

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE YELLOW WAGTAIL?

Wet features

- Creation, restoration or maintenance of wet features such as open wet ditches, ponds and scrapes will boost numbers of flying insects on which yellow wagtails feed on all types of farmland.
- For the greatest benefit to yellow wagtails, these wet areas should be open and free from shading by hedges and trees.
- Yellow wagtails cannot forage in thick swards, so bare ground or short vegetation at the waters edge is important for them.

On arable land

- A wide crop diversity will generally provide more nesting and foraging opportunities for yellow wagtails throughout the breeding season. Winter wheat is commonly used throughout the breeding season, but where available, birds will often relocate to legumes and potatoes for later broods.
- Creation of a network of insect-rich habitats

around arable farmland will provide plenty of food – open, weedy habitats, such as annually cultivated margins, fallow plots and organic or low-input crops, are ideal, allowing access to the ground for feeding and nesting.

- Try to avoid using broad-spectrum insecticides after 15 March to protect beneficial insects.

On grassland

- Maintain water levels and extensive grazing to provide some nesting cover on wet grasslands and grazing marsh.
- Low-input, cattle-grazed pasture is likely to provide good all-round habitat for yellow wagtails.
- Maintain areas of unimproved grassland with low inputs to boost insect numbers and provide high-quality feeding habitat.
- Delaying cutting of silage and hay crops used by nesting yellow wagtails until after 15 July will allow most first broods to successfully fledge prior to management.

KEY POINTS

- **Increase the range of crops in your rotation, to boost both feeding and nesting opportunities.**
- **Create, restore or maintain wet features such as open wet ditches, ponds and scrapes to boost insect food.**
- **Maintain areas of unimproved grassland, or manage grassland with low-inputs to boost insect food**
- **Annually cultivated fallow plots can provide a good food source – ensure that they are positioned away from tall boundaries.**

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