

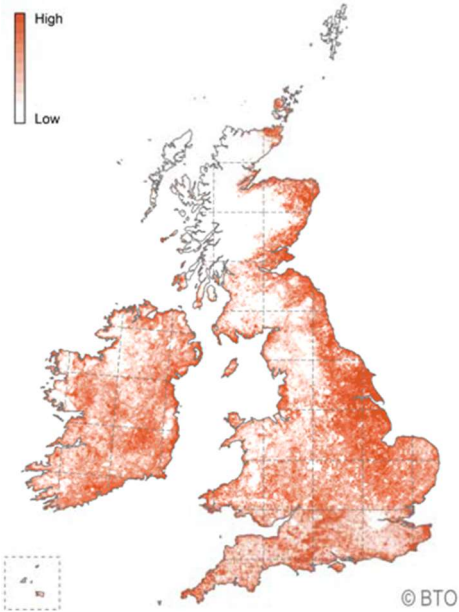


giving nature a home

## LAND MANAGEMENT FOR WILDLIFE

# LINNET (Linaria cannabina)

Breeding Relative Abundance 2008-11



Breeding abundance map reproduced from Balmer et al 2013 Bird Atlas with permission from British Trust for Ornithology.



RSPB (rspb-images.com)

Linnets are found on farmland wherever there is a plentiful supply of seeds throughout the year. The UK population of linnets fell by 57% between 1970 and 2013. This is largely the result of the loss of seed sources on farmland and the loss of suitable nesting habitat.

### WHAT DO LINNET NEED?

#### Nesting habitat:

Thick, thorny hedgerows provide good nesting cover for linnets. They also nest in scrub and bramble areas on grassland and waste ground. In lowland heath they will happily nest in gorse scrub areas where the gorse has formed dense stands

#### Summer and winter food:

Linnets eat small seeds throughout the year. They seek places where they can find lots of seed food. In arable landscapes these areas include winter stubbles, fallow ground, root crops and break crops. Oilseed rape and the associated broadleaved weeds provide ideal food for chicks in the spring.

In pastoral situations, particularly the uplands, hay meadows can provide excellent seed sources, and linnets like small seeds, for example sorrel seeds.

### ANNUAL LIFECYCLE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Flocks move around to find food	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Pairs breed up to three times				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Birds form feeding flocks								■	■	■	■	■

## HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE LINNET?

### Nesting habitat

- Manage thorny hedges on at least a two-year rotation to create thick nesting cover.
- Plant up gaps with native thorny species such as hawthorn and blackthorn.
- Retain areas of scrub, bramble and gorse as both nesting cover and a food source.

### Summer food

- Avoid cutting buffer strips, verges and waste ground annually to allow some areas to develop seeds each year
- Cut ditch banks on a two- or three-year rotation.
- A wide mix of crops is important for linnets. Different crops provide different feeding opportunities throughout the year – avoid planting large areas with a single crop type.
- Adopt conservation headlands or low-input cereal crops to boost broadleaved weed numbers.
- Use uncropped cultivated margins to provide a source of seed food.
- Don't use, or delay the use, of broad-spectrum herbicides on fallow ground to prolong the seed provision from broad leaved plants through the spring.
- Maintain or restore seed rich hay meadows where possible, particularly in upland and in-by areas. Try to use local hay seed sources for restoration, and include flowering plants like sorrel if possible

- Arable fodder crops can provide important seed food,

### Winter food

- Create areas of wild bird seed mixture in the spring, including oily seeds such as kale, oilseed rape or linseed in the mix. Where kale is included the mixture can be left for two years.
- Leave fields of overwintered stubbles and fallow ground unmanaged for as long as possible through the winter and spring, to allow the longest period of food availability possible
- Low-input cereal crops followed by overwintered stubble provide more seed food for birds than conventional stubbles as they are often weedier.
- If your over winter stubbles have very little in the way of weed, broadcasting a quick seeding crop, such as mustard, after harvest can help to increase the availability of seed.
- In pastoral areas, where its possible and appropriate, maintain or increase areas of arable cropping, particularly small seeded crops such as linseed or millet.

## KEY POINTS

- Ensure that the farm provides nesting habitat, summer food and winter food.
- Boost seed food by providing uncut areas, a wide mix of crops, stubbles or wild bird seed mixtures.
- Create thick, thorny nesting cover in hedges or by retaining areas of scrub, gorse or bramble.

### Contact Conservation Management Advice at:

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