

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE CIRL BUNTING?

Mixed farming

A mosaic of small, grass and arable fields, divided by thick hedgerows with pockets of dense scrub, provides the ideal conditions for ciril buntings. Nesting habitat, summer invertebrate food and winter seed food should all be provided within a small area because of their sedentary nature. They usually forage within 250m of their nests and in winter rarely travel more than 2km to find weedy stubbles.

Much of the management ciril buntings need can be funded through agri-environment schemes.

Nesting habitat

- Trim hedges as late as possible in the winter and ideally in January or February, preferably on a 3yr or more rotation. Rotate management around the landholding.
- Restore hedgerows through planting, coppicing or laying.
- Maintain or create areas of scrub and open up very dense scrub.

Summer food

- Create wide, tussocky buffer strips, field margins and field corners in arable fields.
- Create/maintain rough or unimproved pasture with low inputs and ideally graze with cattle. Summer cattle grazing will create a varied sward rich in invertebrates.
- Leave six metre buffer strips uncut or areas in silage or hay fields.
- Avoid using insecticides in cereals after 15

March. If this is not possible consider creating conservation headlands in spring barley fields. The extended winter stubble option will provide useful summer foraging habitat.

Winter food

- Spring barley followed by open, weedy, overwintered stubble. Leave fields of overwintered stubbles until the end of March to maximise seed availability for birds.
- Create areas of barley-based wild bird seed mixtures in the spring. The crop needs to have an open structure to allow the birds to forage and be maintained until April.
- Maintain or increase areas of low-input arable cropping.



Ciril bunting eye view of barley stubble © Cath Jeffs

KEY POINTS

- Ensure spring barley stubbles are left over winter, until the end of March, to provide a seed food source.
- Maintain extensively managed grassland with a varied sward structure and field margins for summer invertebrate food. Low-intensity cattle grazing can create ideal conditions.
- Maintain tall, thick hedgerows and patches of scrub for nesting. Manage on a rotation in winter so there is always some mature habitat available and not all hedges or scrub areas on the farm are trimmed or cut in the same year. Cutting hedges only every two or three years is best for wildlife.
- Summer fallows and extended stubbles are an excellent source of insects.
- Provide all habitat components together.

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