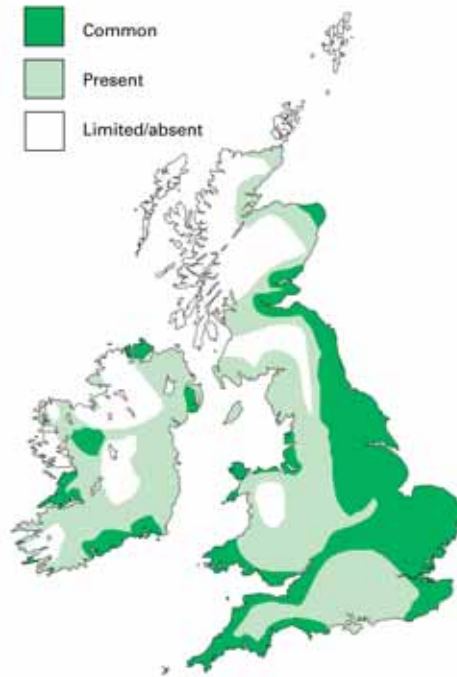




for birds  
for people  
for ever



Distribution map showing the relative abundance of linnets in Britain and Ireland 1988-91



Linnet by Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

This small finch is often seen in flocks. In the breeding season, the male has red on the forehead and breast (above)

Linnets are found on farmland wherever there is a plentiful supply of seeds throughout the year. The UK population of linnets fell by 48% between 1970 and 2003. This is largely the result of the loss of seed sources on farmland.

### WHAT DO LINNETS 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.

**Summer and winter food:** Linnets eat small seeds throughout the year. They seek places where they can find lots of seed food. Such areas include winter stubbles, rotational

set-aside, root crops and break crops. Oilseed rape and the associated broadleaved weeds provide ideal food for chicks in the spring.


### ANNUAL LIFECYCLE OF A LINNET


| January   | February | March | April  | May | June       | July | August  | September | October | November | December |
|---|----------|-------|--|-----|------------|------|---|-----------|---------|----------|----------|
| Flocks may move to find new sources of seed food throughout the winter. |          |       | Main breeding season. They nest in thick hedges and scrub and feed on seeds. |     |            |      | They flock together in winter to find sites with plenty of seed food. |           |         |          |          |
|   |          |       | 1st broods   |     | 2nd broods |      | 3rd broods  |           |         |          |          |


## HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE LINNETS?

| Nesting habitat   | Summer food  | Winter food  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ELS</b> Manage thorny hedges on at least a two-year rotation to create thick nesting cover.</li> <li>• <b>HLS</b> Plant up gaps with native thorny species such as hawthorn and blackthorn.</li> <li>• Retain areas of scrub, bramble and gorse as both nesting cover and a food source.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ELS</b> Avoid cutting buffer strips, verges and waste ground annually to allow some areas to develop seeds each year</li> <li>• <b>ELS</b> Cut ditch banks on a two- or three-year rotation.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• <b>ELS</b> Adopt conservation headlands <b>HLS</b> or low-input cereal crops to boost broadleaved weed numbers.</li> <li>• <b>ELS</b> Use uncropped cultivated margins to provide a source of seed food.</li> <li>• <b>SA</b> Delay the use of broad-spectrum herbicides on rotational set-aside to prolong benefits through the spring.</li> <li>• <b>HLS</b> Maintain or restore seed-rich hay meadows where possible.</li> <li>• <b>ELS</b> <b>HLS</b> Arable fodder crops can provide important seed food.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ELS</b> <b>HLS</b> Create areas of wild bird seed mixture in the spring, including oily seeds such as kale, oilseed rape or linseed in the mix.</li> <li>• <b>SA</b> <b>ELS</b> Leave fields of over-wintered stubbles and rotational set-aside unmanaged for as long as possible through the winter and spring.</li> <li>• <b>HLS</b> Low-input cereal crops followed by over-wintered stubble provide more seed food for birds than conventional stubbles.</li> <li>• <b>ELS</b> <b>HLS</b> In pastoral areas, maintain or increase areas of arable cropping.</li> </ul> |

### KEY

 = all farms

 = arable and mixed farms

 = pastoral farms

**ELS** = Entry Level Stewardship

**HLS** = Higher Level Stewardship

**SA** = Set-aside

## PRIORITY ACTION

- 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.

### See also the RSPB advisory sheets on:

- arable crops on livestock farms
- buffer strips on cultivated land
- buffer strips on grassland
- conservation headlands
- ditch management
- hay and silage meadows
- hedgerow management
- low-input cereals
- over-wintered stubble
- set-aside management
- uncropped cultivated margins
- wild bird seed mixtures

For answers to all of your farm wildlife enquiries, visit [www.farmwildlife.info](http://www.farmwildlife.info)

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



Agricultural Adviser, The RSPB,  
UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy,  
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL  
Tel: 01767 680551  
[www.rspb.org.uk/farming](http://www.rspb.org.uk/farming)



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The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge,  
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