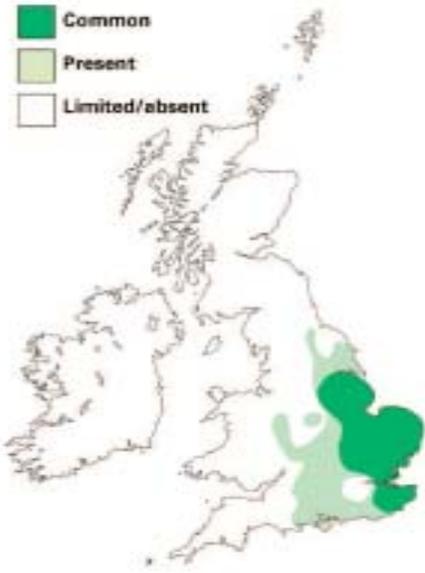




for birds
for people
for ever



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



Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

The turtle dove is much more rufous (reddish-brown) on its back and wings than other doves, and has a distinctive black tail with a white edge, which can be seen in flight.

The turtle dove occurs on arable and mixed farmland that offers suitable nesting habitat. Within the UK it is largely confined to the south and east. The UK population of turtle doves fell by 81% between 1970 and 2004*; this was probably because fewer seed sources were available to them on farmland. The turtle dove is a summer visitor to the UK, arriving in late April and leaving at the end of August.

*Data source: British Trust for Ornithology

WHAT DO TURTLE DOVES NEED?

A continuous supply of weed and crop seed from late April until the end of August.

Both adult and chick turtle doves depend on the availability of seeds, especially those of fumitory, knotgrass, chickweed, oilseed rape and cereal grains. They feed on the ground in weedy

areas, especially where the vegetation is short and sparse, and where there are areas of spilt grain and stubbles after harvest. Lack of seed food is probably the major factor limiting the breeding success of turtle doves.

Tall mature hedgerows, areas of scrub or woodland edges with a thick shrub layer for nesting.

Most turtle doves nest in hedgerows or scrub over 4m tall. They prefer thorny species such as hawthorn, and nests are often associated with climbers such as traveller's joy (wild clematis), honeysuckle or bramble.

ANNUAL LIFECYCLE OF A TURTLE DOVE

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Winters in sub-saharan Africa				Arrives	Main breeding season but may depart in August after first attempt				Dept	Winters in sub-saharan Africa		
				1st broods			2nd broods					

FARMING FOR BIRDS

Turtle dove

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE TURTLE DOVES?

Nesting habitat	Summer food	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELS Maintain hedgerows that are wide and more than 4m tall, and retain climbing plants such as traveller's joy (wild clematis), honeysuckle and bramble in mature hedgerows. • ELS Maintain shrubby edges to woodland blocks and allow these to encroach outwards into fields where appropriate to provide more tall scrub for nesting. • Maintain areas of tall scrub around the farm and allow hedges to grow out at hedgerow junctions in field corners to create larger areas of scrub. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELS HLS Create areas of wild bird cover each year with a biennial component such as kale to ensure some seed each spring – an open crop will give access to the ground and should promote weed germination that will attract them. • Turtle doves can be attracted to feed on seed such as grain tailings put out on farm tracks through the summer period. See RSPB advice on 'farmland bird feeding stations'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HLS Grow low-input cereals to provide crops rich in broad-leaved weed seeds. • SA Leave rotational set-aside unsprayed for as long as possible (ideally July) to provide a seed source. • Leave stubbles uncultivated until the end of August to provide seed food for turtle doves through to the end of the nesting season.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELS HLS Uncropped, cultivated field margins or cultivated fallow areas will enable germination of broad-leaved weeds to provide an accessible seed source. • ELS HLS Adopt conservation headlands around cereal crops to provide a seed-rich margin. The unfertilised option will create a more open margin that is more accessible for turtle doves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELS Introduce arable crops on livestock farms (except maize) or create small plots of wild bird seed mixture to provide a seed-rich habitat in pastoral areas. • ELS HLS Species-rich hay meadows or clover leys can boost food availability.

KEY

 = all farms  = arable and mixed farms  = pastoral farms

ELS = Entry Level Stewardship **HLS** = Higher Level Stewardship **SA** = Set-aside

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



Farming and Wildlife Advisory
Group, NAC, Stoneleigh,
Kenilworth, Warwickshire
CV8 2RX Tel: 024 7669 6699
www.fwag.org.uk



The Game Conservancy Trust,
Fordingbridge, Hampshire
SP6 1EF
Tel: 01425 652381
www.gct.org.uk

PRIORITY ACTION

- Ensure that there is some seed food available throughout the spring and summer.
- Maintain tall, thick hedgerows and areas of scrub on the farm, and allow the shrub layer to develop along woodland edges.

See also the RSPB advisory sheets on

- Arable crops on livestock farms
- Conservation headlands
- Farmland bird feeding stations
- Hay and silage meadows
- Hedgerow management
- Low-input cereals
- Over-wintered stubbles
- Scrub management
- Set-aside management
- Uncropped cultivated margins
- Wild bird seed mixtures

For answers to all of your farm wildlife enquiries, visit www.farmwildlife.info