



Jordans Farm Partnership

THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS' IMPACT REPORT
2019-2020



FARMING FOR THE FUTURE



Celebrating five years of impact for nature

We are very proud of our long-standing relationship with Jordans and their farmers.

It is encouraging to see the collective impact we are having in creating and maintaining habitat for wildlife in what can often be an inhospitable environment. Given that large swathes of the UK's land is used for agriculture, farmers have a vital role to play in nature's recovery.

Our farm advisors work closely with Jordans farmers to develop bespoke conservation plans for their farms, and visit annually to check on progress. During these meetings, our advisors are hearing that these improvements have led to some fantastic gains for nature, with many farmland species flourishing.

That said, we still have a long way to go. We're living amidst a nature and climate crisis, and know that to turn things around we need to see at least 30% of our land managed for nature's recovery. The Jordans Farm Partnership showcases what can be achieved if we choose to farm in a sustainable way – something that would have a huge impact if adopted more widely – and we hope others will take note.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Craig Bennett".

Craig Bennett
Chief Executive,
The Wildlife Trusts

GREY PARTRIDGES © JOHN BRIDGES

WATERSOURCE FOR WILDLIFE © MATTHEW ROBERTS





In 2020, Jordans oat growers provided more than 4,060 hectares of land for farmland wildlife including grey partridge, lapwing, corn bunting and vital pollinating insects like bees. That's enough space to play 5,686 football matches all at once!

Creating space for nature

Wildlife is disappearing at an alarming rate and the threat of climate catastrophe is ever present. The natural world urgently needs our help.

The Wildlife Trusts are calling for 30% of the UK's land and seas to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030. Making more space for nature to become abundant once again will give our struggling wildlife chance to recover and allow wild places to store carbon, helping to tackle the climate crisis. With agriculture covering more than 70% of the UK's land, farmers can play a key role in helping to create this thriving natural world.

Five years ago, The Wildlife Trusts and Jordans joined forces to support farmers growing oats for their cereals, helping them to farm in harmony with nature. Since then, the Jordans Farm Partnership has produced an industry-leading wildlife standard to encourage practices that support more nature on farms.

The 30 farmers involved, who are growing oats for Jordans, collectively farm over 15,000 hectares of countryside! Every one of them is committed to protecting and managing an area equal to at least 10% of their farmed land for wildlife – a core principle of the Jordans Farm Partnership.

Working together with their local Wildlife Trust farm advisor, each farmer develops a comprehensive nature farm plan. The plan sets out how the farm can be managed to provide food and habitat for a range of wildlife including birds, bats, bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. Growers can achieve this by creating and restoring features such as ponds, managing hedgerows and providing field margins. Not only does this support nature on the farm, it also helps connect habitats and create networks for wildlife to move more easily across the wider landscape.

ACTIONS ON THE GROUND

Habitat management

In 2019-20, JFP farmers managed more than 4,060 hectares of wildlife-friendly habitats to support nature's recovery on their farms. These are just some of the wild places they have created or maintained.

"All farmers are custodians of the countryside"

JFP Farmer, Suffolk

692ha
of woodland

94
ponds

475ha
of field margins

717km
of hedgerows

136km
of waterways

ACTIONS ON THE GROUND

Conservation focus species

Each JFP farm plan identifies at least four focus species (or groups of species) for their wildlife-friendly farming measures. These are examples of some of the wildlife that they have been helping.



Bees & pollinating insects

- Maintaining flowering hedgerows, which provide pollen and nectar
- Establishing wildflower-rich field margins, which are a good food source

“Ten years ago we rarely saw a barn owl — now we have four breeding pairs!”

JFP Farmer, Dorset

Bats

- Keeping mature trees, which provide important roost sites
- Maintaining hedgerows, which provide routes to fly and forage for food along



Brown hares

- Creating rough grassland, which provides shelter for baby leverets
- Keeping overwinter stubble, which allows for good foraging

Lapwings

- Keeping uncropped areas in fields for nesting
- Creating 'scrapes'; wet muddy areas, good for food



Grey partridges

- Growing bird seed plots for adults to feed
- Maintaining wildflower margins for insects, on which chicks feed



Barn owls

- Installing nesting boxes on the farm
- Maintaining grass margins, which are good for hunting



Yellowhammers

- Managing hedgerows, which provide nest sites
- Keeping tall hedgerows and trees, which provide song posts



Flourishing relationships

Fundamental to the success of the partnership and helping nature on the ground is the relationship between each individual grower and their local Wildlife Trust farm advisor.

Once a comprehensive farm plan has been drawn up to meet the Jordans Farm Partnership wildlife standard, the advisor remains on hand to provide support.

Each year the advisor visits the farm to see how the grower is progressing with their action plan. This is a great opportunity to understand what is working well and to discuss solutions for any unexpected challenges. One of the best bits of these visits is the chance to hear how wildlife is responding to the improvements put in place on the farm!

Despite the restrictions caused by Covid-19 and lockdown, Wildlife Trust advisors were able to visit their growers during the year to maintain these important relationships.

“Green woodpeckers are increasing as a result of there being more ants in the wildflower plots”

JFP Farmer

ASSURANCE

Independent assessments

To give confidence that Jordans' oat growers are carrying out the biodiversity measures as required by the Jordans Farm Partnership wildlife standard, the farms are independently assessed by wildlife consultants.

The second round of independent assessments was undertaken in 2019/20. The six farms assessed were all found to be managing an area for wildlife equal to at least 10% of their farmed land, with many achieving far beyond that. Furthermore, half of this area provides year-round food and habitat for birds and pollinators in line with the standard.

During their visits, the assessors were delighted to see brown hares and numerous butterflies. Wildlife that appeared to be doing particularly well on the farms include grey partridge, swallow, skylark, yellowhammer and lapwing. Several of these species are nationally in decline, so it is great to see them doing well!

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ASSURANCE



The wild pollinator plots were also thriving, and wildflowers have colonised grassy field margins by themselves. On one farm, pyramidal orchids have appeared – a new record for the farm!

The assessors were encouraged to hear that the farmers believed populations of green woodpecker, buzzard, little owl, hobby and kestrel were increasing on their farm as result of biodiversity measures put in place.

The Jordans Farm Partnership will continue to undertake independent assessments of a sample of the farms in the partnership each year.



“The assessor was very impressed with the extensive spread of conservation field margins and other habitat features It is a significant feature of the local landscape and undoubtedly provides a hot spot for arable farmland wildlife.”

JFP Assurance Reviewer

STORIES FROM THE FARM

Hamish Stewart

Ragley Hall Farm, Warwickshire

*"Conservation used to be restricted to the edges —
now it's part of the farm's business plan"*



STORIES FROM THE FARM

A passion for ponds

When Hamish took on the role of Farm Manager at Ragley Hall Farm in Warwickshire, he was keen for the farm to join the Jordans Farm Partnership.

Having previously worked at another Jordans farm he was aware of what could be achieved through the partnership and knew that farming for both profit and wildlife could go hand in hand.

Within weeks of Hamish's arrival, the farm was signed up to the partnership. The farm was already in a Countryside Stewardship Scheme but *"the JFP goes beyond this"* says Hamish. By joining the partnership, he has been able to do even more to benefit wildlife whilst continuing to run a profitable farm business.

Hamish takes great pride in the wild bird seed plots he grows on the farm, which provide a reliable food source for farmland birds over winter. Hamish's mixes of sunflowers, quinoa, kale, linseed and oats are grown with the same care and attention that he gives to his commercial crops. His efforts are paying off, with his plots coming alive with finches, tree sparrows, skylark and linnets in winter.

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STORIES FROM THE FARM

Hamish also has a passion for ponds. With guidance from his farm advisor at Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Hamish set to work restoring the 46 ponds on the farm. He cleared out silt and rotting leaves, and removed dense tree branches from the stagnant, wildlife-depleted ponds. He ensured each pond was surrounded and protected by six-metre-wide buffer strip of grass and other vegetation too. These buffer strips help ensure activities on the wider farm, such as applying fertiliser to crops, do not disturb the pond – vital to ensuring the pond remains healthy and supports a wide variety of aquatic plant and animal species. Hamish also maintains shallow marshy areas around the ponds, ideal habitat for dragonflies and damselflies, and has created log piles close by to encourage amphibians and insects.

As a result of his dedicated work the ponds are much healthier, and Hamish has seen a real benefit for wildlife. Insects and other invertebrates have increased thanks to the pond improvements and this in turn has benefitted the birds that feed on them. In addition to moorhens nesting on the ponds, herons breed on the farm estate and lapwing rely on the insects to feed their chicks.

The rejuvenated ponds benefit amphibians too, as toads, frogs and newts all use the ponds for breeding in spring.

Of course, the clean healthy ponds are also a valuable source of drinking water for other thirsty wildlife on the farm!



STORIES FROM THE FARM

*"It's important for farmers to be paid to produce a crop,
but also farm to benefit wildlife and the environment"*

Ralph Parker

Highfield Farm, Cambridgeshire

STORIES FROM THE FARM

Weeds or wildflowers?

Once a common sight in arable fields across the UK, arable 'weeds' or wildflowers have declined in recent decades as agriculture has intensified and many of these plants are now considered rare.

Ralph understands that arable wildflowers are an essential source of pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and other pollinators. The plants also support spiders, insects and a variety of other invertebrates, which are ideal for birds feeding their chicks in spring. Furthermore, the wildflowers provide food for large populations of small mammals during the winter months.

"Management for these arable wildflowers is relatively simple" says Ralph. His field margins are a haven for the plants and he deliberately disturbs the soil each year to encourage their growth and *"the seed bank in the soil simply takes advantage of these areas"*.

Some wildflowers are particularly suited to the chalk soils at Ralph's farm. Plants with fantastic names like corn spurrey, dwarf spurge and round-leaved fluellen are among those recorded in the field margins at Highfield Farm. Fine-leaved fumitory has also been recorded nearby.

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STORIES FROM THE FARM



The arable fields at Highfield Farm are a key habitat for many farmland birds, including corn bunting, lapwing and grey partridge, and as part of the Jordans Farm Partnership, Ralph manages his land to give them a helping hand. Rather than sowing all his crops in autumn, after a harvest Ralph drills around a third of his crops in the spring. This means that the winter stubble left from the previous crop offers cover for wildlife and provides a vital area of foraging ground for farmland birds. Broad-leaved plants are encouraged to grow in these unplanted fields, providing seeds for the farmland birds to eat.

By growing catch crops, a quick growing crop that can be sown between main crops, Ralph also provides additional habitat for wildlife in other areas of the farm during autumn. A turnip catch crop provides shelter for invertebrates and also feeds the sheep on his neighbour's farm, which in turn naturally fertilise Ralph's land, meaning less agricultural inputs.

The mosaic of arable crops alongside hedgerows, trees and wildflower margins at Ralph's farm together provide food, nesting habitat and shelter for a range of wildlife species. "*Corn bunting, grey partridge and brown hare all do very well here*" says Ralph. He believes that farming for wildlife and farming for profit go hand in hand – "*quite simply, one complements the other*" he says.



“Clean water is the source of all wildlife. If the ponds are restored, clean and healthy, I know they will support a huge amount of wildlife”

Hamish Stewart, Ragley Hall Farm, Warwickshire

POND © MATTHEW ROBERTS

HAMISH STEWART © MATTHEW ROBERTS