

STORIES FROM THE FARM

"We farm amongst nature and I believe that it's important to farm with nature rather than against it."

George Morris

Manor Farm, Buckinghamshire

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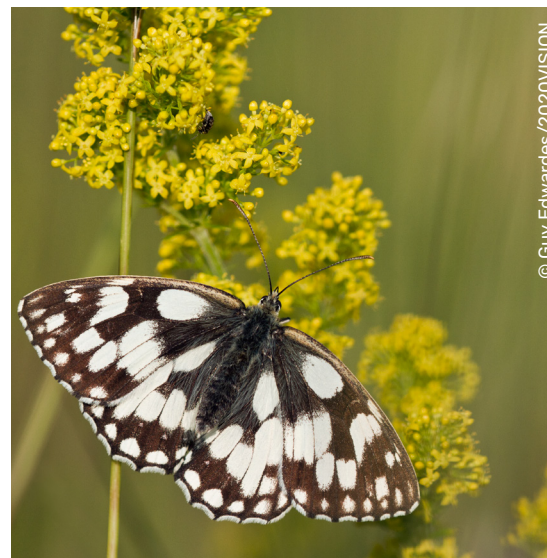
Farming *amongst nature*

George's family has farmed Manor Farm in Hoggston, near Aylesbury, for several generations. This Buckinghamshire mixed farm, both growing crops and farming livestock, is a real family affair; George's wife, Elaine, works alongside George managing the farm, their daughter Caroline is involved in looking after the 350-strong sheep flock, whilst son Alex focuses on the arable operation.

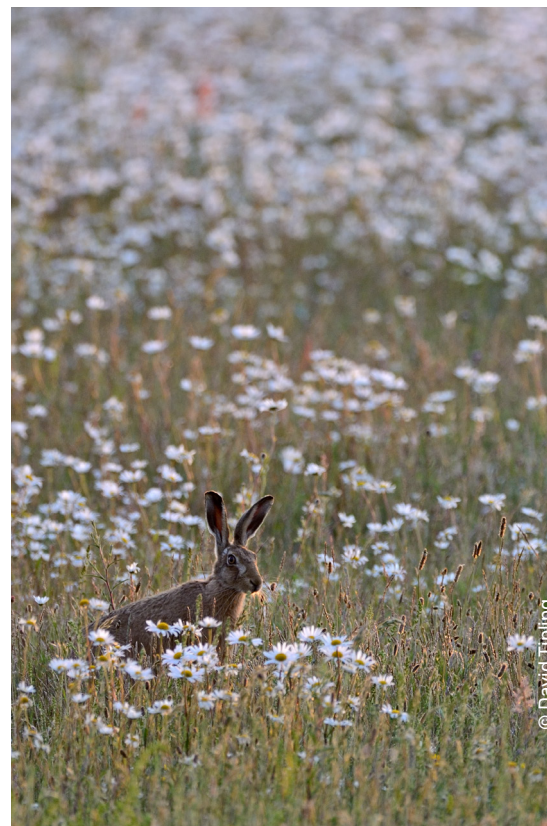
But just as important to the family as their farming operations, is the wider environment that benefits from the way they look after their farmland. The family works hard to support wildlife, having sown extensive wildflower margins around the fields. Bees, butterflies and other pollinators forage for pollen and nectar that are available in abundance from the wildflowers during the spring and summer, and the pollinators in turn support the birds and bats that make the farm their home.

George has been growing oats for Jordans for over 20 years and has always farmed in a way that supports wildlife. *"We farm amongst nature,"* says George, *"and I believe it's important to farm with nature rather than against it."*

This ethos is apparent on the farm with the large numbers of brown hares, marbled white and skipper butterflies that can be found there. Farmland birds including skylarks, which ascend high into the sky to trill their song, and yellowhammers, recognised by their distinctive 'little-bit-of-bread-and-no-cheese' song, are also a familiar sight and sound on the Morris' farm.



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George believes that many of our grandfathers' techniques can be adopted today, such as how to farm in a specific rotation so as to reduce damage to crops from the voracious larvae of leatherjackets – or daddy long-legs as they are commonly known.

"It's important to think about the life cycle of agricultural pests as our grandfathers did," says George. "By farming the land in a rotation of summer pasture for our livestock, followed by autumn cover crops, the leatherjacket larvae are managed without the use of harmful agricultural chemicals that can have a disastrous effect on the wider environment. With the pests gone, our next season's crop, such as oats for Jordans cereals, should flourish."

The Morris' work closely with Giles Strother, their farm advisor from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, who considers the farm to *"provide a good patchwork of habitats, including grasslands, field margins, hedgerows and woodlands, for wildlife such as bees, butterflies, and farmland birds"*. Giles says that *"Hedgerow management is working very well on the farm – there is a good variety of heights and widths, with plenty of fruiting stretches – all providing valuable habitat for wildlife"*. There are also field corners and rough grassland areas here and there, which provide additional habitat. Giles was delighted to hear that there is likely to be restoration of the two farm ponds soon and is confident that *"this will only provide even more wildlife habitat on the farm!"*