



# Farming in the uplands for wildlife

Make the most of Environmental Stewardship in the uplands

[www.naturalengland.org.uk/es](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/es)



Farmers, land managers and farm advisers all have a part to play in maintaining a healthy farmed environment.

Environmental Stewardship is an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and land managers in England for delivering environmental benefits. This leaflet focuses on the options available to upland farmers for Entry Level Stewardship (ELS), Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS), Uplands Entry Level Stewardship (Uplands ELS) and Uplands Organic Entry Level Stewardship (Uplands OELS)<sup>1</sup>.

### Your farm has environmental value

Your farm has landscape and historic features, natural resources and wildlife that need your protection and management.

### You make a difference

Your land management practices have the biggest influence on the wildlife found on your farm and your choices determine the type and quality of wildlife on your land.

### Right options, right location, right management

This leaflet helps you to choose the right options and put them in the best places to achieve the greatest benefits. For Uplands ELS there are also a number of compulsory land management requirements: please see the *ELS or OELS handbook* or the booklet *Look after your uplands with Environmental Stewardship* for more information. If you need additional help locating or managing the options or compulsory requirements then please contact Natural England.



Whinchat

## Why is your farm important for wildlife?

Upland wildlife needs upland farmers. Many of England's most characteristic upland species have adapted to habitats maintained by agriculture and are dependent on continued farming. The farm management practices of generations have provided what these species need to thrive. Retaining this skill and knowledge will be crucial to secure the future of our most cherished upland wildlife. Drumming snipe over rush pastures in spring, hay meadows rich in wild flowers, and purple moorland at the summer's end are all still familiar sights across the uplands of England.

However, studies of farm wildlife across England over the last 60 years have shown that upland wildlife has declined. Reclamation and increased intensity of grazing and other moorland management resulted in the loss of 27% of heather moorland between 1947 and 1980. Increased intensity of grassland management has led to the loss of 33% of unimproved meadows in some areas since the 1980s. These factors have caused once common species to become scarcer and some species to be lost from parts of upland England.

Since the introduction of agri-environment schemes in 1987 these declines have slowed dramatically thanks to concerted action by upland farmers. Ensuring continuity and increasing the coverage of agri-environment management in the uplands is therefore crucial in reversing these long term wildlife declines.

Through the use of ELS and Uplands ELS a number of simple management measures can be put in place that will make a huge difference to the wildlife found across your farm.

<sup>1</sup> References to ELS and Uplands ELS throughout this leaflet also include OELS and Uplands OELS

## What can you do for upland wildlife?

Wildlife requires a balanced and varied approach to farmland management that will provide a variety of habitats.

For example:

### **Moorland**

You can increase wildlife on hills and moorland by managing grazing to achieve a mixture of vegetation heights and types (eg heather, grass, sedge). Very heavy or light grazing generally leads to less variety and less wildlife.

### **Moorland edge**

You can benefit breeding birds such as waders and twite by limiting your stocking density in spring on areas of rough grazing and rush pastures around the moorland edge. This helps provide suitable habitat for nesting and prevents damage to eggs.

### **Hay meadows and other in-bye grassland**

On your existing meadows and pastures you can increase flowers, bees and butterflies by reducing fertiliser inputs, leaving uncut strips in meadows and, where possible, making hay later. Later cuts and uncut strips give plants the chance to flower and provide food and shelter for insects and other species.

### **Small native woodland and scrub**

If you have small native woodlands you can increase numbers of woodland birds and flowers by fencing-off and excluding livestock. This encourages regeneration under the woodland canopy.

## Need further help and information?

**For details of farm events in your region and to arrange one-to-one farm visits, or for further information, please contact:**

### **Natural England**

Tel: 0300 060 1695

Email: [farmevents@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:farmevents@naturalengland.org.uk)

Website: [www.naturalengland.org.uk/farmevents](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/farmevents)

## What are the benefits for you?

### **Regular farm income**

Payments are available through ELS and Uplands ELS to provide a six-monthly income for land management that supports wildlife.

### **Realise the wildlife potential of less productive areas**

The least productive areas of your farm are often, with the correct management, the best for enhancing wildlife. You can make them work better for you by entering them into ELS and Uplands ELS options.

### **Adapt your farm to a changing climate**

Predicted increases in heavy rainfall and extreme weather events make it more important than ever to protect wildlife.

Wildlife will be better able to adapt to the predicted hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters if uplands are managed to provide a variety of habitats.

Low input grassland, buffer strips, woodland and moorland options will also help by retaining levels of soil carbon.

**Use the farm illustration overleaf to help you choose the best locations and options to increase wildlife on your farm.**



Wood crane's-bill

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