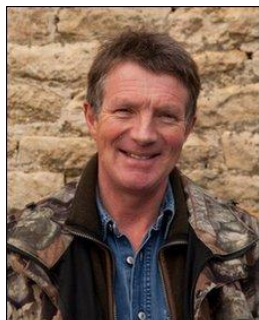


Environmental Stewardship

Case study: Whittington Lodge Farm



Name:	Ian Boyd
Region/County:	South West/ Gloucestershire
Address:	Whittington Lodge Farm Gloucestershire
Farm Size/Type:	291.9 hectares. Mixed farming - arable
Cropping:	Wheat, spring barley, permanent and environmental grassland. Mixed orchard for juice.
Stocking:	Herd of pedigree Herefordshire cattle (+/- 50 – 70 herd at any one time)
Key objectives	To encourage farmland birds; resource protection on sloping fields; preservation of Roman town; wildflower meadows for the landscape.



For more than a decade, Ian Boyd's farm at Whittington Lodge in the Cotswolds has been successfully working towards the management of farm habitats for wildlife. The farm has changed from being production-led to working in harmony with wildlife. His enthusiasm for this approach stands out, resulting in an abundance of wildflowers and insects attracting birds all year. The range of species attracted includes lapwings, corn buntings, grey partridge, small toadflax, greater and lesser horseshoe bats, and great crested newts. This abundance of wildlife sits alongside an increasing educational programme and a well-run commercial farm.

Whittington Lodge Farm is on thin Cotswold soil which was in danger of some erosion on its slopes. As a result of his joining the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) in 2010, Mr Boyd has been able to stabilise the soils, by taking land out of arable production and farm in a way to encourage wildlife, and birds in particular.

“My main objective was to concentrate on habitat rather than farming management to encourage farmland birds” said Mr Boyd.

Under a previous agri-environment Scheme Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA), Mr Boyd had already trialled options such as leaving field margins fallow to provide refuge for wildlife, and creating wild flower meadows specifically designed for the botanical interest. Moving into an HLS agreement was a natural progression.



The agreement area overlaps with Puckham Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest. The condition of this unit has improved significantly since the last ESA assessment in 2004, when the site was classed as 'unfavourable' due to undergrazing and scrub encroachment. Introducing a herd of Pedigree Herefordshire cattle has greatly improved the condition of the grassland, with sward height and herb ratio considerably improved.

Other measures taken on the farm were the introduction of beetle banks (a raised grass bank which offers homes to insects and ground nesting birds), fallow plots for ground-nesting birds, nectar mixtures to attract bumblebees and other pollinating insects and the sowing of seed-producing plants to provide winter food sources for farmland birds.

Monthly visits to the farm were carried out by the South West Farmland Bird Initiative from November 2010 to March 2011. This survey covered the 16 out of 19 species of farmland birds listed by Defra as proving 'quality of life indicators'. Of these 16 species, 15 were recorded during the survey, including good numbers of goldfinch, linnet, reed bunting and yellowhammer. Additional species specifically added to the record list included snipe, redshank, curlew and barn owl. Butterfly species recorded included adonis blue, small blue and dingy skipper.

"I have a passion for wildlife and so designed the farm business around the HLS agreement rather than the other way round" said Mr Boyd who has won a large number of environmental awards, including the prestigious Ruffer LLP Cotswold Grey Partridge Award and runner-up in 2011 FWAG Silver Lapwing Award for his work on farmland habitats

Neil Harris, Mr Boyd's Natural England advisor for over eight years commented, "Ian's farm shows just how much can be achieved for the environment with a dedicated farmer implementing a range of measures through Higher Level Stewardship. The results are staggering and inspiring and it is always a real joy to visit this place to see just how biodiverse the countryside can be."

"My generation were trained as 'production managers' and it needs a mind change to produce for habitat. The Environmental Stewardship Scheme has helped to consolidate this mind change" said Mr Boyd.

Where can I find out more?

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