

CASE STUDY

FWAG Silver Lapwing

Award finalist 2012

EDWARD CROSS, ABBEY FARM,
FLITCHAM, KINGS LYNN, NORFOLK



Abbey Farm is a 375 ha tenanted holding lying on the chalk scarp of north-west Norfolk at one of the springheads of the River Babingley. It has soils with a high sand and/or chalk content. 15% of the farm is organic. There is a diverse cropping programme growing seven different combinable crops, plus sugar beet and green manures. The farm is in the fourth year of an OELS/HLS agreement.

Conservation priorities include maintaining and enhancing plant diversity, wetland management, recreation of chalk and other dry grassland using local origin seed mixes and bird conservation. The farm has a Scheduled Monument on the site of an Augustinian priory which has evidence of occupation since the Neolithic period. Edward Cross and his partner try to maintain the generally open landscape character, but have increased the presence of shrub/tree species through green lane creation and hedge planting.

The farm's most recent capital investment was a cereal drill and tractor which aims to increase crop yield through more accurate seed placement, and reduce diesel use through cutting the number of machine passes. The Cross' avoid use of certain insecticides and minimise spray drift. Fields are monitored for P and K levels with most being tested one year in three.

The Species and Habitat BAPs most relevant to Abbey farm are brown hare, long-eared and noctule Bats, spotted flycatcher, skylark, black poplar, hedgerows, calcareous grasslands, pastures, field margins and ponds. The farm has a public bird hide which has about 4-5,000 person visits/ year. There is one area of open public access on pastures where we are diversifying the habitats and several farm walks are held each year.