

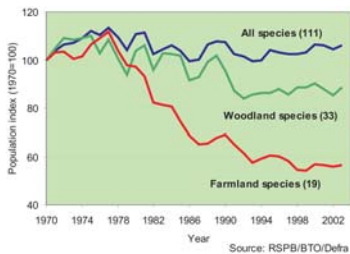
COMMON BIRD INDICATORS: HELPING TO TRACK PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2010 TARGET



- **Common bird indicators show the average trends in abundance of a selected set of species. They are especially useful in showing change in the overall condition of ecosystems, which is difficult and expensive to measure directly.**
- **Using birds has many advantages: excellent data, based on the volunteer efforts of skilled birdwatchers; a stable taxonomy; a thorough knowledge of ecology and behaviour; meaningful responses to environmental change; and great resonance and symbolic value with the public and decision-makers.**
- **Bird populations integrate a set of environmental changes, because they are mobile and often wide-ranging. Bird numbers also respond more slowly than those of smaller organisms, and at a larger spatial scale.**
- **Strengths of common bird indicators include their statistical robustness, relative simplicity, cost-effectiveness and ease of update.**
- **Common bird indicators can help measure progress towards reducing the rate of biodiversity loss at the national, regional and global levels.**

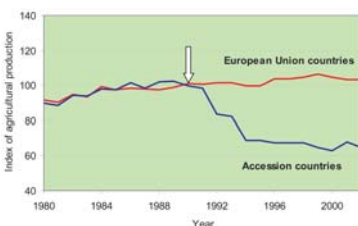
NATIONAL: The UK common bird indicator

- This indicator is based on population trends of common breeding birds.
- It is one of the UK Government's 15 headline indicators of the sustainability of lifestyles in the UK.
- The UK common bird indicator shows large declines in common woodland and especially farmland birds since 1970.
- The UK Government has adopted a formal commitment to "reverse the long-term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020".
- UK land-use policy is now coupling agricultural production with the needs of maintaining and restoring biodiversity.



The UK common bird indicator

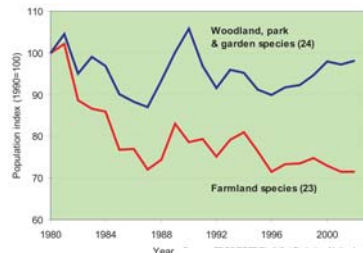
- Declines are driven by changes in agricultural methods and specialisation.
- The key factors are hedgerow loss, land drainage, increased mechanisation, increased fertiliser and pesticide use, reduction of spring cultivation, simplification of crop rotations, changes in crop use, and loss of farm diversity.
- In EU Accession countries, farmland birds showed signs of recovery around 1990, as the former Eastern Bloc broke up and agricultural intensity was reduced.
- There has been no similar recovery of farmland birds in the EU, where intensification has continued (Gregory *et al.* 2005 *Phil. Trans. Roy. Soc. Lond. B.*, in press).



Agricultural production in EU and Accession countries

REGIONAL: The Pan-European common bird indicator

- This indicator shows average trends in population sizes of a suite of common breeding birds across 18 European countries.
- It is based on national annual breeding bird surveys conducted by skilled volunteers.
- It shows that common farmland birds in Europe have declined steeply over the last two decades, while common woodland birds have not.
- The European Union has adopted the farmland bird index as a "long-list structural indicator" for Europe.



The Pan-European common bird indicator



GLOBAL: Scaling up common bird indicators



- Population trends of common breeding birds can feed through to, and help improve, global indicators based on species' population trends, such as the Living Planet Index.
- Methods used in Europe can readily be applied in other regions with similar data sets, such as North America and Australia.
- Indicators are under development for species groups that have been counted in many countries for many years, such as waterbirds (led by Wetlands International), seabirds and birds of prey.
- Thousands of birdwatchers around the world make bird lists, which can provide a reliable index of species abundance changes. Such lists are now being captured through web-based systems in a number of countries – see www.worldbirds.org.

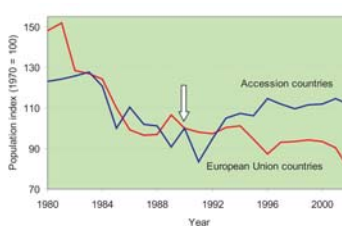
Assessing biodiversity trends: BirdLife's approach using indicators for birds

Are we on track to achieve the target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010? Birds can make a major contribution to a global monitoring scheme because of the wealth of information available. A suite of relevant bird indicators is now taking shape:

- **Red List Indices** measuring global and regional trends in the extinction risk of all species.
- **Important Bird Area Indices** measuring trends in the condition of sites, pressures on them, and responses in place.
- **Common Bird Indicators** measuring population trends of representative common species to indicate trends in the condition of habitats.

Further information:

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Common bird indicators for EU and Accession countries