

Keeping common birds common

Title



BirdLife Europe invests heavily in taking action for threatened species and conserving key sites (**Important Bird Areas**), but a vital third pillar of our work involves addressing factors affecting birds in the wider environment. Many of Europe's most common and widespread bird species have undergone large declines in recent decades, particularly those in farmland.

Together with the **European Bird Census Council** (EBCC), BirdLife initiated the **Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme** (PECBMS) in 2002. This scheme, which is funded jointly by the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** (RSPB) and the European Commission, collates data from annually operated breeding bird surveys and combines them to produce **supranational trend indices for around 150 species across 25 countries**.

These indices can then be combined to produce **policy-relevant multispecies indicators**, showing the overall trend of groups of birds associated with particular habitats, such as farmland and forest (which cover approximately 50% and 30% of Europe's land surface, respectively). The trend of common and widespread forest birds in Europe has remained roughly stable since the 1980s, but farmland birds have

- declined by more than half.

Along with more detailed field research, the decline of these species provides overwhelming evidence that various land use policies are unsustainable. In particular, it has demonstrated the need for a thorough reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, for which BirdLife Europe has long advocated.



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