

Sparrow flock
on farmland
(right)

food across the site so that it can easily be seen by the birds. They are likely to eat 10 kg a week in autumn and late winter but could eat as much as 25 kg a week or more in cold weather between December and February.



Don't wait more than a week before putting fresh food down. If there is still food left, reduce the amount slightly and scatter it a few metres away so that the new food doesn't pile up on top of old food. This will reduce the risk of diseases such as salmonella spreading through bird populations. Tailings can be spread along a track each day, or if you are using a fixed feeding table, sweep it clean regularly.

Rodents may be attracted to your bird food store but keeping the grain in a rodent proof bin will help. You can also deter rodents by keeping your feeding station clean. If rodents are a problem try building an elevated table with an overhang, or move your feeding site to another location. If you want to prevent wood pigeons and crows from using the food you could put a large mesh cage over the food that will only allow smaller birds in.

Further information

If you would like to know more about the Bird Aid project and winter feeding farmland birds please contact the RSPB:

**UK Headquarters, The Lodge,
Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551**

**Northern Ireland Headquarters,
Belvoir Park Forest,
Belfast BT8 7QT
Tel: 028 9049 1547**

**Scotland Headquarters, Dunedin
House, 25 Ravelston Terrace,
Edinburgh EH4 3TP
Tel: 0131 311 6500**

**North Wales Office, Maes y
Ffynnon, Penrhosgarnedd,
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Tel: 01248 363800**

www.rspb.co.uk/farming

Front cover: tree sparrow and grain by Andy Hay, yellowhammer by Chris Gomersall (both rspb-images.com) bird feeding station by J Badley (RSPB)

Inside: corn bunting by Mike Richards, skylark by Chris Gomersall and spilt and germinating grain by Andy Hay (rspb-images.com). Bird feeding station and tailings by Dante Munns (RSPB)

Back page: sparrow flock on farmland by Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)



for birds
for people
for ever



RSPB Bird Aid project

*Providing seed food
for farmland birds*

The RSPB is working with farmers to see if providing seed can offer a lifeline to birds and help them survive through the winter in the absence of seed-rich areas such as winter stubbles or wild bird cover crops. Populations of many farmland birds have

declined over the last 30 years. This leaflet explains how you can use half a tonne of seed to help with the Bird Aid project and secure a future for seed-eating birds on your land. Latest results of our research suggest that tree sparrows and corn buntings are some of the birds that you can help in this way.

station is an area of the farm where you can put down grain waste and seed to provide food for the birds through the winter, when food for them on farmland is in short supply. The birds will benefit even more from a bird feeding station where it is not possible to create alternative sources of seed, such as stubbles or seed-bearing wild bird cover crops.

Where to locate your feeding station

It is best to feed the birds frequently so ideally you will be able to choose a location that you visit regularly in your normal work. The site should be away from grain stores and animal feed stores.

A non-cropped area, such as a farm track or area of short grassland, could be ideal as you will then avoid re-introducing weed seed onto your arable land. A firm, free-draining surface is best as there is less risk of the seed rotting or germinating.

The site should be in an area used by farmland birds such as sparrows and yellow-hammers in winter, and close to a hedge or bushes so that birds can quickly find cover if they are disturbed. If you choose an open site away from hedges you may attract skylarks, but you are

also more likely to attract wood pigeons and crows as well.

What feed to use?

Sparrows, finches and buntings feed on a variety of seeds, including grain and small weed seeds. Tailings, the by-product of the grain cleaning process, can provide useful seed food if they are mostly weed seed and chipped grain with some whole seed. Cereal grain can also be used but don't use tailings that are mostly husk and chaff as they are of very little benefit to the birds. Given the choice, birds prefer wheat to barley or oats because it has no husk.

The amount of food you need to put out will vary depending on the number of birds you are attracting, how much other food is available nearby and what the weather is like. About half a tonne of feed should supply one bird feeding site for the whole winter.

Supply food to the birds little and often. Try not to let food accumulate – but always food available.

Start with a good bucketful and see how much is used. Spread the



Skylark (right)

Corn bunting (below)



Tailings (left)

Spilt and germinating grain in a farmyard (below)

What you can do

To help the birds on your farm over winter you can create a bird feeding station. The bird feeding

Storing the bird food

Keep the grain dry and away from pests. It will be more convenient for you if you can store the grain near to the feeding site. You can get galvanised rodent-proof grain bins, which are also reasonably well protected from the weather.

When to feed?

It is best to start feeding in early October so that the birds become used to having a regular source of food before their other food supplies run out. Carry on feeding until at least the end of March. If possible, carry on feeding for as long as the birds are using the site.



A bird feeding station on a track

