

2019 Big Farmland Bird Count Results

February saw the sixth annual Big Farmland Bird Count (BFBC) organised by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, with record numbers of participants and species recorded.

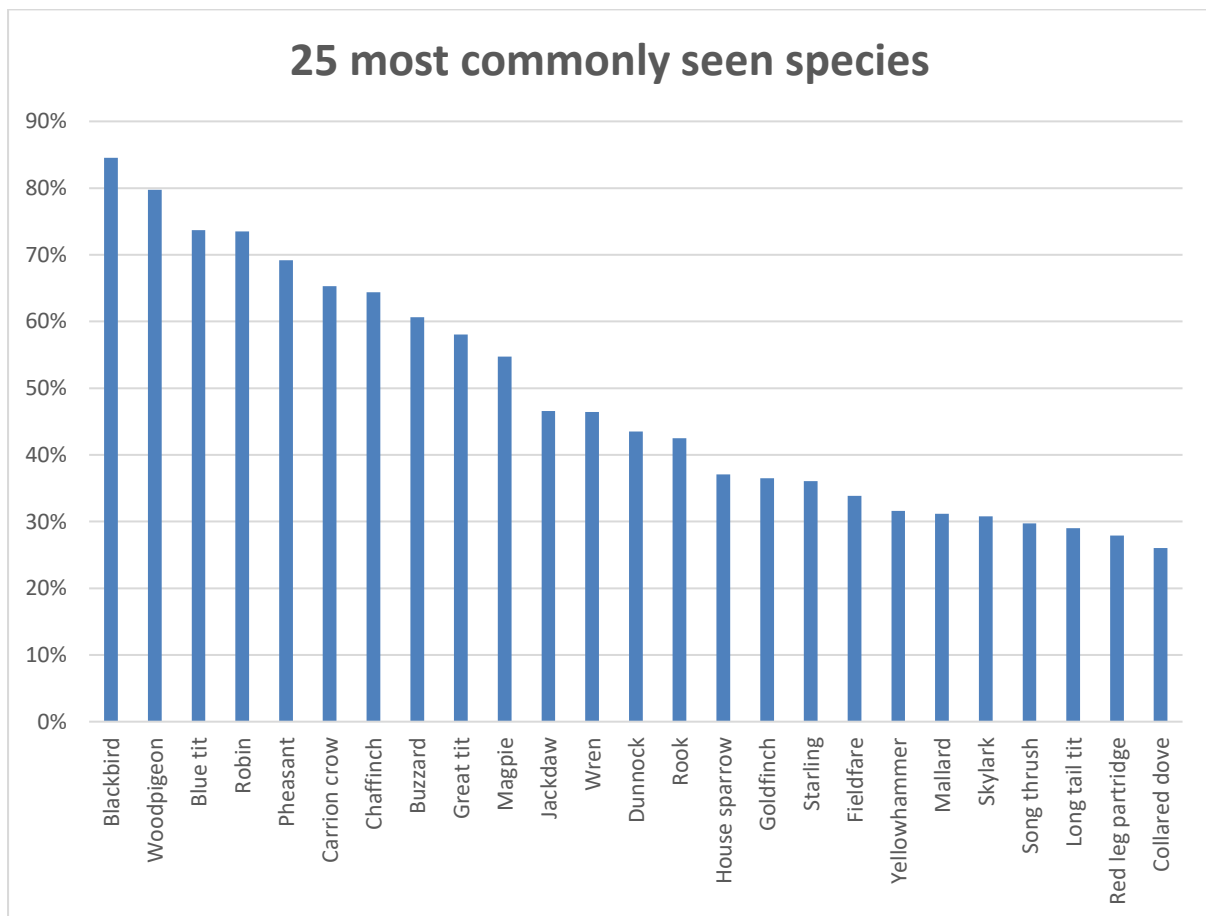
Over 1400 farmers took part and recorded 140 species across over 1 million acres. That's more farmers than in any previous year.

The BFBC was launched in 2014 to highlight the positive work done by farmers and gamekeepers in helping to reverse the decline in farmland bird numbers. The count offers a simple means of recording the effect of any conservation work currently being instigated by farmers and gamekeepers on their land, such as scatter feeding birds through winter or growing crops specifically to provide seed for birds.

What did farmers see?

The most commonly seen species were blackbirds and woodpigeons, seen by over 75% of our participants. Robins and blue tits were seen by over 70% of the farmers.

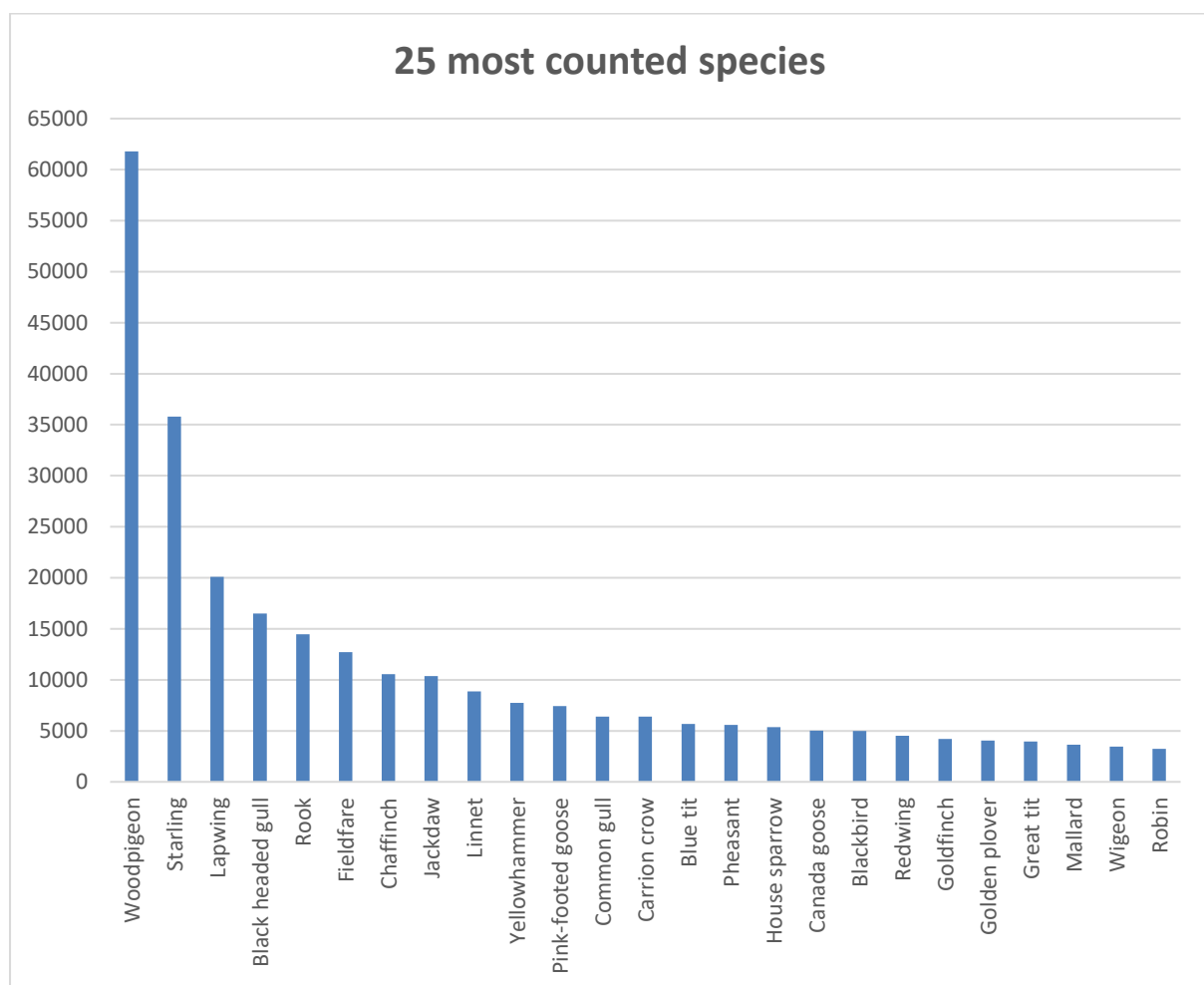
The graph below shows the full list of the 25 most commonly seen species.



At the other end of the scale, we were delighted to see that a total of 30 species from the Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern were recorded, with 5 appearing in the 25 most commonly seen species list: fieldfares, starlings, house sparrows, yellowhammers and song thrushes, with the first four seen by over 30% of the farms taking part.

The five most abundant birds seen were woodpigeons, starlings, lapwing, black headed gulls and rooks. A total of 148,661 were found, making up nearly 50% of the total number of birds recorded.

8 of the top 25 most abundant species are on the Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern: starlings, fieldfares, lapwings, linnets, redwings, herring gulls, yellowhammers, and house sparrows.



Who took part?

The type of farms taking part reflected the full range of farm businesses we had hoped to see.

The average farm size of those taking part was 739 acres, with 66% growing arable crops, 52% having beef or sheep, and 13% growing field vegetables. There were also a number of

dairy farms, horticulture units, poultry producers and pig producers submitting counts. We are really pleased to get such a variety of interest.

48% of participants are in some form of agri-environment scheme, demonstrating their long-term commitment to environmental management.

40% of participants were providing some form of extra seed feed for birds, either through growing wild bird seed mixes, or by providing additional grain through scatter feeding or via hoppers.

Where were participants from?

Farmers from every county in England took part and there were also responses from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We also had a number of farmers from Austria take part!

Norfolk had by far the most returns, with 145 farmers completing the survey. This was followed by Suffolk with 92, Herefordshire with 63, and Hampshire with 60. Our thanks go out to these counties for their huge support.

Where did people count?

The survey areas included important environmental features such as hedges, woodland ponds, grass margins, ditches and trees. Most survey sites were next to winter cereals, grassland or overwintered stubbles. The features recorded are a good demonstration of the variety of habitats present in farmland across the UK.

