

SPECIES ACTION PLAN : Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

<p>Associated Species Action Plans</p> <p>Black redstart</p> <p>Brown hare</p> <p>Dingy skipper</p> <p>Grey partridge</p> <p>Little ringed plover</p> <p>Orchids</p> <p>Song thrush</p> <p>Tree sparrow</p> <p>Wall brown butterfly</p>	<p>1. Current Status</p> <p>A national decline from 1972 to 1996 of about 75% has been recorded on farmland. Urban “wastelands” in Birmingham and the Black Country are thought to have maintained a constant population of breeding birds but more survey work (e.g. CBC) needs to be undertaken to verify this.</p> <p>2. Current factors affecting species</p> <p>In agricultural land the reduction in population is probably due to agricultural intensification which results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced habitat diversity • reduced nesting opportunities • reduced invertebrate and seed sources <p>due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased use of herbicides and pesticides • sowing of monocultures • increased production of silage • a trend towards autumn sowing of cereals • reduced winter stubbles
<p>Associated Habitat Action Plans</p> <p>Arable Fields</p> <p>Arable Field Margins & Beetle Banks</p> <p>Grassland (all types)</p> <p>Urban “wasteland”</p>	<p>The problem and trends in urban areas are less well understood. More work needs to be undertaken. There may be an association of skylark and the grassland of old landfill sites but this requires research.</p> <p>3. Current Action</p> <p>3.1 Legal Status</p> <p>The skylark does not receive special protection under Schedule 1 of the WCA 1981 but receives general protection in Sections 1-8.</p>

3.2 Management, research and guidance

This species is the subject of the National Farmland CBC and the National Nest Record Scheme. The Birmingham and Black Country Breeding Birds Survey will provide more information, when published.

There exists published guidance for birds on farmland from FWAG, the Game Conservancy Trust, RSPB, BTO and English Nature. No information or relevant guidance exists for skylarks breeding on urban “wastelands”.

New guidance for skylarks in Birmingham and the Black Country needs to develop along the following lines:

- Greenspace required in new developments should, where appropriate, be provided as new commons/ village greens and not as fragments. Part of these commons should be managed by cutting and removing arisings rotationally in August, every 2 years.
- Existing urban commons supporting breeding skylarks should be seeded using a coarse grass mixture.
- A leaflet on managing urban commons for skylarks, including scrub removal, access etc.

4. Action Plan Objectives and Targets

Objective	Target
1 Maintain existing breeding population and range in Birmingham and the Black Country	Ongoing
2 Establish population trends and conservation status.	By 2002
3 Support research into urban skylarks.	Ongoing
4 Increase the breeding population by 20%.	20% increase by 2006
5 Raise public awareness of the species.	Ongoing

5. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.1 Policy and Legislation										
Seek the inclusion of effective measures which protect skylarks and their habitats in the preparation of Unitary Development Plans and/ or other policy documents.	LA's	EN, WT	As UDPs and other policy documents are prepared.							1, 2
Designate urban commons and agricultural set-aside as SINCs if any contain breeding skylarks.	EN	WT, LA's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1, 2
5.2 Site / Species Management and Protection										
Remove scrub on those "commons" where skylarks breed by autumn cutting and removing arisings.	WT	LA's BTCV SRB's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1
Manage access to breeding sites.	LA's	LO's	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	1
5.3 Advisory										
Provide advice to RSPB and other bird organisations about special needs of urban skylark populations.	WT	LCG's		•						3, 5
5.4 Future Research and Monitoring										
Instigate CBC type survey.	LA's	LCG's		•				•	•	2

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.5 Communication and Publicity.										
Prepare and publish leaflet on skylarks in the Black Country.	LA's WT WMBC	Media		•						5
5.6 Links to other Action Plans										
Arable Fields; Arable Field Margins & Beetle Banks; Urban "Wasteland"; Grasslands										

Skylark **Biodiversity Action Plan**

6. Co-ordination and Review

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate and will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods, which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and / or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Biodiversity Steering Group.