



Andy Bosen

Westwood Farm, Norfolk

"If the birds are doing well, this indicates all wildlife on the farm should be doing well too."

STORIES FROM THE FARM

Born and raised

Andy has a special connection with his farm - he was born and raised on the land here.

Birds are a real passion for Andy, he has been recording his sightings on the farm for many years. His ever-growing handwritten list now boasts close to 100 bird species.

Barn owls are a favourite – but sadly disappeared from the farm for five years. Andy was delighted when, this year, barn owls returned and successfully bred.

Andy knows that winters can be tough for farmland birds – so he has been doing what he can to help them to survive on his farm. Alongside growing oats for Jordans, he has also sown a three-hectare field with a special seed mix including red millet, sunflowers, kale and fodder radish. Once they have flowered, these plants 'go to seed', providing a vital food source for farmland birds over winter. On many other farms, increased efficiency has led to a reduction in 'spilt' or lost grain, which has greatly reduced food availability – so Andy is providing an important lifeline for these birds.

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CORN BUNTINGS © TERRY WHITTAKER/2020VISIONPH



BARN OWL © JON HAWKINS SURREY HILLS PHOTOGRAPHY

STORIES FROM THE FARM



Many UK birds have seen dramatic declines: the turtle dove was once common but numbers have dropped by almost 97% in just 20 years, making them the UK's fastest declining bird species. Although they had been seen around Andy's farm, they had not been recorded there.

Andy has created good nesting and feeding habitat for the turtle doves, with an abundance of thick hedgerows and grass strips on the farm, as well as cultivating grassland with a low input of fertiliser, allowing wild plants to flourish. The large number of ponds on Andy's farm also provide a vital water resource for turtle doves raising chicks, which they feed with 'crop milk' (a nutritious milk-like substance that they produce).

With help from his Wildlife Trust farm advisor, Andy has encouraged areas of scrub on the farm and along woodland edges to help boost the number of suitable areas for wildlife. He was delighted when earlier this year, his hard work paid off – a pair of turtle doves were seen feeding on the farm for the first time. Andy hopes that through continued wildlife-friendly management, they will return again next year to breed and raise a brood of turtle dove chicks!