

Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*)



1 Definition

The Grey Partridge was formerly widespread on arable land, as well as on heaths, rough pasture and even sand dunes. It depends on cover around fields for nesting and for providing abundant invertebrates for food. Both have declined through agricultural intensification.

2 Current status

2.1 National

The UK population of Grey Partridge declined by over 50% between 1969 and 1990 to a current estimated 150,000 pairs. Populations in mixed farming areas, especially in the north, seem stable but in more intensively farmed areas such as the south-east the species has declined.

2.2 Local

Now a rather patchy distribution in Suffolk, with concentrations in the Breckland, south-west Suffolk and coastal Suffolk, linked partly (but not exclusively) to light soils.

2.3 Natural Areas

All

3 Current factors affecting Grey Partridge in Suffolk

- Loss of nest sites (such as hedge bottoms) to farm intensification.
- Reduced food supplies and sources for chick food through the use of pesticides and herbicides, as well as the loss of winter stubble feeding grounds for overwintering birds.
- Vulnerability of nests to predators in farmland with poor cover.
- Nest destruction caused by early mowing and other farm operations.

4 Current action

4.1 Legal status

Grey Partridge is protected in the close season in Britain under the Game Acts. It is also listed on Annex III/I of the EC Birds Directive and Appendix III of the Bern Convention.

4.2 Management, research and guidance

- The Game Conservancy Trust (GCT) encourages land managers to create suitable conditions for Grey Partridge, including suitable nest sites and cover, summer and winter feeding areas (eg, conservation headlands and winter stubbles), and control of predators and shooting. Some GCT work occurs in Suffolk.
- A National Species Action Plan has been prepared for this species by the RSPB, EN and the GCT.
- Farmland bird management guidelines for Grey Partridge are widely distributed by RSPB, FWAG and DEFRA.
- Breckland ESA conservation headlands prescription should help Grey Partridges.
- Many landowners seek to encourage Grey Partridges by providing suitable habitat on their land for Game Shooting.
- Many options available in Defra's CSS, including grass margins, conservation headlands and a variety of other arable options should help Grey Partridges. The same is true of the conservation headlands prescription in the Breckland ESA.

5 Action plan objectives and targets

- 1 Maintain the current range of Grey Partridges in Suffolk as measured in the 1993 Provisional Atlas of Breeding Birds in Suffolk.*
- 2 Enhance the current geographical range of Grey Partridge where biologically feasible.*
- 3 Create and maintain suitable habitats for Grey Partridge through agri-environment schemes and landowner liaison.*

6 Grey Partridge: Proposed local action with lead agencies

Action	Date	Partners
POLICY AND LEGISLATION		
Ensure Entry Level and Higher Tier agri-environment schemes contain suitable prescriptions to benefit Grey Partridge on arable land	2004	Defra, RSPB, FWAG, EN
Promote opportunities for tailored management of set-aside land through agri-environment schemes	2007	FWAG, RSPB, SWT
Promote uptake of agri-environment scheme prescriptions that are likely to benefit Grey Partridge.	2007	FWAG, Defra,, RSPB
Ensure compliance with Game acts, annex III/I of EC Birds Directive and Appendix III of Bern Convention by reminding landowners and shoot organisers of relevant legislation.	2007	Defra, RSPB, FWAG
RESEARCH AND MONITORING		
Collate all Grey Partridge records annually and pass records on to SBRC.	On-going	SBRC, GCT, FWAG, SWT, Landowners, RSPB
Undertake survey, encouraging landowner participation to establish Grey Partridge numbers in Suffolk.	2005	SBRC, GCT, FWAG, SWT, Landowners, RSPB, Defra
ADVISORY		
Continue to provide conservation advice to land managers on field margins, set-aside management, etc to benefit Grey Partridge.	2007	FWAG, Defra, RSPB
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY		
Undertake two farm walks per year for farmers and land owners which make reference to Grey Partridge and its habitat requirements.	2007	FWAG, DEFRA, SWT, RSPB