

Table 1: Summary of main agricultural causes of population change for some farmland bird species

Source: RSPB Scotland

Species	Main causes of population change on lowland farms
Grey partridge	Decline caused by pesticides, which affect the survival of chicks by reducing insect populations, and changing hedgerow and field margin management, which reduces habitat for nesting.
Corncrake	Long-term decline caused mainly by early and repeated cutting of forage grasses, destroying nests and young. Conservation measures to delay cutting and provide cover throughout the breeding season have led to population recovery in the core range in Scotland.
Lapwing	Declines caused by the reduction of nesting opportunities and nest success as a result of grassland intensification, loss of spring cropping, and the timing and frequency of agricultural operations in remaining spring-sown fields. High densities of generalist predators (crows and foxes) may limit the effectiveness of interventions to preserve habitats.
Skylark	Decline caused by loss of nesting and foraging opportunities in dense, autumn-sown crops, coupled with high rates of nest loss in intensive grass silage systems.
Chough	Causes of long-term population fluctuations are not fully understood, but intensifying or abandoning grazing management of coastal grasslands may have contributed to declines by reducing the availability of soil invertebrates, which, in turn, affects survival, especially of birds in their first year.
Corn bunting	A decline of mainland populations has been caused by herbicide use, efficient harvesting, and loss of spring cropping reducing the availability of weedy, grain-rich over-winter stubbles, as well as the effects of more intensively managed arable and grassland on insects that chicks rely on for food. These effects are compounded by the impacts of earlier cereal harvesting and repeated silage cutting on nests. On the Western Isles, where cereal sowings are exceptionally late and agrochemical inputs very limited, corn buntings nest very successfully in dune grassland. Here declines are being driven by early harvesting and baling cereals as arable silage, which removes the over-winter grain source.