



**Yorkshire**  
Wildlife Trust



**GROUND  
NEST FEST**

Guide to Yorkshire's

# GROUND- NESTING BIRDS



[ywt.org.uk/ground-nest-fest](http://ywt.org.uk/ground-nest-fest)



[ywt.org.uk](http://ywt.org.uk)



**Driving nature's recovery in Yorkshire**

# A ground-nesting bird, as the name suggests, is one which lays its eggs in a nest made on the ground.



Curlew nest (Beth Thomas), hidden amongst vegetation.

There are surprisingly many species that nest in this way. They typically choose habitats such as open grassland, meadow and moorland to nest. Whilst some species are year-round residents, many arrive only for the breeding season – typically between 1st March and 31st July. The Yorkshire Dales is an important home for these birds during this time.

You have likely never seen a ground nest, because they are expertly camouflaged. Their ability to blend in helps to keep eggs and chicks safe from predators but also means people and dogs might not know they are nearby.



Cover image: Red grouse, Ben Hall/2020VISION

## Which birds nest on the ground?

Many different types of bird nest on the ground, including waders, songbirds, raptors, gamebirds and waterfowl. In the Yorkshire Dales, familiar ground-nesting birds include curlew, oystercatcher, skylark, ring-ouzel, hen harrier and short-eared owl.



### Waders

Curlew  
Oystercatcher  
Snipe  
Redshank  
Lapwing  
Golden plover



### Songbirds

Skylark  
Ring ouzel  
Meadow pipit



### Raptors

Hen harrier  
Short-eared owl  
Merlin

## Why do some birds nest on the ground?

Long grass, and thick scrub can help hide eggs and chicks from predators, especially those flying overhead.

Nesting on the ground makes it easier for both parents and chicks to find food nearby.

In places like moorland, trees are largely absent. Making their nest on the ground is the only available option.

Some chicks are ready to move soon after hatching, and being on the ground helps them explore, feed, or reach water more easily.



# Our Yorkshire landscapes are an important place for ground-nesting birds

The Yorkshire uplands and surrounding farmland are strongholds for iconic ground-nesting birds, such as lapwing and curlew, that make the county their summer home. Our landscape provides ideal nesting habitat and a rich supply of insects, including earthworms, dung beetles and caterpillars, to feed newly hatched chicks.

Summer visitors, and residents alike, typically breed between 1st March and 31st July, with some species nesting as early as February.

There are several signs that the breeding season is about to begin or is already well under way. The bubbling call of the curlew returns, signalling the arrival of spring. Male lapwings perform dramatic aerial displays to impress females and establish territory, while snipes can be heard drumming as part of their courtship displays.



MARGARET HOLLAND

Ring ouzel



DANNY GREEN/2020VISION

Short-eared owl



FERGUS GILL/2020VISION

Redshank

**“The Yorkshire uplands are strongholds for iconic ground-nesting birds.”**





# Ground-nesting bird supporter

## Why do the ground-nesting birds need our help?

Although a common sight in our landscape, several ground-nesting species such as the lapwing, and particularly the curlew, face an uncertain future as their numbers are in steep decline.

They are affected by a range of stressors including disturbance by people/dogs, loss of habitat, increase in predation and changes to habitat management.

Across Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, we are working hard to protect our wildlife, including ground-nesting birds. Our habitat management efforts—such as peatland restoration and landscape-scale recovery projects—are already helping to improve conditions for species like golden plover and curlew.

We also work in partnership with farmers and local landowners to make positive changes, including protection and restoration of wetland areas, to better support ground-nesting birds across Yorkshire.

## Farmer spotlight

### Lawkland Hall Farm

Lawkland Hall Farm is a 172-hectare working dairy farm, ran by tenant farmers Pete and Rona Webster. With support from RSPB, they are managing their farm in wader-friendly ways. The farm has maximised an already damp, low lying area by removing historic drains, re-wetting and creating scrapes. This has created a wetland haven for wading birds namely Curlew, Snipe, Lapwing, Oystercatcher and Redshank. It is a great demonstration of how commercial farming can sit alongside nature.



Pete and Rona Webster outside their public-access bird-hide.

## What can you do to help our ground-nesting birds?

There are several actions we can all take to make a positive difference and support our ground-nesting birds in Yorkshire.

**Alert** Be alert for signs of ground-nesting birds, such as distressed or disturbed parent birds.

**Avoid** Actively avoid areas where ground-nesting birds are present during the breeding season.

**Always** Always keep your dog on a short lead during the breeding season (31<sup>st</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> July) and when livestock are present.

**Away** If you enter an area where ground-nesting birds are present, move away as quickly as possible.

**Awareness** Raise awareness of ground-nesting birds among other visitors to the Dales.

How about putting up a poster in your local area to spread the message?



# We are protecting their habitats

Ground-nesting birds use an array of habitats including **peatland**, **heathland**, **grassland** and **farmland**. The two flagship upland programmes of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust work across this array of habitats and try to improve these spaces for wildlife, including ground-nesting birds.



Peatland



Heathland



Grassland



Farmland





## Wild Ingleborough

Wild Ingleborough is a landscape-scale partnership project, working to restore habitats across the 1300-hectare Ingleborough National Nature Reserve.

Due to many decades of heavy sheep grazing, wildlife has declined across the site but is clinging on in fragmented pockets. Through targeted interventions such as peat restoration, sensitive woodland creation and conservation grazing with hardy native cattle, the soil is regenerating and vegetation is making a comeback – the better to support diverse insect and invertebrate populations, and consequently, the birds that live here. Our land management aims to improve habitats for several species of ground-nesting birds that are present here in small numbers, such as curlew, ring ouzel and black grouse.

In addition to our work on the National Nature Reserve, we are working together with farmers and landowners in the wider area to create a nature-rich landscape, which benefits wildlife, nature and our communities.

## Yorkshire Peat Partnership

Since 2009, Yorkshire Peat Partnership has been working to restore and conserve upland peat to ensure the long-term future of these unique and valuable habitats. To achieve this they work with landowners, contractors, keepers, agents and farmers across the Yorkshire Dales, Nidderdale National Landscape, North York Moors National Park and areas of the South Pennines.

Up to 80% of peatland in North Yorkshire's uplands have been damaged in some way. Hundreds of thousands of meters of drainage channels have been cut, with wide-scale erosion. YPP is blocking up these channels to rewet our peatlands, and by replanting native bog vegetation, we stabilise the peat and protect it from erosion. These changes allow important food species like cranefly to thrive, supporting the food web. It provides shelter for invertebrates that ground-nesting birds, like golden plover need to feed. The vegetation also provides important cover for ground-nesting birds to hide or nest.

Ground-nesting birds are given high consideration by YPP, even their logo is of a golden plover, a peatland resident. They also conduct their restoration work over the winter to avoid breeding bird season, avoiding disturbing those that use these areas to nest.



# Ground-nesting bird fact file

Learn more about the different ground-nesting birds found in Yorkshire, including species that make their home in Wild Ingleborough and the peatlands we've helped to restore.

How many of these species have you already seen?

Did you know that they nest on the ground?



**Lapwing**

This striking bird, recognisable by its long black crest, favours farmland for nesting. In spring, males perform eye-catching flying displays to attract females. You may hear its distinctive "peewit" call before you see it.



**Meadow pipit**

This small songbird favours moorland and grassland, finding space within dense vegetation to make its cup-shaped nest. Whilst only small, the males make themselves known by singing loudly and performing a parachute display flight.



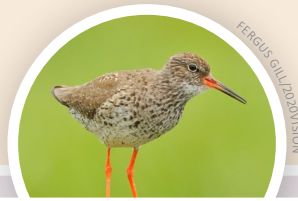
**Hen harrier**

This rare bird of prey is suited to upland moors and makes its nest amongst areas of dense heather. Distinguished by their white rump, they fly low across the moors preying on small birds and mammals.



**Snipe**

Listen out for the 'drumming' sound of a male snipe as it performs its aerial courtship display. It's not a call, but actually its tail feathers beating in the wind. Snipe live on wet grassland, marshes and moorlands throughout the UK.



**Redshank**

The redshank lives up to its name as it sports distinctive long, bright red legs! It feeds and breeds on marshes, mudflats, mires and saltmarshes. Look out for it posing on a fence post or rock.



**Golden plover**

Residing in upland moorlands in summer it nests on open ground among heather and grass. They are rather shy and wary making them difficult to spot over breeding season.





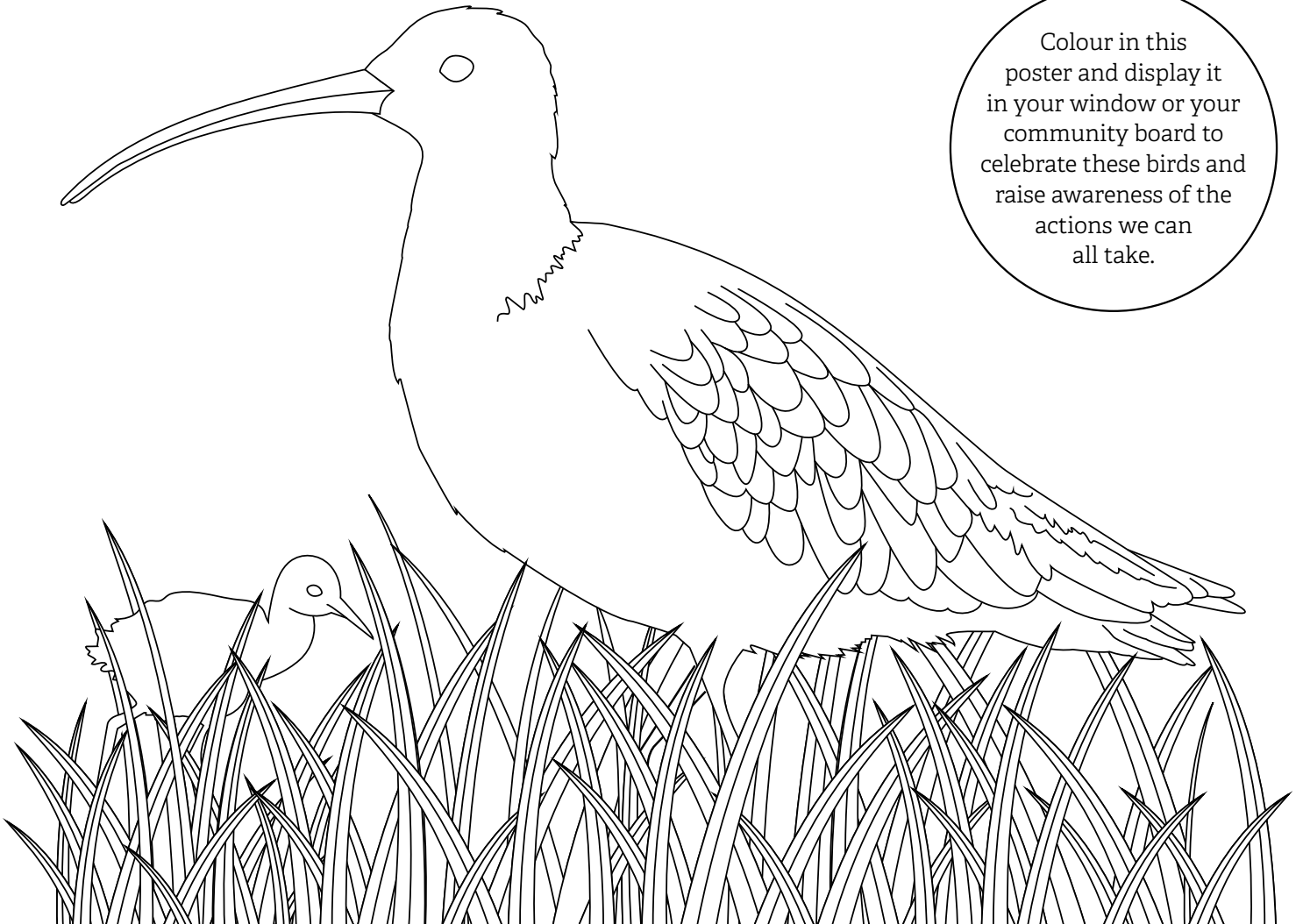
Colour in this poster and display it in your window or your community board to celebrate these birds and raise awareness of the actions we can all take.



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# ATTENTION!



Colour in this poster and display it in your window or your community board to celebrate these birds and raise awareness of the actions we can all take.

## Ground nesting birds present

Between March and July



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Please keep your dogs on short leads and keep to paths to protect our ground nesting birds.



# Wordsearch



Can you find all these ground-nesting birds?



I C M E R L I N W H E A T E A R V L  
V C O S H O R T E A R E D O W L H Q  
B L A C K G R O U S E H E N P U P J  
R B O Y S T E R C A T C H E R M I W  
X F O M E A D O W P I P I T Z G N S  
G O L D E N P L O V E R N F M I P K  
S Q N X H I D X E Y L A P W I N G Y  
N K N L Z R I N G O U Z E L D V P L  
I E Y O F R E D S H A N K A F R U A  
P Y O H E N H A R R I E R D W N T R  
E J P K I L H U C U R L E W L X J K  
G C Z R C N K A R E D G R O U S E H

Curlew

Merlin

Wheatear

Lapwing

Hen Harrier

Black Grouse

Snipe

Short-eared Owl

Red Grouse

Redshank

Skylark

Oystercatcher

Golden Plover

Meadow Pipit

Ring Ouzel





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# Help create a **Wildier Yorkshire!** Join us today.

Our members are wildlife heroes. They help us to bring species back from the brink of extinction, give Yorkshire's wildlife a powerful voice in government and inspire future generations to care for our amazing wild places.

**Will you join them?**



Visit [ywt.org.uk/membership](https://ywt.org.uk/membership), scan the QR code or call us on 01904 659570 to discover the great benefits of being a member, and get your welcome pack on its way!