



GLAS Actions for Farmland Birds

In recognition of the threat posed to farmland birds by modern farming practices, the Green Low-carbon Agri-environmental Scheme (GLAS) provides a range of tailored measures to protect and increase their numbers.

Tailored GLAS measures encouraged farmers to manage their lands to provide foraging and nesting sites for endangered breeds such as Breeding Waders, Chough, Curlew, Corncrake, Geese, Swans, Grey Partridge, Hen Harrier, and Twite another measure which encouraged the growing of specific crops to act as cover and feed for birds included Wild Bird Cover.

GLAS Target Species Payment Rates:

*All images below are sourced from [Birdwatch Ireland](#).

The objective is to maintain and increase the success of breeding birds by halting habitat loss and enhancing habitat availability and suitability. The decline in bird populations is mainly due to the loss of habitat, primarily due to the intensification of agriculture and afforestation land, which, in turn, has led to an increase in predation rates.

- **Breeding Waders: €366/ha/year**

National and regional numbers of Breeding Waders have suffered severe declines over recent years, in particular:

Lapwing:



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

Dunlin



National Rural Network



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

Red Shank



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)



National Rural Network

Golden Plover



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](https://www.birdwatchireland.org/)

Snipe



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](https://www.birdwatchireland.org/)

- Chough: €365/ha/year



National Rural Network

Chough



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

- Corncrake: €364/ha/year

Corncrake



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)



National Rural Network

- Curlew: €366/ha/year

Curlew



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

- Geese and Swans: €205/ha/year

Ireland hosts a significant proportion of the European populations of Geese and Swans. GLAS aims to promote the production of a grass sward to feed overwintering geese and swans, including:

Whooper Swan





National Rural Network



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

Greenland White Front Goose



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

Barnacle Goose



National Rural Network



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](https://www.birdwatchireland.org/)

Brent Goose





National Rural Network



GREEN
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

- Grey Partridge: €2.10/m/year

Grey Partridge



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

- Hen Harrier: €370/ha/year

Hen Harrier



National Rural Network



AMBER
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

- Twite A: €375/ha/year

Twite



National Rural Network



RED
CONSERVATION STATUS

Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](https://www.birdwatchireland.org/)

GLAS Targeted Habitat, Nesting and Forage Area Payment Rates:

- Arable Grass Margins (3m): €0.35/m/year
- Arable Grass Margins (4m): €0.50/m/year
- Arable Grass Margins (6m): €0.70/m/year
- Bird Boxes: €6/box/year
- Commonage Management Plan: €120/year
- Twite B: €1.50/m/year
- Twite C: €900/ha/year
- Wild bird cover: €900/ha/year

The Grey Partridge



Image source: [Birdwatch Ireland](#)

There are two native game birds in Ireland, the grey partridge, and the red grouse, and both are now classified as red-listed birds of conservation concern. In the late 1990s, the grey partridge population was on the verge of extinction, falling to approximately 20 birds nationwide.

The National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) began the Grey Partridge Conservation Project at Boora by purchasing 600 acres from Bord na Mona in 2006, 400 acres of which were cultivated to support the birds. In addition to the ongoing conservation efforts from NPWS, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPSW), designed and targeted the measures that were included in the GLAS scheme.

We recently spoke with farmer Joe Molloy, who implemented the Grey Partridge measure on his farm under GLAS 1. His GLAS planner and Agricultural Consultant Michael Martyn and Kieran Buckley, his local wildlife ranger with the NPWS, were also present.

Joe informed us that he had previously been involved with the NPWS on the Boora Project in west Offaly, where much of the early lessons towards Grey Partridge Conservation were learned.

"While fencing off a 12-metre margin along my field boundaries seemed like a lot of area to set aside from a production point of view, I realised that there is always room for nature, and I can still manage my Dairy enterprise efficiently without affecting the production of the cows."

Joe was milking 100 cows on an 83-acre grazing platform. According to his advisor Michael Martin, farmers in the area broadly welcome the scheme measure "They saw the success of the Boora Project and accept the need to preserve the Grey Partridge."

Under the GLAS scheme Grey Partridge measure, a farmer must establish a 12m margin consisting of either: 4m (grass) and 8m (Grey Partridge Mix or 3m (grass) and 9m (Grey Partridge Mix) along an entire length of an existing field boundary. The minimum length that must be undertaken per GLAS contract is 500 metres.



The grass mix must consist of 70% Cocksfoot, and 30% timothy at a grass seed rate of 15kg/ha. The Grey Partridge Mix must consist of Triticale, Kale Lucerne, Perennial Chicory, and Fodder Radish.

The management regime for 8*metre Grey Partridge Mix is as follows:

Year 1: Establish the 8-metre Grey Partridge Mix

Year 2: Leave the entire 8-metre Grey Partridge Mix in situ

Year 3: Re-establish 4 metres of the 8-metre Grey Partridge Mix, leaving 4 metres in situ

Year 4: Re-establish the first 4-metres of the 8-metre Grey Partridge Mix, leaving 4 metres in situ

Year (subsequent years): Follow the rotation as outlined above.

The management regime for the 4* metre grass margin is as follows:

Year 1: Establish the 4-metre grass margin. Top/ mulch if required.

Year 2: Top/ mulch after August 31st and before January 15th.

Year 3: Leave-in situ

Year (subsequent years): Follow the rotation as outlined above (Year 2 & Year 3)

Joe sowed a four-metre grass strip of Cocksfoot and Timothy along an entire field boundary. The grass strip was bounded by an eight-metre strip of Grey Partridge seed mix; this provides feed for young chicks.

The 12m must be fenced off to exclude livestock from the habitat; the fence must be maintained and restored throughout the scheme's duration. Wildlife ranger Kieran Buckley explained, "The grass strips provide an ideal nesting area for the Grey Partridge, while the feed strip provides cover and encourages insect populations which is the sole feed for the chicks in their early lives."

According to the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, there has been a significant uptake of the farmland bird measures, with 163 applications for the Grey Partridge measure alone. The measure will result in the minimum establishment of 500 metres/ participating farm leading to over 81.5km of habitat margin.

Birdwatch Ireland has broadly welcomed the Grey Partridge initiative under GLAS. Dr. Alex Copeland of Birdwatch Ireland (2018) said: "Overall, the RDP initiatives to protect the farmland

birds are very encouraging. We are confident that over time there will be a significant and visible increase in bird numbers, especially the endangered species".

Source: NRN, (2018; Reviewed 2021)