

# Acknowledgements

Throughout the process of compiling this book, many individuals have helped us for which we are very grateful. We would like to give a special mention to a few who have gone beyond the call of duty:

First, our thanks go to David Williams for his genius as a wildlife photographer, his expertise in the layout of this book and his infinite patience with the year-long edits required;

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John Strowger for running the Pied Flycatcher nest box scheme for so many years;

Ben Hay, one of Anthony's oldest and dearest friends, for poring over the copy (and the Latin names) with a fine toothcomb;

and finally to Amanda Anderson and Robert Benson of the Moorland Association and Stuart Housden of the RSPB whose kind dedications emphasise Anthony's commitment and love for Barningham's wildlife.

The Milbank Family  
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Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

# A Wild Life

Through the seasons on an upland estate

Anthony Milbank

# Foreword

What is a countryman? Someone at one with nature who revels in all its mystery. Someone who deeply observes the seasons and their shifting wildlife and behaviour and is alarmed at changes that are detrimental to nature’s rich tapestry. Anthony Milbank was one of these highly observant and informed custodians of our countryside.

Viewing these stunning images through his proud eyes ensures that everyone else will understand the importance of management decisions and ongoing action to ensure that generations to come will enjoy it all too. With his long-term vision, The Barningham Estate is bucking the UK trends of decline for so many precious and vulnerable species captured so beautifully in this book. Habitats safeguarded and recreated, not lost; traditional land used sensitively, keeping pace with modern life.

It is hard to choose a favourite picture from such a visual feast, but the two Black Grouse lekking on page 20 is stunning and represents a conservation success story repeated across the upland estates Anthony so skilfully brought together when he formed the Moorland Association. All but a few of the English Black Grouse populations are found adjacent to moors managed for Red Grouse, joining so many other thriving ground-nesting birds such as Merlin, Curlew and Lapwing that benefit from the gamekeepers’ work to conserve the Red Grouse.

Robert Benson  
Chairman  
Moorland Association

# Foreword

People who love birds, and the special landscapes where they live, have a common bond. Anthony Milbank positively delighted in nature and shared his knowledge and passion with everyone he met.

I had the good fortune to meet Anthony in the early 1990s and we ‘clicked’. So, when I was planning the annual outing of the RSPB’s Council of Trustees, I asked him if he would be so kind as to allow us to visit Barningham, to showcase how a well conducted estate benefited moorland habitats and many important bird species. Anthony and Belinda could not have been more welcoming and the occasion was a great success. From there, Anthony rapidly became a part of the RSPB’s Council, where his wisdom, knowledge and charm contributed to our work most effectively. Anthony always listened to the evidence, timed his interventions skilfully and sought opportunities to build closer working relationships between different interests. All for the common good of birds, conservation and the people who manage the land.

Anthony’s enthusiasm for the Uplands, and his generosity in sharing what had been achieved at Barningham under his stewardship was limitless. As this superbly written and illustrated book so eloquently demonstrates, you can almost hear the bubbling Curlews, imagine the male Redstart singing from the top of a hawthorn in flower, or see the heather in full August bloom buzzing with bumblebees.

The story is one that resonates strongly. We must all reflect and learn from it, to ensure our uplands remain in good heart for the future.

Stuart Housden  
Executive Director  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



Sir Anthony Milbank Bt.

In 1978 Sir Anthony inherited Barningham Park and Estate, home to the Milbank Family since 1690. He started his tenure as a full-time working farmer guided by his farm manager. He relished the manual labour and bargaining at the auction marts with the local Dales farmers, notorious for their dry wit. Anthony, too, loved to tell a story but found it hard to deliver the punch line without laughing helplessly at his own joke. His humour and enthusiasm were boundless, captivating everyone he met.

As Anthony gained knowledge of the uplands, conservation became his passion and he set about transforming the Estate into a beacon of environmental stewardship. He blocked up drainage grips and dammed streams to create wetlands and ponds. He planted miles of double hedges, replaced conifer plantations with native trees, restored wild flower meadows and planted site-specific woodland on the moorland fringe suitable for Black Grouse. The wildlife has thrived.

Anthony was a true countryman, never happier than walking about the estate with a posse of spaniels at his heel and always having time for a chat with a farmer or a walker he encountered on the way. Anthony believed the upkeep of beautiful heather landscapes went well beyond keeping them in optimum condition for wild Red Grouse. Many of the country’s rare and endangered ground-nesting birds thrive on land carefully managed for shooting with higher densities of Golden Plover, Curlew, Redshank and Lapwing existing on managed grouse moors, compared to un-keepered moorland.

Anthony’s aim was to achieve a farmed, sporting nature reserve and his successful management won him the Joseph Nickerson Heather Award in 1988, beating 60 other entrants. He also won third place in the Laurent Perrier Award for Wild Game Conservation 1989.

In 1986 Anthony, together with Earl Peel and Martin Gillibrand founded the organisation that was to become the Moorland Association, of which Anthony served as the first chairman for 15 years. The Association very quickly found itself representing the interests of the majority of owners of moorland in England and Wales. He also encouraged his head keeper, Alan Edwards, to form the association which became the National Gamekeepers’ Organisation.

In 1992 Anthony was invited to the board of the Nature Conservancy Council and later the Council of the RSPB. He was the first large landowner and is the only grouse moor owner to have sat on the RSPB Council. His diplomacy resulted in being invited

back for a second 5 year term (1993 – 1998, 2006 – 2011). Many RSPB Council members have visited Barningham to see how the Estate produces such large numbers of breeding waders and rarities such as Ring Ouzel, Cuckoo, Pied Flycatcher, Merlin, Blackcap and several species of Owl.

Anthony became chairman of the Country Landowners’ Association, Durham and Cleveland branch, in 1990, and then served on the National Executive; he was a President of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust; he founded and chaired the Northern Uplands Moorland Regeneration Project; he chaired the Governors of Aysgarth School and was a Governor of Barnard Castle School. He served as High Sheriff of Durham and DL for North Yorkshire.

Anthony lived a life full of adventure and often found himself in perilous situations. He was a passionate skier, and spent several weeks each winter climbing Alpine peaks and ski touring. One winter, participating in the Beat Fopp Cowbell Ski Marathon in Klosters he caught an edge on a mountain pass and fell, breaking three vertebrae in his neck. Staggering to his feet he completed the race. This was one of several near death experiences for which he became well known. Another, whilst venturing alone on foot from a camp in Kenya, armed only with a pair of binoculars, he was charged and tossed into an acacia bush by a buffalo bull. Remarkably the buffalo did not return to kill him, as would be expected, and he scrambled back to camp bruised and bleeding. To Anthony’s delight it was agreed that as Tsavo was home to the buffalo and he was only a visitor, the buffalo would not be destroyed.

After retiring from managing Barningham Estate Anthony embarked on a new career as a writer. He had many articles published in a variety of magazines, most notably his recollections in The Field.

Anthony commissioned this book to celebrate the remarkable birds and wildlife at Barningham. In his last year during a battle with cancer, Anthony worked with the wildlife photographer David Williams and derived immense pleasure directing him around the estate, admiring the resulting photographs and writing the text. Anthony never saw the final copy but we feel it is a fitting tribute to his lifetime of dedication to wildlife and conservation.

The Milbank Family  
July 2017



Photograph courtesy of Bonnie Durrance

“I know I am a very fortunate person. I was born into a privileged position and I am steward of a large chunk of beautiful countryside. I am aware of my good fortune. And of my responsibility” Anthony Milbank



Photograph courtesy of Eddie Ryle Hodges



Barningham and Holgate Estate

Barningham and Holgate Estate consists of some 7,000 acres on the Northern edge of the Yorkshire Dales. At its highest point, it rises to 1,500 feet above sea level dropping South into Helwith Beck and North into the River Greta, one of the most beautiful rivers in the country. The vegetation ranges from blanket bog with its deep peat, through dry heather moorland, upland pasture, hay meadows, mixed woodland and steep river banks.

The Yorkshire Dales are famous for their dry stone walls and old hedgerows; Barningham is no exception. Many of the boundaries are the result of the 1805 Enclosure Award, and are now important landscape features. The Deer Park wall was built in the 1860s. The stone came from a quarry at the far end of the Park Wood. The wall is two miles long and, in most places, eight foot high. It took three years to extract the stone, cut it, transport it by horse and cart and then build it. Like the Forth Bridge, the walls and hedgerows are in constant need of repair.

Wetland conservation areas, lakes and ponds scattered about the estate add to the interest and are one of the reasons why there is such a wide variety of wildlife and plants to be found here during the course of the year. The secret, of course, is careful management.

Apart from grouse shooting, which takes place on up to 4,000 acres of the higher heather moorland area, farming for sheep and cattle is the principle activity. This is undertaken by six tenant farmers and most of their activities are controlled either by their tenancy agreements or by government environmental schemes. We are major producers of meat with more than 600 head of cattle and 6,000 breeding ewes.

The 500 acres of forestry are being developed and diversified with a view to increasing the production of quality timber and to increase the estate's biomass business, which involves selling dried wood chip to biomass boilers installed in the region.

There is some limited roe deer shooting at various times of the year as well as wild brown trout fishing in the River Greta and the little becks rushing down from the moor. Rough shooting for wild pheasants, rabbits and duck take place in the rushy, wetter pastures below the moor.

The estate manages some 25 houses and 100 agricultural buildings. Some of these are farm houses, others house retired staff, and the rest are brought up to quality condition and let either as holiday cottages or on longer lets to people attracted to the area. The old coach house has been turned into a series of units, taken as offices for businesses. Currently these include an artisan bakery, a haberdashery and an artist's studio. The unusual Milbank Arms is one of very few examples of an old fashioned pub having no bar but highly exotic cocktails.

The main House is a mainly Georgian, Grade II\* Hall, with 13th Century fortified farmhouse origins and Victorian additions. It is surrounded by wide sweeps of lawn, a 17th century terrace, a ha-ha, and an Ice House in the ancient woodland behind the house. A rockery and water garden, with pools and waterfalls, is fed by its own piped system from a stream over a mile away up on the Low Moor. The house has been owned by the Milbank family since 1690.

With the help of David Williams, a professional photographer, we have set about recording a year on Barningham Estate to illustrate how man and nature intertwine to create this wonderful place.

Anthony Milbank  
AD 2015/6





# Gamekeepers

Traditional grouse shooting is highly sought after by sportsmen from all over the world, providing an important income for estates where farming options are limited. It is also very enjoyable for everyone involved in the day (and their dogs) and it helps us to finance conservation projects.

A major contribution to the success of ground-nesting birds is the work of the gamekeepers; particularly during the Spring, when predator numbers must be contained. It is a well-established fact that many other species of vulnerable ground-nesting birds on and around moors managed for grouse shooting benefit from this management too.

The gamekeepers also concentrate on ensuring that the habitat is best suited to the needs of game birds. Heather, being the main source of food for the Red Grouse, requires restoration by the burning of small patches in Winter when it gets too long. This keeps plenty of the regrowth young and vigorous thereby providing food for a healthy surplus of young birds.

A gamekeeper's role is also to be a permanent form of land policeman ensuring that dogs are kept on a lead during the nesting season. They organise and run the grouse shoots and the very popular Cocker Spaniel and Labrador Field Trials on the low ground.

Grouse shooting is a time-honoured sport of centuries. A well-managed grouse shoot ensures the long-term survival of the species as it is strictly controlled and a sustainable breeding stock is always maintained.

Gamekeepers and ferreters are responsible for the control of rabbits and grey squirrels. Rabbits cause a huge amount of damage, particularly in newly planted woods. The rabbits will decimate young trees, often ring barking and killing older trees as well, especially in snow. Nipping the leader or young branches of a tree or shrub will ruin the shape and “shock” the tree to such an extent that it will lose a whole year's growth.

Equally damaging are the non-native grey squirrels which eat the bark of mid aged broadleaf trees, causing irreparable harm. They are also very effective egg and chick thieves in the spring, and have driven out the red squirrels from our part of the world. As spring approaches the fewer grey squirrels around the better.

Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)





Habitat

The Estate is well known for its very wide assemblage of birds, mainly as a result of the varying habitats within it. To make the estate more diversified for wildlife we have created a series of small lakes, ponds and wetland areas.

‘The Bog’, below Low Lane, is a 7 acre natural wetland where the field drains have been blocked and a series of dams built, allowing the water to form small pools and runners down to a larger stretch of open water. This area is now a haven for many different species of wildfowl and waders. We even had a Bittern living there for a while.

Larger dams on moorland becks have flooded two valleys and established beautiful natural lakes at Cow Close and Scaleknoll, which are very popular throughout the year for Geese, Mallard, Teal, Tufted Duck and Black-headed Gulls.

For birdlife the North Wood wetland area has been the most successful for numbers and variety of duck and waders. Here, the rushy pasture is flooded with shallow water and the tenant farmer is paid to leave the surrounding fields free of stock during the nesting season. In 2016 over 50 Snipe were counted feeding in the shallows.

The Estate’s woodland is comprised of two large areas of ancient woodland and many smaller blocks of mixed conifer and broadleaf. North Wood, on the banks of the River Greta, was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest

(SSSI), being one of the few remaining naturally regenerating deciduous woodlands in this part of the country. The ash, oak, birch, hazel and sycamore attract many birds in the Spring.

We have a particularly beautiful gill on the edge of Holgate Moor and it became a passion to try to reintroduce the deciduous woodland that was being prevented from regenerating by a combination of sheep and rabbits. It is a common concern that these beautiful gills on the edge of the moorland have become denuded of the juniper, yew, oak and ash which used to thrive there. The woods are now maturing with an interesting variety of tree species and the gill is returning to its natural woodland state.

Scrub is an asset in its place and should be recognised as a valuable part of the rich diversity of our countryside. The estate has many areas of scrub which are encouraged by management: scrubby woodland is coppiced and provides glades for wild flowers, birds and butterflies. Gorse is also encouraged and planted providing a wonderful protective habitat for birds. Scrubby bogs are kept wet by controlling the water table, cutting reeds and clearing channels.

We are privileged to have enough land to be able to set aside large areas exclusively for habitat preservation, and the estate is all the more wonderful for it.

Birds of Conservation Concern

The UK’s birds can be split into three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green - where red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green. This information is based on the December 2015 update (Eaton, M.E., Aebischer, N.J., Brown, A.F., Hearn, R.D., Lock, L., Musgrove, A.J., Noble, D.G., Stroud, D.A. and Gregory, R.D. (2015). Birds of conservation concern 4: the population status of birds in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. British Birds 108: 708-746).

The species listed below are all known either to occur and/or breed on the Estate - the asterisks denoting listed species that have been among the 90+ species photographed during the production of this volume.

Red List

Black Grouse\*  
Cuckoo\*  
Curlew\*  
Fieldfare\*  
Grey Partridge\*  
Grey Wagtail\*  
Hen Harrier  
Herring Gull\*  
House Sparrow\*  
Lapwing\*  
Linnet\*  
Marsh Tit

Merlin  
Mistle Thrush\*  
Pied Flycatcher\*  
Redpoll\*  
Redwing\*  
Ring Ouzel\*  
Skylark\*  
Song Thrush\*  
Spotted Flycatcher\*  
Starling\*  
Tree Sparrow\*  
Woodcock

Amber List

Barnacle Goose\*  
Black-headed Gull\*  
Bullfinch\*  
Common Gull  
Common Sandpiper\*  
Crossbill  
Dipper\*  
Dunlin\*  
Dunnock\*  
Goldeneye  
Green Sandpiper  
Greylag Goose\*  
House Martin\*  
Kestrel\*  
Kingfisher  
Lesser Black-backed Gull  
Mallard\*  
Meadow Pipit\*

Mute Swan  
Osprey  
Oystercatcher\*  
Pintail  
Red Grouse\*  
Redshank\*  
Redstart\*  
Reed Bunting\*  
Shelduck\*  
Short-eared Owl\*  
Snipe\*  
Stock Dove\*  
Stonechat\*  
Swift\*  
Tawny Owl\*  
Teal\*  
Wigeon\*  
Willow Warbler\*



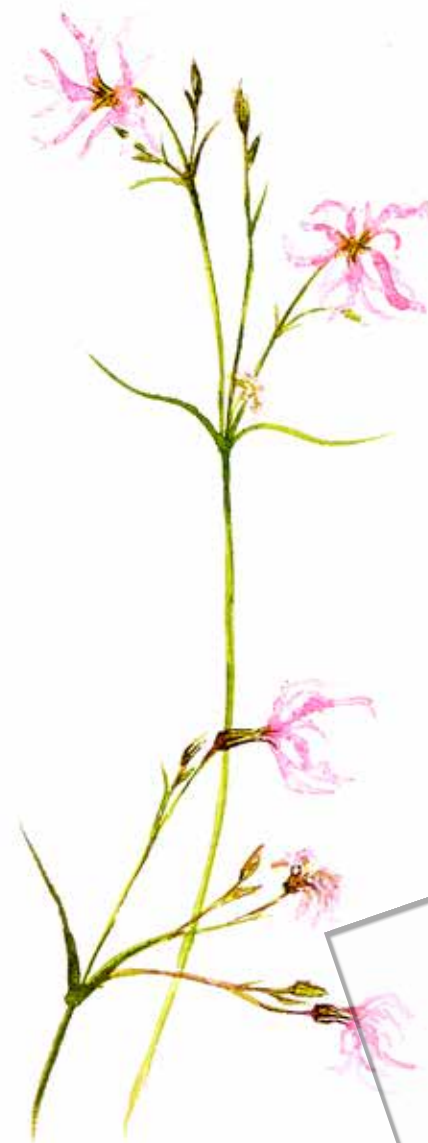
# Spring

March Equinox - June Solstice

Spring starts slowly. The stronger ewe lambs are introduced to the moor unable to believe in their freedom; they dance and frolic in their excitement. Fields are fertilised, harrowed and rolled to prepare for silage and hay for winter feed.

The first signs of birds are the preliminary visits by Curlews and Lapwings. Meadow Pipits and Skylarks join them. Golden Plover drop in and collect in open fields followed by waders from the coast such as Oystercatcher, Redshank and Snipe.

From Northern Africa come Wheatears and Stonechats. Soon the moorland fringes and wet pastures resound to the courting displays and the squabbling over territories. The dark heather softens and greens with new growth.



Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*)

The pastures grow, providing cover for the newly arrived chicks. Mallard, Teal and other ducks are attracted by the muddy edges and lakeside cover; Black-headed Gulls set up nest sites. Geese establish their big nests in the heather and bring their broods down to the lakes in long, single file gaggles.

Most waders leave their nests immediately when danger appears, relying on the mottled eggs to hide the nest. Other species of ground-nesting birds sit tight - relying on the hidden nest site and the camouflage of their feathers. The Red Grouse has the ability to close up all its orifices so that a fox passing by cannot pick up its scent. This deadly competition between the hunter and the hunted is as old as time itself.



Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)







The Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) heralds spring in the uplands with its evocative liquid call. Nesting on extensively managed rough grassland they are vulnerable to predation. The RSPB reported a 64% decline from 2007 - 2014 but they are thriving on moorland managed for Red Grouse. The work of gamekeepers in controlling the numbers of foxes and corvids may be vital in maintaining breeding populations.







The numbers of the iconic Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) are in serious decline in most parts of the UK. The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust carried out a 9 year experiment in Northumberland which showed that controlling the numbers of foxes and Carrion Crows significantly improved the breeding success of Lapwing, Curlew and Golden Plover. It also highlighted the importance of the contribution that grouse moor management makes to otherwise dwindling national populations of waders.





## Black Grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*)

Originally widespread throughout England the Black Grouse has declined dramatically, particularly over the past 20 years, and is now on the Red List of endangered species.

It is estimated that there are now less than 5,000, restricted to the North Pennine hills and, in 1990, with a relic population of lekking Black Grouse, we embarked on a scheme to increase their numbers.

We planted 15 acres of native trees and shrubs with open areas on the edge of the moor. The sheep numbers were limited on the adjacent, overgrazed moorland, which gradually reverted to heather and rough grassland. We now have at least 15 Blackcock and 8 Greyhen so the future for this rare bird is looking more assured.





Black Grouse ♂ (*Tetrao tetrix*)



Black Grouse ♀ (*Tetrao tetrix*)







Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) breed on boggy ground with a mosaic of short damp grass, shallow open water and rush tussocks. These conditions provide perfect nesting cover and insect rich feeding grounds for the chicks.



Redshank caught in late spring snowstorm.





Dippers (*Cinclus cinclus*) adopt a stream-side nest site within their territory which is then used by successive generations of birds. Sometimes the same nest is relined for a second brood.









Pied Flycatchers (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) on the River Greta & Gill Beck

Brignall Banks is a beautiful area covering each side of the River Greta stretching from Greta Bridge right up to Rutherford Bridge beyond Scargill. It has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by English Nature for its wide diversity of birds and plants.

It is also one of the only remaining naturally regenerating woodlands in County Durham. As such it has been attractive to a lovely little bird, the Pied Flycatcher, for as long as anyone can remember. Wintering in tropical Africa it breeds in Europe, favouring open, deciduous woodland where it feeds on insects and caterpillars. The male is a very natty dresser with white underparts and black wings and back, whilst the female is a much less noticeable pale buff.

Nest box schemes have been operating on the Barningham Estate since 1980 as part of a bird-ringing scheme organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The current scheme started in 1997 and is ongoing. The aim is to attract as many breeding birds as possible. This enables the BTO to ascertain migratory habits and whether bird numbers are steady, increasing or declining. Similar schemes operate in other County Durham sites and it has been found that chicks regularly return to breed in a nest box close to the one in which they were reared. Occasionally, they even return to the same nest box.

The chicks are ideally ringed at about 6-8 days old, about half way through their development prior to fledging. This is how the BTO knows, for example, that a chick caught and released here was caught again in the Lake District that same summer. They also know that a female ringed on the 24th September 2000 in Cospeito, N.W. Spain, on its southward migration to Sub-Saharan Africa, was caught on the Greta in 2002. That bird, some five inches long and weighing about 13g, will certainly have flown over 6,000 miles during the course of these two captures alone.

It is estimated that about 17,000 – 20,000 pairs arrive in Britain every year but their numbers are in decline and in 2016 they were placed on the International Red List of Threatened Species. As the table shows, numbers in Gill Beck have been stable over the years.

The nest boxes have also been host to a range of other birds; Nuthatches, Redstarts and Coal Tits for example while Blue Tits and Great Tits are regular users. A Treecreeper has used the same box on two different occasions. Over the twenty years of the Gill Beck scheme 864 Pied Flycatcher chicks have been ringed and released. Isn't it nice to think that one small beautiful part of our Parish can play host to such a wonderful and continuing miracle?

Pied Flycatchers - Summary

Year	Pairs	Chicks	Mean brood size
1997	4	26	6.3
1998	6	57	9.5
1999	8	51	6.4
2000	2	14	7.0
2001	2	12	6.0
2002	7	44	6.3
2003	3	23	7.7
2004	7	39	5.6
2005	6	32	5.3
2006	3	20	6.6
2007	7	51	7.3
2008	8	58	7.3
2009	9	48	6.0
2010	9	66	7.3
2011	10	63	7.0
2012	9	58	6.4
2013	8	43	5.4
2014	9	42	6.0
2015	10	54	6.0
2016	10	63	6.3
Total	138	864	6.3



This female was ringed (Z322216) on the 11th June 2015 (box 4, one of a brood of five) and found (25th May 2016) sitting on 7 eggs in a box within 100 metres of where she was hatched the previous year.



This young Pied Flycatcher hatched from one of the eggs laid by female Z322216 in box 27, and was given ring number L351864 on 13th June 2016.



Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)

There are roughly the same number of these rare, shy birds as there are Black Grouse nesting in the UK – about 7,000 breeding pairs wintering in Iberia and North Africa. We are extraordinarily lucky to have both species at Barningham.

The Ring Ouzel is very sensitive to disturbance and predation and nationally their numbers are declining dramatically. Based on figures from the British Trust for Ornithology numbers fell by 72% from 1991 – 2012.

A specific variety of habitat observed at Barningham is required for successful breeding and includes a mix of grass, heather and burnt heather all close to the nest site.

The chicks first forage for invertebrates in the grass and then move on to the heather and moorland berries.



Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)



Ring Ouzel (*Turdus torquatus*)











Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) are resident in the UK but are joined in winter by birds from Northern Europe. The males can be heard in flight giving their 'drumming' display in the breeding season - as they stoop the wind vibrates through their tail feathers creating the characteristic drumming sound.







Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)







Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)



Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*)



Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*)



Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*)





Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

Unlike many other gulls who come inland more rarely, the Black-headed Gulls set up large colonies on reservoirs and moorland lakes.

They lay up to 4 eggs but, owing to the cold and winds they encounter in the early spring, they seldom fledge more than one or two.

They can be seen quartering the moors or travelling longer distances down to arable fields searching for insects, small mammals or nestlings. They return to regurgitate their find to the awaiting chicks.



Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*)



Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)

Great Black-backed Gulls are dominant predators and will eat almost anything they can swallow. Inland, they patrol the moorland fringe searching for the eggs and fledglings of ground-nesting birds. They also hunt and kill both juvenile and adult birds in flight or on the ground.

Herring Gulls are also scavengers, stealing the eggs and young of other birds and robbing Plovers and Lapwings of their catches. Despite increasing numbers in urban situations their population has decreased by 50% in 25 years and they are now on the RSPB Red List of threatened species.





**Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)**

Although positively no oysters here, some Oystercatchers come inland to breed. These birds benefit from the lack of predators on managed moorland and often nest in patches of burnt heather or on shingle near the wetlands.

At the coast they feed on mussels and cockles and inland mainly on worms and insect larvae.





Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)



Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)



The Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) migrates from the tropical forests of the Congo and Angola and lays its eggs in the nests of other birds particularly Dunnock, Meadow Pipit, Song Thrush and Reed Bunting (next page).

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)



Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)





Redstart ♂ (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)



Reed Bunting ♂ (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)



Redstart ♀ (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*)



Reed Bunting ♀ (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)



Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)







Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)



Common Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*)



Red Campion (*Silene dioica*)



Lesser Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*)



Wild Pansy (*Viola tricolor*)



Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*)



Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*)



Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*)



Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*)



Bog Cotton (*Eriophorum angustifolium*)





Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)



Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)



Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)





Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)



Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)



Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)



Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)





Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)



Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) in breeding plumage. In Spring and Summer they inhabit upland moorland and then congregate in large flocks before moving to lowland fields for the Winter.







Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*) rely on heather moorland but, in the last 50 years, there has been a dramatic loss of this habitat owing to commercial forestry, overgrazing and a reduction in gamekeeping. The UK is responsible for 75% of the world's heather moorland, which contains 18 bird species of European or International importance (GWCT). As such it is a vital resource, and heavily reliant on the continued management on upland estates.







Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)



Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*)

The Yellowhammer is a farmland bird typically associated with hedgerows and herbaceous field margins. It is dependent on seeds and insects and its 50% decline in the UK over the last 25 years is likely to be related to food availability.

Agricultural intensification, the removal of hedges, increased use of pesticides and herbicides and the loss of winter stubble and weeds have all contributed, as well as predation from corvids and domestic/feral cats.

Environmental stewardship schemes are helping farmers and landowners to ensure that farmland is managed in the best way for a variety of plants, insects and wildlife while still providing a living for those who work the land.



Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*)



Chaffinch ♀ (*Fringilla coelebs*)



Chaffinch ♂ (*Fringilla coelebs*)





Siskin (*Carduelis spinus*)



Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*)



Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalos caudatus*)



Coal Tit (*Parus ater*)



Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*)



Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*)



Great Tit (*Parus major*)



Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*)



Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)



Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*)



Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*)



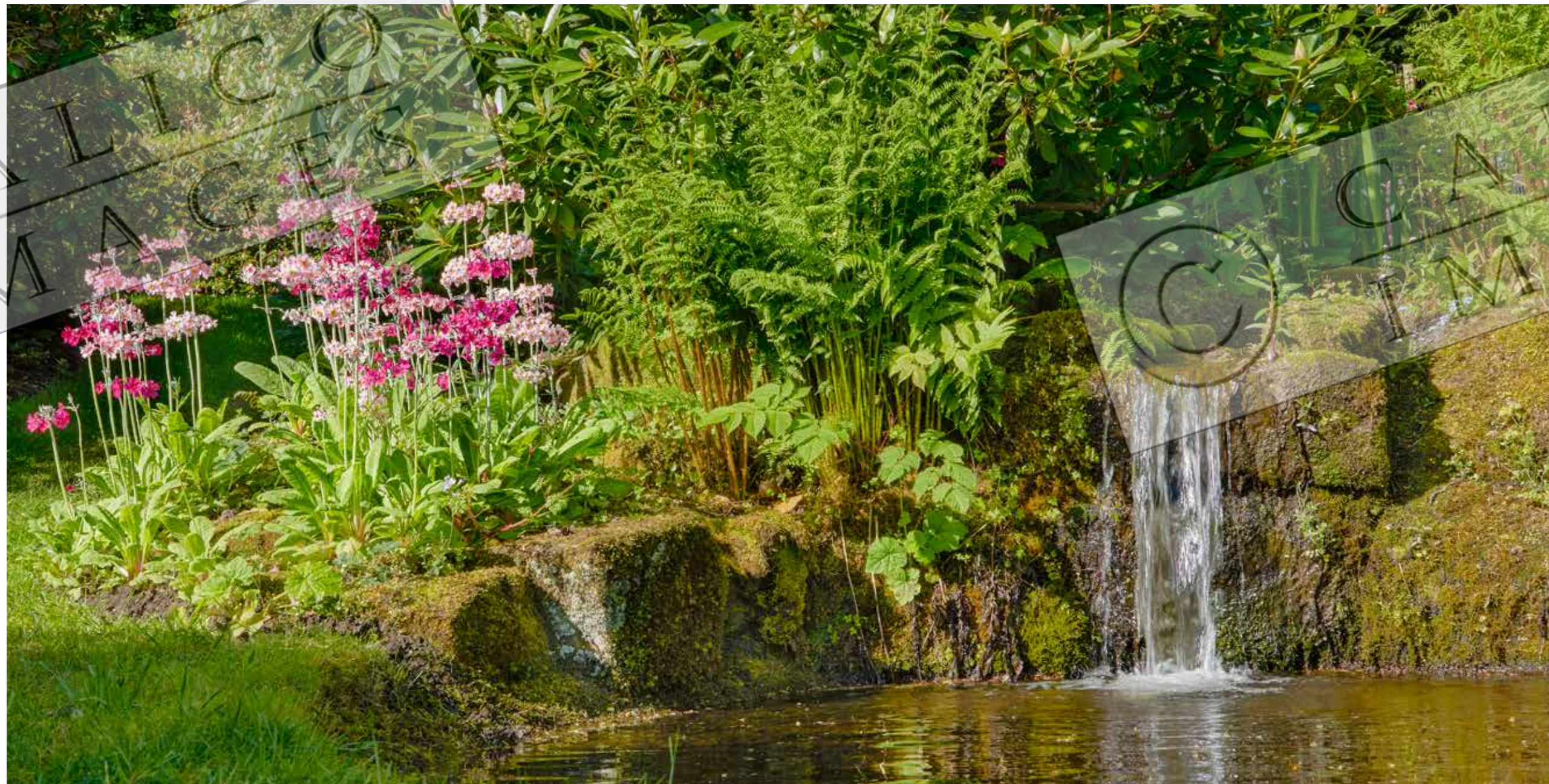
Orange-tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*)



Wall Brown (*Lasiommata megera*)



Swift (*Apus apus*)







Blue Tits (*Parus caeruleus*)



Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)



Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)



House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*)



Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*)



Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*)



Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)





Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)



Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*)



Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)



Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*)



Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)



Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)



Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)



# Summer

June Solstice - September Equinox

As the vegetation grows, farm animals are released with their young. The fields are full of fattening lambs and calves.

Frustratingly, birdlife becomes much less easy to see; broods are hidden away and birdsong dwindles as there is no longer competition for mates.



Musk Thistle (*Carduus nutans*)

Ground-nesting birds such as Red Grouse, Curlew and Lapwing have to maintain a constant guard against predators and second broods are often embarked upon.

Carrion Crows, Woodpeckers and Jackdaws take eggs and chicks or bring them back to feed their own young. Black Grouse nest in mid-May and Grey Partridge nest in mid-June or even later; both are very vulnerable to these predators.



Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*)  
Black Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

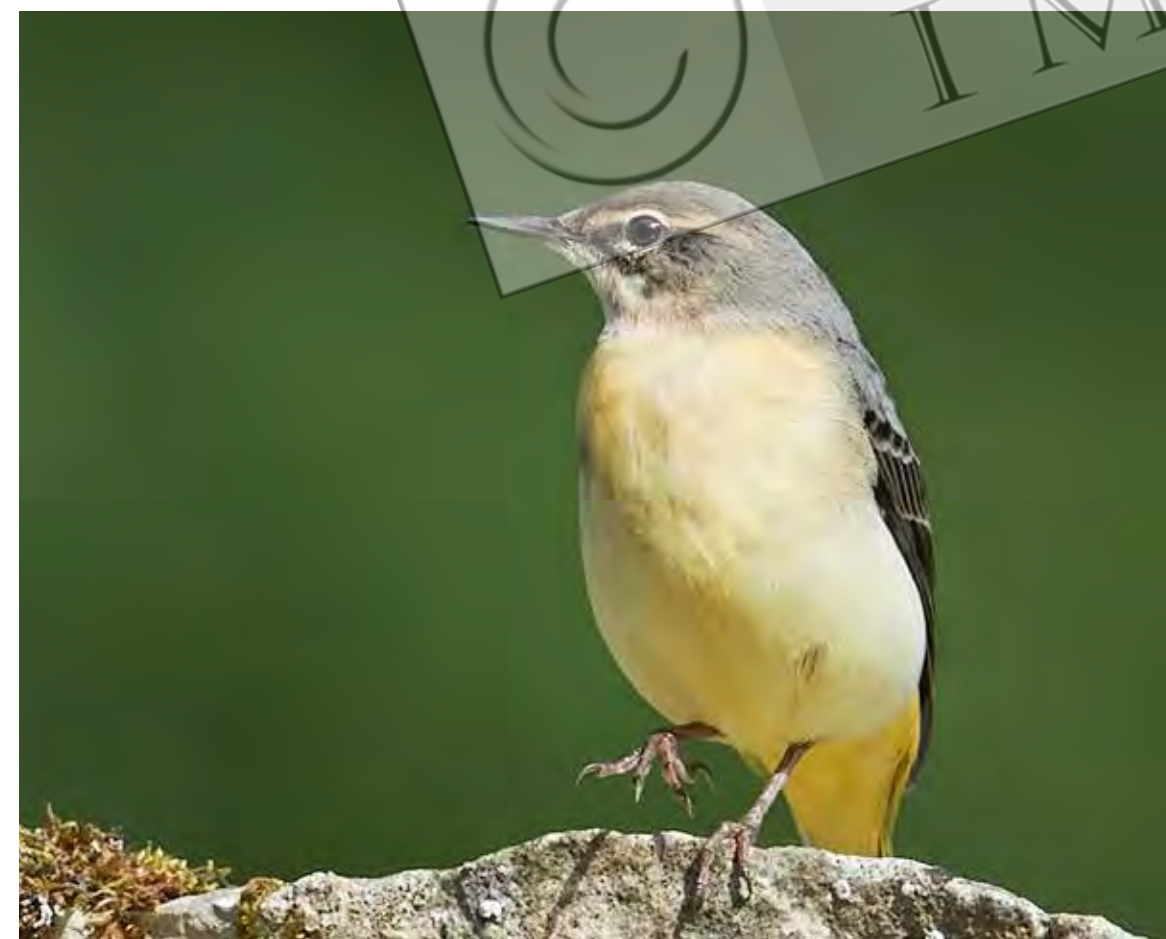






Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) - a widespread and confiding bird nesting in wall crevices throughout the UK, this is a darker sub-species of the White Wagtail. It is resident in milder areas in the south but the northern birds migrate to Spain and North Africa.

The Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) is always associated with fast running water when breeding. Some migrate to Europe for the winter while others remain in Southern England.





Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)



Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins are all affected greatly by the weather.

Many die of starvation, exhaustion and storms on their migration to and from Southern Africa. Both drought in Africa and late frosts and cold springs here are causing serious decline in populations as they are totally dependent on flying insects.

House Martin (*Delichon urbica*)



Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)



Sand Martins nest in sandy cliffs and banks usually near water and most people welcome swallows and house martins around their homes. Although some nests may cause problems, all birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act and it is an offence to take, damage or destroy a nest, the eggs or young whilst being built or in use. Currently a fine of up to £5000 and/or a 6 month prison sentence can be imposed.





Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) prefer to nest in burrows and holes both by the coast and near inland lakes and ponds.

They often desert their ducklings at an early age, leaving them in 'crèches' with one or two adults looking after them.







Coot (*Fulica atra*)



Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)







Stoat (*Mustela erminea*) with Moorhen chick (top left) and rabbit (lower left)







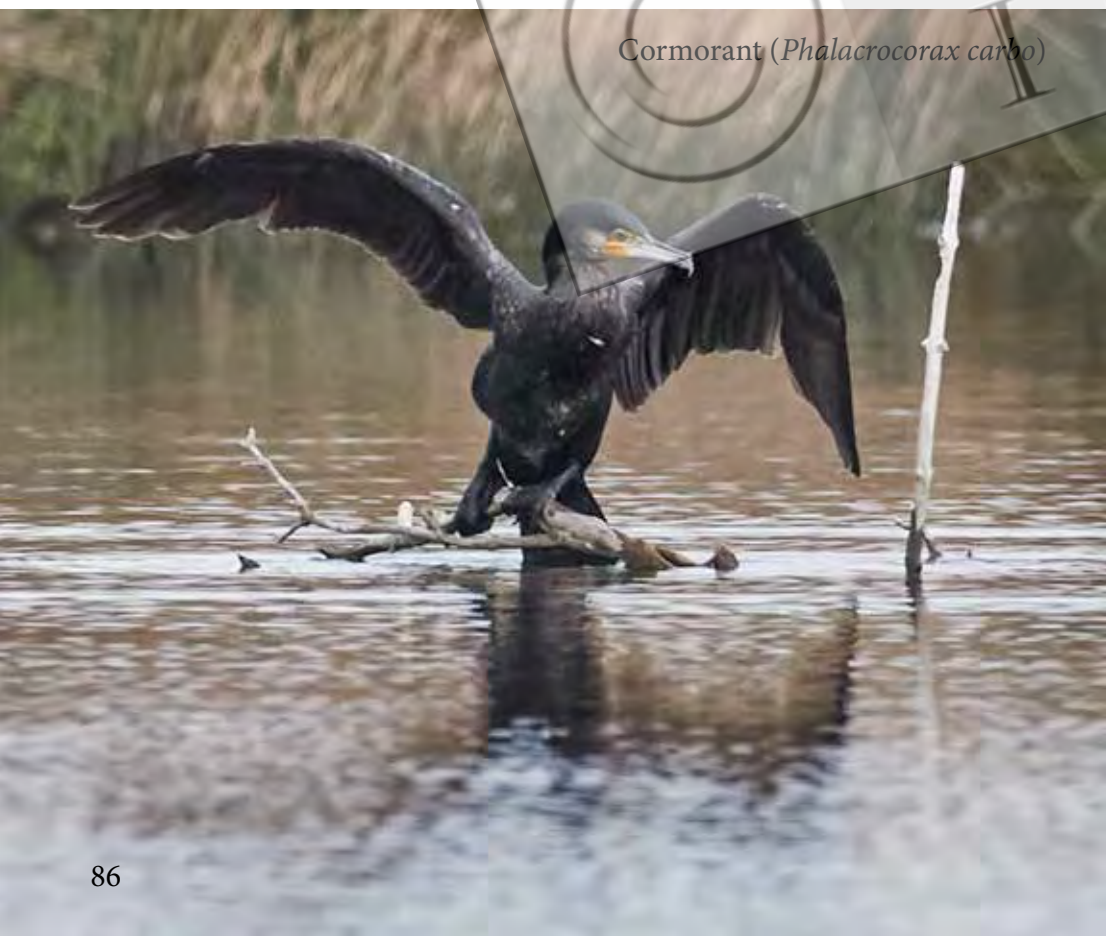
Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)



Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)



Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)



Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)



Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)



Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)





Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) frequent ponds and lakes, often in flocks and nest in reeds near or over the water.







Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)



Treecreeper (*Certhia familiaris*)





Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*)



Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)



Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone corone*)



Magpie (*Pica pica*)

### Predators

Carrion Crows are extremely intelligent scavengers, often solitary, wary of man and very good egg thieves.

Magpies are voracious predators of songbird eggs and chicks.

Jays are shy woodland birds mainly feeding on acorns, nuts and seeds but also small mammals and the nestlings of other birds.

Jackdaws are foragers, eating almost anything, including eggs and chicks, often to be found in flocks together with Rooks, which feed mainly on insects, grain and seeds.





Grey Partridges (*Perdix perdix*) have declined drastically in the UK since the Second World War as a result of predation and intensive farming practices. Fields have been enlarged by removing hedgerows and field boundaries with grassy cover. The widespread use of herbicides and pesticides has also been very damaging as, in the first weeks of life, Grey Partridge chicks feed almost exclusively on insects.

The early cutting of grass for silage destroys nests and the moorland fringe has become a refuge. Now, fortunately, more is being done by farmers with help from Countryside Stewardship Grants, to leave stubble overwinter and to improve the habitat for all farmland birds.

Some 98% of UK hay meadows have been lost to intensive farming since the 1950s. A good hay meadow contains a rich mixture of native grasses and wild flowers with up to 45 species per square metre which supports a wide range of invertebrates.

Traditional hay meadows provide valuable nesting habitat and the critical factor is the cutting date, from mid-July onwards. Some fields are now cut for “haylage” in June which can cause serious damage while the adult birds are still incubating. At Barningham we have initiated a programme to protect hay meadows and develop others. We have recreated 20 acres of new wildflower meadows which are safeguarded within farming tenancies. These fields are not cut until July after chicks have fledged. We are now able to harvest seed from these meadows to spread on other suitable fields.













Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)



Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)



Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*)



Stonechat ♂ (*Saxicola torquata*)





Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*) are ranging the moors looking for voles or unwary grouse chicks. Long-eared Owls are sometimes seen in the woodland competing with Tawny Owls. Sparrowhawks, Merlins and Little Owls hunt the hedgerows.







Large Red Damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*)



Common Blue Damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*)



Common Darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)



Yellow Fringed Water-lily (*Nymphaoides peltata*)



Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)



Emerald Damselflies (*Lestes sponsa*)



Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*)



White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*)



Dance Fly (*Empis tessellata*)



Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*) fighting with Carder Bee (*Bombus* sps) on Knapweed



Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)



Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*)



Yellow Dung Fly (*Scathophaga stercoraria*)



Giant Tachinid Fly (*Tachina grossa*)



Buff-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus terrestris*)



Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)



Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*)



Small Skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*)



Hoverfly (*Eristalis arbustorum*)



Long Hoverfly (*Sphaerophoria scripta*)



Green-veined White (*Pieris napi*)



Peacock (*Aglais io*) and Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*)







### Upland becks

These wonderful babbling streams are where the great northern rivers like the Tees and Swale begin their life and within them a world in miniature like the perfectly formed 5-6 ounce trout. Often completely invisible, they hide beneath the overhanging banks or under stones. There can be plenty of them; an Environment Agency survey found a trout for every two square meters of surface water.

Following this watery system to its absolute origins, tiny becks – only two to three feet wide and deep - fan out like fingers on to the open moor. They carry tiny little minnow-sized trout much appreciated by the best and most patient fisherman of all – the Grey Heron.

These wild brown trout are some of the purest throughout England. For the fisherman, casting a fly is an almost impossible feat but a worm can be dangled and the patience of the most devout saint is required while waiting for a bite.



Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)



The Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) has a liquid, twittering song and call. The chicks are initially fed on insects and then the birds collect in large flocks, known as charms, feeding predominantly on thistle and teasel seeds.





# Autumn

September Equinox - December Solstice



Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)

The days grow shorter and the green of the chlorophyll in the tree leaves starts to diminish to be replaced by orange, yellow and even red before disappearing altogether.

Migratory birds, such as Wheatears and Redstarts, move away South seeking warmer weather and a better chance of food. Others arrive from the North or East to spend their winter here. Geese and duck make our wetlands and lakes their temporary home.

Fieldfares, Redwing and Mistle Thrushes feast on the insects in our fields. Woodcock and Snipe move away from freezing Northern Europe to guzzle up with their long thin bills any invertebrates they can find in the soft mud.

Crossbills and Finches stay long enough to feed on the berries and hips they find in the hedgerows and gardens.



Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)







Autumn Garden in Barningham Park





Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)







Having Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) in such numbers on Barningham is a grand example of the right habitat improving the population of a species.

Both grassy upland moors where nests can be hidden in heather in spring and splashy meadows where these wary but gregarious birds can gather in winter suit them perfectly.

The winter plumage of these Plovers is more nondescript as the birds lose their handsome black shirt fronts. They form large flocks, often with lapwing, and fly in tight formation with rapid, twinkling wingbeats to winter in more lowland pastures.









Blackbird (*Turdus merula*)



Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*)



Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)





The Cycle of Life  
Death, Decay and Regrowth





Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)



Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)



Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)



Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*)





# Winter

December Solstice - March Equinox



Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

Winter can be long and severe. Cold, wet and windy conditions continue for months. Snow falls most winters, sometimes deeply. The Woodcock fly in from Russia and Scandinavia.

Only the hardest of moorland birds survive on the hill all year round which remains home to the sub-arctic Red Grouse. The others journey to more southern pastures or to the coast. Many migrate back to Africa or the Mediterranean.

The stronger ewes are left to manage outside and all but the hardest cattle are brought in to specially adapted farm buildings. After a snowfall the birds follow the feeding sheep on the moor as they uncover the heather.

Up until the end of March, controlled burning of small patches of the longer heather keeps it young and vigorous for the sheep and grouse to feed on.



Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*)













Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*)





Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*)



Photograph via Shutterstock

The UK has a resident breeding population of Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) but in Winter large numbers migrate South from Finland and Russia. These birds fly incredible distances. Satellite tracking data has revealed an average migration of 3,000km; that three birds have travelled distances of 6,000 – 7,000 km to sites in Central Siberia and one male tagged as an adult in 2012 is estimated to have flown at least 38,000km during his life.

At dusk in Spring the males are conspicuous over woodland performing their 'roding' breeding display, a repeated two-part call uttered in flight. The females nest in low cover in woodland and are renowned for the ability to fly carrying their young to safety between their feet when threatened.





The pink berries of Chinese varieties of Rowan in the garden, *Sorbus vilmorinii* and *hupehensis*, are not first choice for our resident birds and remain on the trees well into the winter.



In some years when their food is scarce, Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*) migrate south from Scandinavia and Siberia and arrive in large numbers. This is called a Waxwing Winter.





Black Grouse ♂ (*Tetrao tetrix*)



Black Grouse ♀ (*Tetrao tetrix*)





Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*)

In the mid-1990s we became aware that Holgate Moor was hosting a pair of Eagle Owls who had taken up residence on a cliff face overlooking Helwith Gill. Their location was a closely guarded secret for almost 10 years during which time they successfully raised 23 owlets and featured in a BBC documentary.

The origin of the pair was never proven but the female wore the remains of a purple jess and was almost certainly an escapee. The echo of their monosyllabic call along the valley was impossible to disguise and gradually their presence became known in the wider community.

From a habitat and territorial perspective their chosen location was perfect. There were many old ash trees from which they were able to launch their silent, gliding attacks on the unsuspecting rabbit population in the area. They were incredibly graceful, but with a remarkable lethality. Interestingly, although the cliff was close to moorland, the remains of grouse were never found by the nest site.

The old yews on the cliff face provided ample cover for

roosting adults and the vegetation at the bottom of the cliff face was the perfect cover during spring and summer for the young owlets to develop unseen.

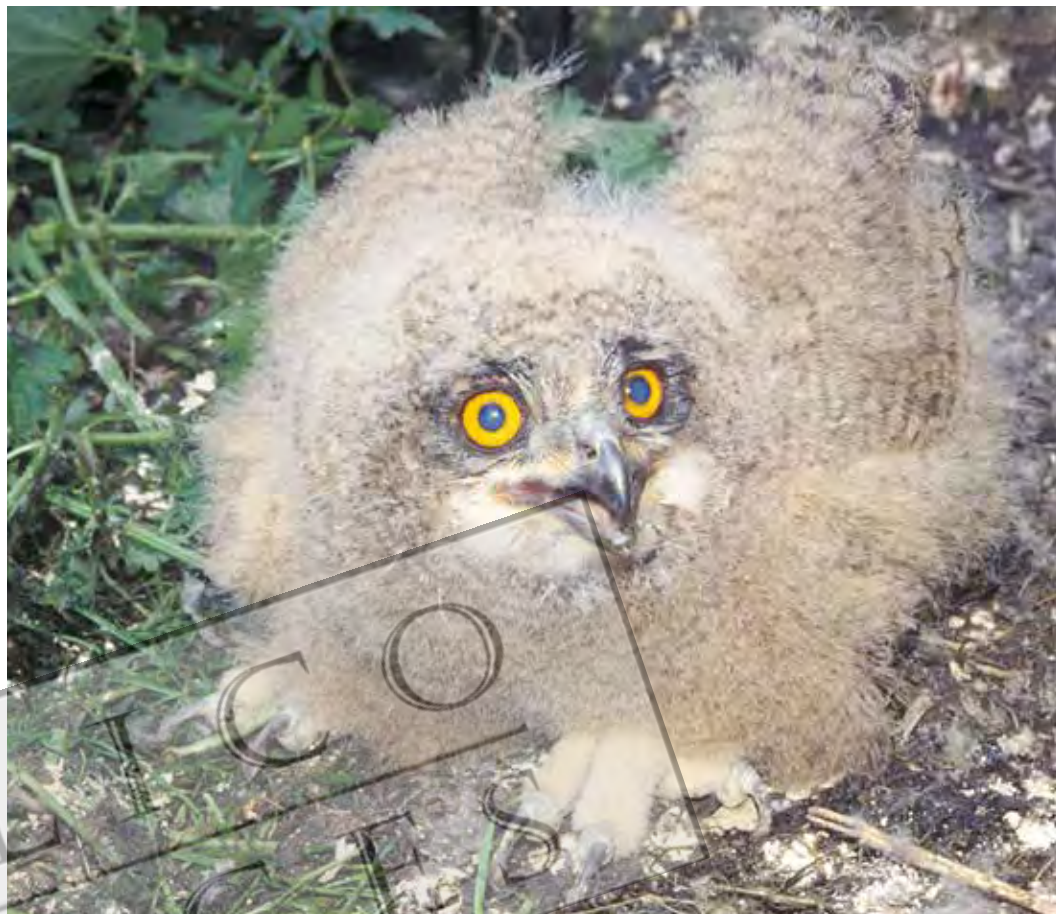
Of the 23 owlets that survived, all of which were ringed, four were recovered: one in North Yorkshire, one flew into power lines in Shropshire and was electrocuted, one was picked up in the Scottish Borders, and the unidentified remains of a “Long-eared Owl” near Edinburgh, was subsequently found to be wearing an Eagle Owl ring.

Whatever happened to the other 19 birds remains a mystery but they are very long lived and there is every chance some still survive.

Sadly, the female of the pair died shortly after the television programme was filmed, and the male subsequently left the area. The Eagle Owl chapter was unique and exciting. We never did discover whether the male was a genuine, wild Eagle Owl from across the North Sea, but whatever their origins the pair lived a wonderful life at Barningham.







All photographs of the Eagle Owl chicks on this page are courtesy of Tony Crease



Eagle Owl  
Photograph courtesy of  
Julia Wright



### Wetland Projects

To diversify the estate more for wildlife we created a series of small lakes, ponds and wetland areas.

This conservation project over the years included The Bog below Low Lane, Cow Close lake and scrape, Edwood pond above Gill Beck, Scaleknoll on the low moor, Hawsteads bottoms and North Wood Wetland Area where the tenant farmer is paid to leave the surrounding fields free of stock during the nesting season.

These have all proved to be very popular with a variety of ducks and waders.

Scaleknoll Lake









A covey of driven Grouse. The income from Grouse Shooting is very important to the management of the estate and helps to finance conservation projects.







A busy estate has varied farming activities throughout the year.







Timber harvesting







Heather, being the main source of food for the Red Grouse, requires restoration by the burning of small patches in Winter. This keeps plenty of the regrowth young and vigorous thereby providing food for a healthy surplus of young birds.





Species List - Birds

Barn Owl	2
Barnacle Goose	43
Black Grouse	20,21,22,23,140,141
Black-headed Gull	44
Blackbird	122
Blackcap	66
Blue Tit	70
Brambling	124
Bullfinch	127
Buzzard	56,57
Canada Goose	43
Carrion Crow	93
Chaffinch	65
Chiffchaff	71
Coal Tit	67
Collared Dove	73
Common Sandpiper	86
Coot	82
Cormorant	86
Cuckoo	48
Curlew	16,17
Dipper	26,27
Dunlin	86
Dunnock	49
Eagle Owl	143,144,145
Fieldfare	122
Golden Plover	60,61,118,119
Goldfinch	110,111
Great Black-backed Gull	45
Greenfinch	65
Great Spotted Woodpecker	90
Great Tit	67
Grey Heron	86,109
Grey Partridge	94
Grey Wagtail	77
Greylag Goose	42,43
Herring Gull	45
House Martin	79
House Sparrow	70
Jackdaw	92
Kestrel	54,55
Lapwing	18,19
Little Grebe	86
Little Owl	59
Little Ringed Plover	86
Linnet	66
Long-tailed Tit	67

Species List - Birds (contd.)

Magpie	93
Mallard	40,41
Meadow Pipit	49,100
Mistle Thrush	68
Moorhen	83
Nuthatch	124
Oystercatcher	46,47
Pheasant	116
Pied Flycatcher	31
Pied Wagtail	76
Red Grouse	11,62,63,98,99,123,134,135,150,151
Redpoll	71
Redshank	24,25
Redstart	50
Redwing	126
Reed Bunting	50,51
Ring Ouzel	32,33,34
Robin	71
Rook	92
Sand Martin	79
Shelduck	80,81
Short-eared Owl	102,103
Siskin	66
Skylark	100
Snipe	38,39
Sparrowhawk	58
Spotted Flycatcher	66
Song Thrush	49,126
Starling	73
Stonechat	101
Stock Dove	73
Swallow	78
Swift	69
Tawny Owl	136
Teal	120,121
Treecreeper	91
Tree Sparrow	70
Tufted Duck	88,89
Waxwing	138,139
Wheatear	100
Wigeon	86
Willow Warbler	71
Wood Pigeon	73
Woodcock	137
Wren	67,124
Yellowhammer	64,65

Species List - Plants & Butterflies

Plants

Blackthorn	14,15
Bluebell	29
Bog Cotton	53
Cuckoo Flower	53
Common Dog Violet	53
Early Purple Orchid	53
Lesser Celandine	53
Male Fern	53
Primrose	52
Red Champion	53
White Water-lily	105
Wild Pansy	53
Wood Anemone	53
Yellow Fringed Water-lily	104

Butterflies

Green Hairstreak	68
Green-veined White	107
Meadow Brown	107
Orange Tip	69
Peacock	107
Painted Lady	107
Red Admiral	107
Ringlet	107
Small Copper	68
Small Skipper	107
Small Tortoiseshell	107
Wall Brown	69

36 additional bird species have been seen on the estate but not photographed for this volume include Bittern, Gadwall, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Goldeneye, Goosander, Goshawk, Green Sandpiper, Green Woodpecker, Hen Harrier, Jack Snipe, Jay, Kingfisher, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Long-eared Owl, Marsh Harrier, Marsh Tit, Merlin, Mute Swan, Osprey, Peregrine, Pink-foot Goose, Pintail, Pochard, Raven, Red Kite, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-legged Partridge, Ruddy Duck, Shoveler, Snow Bunting, Twite, Velvet Scoter, Water Rail, Whinchat and Wood Warbler.

Species List - Odonata, Insects, Mammals & Fish

Damselflies & Dragonflies

Common Blue Damselfly	104
Common Darter	104
Emerald Damselfly	105
Large Red Damselfly	104
Southern Hawker	105

Insects

Buff-tailed Bumblebee	106
Carder Bee	106
Dance Fly	106
Giant Tachinid Fly	106
Hoverfly	106
Long Hoverfly	106
Silver Y	106
Yellow Dung Fly	106

Mammals

Grey Squirrel	72
Brown Hare	72
Hedgehog	72
Rabbit	72
Stoat	84,85

Fish

Brown Trout	109
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# Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the late Sir Anthony Milbank Bt. for inviting me to take part in this project and for his enthusiasm in driving it forward. In addition my thanks must go to Belinda, Lady Milbank and Sir Edward Milbank Bt. for their continued support to achieve completion.

I must also express my thanks to the keepers, both past and present, of the Barningham and surrounding estates who facilitated my access to the more remote areas and helped me to find the various species I was looking for. The same thanks must also go to all the tenants and adjacent farmers who advised me where different species could be found and again facilitated access.

Additionally, I need to thank all those who helped me identify some of the more unusual species seen in this book – without them, the volume would appear incomplete.

*David Williams*  
July 2017