

Wild Bird Mixtures

One Year Winter Bird Food

Survival Mixture

Ref. MIXSM

This mixture should be sited on field margins or adjacent to hedges or woodland. It contains a good range of species which provide a food source for birds and smaller mammals. The mixture can be sown from April until June. It is essential to sow into a warm, well prepared seedbed which is free of weeds. A sowing rate of 10 kg per hectare is recommended.

25%	quinoa
30%	fodder raddish
30%	white millet
10%	buckwheat
5%	kale

£4.39 per kg

Two Year Wild Bird Food

Triticale, Kale & Quinoa

Ref. MIXWBSS

A spring sown mixture which provides a seed source for wild birds. Usually sown on field margins as strips or in blocks within arable fields. We recommended drilling the triticale before surface sowing the kale and quinoa. Sow 50 kg per hectare.

70%	spring triticale	supplied separately
15%	kale	
15%	quinoa	

£4.04 per kg

The Decline of Farmland Birds

There has been much research showing a decline in farmland biodiversity. Farmland birds have been the focus of particular attention and species such as the tree sparrow, for example, have seen numbers decline by 95%. Other species such as grey partridge, corn buntings, lapwings and skylarks receive much publicity and now within Environmental Stewardship there is an opportunity to redress the balance.

Target Species

It is possible to target certain bird species and provide specific food and/or habitat for them. If you wish to know more there is a good source of information at www.rspb.org.uk/farming

Grassland is Important

Many ground nesting birds find grassland important because there is less disturbance due to reduced farming activity. Additionally, grassland provides a source of food. Insects, earthworms and grassland invertebrates such as leatherjackets are in great number during the summer and this provides food for chicks.

The best grass areas are those containing a diverse range of species. Leys used for forage production, especially ryegrass, tend to be too dense. For details of a suitable grass margin mixture see page 29.

Crops for Seed Eating Birds

For many years farmers have provided suitable seed bearing and cover crops for game birds. The same principles apply for providing food and cover for non game birds. We list some mixtures on these pages which can be sown for one or two years. The use of annual species such as quinoa and millet provide a reliable source of seed from the end of the autumn into the winter. A two year crop should provide seed into the spring of the following year. This is very important for successful breeding as birds often go short of food in the early spring.

Establishment and Management

In common with other crops these need management if they are to deliver results. As most sowings are comprised of more than one crop species, it is unlikely that chemical weed control will be possible or allowed without authorisation. Therefore seedbeds should be planned well in advance to give a clean, weed free start. Any weeds in the crop, provided they are not dominant, can become a further food source for birds once they set seed.

It is possible under some agri-environmental agreements to use a limited amount of seedbed fertiliser. This is often necessary as many of the sown species will require a source of fertility, particularly nitrogen, to get established.

The seeds can be broadcast but these mixtures are better shallow drilled. Warm soils are essential for satisfactory establishment and for this reason we do not recommend any sowings before April.