# Supporting guidance for vulnerable priority species

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Updates to last version

- added the template for recording the presence of vulnerable priority species

## Introduction

In order to score points under this criterion, you must:

- demonstrate that the species is present on your holding, submitting information using the 'Vulnerable priority species template' on the type of evidence, the date the evidence was collected and a map showing the location within the holding where the species was identified; and
- include management options and / or capital items in your application that will benefit the species, located appropriately within the holding

Recording form for presence of vulnerable priority species as a national priority (MS Word, Size: 139.0 kB)
doc_external_url: https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Vulnerable-Species-AECS-May-2015-v2.docx [Form template]

The management options and capital items that should be adopted for each species are identified below, along with further supporting guidance on each species.

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## Farmland waders: curlew, lapwing, redshank, snipe and oystercatcher

Supporting guidance for farmland waders is available.

In order to score National Priority points for farmland waders, you must undertake **two** or more of the following capital items, in addition to your adopted management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for each option:

- Creation of Wader Scrapes
- Creation of Wetland – Field Drain Breaking
- Creation of Wetland – Pipe Sluices
- Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams
- Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams
- Cutting of Rush Pasture

# Corncrake

Corncrake requirements are detailed in the specialist corncrake option pages and further information is contained in the supporting guidance.

Further information is available from the RSPB.

In order to score National Priority points for corncrake, you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Corncrake Mown Grassland
- Corncrake Grazing Management

In addition, if you manage mown grassland for corncrake, you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options / capital items as per the option requirements for Corncrake Mown Grassland:

- Management of Cover for Corncrake
- Corncrake Grazing Management
- Creation of Cover for Corncrakes

# Corn bunting

Corn bunting requirements are detailed in the specialist corn bunting option pages and further information is contained in the supporting guidance.

Further information is available from the RSPB.

In order to score National Priority points for corn bunting, you must either undertake Corn Buntings Mown Grassland, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option, or undertake at least **three** of the following management options / capital items, where you can meet the eligibility requirements

- Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds
- Grass Strips in Arable Fields
- Beetlebanks
- Retention of Winter Stubbles for Wildlife and Water Quality
- Creation of Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds

# Chough

Chough requirements are detailed in the specialist chough option pages and further information is contained in the supporting guidance.

Further information is available from the RSPB.

In order to score National Priority points for chough, you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Chough Grazing Management
- Chough Mown Grassland

# Twite

Twite nest in mature heather, or occasionally bracken.

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Availability of seed, especially later in the breeding season, appears to be a key requirement for breeding twite. However, these seed sources tend to be on enclosed, in-bye land that is adjacent to the moorland habitats where they nest.

Moorland management for twite should therefore concentrate on maintaining stands of mature heather and bracken in areas immediately adjacent to hay meadows and unimproved seed-rich grassland. These areas should be protected from muirburn and overgrazing.

Further information is available from the RSPB.

In order to score National Priority points for twite, you must undertake at least **two** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Retention of Winter Stubbles or Wildlife and Water Quality
- Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds
- Moorland Management
- Tall-herb Vegetation Management
- Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland
- Species-rich Grassland Management
- Forage Brassica Crops for Farmland Birds

In addition, you must undertake the following capital item:

- Creation of Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds

# Black grouse

Throughout the year, black grouse use a wide range of habitats for nesting, feeding, lekking (displaying), chick-rearing, cover and shelter.

Heather and blaeberry are important foods for adult black grouse throughout the year and grasses, sedges, rushes and herbs might be eaten depending on local availability.

Adult females benefit from eating protein-rich foods such as cotton grass buds in the spring, as this helps them to get into good breeding condition. Insects, including caterpillars and sawfly larvae, are an important food source for chicks.

Maintaining a range of habitats, including wet flushes, is therefore important for black grouse.

Further information is available from Scottish Natural Heritage.

In order to score National Priority points for black grouse, you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Moorland Management
- Habitat Mosaic Management
- Species-rich Grassland Management
- Tall-herb Vegetation Management
- Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds
- Away Wintering Sheep
- Stock Disposal

# Hen harrier

Hen harrier prey primarily on small mammals, particularly short-tailed field voles, and a range of birds, particularly meadow pipits and grouse chicks. Merlin specialise in catching small birds, and short-eared owls feed mainly on small mammals.

All three species prefer to nest in heather-dominated vegetation at least 30 centimetres tall, although harriers and short-eared owls will also nest in tall rushes and bracken. Mixtures of heather and grass appear to be preferred by both voles and meadow pipits.

You should therefore aim to create a mix of heather and rough grassland with some rank areas at least 30 centimetres tall.

Further information is available from Scottish Natural Heritage.

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In order to score National Priority points for hen harrier you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Hen Harrier Grassland Management
- Moorland Management
- Wetland Management
- Predator Control
- Tall-herb Vegetation Management
- Heath Management
- Species-rich Grassland Management
- Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland

# Marsh fritillary

The marsh fritillary is a butterfly that lives on damp grassland and moorland. Its range in Scotland is restricted and centred on Argyll and neighbouring islands. It is mainly reliant on traditional agriculture through light cattle grazing, ideally by traditional breeds.

The aim is to create a patchwork of short and tall vegetation, five to 25 centimetres in height, with areas of abundant devil's-bit scabious (the caterpillar's sole food plant) and a supply of nectar sources.

Sheep selectively feed on scabious and can severely reduce or even eliminate it from the sward. The main threats to this species are habitat loss and inappropriate land management. Uncontrolled burning, drainage, and cessation of grazing can also be detrimental.

Further information from Scottish Natural Heritage:

- Marsh fritillary
- Lepidoptera

In order to score National Priority points for marsh fritillary, you must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements:

- Habitat Mosaic Management
- Species-rich Grassland Management
- Wetland Management
- Moorland Management
- Heath Management (Coastal, Serpentine, Lowland and Special Interest)
- Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle

# Great yellow bumble bee

The great yellow bumble bee is a specialist species which requires extensive areas of open, flower-rich grassland. Few such habitats are self-sustaining, requiring sympathetic management to maintain a diverse sward.

As well as abundant nectar and pollen, bees also need some undisturbed grassland as nest areas. They frequently make nests in abandoned rodent burrows, so management that provides habitat for voles and other rodents will also encourage bees, where there are also flower-rich areas nearby.

The management options below have been chosen because we consider them likely to provide these conditions. Options such as Wild Bird Seed for Farmland Birds can be especially beneficial where the seed mix includes nectar-rich species such as Phacelia or borage.

To ensure maximum benefit for the great yellow bumblebee and other pollinators, ensure a diversity of flowers throughout May to September, in particular red clover (and other vetches, such as meadow vetchling) and knapweed.

In order to score National Priority points for great yellow bumble bee, you must undertake at least one of the following management options / capital items, where you can meet the eligibility requirements:

- Species-rich Grassland Management
- Restoration of Species-rich Grassland

# Great crested newt

Lowland agricultural land is the key habitat for great crested newt, which requires aquatic and terrestrial habitats to enable them to breed, forage, disperse and hibernate

Historically, farming has favoured this species, particularly through the creation of ponds that are open (not heavily shaded), are close to other ponds, don't support fish or duck, and contain clean water and abundant aquatic vegetation.

Great crested newt also require suitable terrestrial habitat nearby. This includes rough grassland with patches of tall herb and scrub, hibernation sites and refuges (for example, piles of logs or stones, drystone walls, deciduous woodland and scrub), and habitat corridors linking breeding ponds and terrestrial areas, such as hedgerows, scrub, overgrown field margins and rough grassland (for example, buffer strips).

Further information from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust:

- Great crested newt
- Habitat management for amphibians

In order to score National Priority points for great crested newt, your holding must be within the priority area for the species. You must undertake at least **one** of the following management options, where you can meet the eligibility requirements for the option:

- Beetlebanks
- Grass Strips in Arable Fields
- Water Margins in Arable Fields
- Water Margins in Grassland Fields
- Management, Restoration or Creation of Hedgerows
- Habitat Mosaic Management
- Wetland Management

In addition, you must undertake the following capital item:

- Pond Creation for Wildlife

# Freshwater pearl mussel

Freshwater pearl mussels are large shellfish that live in several of our clean rivers and burns.

They are one of the longest living invertebrates in the world, living for over 100 years. They live amongst gravel on the riverbed and feed by filtering water. They are extremely sensitive to pollution and this is one of the main reasons they are critically endangered.

Good land management is one of the most important factors to ensure they survive. Actions to reduce silt getting into rivers, including creating water margins, reducing diffuse pollution and improving bankside woodlands, can all help to ensure Scotland's populations survive.

Further information is available from Scottish Natural Heritage.

In order to score National Priority points for freshwater pearl mussel, you must undertake at least **two** of the following management options / capital items, where you can meet the eligibility requirements:

- Water Margins in Arable Fields
- Water Margins In Grassland Fields
- Wetland Management (where grazing management can restrict poaching of unfenced springs / burns)
- Habitat Mosaic Management (where grazing management can restrict poaching of unfenced springs / burns)
- Converting Arable at Risk of Erosion or Flooding to Low-input Grassland
- Creation of Grass Strips and Water Margins in Arable Fields
- Creation of Low-input Grassland to Convert Arable Land at Risk of Erosion or Flooding
- Restoring (Protecting) River Banks
- Alternative Watering

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