

## Annex 5. Bird Species, for Which Grasslands Serve as Important Breeding and Feeding Habitats (A. Auniņš, S. Rūsiņa)

Images of bird species that are nesting or feeding in the grasslands and for which grasslands are the most important or one of the most important habitats.

See Chapter 22 for grassland maintenance and management methods for bird conservation and Chapter 23 for the restoration of grasslands as a habitat for grassland birds.

Species are arranged in five ecological groups: waders, passerines, raptors and owls, water birds and other species (includes some species that do not strictly belong to any of the above listed groups) (Table 1). A brief description of species ecology is based on Peiponen 1974; Beintema 1983; Opermanis, Auniņš 1995; Opermanis 1997; Svendsen et al. 2015.

Other typical farmland bird species occur in the grasslands as well, for instance, *Alauda arvensis*, *Per-*

*dix perdix*, *Coturnix coturnix* and others. However, unlike the above-listed grassland species, these are not as closely linked to grasslands and prefer extensively cultivated arable lands. *Locustella naevia* also inhabits various abandoned, but still open fields, or fields that have started to overgrow with shrubs. *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* inhabits various water edges, wetlands, and occurs in wet grasslands as well. The shrubs and shrub belts present in the grasslands are used by various shrub dwelling passerines, for instance, *Sylvia communis*, *Sylvia borin*, also *Emberiza schoeniclus* near water bodies. *Anas platyrhynchos* can be found nesting in the grasslands that are adjacent to streams and waterbodies.

During migration the grasslands are used by a large variety of open landscape birds, including those that do not nest here, for instance, various species of geese, most commonly *Anser albifrons* and *Anser fabalis* as well as a variety of waders. These species prefer flooded grasslands or flooded arable land.

Table 1. Bird species, for which grasslands serve as important breeding and feeding habitats (\* asterix indicates protected species).

English name of the species	Latin name of the species	Ecological group
Aquatic Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus paludicola</i>	Passerines
Black Grouse	<i>Tetrao tetrix</i>	Other species
Black-tailed Godwit*	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Waders
Common Redshank*	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Waders
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrina</i>	Passerines
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Waders
Corncrake	<i>Crex crex</i>	Rails
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Waders
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Waders
Gadwall *	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Waterbirds
Garganey*	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Waterbirds
Great Snipe*	<i>Gallinago media</i>	Waders
Hen Harrier*	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Raptors
Lesser-spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila pomarina</i>	Raptors
Marsh Sandpiper*	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Waders
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Passerines
Montagu's Harrier*	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Raptors
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Waders
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Waterbirds
Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Passerines
Ruff*	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Waders

(continued)

English name of the species	Latin name of the species	Ecological group
Short-billed Dunlin*	<i>Calidris alpina schinzii</i>	Waders
Short-eared Owl*	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Owls
Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	Rails
Tawny Pipit*	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Passerines
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Rails
Western Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Passerines
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	Other species

Photo: A. Auniņš (*Philomachus pugnax*, *Tringa totanus*, *T. stagnalis*, *Anthus pratensis*, *A. campestris*, *Motacilla flava*, *Anas strepera*, *Circus pygargus*, *Crex crex*), J. Jansons (*Calidris alpina schinzii*, *Limosa limosa*, *Numenius arquata*, *Gallinago gallinago*, *Anas clypeata*, *Asio flammeus*, *Anas querquedula*, *Aquila pomarina*, *Rallus aquaticus*), A. Petriņš (*Haematopus ostralegus*, *Vanellus vanellus*, *Gallinago media*, *Lanius collurio*, *Carpodacus erythrina*, *Porzana porzana*, *Tetrao tetrix*, *Ciconia ciconia*).

### Waders

*Haematopus ostralegus*

*Vanellus vanellus*



Very rare breeder, mostly in the valley of the River Daugava, on the shores of the Gulf of Riga and the islets of coastal lakes. Although in Europe this is generally a typical grassland species, especially in the Netherlands, they almost do not breed in the grasslands of Latvia. They always prefer very short and sparse vegetation and areas without vegetation. They nest on the ground, the nest is very open. They feed on various invertebrates, which are picked out from the water's edge or in shallow water.

Common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. It nests on the ground in grasslands with low vegetation, feeds on various invertebrates, most commonly – earthworms. Due to better nesting success, the grasslands are a more important breeding habitat than arable land as nesting sites, although it occurs more frequently in arable land.

*Calidris alpina schinzii*

*Philomachus pugnax*



The species has currently gone extinct as a breeder in Latvia. Recolonisation is possible, if habitats suitable for the species – the coastal grasslands – are restored. The species nests on the ground and in moist grasslands near water with low vegetation, feeds on invertebrates at the water's edge. A critically endangered subspecies in the region.

Very rare and unevenly distributed breeder in larger grasslands near water and in open mires. It feeds on invertebrates (especially earthworms) and nests on the ground in moist and wet grasslands on the banks of water bodies.

## Waders

*Tringa totanus*

Rather rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia, declining species. It feeds on invertebrates. Nests on the ground in moist and wet grasslands close to water.

*Tringa stagnatilis*

Very rare breeder, almost exclusively in the eastern part of Latvia. The species nests on the ground in wet grasslands, feeds on invertebrates in shallow puddles or on the banks of water bodies.

*Limosa limosa*

Very rare and unevenly distributed breeder. In Latvia mainly occurs in the coastal zone of the Baltic Sea and around lakes and pools of large raised bogs (in Ķemeri, in Teiči). It is a globally near-threatened species. They feed on invertebrates and plant seeds. They nest on the ground in tall grass of mesic and wet grasslands close to water bodies.

*Numenius arquata*

Rather rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. Declining species. They feed on invertebrates. The species nests on the ground in marshes and grasslands in open landscape close to water.

*Gallinago media*

Very rare breeder, mostly in floodplains of rivers in Eastern Latvia (the rivers of Aiviekste, Pededze, Rūja, Seda, Dviete etc.), a globally near-threatened species. They feed almost exclusively on earthworms by probing the soil, therefore it is important that the soil is moist and loose. The species nests on the ground in large and wet floodplain grasslands.

*Gallinago gallinago*

Rather common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species nests on the ground in wet grasslands with tussocks and hides the nest in vegetation. Feeds on invertebrates in shallow pools and on the banks of water bodies by probing the soil or mud.

**Passerines***Anthus pratensis*

Common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species nests on the ground, feeds on the ground on small (usually smaller than 5 mm) insects and other invertebrates, prefers enclosure poles, fences and small shrubs as hunting "towers". Also feeds on plant seeds and berries.

*Anthus campestris*

Very rare breeder, almost exclusively along the coastline of the Baltic Sea and Gulf of Riga, in heathlands of Ādaži and in Latgale region in the vicinity of Piedruja. Feeds on insects and plant seeds. Nests on the ground in dry, sandy grasslands and dunes.

*Motacilla flava*

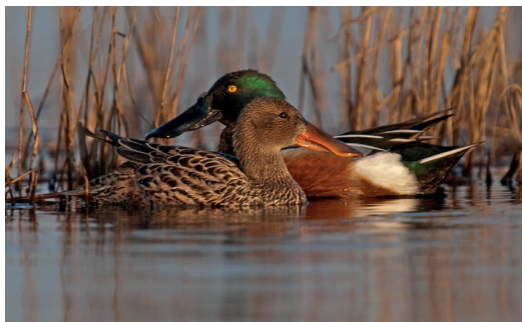
Once a very common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia, however, over the last decades the population has rapidly decreased and now it is rather rare. They nest on the ground and feed on invertebrates.

*Lanius collurio*

Quite a common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species feeds on larger insects and even small rodents, they hunt more successfully in low grass. They nest in shrubs, preferring thorny shrubs, where the nest is better protected from predators.

*Carpodacus erythrina*

Common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species feeds on seeds and plant buds, during the nesting season they also feed on insects and their larvae. The species nests in shrubs and thick grass.

**Waterbirds***Anas clypeata*

Rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species prefers grasslands edging on water bodies in open landscape. They avoid nesting in areas overgrown with shrubs and trees. Nest on the ground in dry places. Feed in shallow water.

**Raptors and owls***Asio flammeus*

Very rare breeder in Latvia, disappearing species. Nests on the ground. Feeds on small rodents in moist grasslands near rivers and lakes

*Anas querquedula*

Rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species prefers grasslands edging on water bodies in open landscape. They avoid nesting in areas overgrown with shrubs and trees. Nest on the ground at the water edge. Feed in shallow water.

*Aquila pomarina*

Quite common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. Occurs in mosaic-like landscapes with a large proportion of grasslands. The species feeds on small rodents, other small mammals, amphibians, small birds and insects in various grasslands.

*Anas strepera*

Very rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species prefers grasslands edging on water bodies in open landscapes. They avoid nesting in areas overgrown with shrubs and trees. They nest on the ground close to the water's edge. Feed in shallow water.

*Circus pygargus*

Rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia, population of the species is declining. Feeds on small mammals and birds. Nests on the ground in grasslands, often close to water.

### Other species

*Crex crex*



Common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species feeds on various invertebrates, rarely also on frogs and small mammals or green parts and seeds of plants. Nests on the ground in various grasslands with medium to high vegetation, the best nesting sites are wide floodplain grasslands.

*Rallus aquaticus*



Rather common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. The species nests in thick stands of aquatic vegetation of shallow water bodies surrounded by grasslands, most frequently occurs in floodplain grasslands with oxbows. They feed on invertebrates on muddy banks of water bodies and in slacks.

*Porzana porzana*



Rather rare breeder in the entire territory of Latvia, declining species. The species inhabits oxbows, slacks with water and other wet depressions, feeds on invertebrates and green parts of plants. Nests on the ground.

*Tetrao tetrix*



Rare and unevenly distributed throughout the entire territory of Latvia. The species uses grasslands as lekking areas and to a lesser extent as feeding sites, the species feeds on plant seeds and, in summer, also on invertebrates. Nests on the ground.

*Ciconia ciconia*



Common breeder in the entire territory of Latvia. Feeds on insects, amphibians, bird chicks, rodents and other small mammals. In an intensive agricultural landscape, where pesticides reduce the food availability, semi-natural grasslands, ditch edges and roadsides with open, natural vegetation are the best feeding sites.