

Farmers' Wildlife Calendar:

CLIMATE TRACKER

Where to see each species.

This information sheet aims to describe the habitats where you will find each of the species. This will allow you to go about your daily work and watch for each of the seasonal events.

We will talk about the importance of hedges, bare soil, wildflower areas, ponds, farm buildings and scrub.

Hedges

Hedges are incredibly valuable habitats on farms that provide food and shelter for insects, birds and mammals. The management of your hedge and the frequency of cutting will affect the amount of biodiversity it can support.



Blackthorn hedge with lots of flowers, providing food for insects.

Blackthorn is a common sight on Irish farms. It is used as a stock proof fence because its long thorns. It is also a food source, providing food for pollinators when it flowers and for birds in the form of sloes in the Autumn.



Flowering Primrose

Primrose can be found at the base of hedges. It grows well hedges because it likes shaded areas. It can also be found in grassland. If you have a native wildflower area on your farm you might spot it there too!



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Department of Agriculture,
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Bare soil

Bare soil is used for nesting by 62 of our 77 solitary bees in Ireland. One of which is the **Ashy Mining Bee**. Bare soil can be created by scraping back some vegetation with your boot or shovel to expose earth. Keep an eye out on any unfenced hedges – often cattle will have created bare soil which is great for solitary bees!



Ashy mining bee emerging from an underground nest.

Other habitats the **Ashy Mining Bee** can be found in are hedges, wildflower meadows or fenced wildflower margins.

Species-rich area

Species rich areas may be sown with wildflowers or with bird cover or natural through an area with low stocking density and flowers available. They support a huge number of insects and also provide an area for ground nesting birds.



Male Orange-tip Butterfly on Cuckoo Flower

The **Orange-tip Butterfly** will be found in wildflower areas, or anywhere with flowers to feed on.

The caterpillars are commonly seen feeding on the leaves of Cuckoo Flower. Keep an eye out for any Cuckoo Flower on your farm. This way you will be able to see what stage of development the Orange-tip is at.



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Ponds

There has been growing recent interest in ponds on Irish farms. Ponds provide a habitat for aquatic plants, insects and amphibians which will provide food for our birds. Ponds can be used as a natural method of flood control.



Common frog and frog spawn

Frogs need water throughout their life cycle. Frog spawn does not have a protective shell unlike eggs of other species. Without water, the frogspawn would dry out. Adult frogs need to keep their skin moist to be able to breathe. If their skin dries out, they cannot absorb oxygen.



Damselfly

Similar to frogs, dragonflies and **damselflies** need water throughout their lifecycle. The larval stages are completely aquatic. Adults may be seen near surrounding fields or forest but will return to a water body for mating and for laying eggs.

Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where water has an influence on the soil. They include floodplains, wet grassland or grassland near ponds. Wetlands filter out or trap nutrients and can store carbon, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Wetlands will have their own unique range of plants and animals.



Marsh-marigold

Marsh-marigold thrives in soggy areas, as the name suggests. So, if you know of a wet area on your farm, keep your eyes peeled for when it first flowers.



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Farm buildings

Old farm buildings provide a nesting opportunity for many different bird species. Birds will use eaves, beams and ledges and crevices in walls to make nests. Farmland birds that are known to nest in buildings are House Martins, Swallows, Barn Owls, Kestrels, Starlings and more. So, keep an eye (and an ear) out to see who is flying in and out of your farm buildings throughout the year.



Swallow chicks

Swallows use beams and ledges to make their nests. They build up the nest using mud. They first construct a shelf to sit on then they will begin to build up the sides. Swallows can reuse nests. So, if you know where they have nested in previous years, you have a clue for this year.

Scrub

Scrub is valuable habitat when managed properly. It should not be allowed take over an area as this reduces the area used for production. However, it provides shelter and food for insects, birds and mammals. It should be seen as an asset on your farm. Common scrub on Irish farms are Gorse and Bracken.



Cuckoo

The **Cuckoo** will be seen/heard in variety of places throughout Irish farms. Its preferred area is areas of Heather, Birch or Gorse. We suggest keeping an ear out for its distinctive “wuck-oo” call. If you would like to familiarise yourself with the call, have a listen on YouTube.



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