

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has set a challenge for farmers to record some of the amazing biodiversity found on your farm during the year. We have 40 species for you to record.
Are you up for the challenge?

Species: Common Linnet

Scientific Name: *Carduelis cannabina*

Irish name: Gleoiseach

Group

Belong to the Finch bird family with Chaffinch, Lesser Redpoll, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Siskin and Twite.

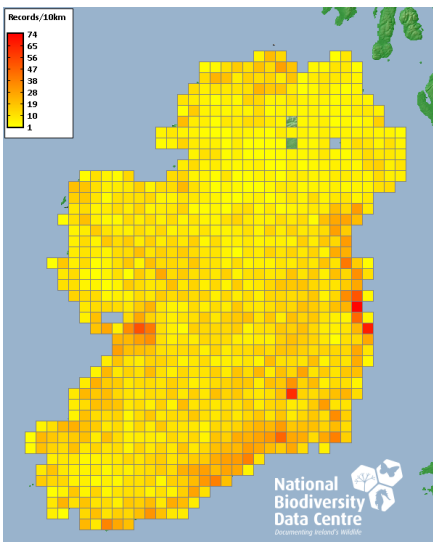
1 of 457 resident and regularly breeding birds species in Ireland.

How common on farms

Biodiversity surveys were carried out across 40 farms within the National Biodiversity Data Centre's 'Protecting Farmland Pollinators' EIP project (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/projects/protecting-farmland-pollinators/>). The 40 farms were chosen to reflect farms of differing types and intensity levels. The Linnet was recorded feeding on a two of the 40 farms.

Distribution

Common and widespread.



Source: The Common Linnet records as viewed on Biodiversity Maps, 2023.



Common Linnet (male). Note: Medium length grey bill. Some red markings on the crown and chest, more extensive in the breeding season.

Identification Tips

- Slightly smaller than a Chaffinch.
- Adult males have a lead grey head and throat and a red patch on the crown. Medium-length grey bill.
- Social birds, can be seen in small groups.
- Frequently perches on exposed places, like a fence, before dropping down to feed on the ground.
- Distinct melodious song, mixture of calls and various buzzing notes.

Biodiversity Tip No. 15

Non-farmed areas, field margins, riparian buffer strips, overwinter stubble, cover crops and winter bird food plots can provide valuable grass, grain and wildflower seeds for finch species like the Linnet.



Conservation Status

Red Lists are an internationally recognised methodology for assessing conservation status. An Irish Birds of Conservation Concern (IBoCC) List was published for 2020 to 2026. It found that the Common Linnet was Amber listed, meaning they are of medium conservation concern.

Management Tips

Summer and winter food:

- Areas of winter stubble, root crops and break crops will provide lots of seed food.
- Oil-seed rape and associated broad-leaved weeds provide ideal food for chicks in the spring.
- Hay meadows can provide excellent seed sources, and linnet like small seeds, for example sorrel seeds.

Nesting sites:

- They prefer thorny thick, well maintained hedgerows, bramble patches and areas of shrub.
- Gorse bushes are a favourite nest site, in lowland heath.

Reduce pesticide and herbicide inputs:

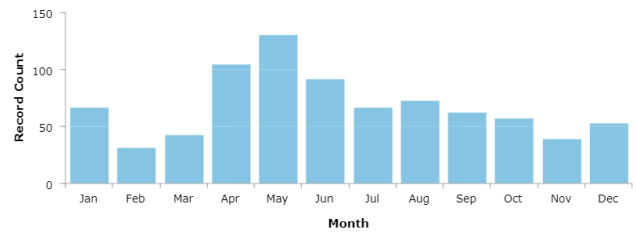
- This will help their food supply.



Adult male Common Linnet.
Photo: Mike Pearson

When?

A resident species, they can be seen all year round. Found in flocks in the winter and more dispersed and widely detected in the breeding season.



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Common Linnet, *Carduelis cannabina* image, accessed June 2023.

[Common Linnet \(Carduelis cannabina\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](https://biodiversityireland.ie/Common%20Linnet%20(Carduelis%20cannabina)%20-%20Detail%20-%20Biodiversity%20Maps)

Where on the farm?

A species of open countryside and farmland.

They're found where there is a plentiful supply of seeds throughout the year.

They use thick farmland hedgerows, heathland, rough ground and gardens.

Value

- Farmland birds are used as an indicator of the general quality of the farmed environment because birds sit near the top of the food chain and trends have been well monitored since the late 1960's.



Adult female
Common
Linnet.

Photo:
Mike Pearson

Further Info

Linnets are found on farmland wherever there is a plentiful supply of seeds throughout the year. They have declined in recent years, this is largely the result of loss of seed sources on farmland.

Linnets breed in a variety of habitats, including rough grassland, uplands and in coastal areas with gorse. They are rather social and small flocks can be seen even during the breeding season.

Mainly resident within Ireland, but will gather in large flocks outside of the breeding season. Increasingly noted visiting bird feeders in suburban areas.

Actions aimed at helping other farmland species are also likely to benefit Linnets, in particular those aimed at improving breeding habitat and food availability during the breeding season (e.g. management of hedgerows, reducing pesticide and herbicide use and set-aside).

In pastoral situations, particularly the uplands, hay meadows can provide excellent seed sources, and linnet like small seeds, for

Similar species

They can be similar to Lesser Redpoll, Common Redpoll and Twite.

Affected by a change in climate?

Modelling suggests that climate change may have had a positive impact on the long-term trend for this species, resulting in less negative trends than would have occurred in the absence of climate change.

Useful Links

Birdwatch Ireland have information here:

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/linnet/#:~:text=Linnets%20are%20social%20birds%20and,red%20patch%20on%20the%20crown.>

A video about Linnets, including their wonderful song:

[Bird Song - The Linnet - YouTube](#)

Try out our free 'Farmland bird' learning platform.

[Ireland's farmland birds \(biodiversityireland.ie\)](#)

Record here

Your records will help us build a picture of farmland biodiversity in Ireland. If you're happy with your identification, you can submit your record.

- On the National Biodiversity Data Centre website:

<https://records.biodiversityireland.ie/record/biodiversity-on-your-farm#7/53.455/-8.016>

or

- You could also download our free smartphone App for recording in the field

Android App:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=nbdc.mobile.biodiversity>

Iphone App:

<https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/biodiversity-data-capture/id906361120>

Need some help with identification?

Just drop us a line, we'll be happy to help:
pollinators@biodiversityireland.ie

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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
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