

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: Fieldfare

Scientific Name: *Turdus pilaris*

Irish name: Sacán

Group

Belongs to the Thrush family (*Turdidae*) bird family.

A migratory bird species from Northern regions, including Scandinavia and Russia. They come south to winter 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. Fieldfare was recorded as present on a few of the 40 farms.



@ Liam Lysaght

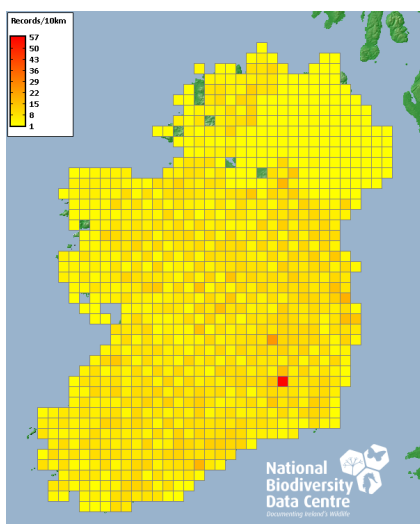
Fieldfare. Note: Grey head and back of neck, a well marked large thrush.

Identification Tips

- About the same size as a Mistle thrush.
- Grey head and back of neck.
- Throat and breast buffy-brown with black streaks.
- White belly, with black arrow markings on the flanks, pale grey rump with and a brown back.
- Usually in groups with Redwings.
- Makes a distinctive 'chuckling' call.

Distribution

Widespread and common winter visitor.



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

Biodiversity Tip No. 37

Leave some food for wintering birds.

Like berries in the hedgerow or some fallen apples in the orchard.



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 Fieldfare was not listed, meaning they are a wintering bird, not of conservation concern.

Management Tips

On the farm:

- Retain and manage native species hedgerows.
- Trim hedgerows on a 2 to 3 year rotation, to allow the plants to blossom in spring and produce berries and fruit in the autumn.
- Allow some hedgerows to grow out, lightly side trim, if necessary.
- If necessary, restore hedgerows by coppicing or laying.
- If you're planting a new hedgerow or tree, include Hawthorn/Whitethorn and Holly.
- If you have an apple tree on the farm, leave some fallen fruit, they're a great food source for wintering thrushes and other wildlife.

In the garden:

- Plant Yew, Juniper and some apples trees.



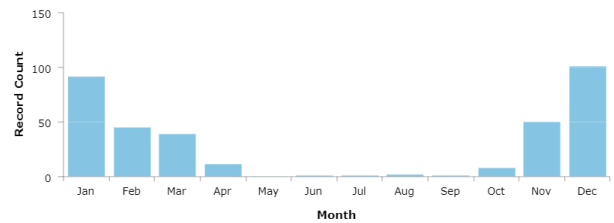
Redwing. Fieldfare often flock with wintering Redwing. Redwing are Red-listed, meaning they are a wintering bird of high-conservation concern.

Photo: Mike Pearson

When?

A winter visitor, from October to late April.

Records per month across all datasets



National Biodiversity Data Centre, Ireland, Fieldfare, *Turdus pilaris*, image, accessed November 2023.

[Fieldfare \(*Turdus pilaris*\) - Detail - Biodiversity Maps](#)
([biodiversityireland.ie](#))

Where on the farm?

Farmland and open woodland in lowland areas. A species found in groups at the edge of fields, feeding on worms and winter berries from the hedgerows.

Value

- It's nice to hear the distinctive 'chuckling' of a flock of Fieldfare and Redwing on the farm in the winter months.
- The name Fieldfare is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'feldware' which meant 'traveller of the fields.'
- In the north of Ireland they're known as 'felts' or 'felties'.



Hawthorn/
Whitethorn berries,
known as Haws.

Photo:
Ruth Wilson

Further Info

Fieldfare can start arriving in Ireland from October. The numbers will vary each year and are dependent on the amount of berry crops that are available in their northern breeding grounds. If the crop of berries has been poor, they will arrive in large flock numbers in Ireland.

Fieldfares are flocking birds, often sharing their feeding places with Redwings. They take worms and grubs from soft ground, and feed on haws and other berries from the hedgerows.

They will aggressively defend a food source such as fallen fruit, chasing other birds away.

At night Fieldfares will depend on tall trees and thick hedgerows, where they will roost.

Similar species

They may be confused with the Redwing. These related species often flock together. Redwing are smaller and lack the blue grey colour of Fieldfare.

Need some help with identification?

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

Useful Links

Birdwatch Ireland have information here:

[Fieldfare - BirdWatch Ireland](#)

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>

Affected by a change in climate?

A very small number of Fieldfare stay in Scotland to breed. Climate change may affect the migration of Fieldfare in the future and birds may stay to breed in southern regions, like Ireland.



Fallen fruit is a favourite of Fieldfare and Redwing.

The Farmland Pollinator Officer post is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as one of its contributions to assisting implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta
agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife Service

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Register Number: 730718.