

9-3 TRENDS IN COMMON BIRD POPULATIONS

Avifauna composition is constantly changing due to a number of factors, the most decisive of which is habitat degradation. Populations of common birds monitored in Wallonia¹ are broadly showing a long-term downward trend, in line with the European trend.

KEY MESSAGE

The most marked decrease is observed for farmland birds: in agricultural areas, few nesting sites and food resources are available throughout the year, not to mention the specific impact of certain practices (e.g. the use of pesticides). The farmland bird index has nonetheless shown an improvement since 2005, even though the current level remains 20% below average 1990 numbers. This improvement does not yet seem to reflect the implementation of agro-environmental measures² but rather shows an increase in the numbers of certain generalist species³ and the stabilisation at a very low level, or even the continuous decline, of other more specialised species⁴. As for woodland birds, numbers fluctuate around the 1990 value. Looking at generalist species, following a decline in the late 1990s, average numbers seem to have recovered and are now close to the base level. According to Wallonia's 2010 red list⁵, 29% of breeding birds are threatened with extinction⁶. Of these, 28% are linked to open environments. This situation reflects the very limited area of heathlands, fens and grasslands available in Wallonia.

Evaluation

Unfavourable but improving situation

[1] 75 species are considered. Though only representing 43% of the breeding species found in Wallonia, they account for 96% of the total bird population.

[2] MAE 9: e.g. managed field strips

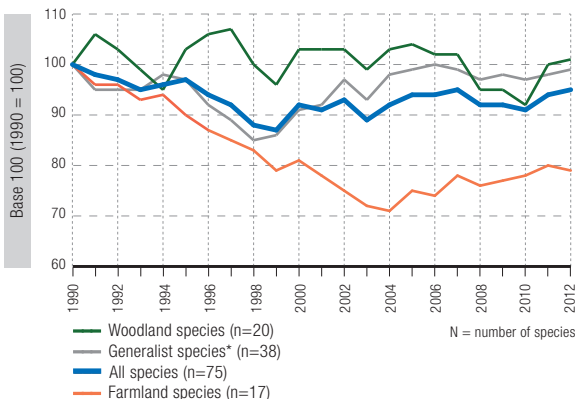
[3] E.g. rooks, common whitethroats

[4] E.g. corn buntings

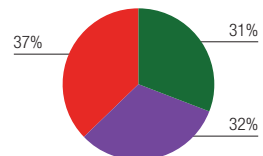
[5] <http://biodiversite.wallonie.be/fr/oiseaux.html?IDC=787>

[6] IUCN categories "vulnerable", "endangered" and "critically endangered": e.g. the grey partridge, European nightjar, black grouse.

Fig. 9-3 Trends in common bird numbers in Wallonia



Population trends for the 75 common bird species considered (1990-2012)



37% Declining (n=28)
 31% Significantly increasing (n=23)
 32% Stable (n=24)