

## Skylark

### Description

The skylark is a small brown bird with a crest. It is better known for its singing while flying. The skylark once populated the countryside but has since declined due to agricultural intensification. It is a small to medium-sized ground dwelling bird. Overall, it is basically streaky brown above and white below with a gorget of fine streaks. In flight it shows a thin, diffuse off-white trailing edge to the wing and white sides to the tail. The head has a crest but this is often held flat, rendering it invisible.



Breeding begins in late April through to July, with two or three clutches of 3 to 5 eggs. Nestlings leave nest at 9 to 10 days, but are not able to fly well until about 20 days. The skylark needs abundant insect food during the summer, but is mainly granivorous in winter.

### Distribution

The skylark can be found breeding on coastal and species rich grasslands, and in some arable areas across Northern Ireland. The vast majority of our breeding skylark are restricted to the upland areas. In the winter months, Skylarks can be found in large flocks feeding in arable stubble fields. The Skylark is Amber listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland.

### Action

Several management options under DARD's Agri-Environment Scheme are potentially beneficial for skylark, including species-rich grassland, heather moorland, rough moorland grazing, winter stubbles, conservation cereals, wild bird cover, under sown cereals, and lapwing fallow plots.

Many sites supporting populations of skylarks are designated ASSI or NNR.

Implementation of Northern Ireland habitat action plans for relevant habitats for the species.

### Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=59>

### MLA Species Champion