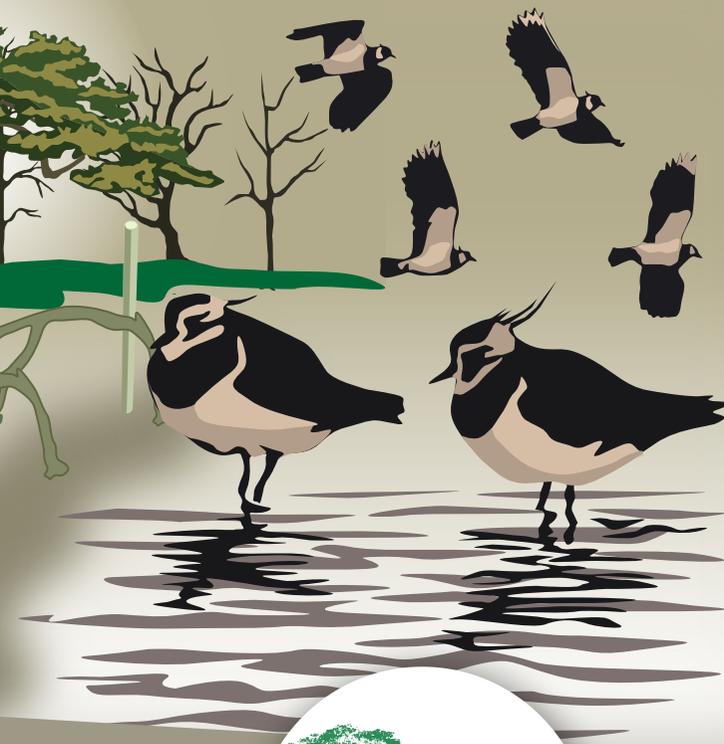


NOVEMBER



WINTER on the farm

NATURE'S CALENDAR & PRACTICAL ACTIONS



As the farming year unfolds, are you keeping an eye out for what wildlife appears on your farm?

What flower or bird brings you joy as the seasons change? What can you look forward to appearing this month? What wildlife might be on your land? What more can you do to encourage it and enhance it?

HERE IS A MONTH BY MONTH GUIDE TO HELP YOU FARM FOR NATURE!

This is just a start – please help us create a rich calendar to celebrate and support farming for nature! What have we forgotten? Do you have any useful 'nature hacks' to share? Let us know on info@farmingfornature.ie

Generally, there is lots of good information available for farmers who want to help wildlife. We have many resources available on www.farmingfornature.ie

If you have any queries why not submit them to our **Farming for Nature Forum** on the website and allow other farmers to answer.

NATURE'S CALENDAR & PRACTICAL ACTIONS

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NOTICING NATURE - AND SOME WAYS TO HELP IT!

Plant new hedgerows and 'gap-up'.

Think about some hedge laying to rejuvenate the hedge and improve stock proofing.

Trim hedgerows where needed.



Hedges



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

When planning your new hedgerow, remember to maximise the benefit to wildlife by planting a variety of native flowering species grown from local sources. Also, try to connect new hedgerows to existing natural habitats to create corridors for wildlife. Look at what grows well in your area and plant-in more of these – better still, collect local seed and grow some yourself, it's easier than you think!

Laying a hedge is a real skill and a great way to help make it more stockproof. Or coppicing species such as hazel, willow and whitethorn is also a good way to create different age structures in the hedgerow. The 'All-Ireland Pollinator Plan' has some excellent resources on managing new and existing hedgerows for wildlife.

To minimise the impact on wildlife if you are cutting your hedgerows, try to cut them between November and January. While hedgerows can legally be cut from the 1st of September this early cutting reduces food supply for wildlife. Ideally, cut your hedgerows in smaller sections on a three-year rotation to ensure there is always some food available for wildlife. Try, if possible, to leave some hedgerow sections uncut, this increases the diversity and structure of habitats present.



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Flooded
Pasture

What 'waterfowl' visit your wetlands or water courses?



Wet grasslands, alongside rivers in floodplains, can provide really important feeding habitats for thousands of ducks [e.g. widgeon], geese and swans that spend their winter in Ireland.

Can you spot the silhouette of the farmland bird the lapwing wading in the shallows?



Woods

As dusk falls or dawn breaks you might see the woodcock, a beautifully patterned bird, who's marking camouflages it well.



Woodcock are a secretive bird, but if you are out and about on the farm late in the day, look out for these along woodland edges. Or can you spot the jay out collecting acorns? – a super oak tree spreader.

It's a good time to spot the mighty Scots Pine standing out amongst the bare deciduous trees. Our only native pine, it was thought to be extinct [and reintroduced from Scotland] until an stand of native pine was recently identified in the Burren. This tree is an important food source for the native red squirrel.



Ditches
Streams
Rivers

Plant some trees like alder and willow to stabilise eroding banks.



Alder coppices well and the wood makes excellent charcoal [and gunpowder!]. Everybody knows the Sally [Willow] – a really easy tree to grow!

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Garden

Hang up some bird feeders in quieter areas of the garden or yard, near to a hedgerow or somewhere they can fly back to for safety.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Join Birdwatch Ireland's Garden Bird Survey to report into the national database what birds are coming to your feeder including winter visitors like blackcaps, greenfinches and siskins.

If you have any spoilt grain, putting this out - say near a good hedge - on a regular basis in the harsher winter months will feed a lot of wild birds.



Burren

As we finish celebrating the harvest feast of 'Samhain', a lot of animals are brought indoors where they are fed for the winter. Not everywhere though!



This time of year is a turning-point for farming, unusually so in the case of the Burren where livestock [mainly suckler cows] are herded onto the rough limestone grasslands [known as winterages] for the winter. On these low-lying hills they can enjoy the 'dry lie' afforded by the limestone bedrock as well as a healthy diet of native herbs, grasses and calcium-rich water.



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Everywhere

Care for your soil. It is the basis of everything for your farming produce and productivity. Among the many benefits of healthy soils are:

- Improved soil aggregate stability
- Better infiltration
- Crop and grassland resilience [to drought/flood]
- Reduced weed pressure
- Adherence to Statutory Management Requirements
- Avoidance of pollution issues



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

- Do not leave soil exposed or susceptible to erosion.
- Avoid poaching, pinch-points, trafficking and rutting.
- Nurture the soil and build humus – give back [healthy] nutrients.
- Minimise tillage.
- Add species diversity to your sward.



NATURE'S CALENDAR & PRACTICAL ACTIONS

WINTER on the farm

Farming For Nature offers best practice Guidelines and Actions for different land types.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO
www.farmingfornature.ie

To investigate what native species you have or could encourage on your land there are plenty of sources to help:

FOR NATIVE FLOWERS - YOU CAN SEARCH BY FLOWERING MONTH, COLOUR OR HABITAT
www.irishwildflowers.ie

FOR NATIVE TREES SEE HERE - IT WILL GIVE YOU ADVICE ON DIFFERENT TREES
www.treecouncil.ie

FOR NATIVE BIRDS SEE HERE
www.birdwatchireland.ie

FOR NATIVE BUTTERFLIES SEE HERE
www.irishbutterflies.com

FOR A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF ALL IRISH SPECIES,
THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE IS THE KEY SOURCE
www.biodiversityireland.ie



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