



# BELFAST HILLS

## KEY UPLAND BIRDS



Become a wildlife detective and help us find and record these declining species

### Help protect our key upland birds

#### Become a wildlife detective and find these important species

**Why:** Many bird species featured in this leaflet are declining in numbers, having suffered persecution and loss of habitats due to changes in farming and urban development. The Hills provide a critical haven for these birds and in order to monitor their presence we need your help to spot and record them. We can then lobby for more protection if necessary.

**How:** When you are visiting the Belfast Hills go prepared to record these birds and send the information in to us or CEDaR using one of the methods shown on the back cover.

**Training and Volunteering:** Check the websites of Belfast Hills Partnership, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, British Trust for Ornithology and Bird Watch Ireland for additional information, training events and bird surveys. The RSPB has a good bird guide and identification section too.

**Belfast Hills Partnership , 9 Social Economy Village  
Hannahstown Hill, Belfast BT17 0XS Tel 028 90603466  
Email info@belfasthills.org www.belfasthills.org**

#### Top Tips for Watching Wildlife

- Check the weather forecast and dress accordingly
- Keep any dogs on leads
- Be prepared to be very patient and sit quietly
- Use the cover of trees and bushes to approach the birds and avoid stepping out into open spaces
- learn to identify birds by their calls
- Don't disturb any wildlife or damage their habitats
- Leave no trace behind you
- Take care not to trespass on private land

#### USEFUL GEAR TO BRING

Binoculars, Camera, Notebook and pencil  
Identification guide book

### Good places to see these key upland birds in the Belfast Hills

Cave Hill Country Park  
Divis and Black Mountain | Slievenacloy  
Check our website for details of how to get to the sites by car or public transport



#### Other upland birds you might see

Wheatear | Golden Plover | Raven | Hooded Crow  
Swift | Swallow | Cuckoo

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### Options For Recording

- Submit your records online [www.habitas.org.uk/records/bhp](http://www.habitas.org.uk/records/bhp) and add pictures as it helps with verifying the record. Records go directly to Northern Ireland's Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) and are used for conservation purposes
- Fill in the form below and put the tear- off section into the box at leaflet dispenser as you leave, or post it back to us.
- Go to [www.belfasthills.org](http://www.belfasthills.org) and get involved by clicking 'Record Biodiversity'.
- Additional help with identification can be found on iSpot, the RSPB and BTO websites .

### FIELD NOTES

Lined area for field notes.



Recording Card

Name ..... Tel ..... Email .....

Species	No	Date	Location (and Grid Ref if possible)	Notes
Stonechat				
Skylark				
Reed Bunting				
Meadow Pipit				
Linnet				
Red Grouse				
Curlew				
Snipe				
Other				



## KEY SPECIES TO LOOK OUT FOR

Common name, Irish and Ulster Scots shown

### STONECHAT:

Caislín cloch - Chat Stone "Corney of the Cravat"



**Seen** All year round

**Habitat** Usually gorse and bramble cover.

**ID** Male has black head, white on neck and reddish orange breast. Female is a duller version with brown head. Male often calls from perch with call sounding like stones being knocked together and flicks his tail if agitated.

**Fact** They build a cup shaped nest in a thicket.

### SKYLARK\*: Fuiséog - Crested Chick "Laverock"



**Seen** All year round- best seen in the uplands in spring / summer or in flocks over stubble fields in winter.

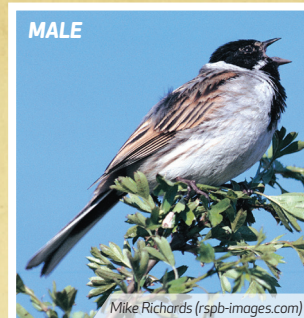
**Habitat** Meadows, moorlands and farmland.

**ID** Non-descript streaked sandy-brown upper parts and paler underparts. In spring / summer its incessant trilling and fluty song is delivered from a great height. Often ascending vertically. Sometimes has a crest. May be confused with Meadow Pipit. (see across right)

**Fact** Their numbers declined by 75% in the last few decades and are still falling. The main cause is thought to be the general intensification in agriculture and loss of arable fields

### REED BUNTING\*:

Gealóg ghiolcal - Bright bird of the Reeds "Chink"



**Seen** All year round and in mixed flocks in winter.

**Habitat** Wetland fringes and farmland.

**ID** Male has black head and white collar and white moustache strips. Female has black patch around eyes and white moustache stripes. In the breeding season males sing a simple, repetitive chinking sound from a perch.

**Fact** They build a cup shaped nest on the ground amongst reeds or grasses.

### MEADOW PIPIT

Riabhóg mhóna - Speckled Bird of the Bog "Tattle"



**Seen** All year round- best spring / summer.

**Habitat** Open moorland and grassland.

**ID** Nondescript streaked brown upper parts and paler underparts. In spring / summer it utters a single "pseet pseet pseet" call. It also has a trilling descending song which it sings in flight during a fluttering 'parachute' display flight. May be confused with a Skylark. (see across left).

**Fact** Meadow Pipit numbers in Ireland have been declining since the mid-1970.

### LINNET\*: Gleoiseach - Chatterer "Lintie"



There are plenty of other upland birds to look out for.

See flipside of leaflet for list

**Seen** All year round and in flocks in winter.

**Habitat** Heaths, scrubby grassland, arable farmland and coasts.

**ID** Grey-brown streaked plumage. Male has pinkish chest in summer and twitters and warbles a melodious, slightly metallic song often from a perch.

**Fact** Linnets used to be a popular cage bird because of their song. Their numbers dropped by 57% over past few decades.

### RED GROUSE\*:

Cearc fhraoigh - Heather Hen "Heath powt"



**Seen** All year round.

**Habitat** Heather moorland.

**ID** Male has chestnut brown plumage and red wattle over eye. Female has mottled grey-brown plumage. Explode out of undergrowth if disturbed, flying with rapid wing beats and long glides. Call is "Go back, go back, go back".

**Fact** The population is declining, perhaps linked to diseases and the loss of heather moorland.

### CURLEW\*: Crotach - Humped "Rainbird"



**Seen** From spring to autumn in the countryside and all year round on the coast.

**Habitat** Breeds in damp grassland and moors in spring / summer.

**ID** Largest European wader, with a long downward curving bill and long legs. Has grey-brown streaked plumage with pale belly and white rump with narrow barring on tail. Has characteristic "curlew, curlew curlew" call.

**Fact** In Northern Ireland they have declined by 82% since the 1980s.

### SNIPE: Naoscach - Evening Goat "Heather Bleat"



**Seen** All year round- best in winter or early spring mornings when males can be heard giving their 'drumming' or 'bleating' display.

**Habitat** Rushy ground and moorland.

**ID** Dumpy bird with a very long beak and short legs. Brown plumage with black and white lines and distinctive stripes on head. Utters one or two "kreech" calls when flushed and flies off zigzag then flies higher. May be confused with Jack Snipe which is smaller with a shorter bill.

Abbix Stamp

Belfast Hills Partnership

Belfast Hills Partnership

9 Social Economy Village

Hannahstown Hill

Belfast

BT17 0XS

Those marked with \* are on the Northern Ireland Priority Species List because they are rare or in decline.