

Worried about Yellowhammers

Indeed, I am worried about Yellowhammers. They have given cause for concern for some years now across the great swathes of agricultural land in the UK where once they were common. They are now rare in such locations and this is thought to be due primarily to a lack of winter food. Improved agricultural tidiness (no spilt grain) and a much increased acreage of winter wheat and barley (which has almost completely consigned fields of winter stubble to the history books) have made it hard for Yellowhammers. Set-aside has offered a lifeline over the last few years but now even that will disappear.



But what about our local Yellowhammers in Pembrokeshire?? Well, this article was prompted by the fact that we have had a singing Yellowhammer for the last five summers within earshot of our house. But not this year. And a walk along a lane in Little Haven which had up to two singing males in 2006 had none this year. William Richards tells me they have disappeared from their usual haunts around Windmill Farm over the last few years. So are they just moving around, or are they really disappearing here too, like in the rest of the UK?? If they are, why could that be? – very little has changed here in terms of agriculture.

I already miss our local bird – the garden seems emptier without the “Little bit of bread and no cheese” song, (often without the “cheese” and often also without the “no”) - especially as he used to sing all through the quiet times of summer when other birds have finished singing.

If you know of a regular singing Yellowhammer in the local area this year, can you let me know?? It is important information which I can feed into the current British Bird Atlas project.

Rosemary Royle