

## 2019 LIFE ON LAND AWARD WINNERS

- **CORN BUNTINGS, Jacks Bush Farm, Hampshire**

**The Lovell family, landholders:**

“Jacks Bush Farm is a great place to be. To work, live, and play. We are ever more conscious of that during this pandemic. We don't really own the farm; we are merely custodians and we want to leave something good for the next generations. The Corn buntings are a sign of life and hope to us. They are just a little brown bird, they're not showy, and don't have any celebrity status. They never seem to be able to fly very well; they are just doing their own thing, getting on with getting through. And yet they bring us such joy whenever we see them. There is plenty of room in God's creation for all of us and it is wonderful that this special bird has an opportunity to thrive here.”

**Andy Clements, Chief Executive of the British Trust for Ornithology and Board member of Natural England says:**

"It is great to see the successes of the group of farmers facilitated by the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), particularly how their management practices have exceeded that national abundance threshold for Corn Bunting. Congratulations go to Mark Lovell whose management of Jacks Bush Farm is sustaining these numbers. The British Trust for Ornithology has been monitoring numbers of Corn Bunting, along with many other farmland birds, for over 50 years. In England the population has declined by 85% over the last 50 years, with recent declines slowing as a result of bespoke farmland management. We know what to do to help this species and potentially to reverse the decline: providing late-cut or uncut grasses/cereals with a ground layer of weeds makes it possible. It is really encouraging to see the results from the Hampshire farmers. Great job!"

***bto.org***

**Alison Cross, Principal Farm Advisor, HIWWT says:**

“Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust is working towards a Wilder Hampshire and Isle of Wight encouraging more people to get on nature's side and make space for wildlife to thrive. Our work with the farming community is a vital part of this and the Wallop Brook Farmers group is a great example of farmers working together with the Trust to address local environmental issues. Made possible through Defra's Facilitation Fund which provides funding for collaborative working, the Wallop Brook Farmers are learning more about the wildlife on their farms and taking action to reverse declines. It has been brilliant to have the tool provided through Redlist Revival which has provided a meaningful way of being able to measure performance of farmland birds on our farms and we are so excited that one of the farms has done so fantastically well with regard to the Corn Bunting population, exceeding the national threshold for abundance.”

***hiwwt.org.uk***

- **CURLEW, Bolton Castle, North Yorkshire**

**Tom Orde-Powlett, family member:**

“Our family has been associated with this area of North Yorkshire for a very long time with each generation sharing the privilege and the responsibility for the heritage and history of the land that we look after. The curlews bring great joy in their own right, but to do so in the numbers we have, against these terrible national declines, is a great reflection of the landscape that is not only maintaining history but also flourishing. We hope what we are doing will provide inspiration to others.”

***boltoncastle.co.uk***

**Mary Colwell, Curlew Media, says:**

“The Curlew is in such trouble in the UK any refuge in this conservation storm is welcome, and Bolton Castle provides that in abundance. Now red-listed and of great conservation concern, the problems are mostly in the breeding season - curlew simply can't get enough chicks away to sustain their populations. On the estate, they find a safe haven - food, excellent habitat and safety. The team are passionate about all wildlife but the love for curlews is palpable. On behalf of the curlew world we would like to thank him for keeping these birds going in such tough times.” [curlewmedia.com](http://curlewmedia.com)

- **LAPWING, Elmley National Nature Reserve, Kent**

**Gareth and Georgina Fulton, stewards at Elmley:**

“For us, Elmley is a place of soul stirring skies and rejuvenated life. It's a place which brings happiness, calm and permanence to many people. Our lapwings are the symbol of this annual rejuvenation of abundant life on the marshes which we hope inspires and enthuses everyone who visits.”

[elmleynaturereserve.co.uk](http://elmleynaturereserve.co.uk)

**Mark Bridgeman, President of the Country Land & Business Association, says:**

“I am delighted to learn of the Life on Land Award for Lapwings being presented to Gareth & Georgina Fulton for their work at Elmley National Nature Reserve. In contrast to many of the short-term targets within today's world, many landholders have frequently provided long-term commitment and continuity for the benefit of land and society. It is no surprise to see the endeavours of the current generation continuing with the work undertaken by Georgina's parents, Philip & Corrine Merricks. Elmley is not just a reserve where species are clinging on to remnants of a declining population but is a thriving Inland water and wetland habitat where species abundance flourishes year after year.”

[cla.org.uk](http://cla.org.uk)

- **NIGHTINGALE, Knepp Castle Estate, West Sussex**

**Charlie Burrell and Isabella Tree, landholders:**

“For us, Nightingales have been an emblem of success in a sea of decline. With numbers declining everywhere, we started our project with none and slowly they started to come. This has meant that we have been able to be enthralled and excited by the re-emergence of this, and other, missing species. With Nightingales this is even more exciting as they travel from the West African jungle and now choose to be here – and in encouraging numbers. Nightingales singing in a cool spring evening in southern England is one of the greatest joys and the thought that they may be gone from us in the next 20 years is shocking. Hopefully what we are doing here at Knepp might help us all become a little bit more aware of what we are doing to our planet and all improve our care for the species we share it with and the habitat they need.”

[knepp.co.uk](http://knepp.co.uk)

**Dr Mike Rands, past Chief Executive of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and Master Elect of Darwin College, Cambridge said:**

“I am simply delighted that Sir Charles Burrell and Knepp Estate have been awarded the Life on Land Award for their amazing efforts to conserve and restore the Nightingale population of the UK.

The future of humanity's life on Earth depends on nature; it provides the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food that we eat. The Knepp rewilding project is truly transformational in both its aspiration and achievements. Through innovative restoration of what was once intensively managed

arable farmland into wildlife-rich habitat through rewilding and very light touch management, the Estate has become a model of sustainable development. By restoring natural ecological processes in our countryside, the Knepp Estate offers a remarkable vision of a future in which the land can be managed to benefit both people and nature.

“It is so fitting that this Award, based on objective nation-wide assessment by another innovative and remarkable project - Redlist Revival - should be for the recovery of the Nightingale: a species that has undergone a 90% decline in the last 50 years in the UK but has an enormously important role in human culture, our music, literature and conservation science.

I warmly congratulate Knepp Caste Estate for winning this Award and for the pioneering work being done both at Knepp and by Redlist Revival to sustain the natural world for the future prosperity of us all.” ***cambridgeconservation.org***

**Penny Green, Knepp Ecologist**

“To hear Nightingale song ringing through the springtime night sky is something very special indeed to me, it gives me goose bumps because I know I’m one of the few lucky ones still able to experience this song or even to understand the importance of what I’m hearing. I *could* be sad to think that we might lose this species from the UK in my lifetime but instead I feel hopeful that places like Knepp exist and are providing the perfect habitat for this species to thrive and bolster its numbers. Sharing the joy of Nightingales and what we’re learning about them with others can only help raise awareness and help keep the enchanted melody of the Nightingale in our countryside.” ***knepp.co.uk***

• **TREE SPARROW, Vine House Farm, Lincolnshire**

**Nicholas Watts, landholder:**

“Vine House Farm is my life. Not just because of the food we produce, but also because of the wildlife that flourishes alongside it.

Tree sparrows mean a lot to all of us here, to my daughter and now my grandson too.

It is pleasing that they are increasing, especially when they have declined so much elsewhere.”  
***vinehousefarm.co.uk***

**Chris Butler, chairman of Trustees, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Groups says:**

“Vine House Farm is a past national winner of the coveted FWAG Silver Lapwing award (currently sponsored by Waitrose) presented to farmers for outstanding commitment and success in improving biodiversity and wildlife habitat on their farms over the years.

This Life on Land Award provides affirmation of the scale of this commitment and congratulations to Vine House Farm for the continuing contribution, particularly for this key species of Bird of Conservation Concern.”

***fwag.org.uk***