



Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur



Description: The smallest UK pigeon, turtle doves are a summer migrant, distinguished by a pale grey-lilac head and breast, chestnut and black diamonds on the wings and a white edged black tail. In spring and early summer they proclaim their territory with a soft purring call from exposed perches.

National status: UK Priority Species, Red list endangered species.

The population of breeding turtle dove in the UK has suffered a 96% UK population decline since 1970 and a 74% decline across Europe since 1980. A bird that was once common across much of England is now retreating into an ever shrinking patch of East Anglia and South East of England, with Bird Atlas data revealing that their range shrank by 52% between 1970 and 2010. The UK population was estimated to consist of 14,000 breeding territories in 2009, however this is now likely to be much lower and the current population is estimated to be between 6-7000 territories.

Local status: Mirroring the national trend turtle doves have been lost from much of their former range in Cambridgeshire with the most recent population estimate (2016) for the county suggesting that just 150–300 pairs may persist.

Associated habitats: Arable Field Margins, Wood Pasture and Parkland, Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, Traditional Orchards, Hedgerows, Scrub, Brownfield Sites, Chalk Grassland.

Key sites: RSPB Fowlmere

Suggested actions to benefit this species:

- Create cultivated plots or margins to allow natural regeneration of arable plants on lighter soils.
- Sow flowering seed mixes developed to provide food for turtle doves throughout the breeding season.
- Maintain areas of mature scrub and hedgerow by managing on 3 year rotation. Do not undertake site clearance or scrub management between 1st March to 31st August.
- Ensure development ecological surveys target this species to identify remaining breeding sites.
- Create new scrub areas close to suitable site for foraging and ponds for clean drinking water.
- Report sightings of turtle doves to local records centre: <http://www.cperc.org.uk/>

Sources of further information: Operation Turtle Dove <http://www.operationturtledove.org/>