

THE CROW FAMILY (Corvids)

Corvids are generalist feeders but it is well known that their diet includes the eggs and nestlings of many songbirds. Research in this area is sparse and of questionable quality. It is legal to control their numbers to protect wildlife using humane methods (with the exception of ravens and choughs).

CORVID NUMBERS HAVE BEEN INCREASING OVER 40 YEARS

e.g. Jackdaw – up 114%
Magpie – up 94%
Carrion Crow – up 81%
Rook – up 36%



We have lived in a managed environment, a 'synthetic' ecosystem, since Neolithic Times. The numbers of farm workers and gamekeepers who hitherto managed our pest species are a mere fraction of what they were 100 years ago.

WHAT EFFECT IS THIS HAVING ON SONGBIRDS?

Predation has already been proved to have a serious effect on upland ground nesting birds and waders. There is no current research on the effect of corvid predation on songbirds.

THE PROBLEM

Songbird numbers have crashed in one generation:

e.g. Skylark – down 51%
Tree sparrow – down 89%
House sparrow – down 74%
Corn Bunting – down 90%

WHY?

- Habitat loss and modern farming usually get the blame but both these have actually been improving in recent years
- Rising levels of uncontrolled predation are ignored – crows, magpies, cats, sparrowhawks, grey squirrels all at record levels

THE RESEARCH

- Existing research is out-of-date and flawed
- New high quality research is urgently needed
- No fully experimental study of songbird predation has ever been carried out in the UK

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

SongBird Survival has commissioned the first ever fully experimental study to examine the impact of corvid removal on farmland songbird productivity. The project will be carried out by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust who have well-recognised expertise in this field.

The two year study will use four pairs of varied sites throughout England, Scotland and Wales in 2011 which contain an abundance of songbirds and corvids, with a view to using four more in 2012. The sites chosen for corvid removal will be chosen at random.

A pilot study has already been successfully completed in 2010 to validate the methodology of counting fledged broods without the need to find nests in farmland hedgerows.

This project aims to deliver the first definitive evaluation of the impact of growing numbers of corvids on the productivity of our songbird population.

THIS WORK WILL COST £88,000

PLEASE HELP US WITH YOUR DONATION

**SongBird Survival, PO Box 311, Diss. IP22 1WW
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RESEARCH FUND APPEAL – DONATION FORM

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Corvid Research Project

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The first ever experimental study examining the impact of record numbers of the crow family on declining songbirds