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for people
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Red grouse



L Campbell (rspb-images.com)

The red grouse is a plump bird, rich brown in colour. When disturbed, grouse explode from the ground, making a whirring noise, and glide away with bowed wings.

CALENDAR

Breeding season:

Beginning of April to end of June.

Nest:

In deep heather.

Winter:

Red grouse are generally sedentary and remain on the moors during winter. Territories are usually established in November/December and the birds are generally paired by January.

HABITAT

Red grouse nest in low densities on open moorland, as well as on raised and blanket bogs with heather cover. In Northern Ireland they are found in the Glens, Sperrins and the Fermanagh uplands.

DIET

Adult red grouse are mainly vegetarian, feeding on heather, bilberry and cotton grass shoots, flowers, seeds and berries. They feed on berries in trees and bushes. Young grouse must have insects for the first 2–3 weeks, before graduating to the same diet as the adults.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE RED GROUSE?

- Create a mosaic of age structures within existing areas of heather. Long heather is required for nesting while young shoots provide food.
- Avoid overgrazing, to maintain heather cover.
- Adopt a suitable burning regime that retains some old heather while promoting healthy growth of young shoots.
- Consider re-establishing heather moorland by reducing inputs and stocking levels.
- Avoid planting trees on existing heather moorland and control the spread of bracken.

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



The RSPB,
Northern Ireland HQ,
Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 7QT.
Tel: 028 9049 1547



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Red grouse distribution

Data provided by *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988–1991*. British Trust for Ornithology, Scottish Ornithologists' Club and Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now known as Birdwatch Ireland).



Filled dot = breeding

Open dot = present during the breeding season