

# Farmland Bird Population in France Decreases Due to Pesticides

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Category : Science/Environment

## Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **dwindle** / ˈdwɪn dl / (v) – to decrease in number  
*Example:* The number of birds in the zoo **dwindled** from 500 to 100.
- 2. **over the course of (something)** / ˈoʊ vər ðə kɔrs ʌv / (idiom) – throughout the duration of something  
*Example:* **Over the course of** five years, scientists were able to formulate a new type of antibiotic.
- 3. **culprit** / ˈkʌl prɪt / (n) – the reason for something bad that happened  
*Example:* Climate change is the main **culprit** behind the decline in polar bear population.
- 4. **ecologist** / ɪˈkɒl ə dʒɪst / (n) – a scientist who studies the relationship between living things and their environment  
*Example:* A group of **ecologists** is living in the forest to study the animals there.
- 5. **disconcerting** / ˌdɪs kənˈsɜr tɪŋ / (adj) – making a person feel disturbed  
*Example:* The child has a **disconcerting** habit of talking to strangers.

## Article

Read the text below.

Recent studies found that the bird population in French farmland has **dwindled** because of the use of pesticides.

Researchers conducted two studies **over the course of** 20 years. One was done on a national level, while the other focused on a particular agricultural region in central France. Both studies discovered that farmland bird population has decreased by 33%, although it has increased nationally. Researchers believe that using pesticides in corn and grain fields is the main **culprit** behind this decline. While pesticides do not directly affect the birds, these substances kill insects that birds rely on for food.

Linnets, skylarks, and partridges are some of the birds that have been quickly disappearing in French farmland. Vincent Bretagnolle [vin-suhn bre-tuhn-yohl], a French **ecologist** and one of the researchers, claims that the decline is so fast that the birds are nearing extinction. This **disconcerting** trend is also apparent in other countries in Europe. In fact, 24 out of 39 species found in European farmland suffered a decrease in their population. Only six species have seen an increase in number.

The researchers feel alarmed with this decline in farmland bird population. This is because agricultural areas also rely on birds to spread pollen for plant reproduction.

Despite the results of the study, researchers said that farmers should not be blamed for the declining number of farmland birds. In addition, they said that a ban on pesticides may not be the best solution.

Aside from using pesticides, other known causes of the decrease in farmland bird population include intensive farming, deforestation, and not practicing proper crop rotation.

## Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

### Discussion A

- Do you think the use of pesticides should be regulated? Why or why not?

- Do you think it is possible for your country to face the same problem (decline in farmland bird population)? Discuss.

**Discussion B**

- In your opinion, who should take action to prevent animal extinction (e.g. government, concerned companies)? Discuss.

- What other initiatives should governments or private organizations do to address animal extinction?