

*This paper forms part of the proceedings from the BOU conference **Ecosystem services: do we need birds?**
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POSTER ABSTRACT

Farmland birds belong to the farmers' world

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Based on the results from two studies, we discuss the issue of farmland birds being a key part of cultural services in agroecosystems. The first study was a sociological interview-based research in Finland and Estonia. It was run in 2003-2004 in order to explore farmers' interest in and knowledge of farmland wildlife, their understanding of the concept of biodiversity, awareness of the potential causes behind declines of farmland birds, and willingness to undertake practices favouring farmland wildlife. The results confirmed that most farmers in both countries viewed biodiversity from a narrow perspective, frequently excluding weed and pest species from it. To the question "The disappearance of which wild species from your farm would you regard as a personal loss?" Finnish farmers expressed considerably higher concern about the decline in farmland species than Estonian counterparts. When prompted to name species, 64 % of the farmers named birds, while 16 % each named plants and mammals, and 7 % invertebrates. The bird species named by Finnish farmers mostly included those nationally declining or regionally lost. In Estonia, most farmland species are common and abundant. It is plausible that farmers found it difficult to perceive declines as possible. The expressed interest in wildlife generally related to farmers' willingness to undertake wildlife-friendly measures. However, in return farmers expected some level of support from the society. This expectation was especially common among Finnish farmers with longer experience of receiving subsidies as compared to Estonian ones, for whom many activities remain culturally imbedded.

The second study in Finland was part of research on a novel agri-environment scheme of environmental fallows. In 2009, 72 farmers were encouraged to provide their own observations of wildlife species on fallow fields². Most of them (52) named species of birds typical of fallows such as *Vanellus vanellus*, *Numenius arquata*, *Perdix perdix*, *Alauda arvensis*, and *Crex crex*. Many commented on an increased abundance of these as a part of a positive experience with fallows.

It is plausible that public support for nature management in farmland might work best if explicitly targeted at species in agroecosystems that form part of cultural ecosystem services as experienced and valued by farmers. It might be important to take into account that farmers' concern for species seem to originate in a personal experience of declines in conspicuous species. These culturally imbedded species could be regarded as *cultural flagship species*. An European-wise research across the gradients of bird decline rates and farming systems might lay a foundation for a suit of such species.