



YOUR REGULAR UPDATE TO ISSUES AFFECTING WILD BIRDS AND VINE HOUSE FARM BIRD FOODS

National Nest Box week 14th- 21st February

Now is the perfect time of year to be thinking about putting up new nest boxes and dusting off old boxes for the forthcoming breeding season. National Nest Box week is on the 14th- 21st February. The week, set up by the BTO is designed to encourage people to either buy or build a nest box and clean out their existing boxes, with the aim to provide more nesting habitat for our garden birds. We offer a large range of nest boxes in our shop and on mail order. We have a range of nest boxes made from wood for sparrows, tits and open fronted boxes for Robins. Please [visit our website](#) for more information.

We also offer woodcreate boxes that are rot and predator proof. We also offer metal nest box plates that are ideal to help prolong the life of an existing wooden box against predator attack. If you are looking for something a bit different we also stock House Martin and Swallow boxes along with bat boxes.



Wooden Sparrow and tit boxes £14.68

Tree Sparrows

Over the last two years Tree Sparrow numbers at one of the ponds I have created on Vine House Farm have built up with the help of nest boxes, feeding and a maturing site with water. About 5 pairs bred around the site. Tree Sparrows can have up to three broods so if conditions are right numbers can soon build up. I have been feeding various seeds and they like red millet the best at my site, second is white millet, third is canary seed and fourth is wheat. That would explain when I was feeding them at another site about 5 years ago on wheat why they were throwing out 5 grains to every one they ate. Numbers in November were about 130, earlier this week numbers had increased to 180 to 200. More nest boxes are being erected and there are plans for more ponds! We now offer red millet in our smaller 6kg bags if any one would like to try millet please [visit our website](#).



Tree Sparrows enjoying our home grown red millet at Vine House Farm

Reserve Focus- Snettisham

I describe Snettisham, in North Norfolk as the greatest ornithological spectacle in the UK, but to see this spectacle you will want a current tide table. The spectacle occurs in the winter when high tide is at about 8am when there is no moon, the tide table will also tell you the phases of the moon. Out on the mud at the end of December there were about 30,000 Knot, 2000 Oyster Catchers, 3000 Bar Tailed Godwits, ducks and other waders as well as 50,000 Pink Footed Geese. The geese take over an hour to fly off and the Knot get up and have a fly around every so often, flying around in unison, a really magnificent sight.

In August and September there will be no geese but there could be up to 80,000 Knot and the tide could be between 7am and 9am. It doesn't matter what the stage of the moon is in the autumn.

On The Farm

January and February are probably the quietest months on a farm, you could say it is maintenance time, I hope we have time to do our maintenance as we seem to be busy finishing work around the new bird seed building and installing new equipment. We are also busy loading wheat which is going for export. The 2008 harvest was a very big harvest and around 4 million tons of wheat will have to be exported. There are specific varieties of wheat to grow for bread making, for biscuits or for animal food. Here in the Fens we grow the animal feed or biscuit making varieties as when we grow the bread making varieties we cannot obtain the quality that is required for bread. The bread making varieties yield less than the feed varieties but the farmer can make a considerable price premium if the wheat makes the full specification for bread making. Potatoes are also being loaded out, about one load a week of King Edwards, one load a week of organic Sante all of which are destined for Waitrose shelves.

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See our website at www.vinehousefarm.co.uk

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