

Marsh harrier

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Marsh harrier male

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Latin name

Circus aeruginosus

Family

[Hawks, vultures and eagles](#) (Accipitridae)

Overview

The largest of the harriers, it can be recognised by its long tail and light flight with wings held in a shallow 'V'. It is distinguishable from other harriers by its larger size, heavier build, broader wings and absence of white on the rump. Females are larger than males and have obvious creamy heads. Its future in the UK is now more secure than at any time during the last century but historical declines and subsequent recovery means it is an Amber List species.

Where to see them

Mainly found in eastern and south-east England, with some in the north-west, south-west and Scotland. Seen over reedbeds and marshes, as well as farmland near wetlands. Marsh harriers can be seen at: Elmley, Kent; Leighton Moss, Lancashire; Minsmere, Suffolk; Titchwell Marsh and Strumpshaw Fen, Norfolk; Ouse and Nene Washes, Cambs, and Blacktoft Sands, Yorkshire. Other nature reserves with marsh harriers include Stodmarsh, Kent and Wicken Fen, Cambridgeshire.

When to see them

Birds are back in their breeding areas by April and leave in September and October.

What they eat

Small birds and mammals

Estimated numbers

Europe	UK breeding*	UK wintering*	UK passage*
-	360 females	-	-

* UK breeding is the number of pairs breeding annually. UK wintering is the number of individuals present from October to March. UK passage is the number of individuals passing through on migration in spring and/or autumn.

Distribution



● RESIDENT ● PASSAGE
● SUMMER ● WINTER

Please note that the map is only intended as a guide. It shows general distribution rather than detailed, localised populations.



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