

Global bird populations in dramatic decline

By Louise Gray

SOME of Britain's favourite birds are at risk of dying out, a report discloses today.

The cuckoo, turtle dove, grey partridge and corn bunting have all seen large falls in their populations, according to the study, which has compiled extensive evidence of a global decline in birds.

The report by BirdLife International found that

species are declining across the globe due to a loss of habitat. The main threats to birds worldwide are agriculture, logging and invasive species.

Dr Mike Rands, the chief executive of BirdLife, said the fall in numbers reflected the degradation of the environment.

"Birds provide an accurate and easy way to read the environmental barometer, allowing us to see clearly the

pressures our current way of life is putting on the world's biodiversity," he said.

The report said government targets to slow or halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 were unlikely to be met because of a lack of money or commitment.

Many birds in Asia were declining because of trapping for captivity while in South America the destruction of forests is a serious problem. A study of

124 of Europe's common birds, which took place over a 26-year period, found that almost half had declined across 20 countries.

The common cuckoo has declined by 17 per cent, while species such as the turtle dove, grey partridge and corn bunting have dropped by 62 per cent, 79 per cent and 61 per cent respectively.

The story is the same for birds migrating between Europe, the Middle East and

Africa, which have suffered 40 per cent population declines over three decades.

Species such as the Eurasian wryneck, Northern wheatear, sedge warbler and common nightingale are disappearing.

A spokesman for the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs said: "This valuable research will help understanding of how best to tackle the decline in bird species."

Habitat fears Some of Britain's favourite species at risk of being driven to extinction



Some of the British birds whose habitat is under threat. Clockwise, from left: corn bunting, common cuckoo, turtle dove and grey partridge. A study of 124 of Europe's common birds, which took place over 26 years, found that almost half had declined

