



Driven grouse shooting and moorland management

Q: What are red grouse and where are they found?

A: Red grouse are one of our few endemic sub-species, meaning that they are **only** found in the UK, and have a population estimated to be 230,000 pairs. They are found on heather moorland including both areas of blanket bog and upland shrub heath. They are classed as a gamebird so seasonal shooting is entirely legal.

Q: What is driven grouse shooting?

A: Red grouse are flushed from cover into the air by people ("beaters") and fly over the people shooting, ("guns") who are stood stationary in a line.

Q: Are there benefits to other wildlife from driven grouse shooting?

A: Many species of upland birds, including curlew, lapwing and golden plover, are more numerous and breed more successfully on moorland managed for red grouse. These areas are also better than other land uses in maintaining heather: 75% of the world's heather moorland is found in Britain making it globally rarer than rainforest.

Q: Are these benefits widely recognised?

A: Yes. In response to the last petition to ban driven grouse shooting, the UK government released a statement recognising that "*When carried out in accordance with the law, grouse shooting for sport is a legitimate activity and in addition to its significant economic contribution, providing jobs and investment in some of our most remote areas, it can offer important benefits for wildlife and habitat conservation*".

Q: What happens when driven grouse shooting stops?

A: The area of heather declines as do species such as curlew, lapwing, golden plover, redshank, red grouse and black grouse, sometimes to the point of local extinction.

Q: Is there a conflict between driven grouse shooting and the conservation of birds of prey?

A: Yes. Our research shows that the predation on grouse by a large number of hen harriers and other raptors can prevent a grouse population recovering from a density too low to be sustainably shot.

Q: What happens then?

A: The grouse moor becomes uneconomic to manage and gamekeepers lose their jobs with knock-on effects in the local economy. Ground-nesting birds decline, including waders and hen harriers themselves.

Q: Do hen harriers thrive on land in England that has no driven grouse shooting?

A: No, due to a combination of nests being predated, lack of food, disturbance, and possibly failing to have enough birds settled in an area to make it attractive to others.

Q: Why are there so few hen harriers on English driven grouse moors?

A: It has been shown that illegal culling by gamekeepers can restrict hen harrier numbers on some grouse moors. Yet without the gamekeepers managing the moors hen harrier decline naturally from predation by other species and a lack of food.

Q: What else can these moors be used for?

A: Many of the areas where moorland is used for grouse shooting are classified as Less Favoured Areas (LFAs), indicating that agricultural production potential is limited by the natural landscape. The historical options for commercial use of the land are few, being mainly limited to grazing by livestock, plantation forestry or game management. Tourism benefits from upland landscapes but makes no contribution to the management costs. Commercial or state incentives would be needed to fund other upland land uses such as carbon storage, renewables or water management.

Q: What will a ban on driven grouse shooting achieve?

A: Almost certainly a decline in a range of species, loss of heather moorland, loss of employment and an impact on a fragile rural economy.

Q: So what can be done?

A: Now, after 15 years of talks, 20 reports, three governments and six years of mediated conflict resolution talks, the aim is to implement the [Defra Hen Harrier Action Plan](#), published in January 2016. This plan recognises the source of the conflict, and brings together several approaches to mitigate it. The combination of diversionary feeding, brood management, winter and roost protection, reintroduction into previously occupied areas, population monitoring, and increased intelligence and prosecution efforts offers the best solution to resolve this divisive issue.

For more information, contact Sofi Lloyd on 01572 717169 or Andrew Gilruth on 01425 651004.

[Click here to download](#) our in-depth guide to grouse shooting and moorland management which covers:

- ✓ Grouse shooting
- ✓ Conservation on grouse moors
- ✓ Heather burning
- ✓ Moorland drainage
- ✓ Disease control
- ✓ Upland predator control
- ✓ Hen harriers and red grouse
- ✓ Mountain hares and red grouse
- ✓ Alternative moorland use
- ✓ Commonly heard criticisms of driven grouse shooting

