



GWCT General Licence survey results December 2019

Introduction

In response to Defra's Wild Birds General Licence Survey in September 2019, the GWCT developed a simple online survey, based on the survey published by Defra, but tailored to the needs of our members and with the assurance of anonymity. It was open for seven weeks and received 2,951 responses.

The survey collected information on the species controlled by respondents, the reasons why this control was necessary, the alternatives that had been tried and the effectiveness of them. It also invited further comments to Defra if respondents chose to include additional information. The survey is attached as appendix A.

The survey provided free text boxes to allow respondents the freedom to describe their experiences. These were then analysed and assigned to three main categories describing the driving factor for undertaking control: conservation, agriculture or public health. The wealth of information provided using this technique gives an important insight into the perceptions of those who live and work in our countryside and who are actively involved in its management. A representative selection of these qualitative responses to illustrate the survey results is included in appendix B.

This document is submitted on behalf of those who completed the survey. It reports their views rather than those of the GWCT, summarises the results obtained and provides an insight into the knowledge and experiences of those who responded.

Who we are

This submission has been produced by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), a research and education charity that has published over 100 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals on issues relating to predation and farmland and moorland birds over the past 50 years. On the basis of our scientific expertise and credibility, we regularly provide advice to such statutory bodies as Defra, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England. We also provide practical advice to farmers, landowners and other conservation organisations on how to manage their land with a view to improving biodiversity. Our Advisory team have, for many years, run industry-leading best practice predation control training courses. These courses are based on practical experience backed up by GWCT science.

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Executive summary

- 2,951 people participated in the survey, many of these providing information on more than one species
- In total 6,366 entries were made for 10 individual species
- Ten species were included in the survey, with the majority of respondents controlling several of them.
- The main reasons for controlling these species were for conservation and agricultural purposes.
- Almost all participants report having witnessed the species they control causing the damage that they describe.
- The results highlighted that the respondents showed a high level of belief that the ability to manage these species is critical to the conservation of certain wild bird species, particularly ground-nesting birds and to agriculture, particularly the protection of livestock and crops.
- The survey revealed a wide range of experiences and concerns around many of the species covered

Figure 1. Respondents cited conservation, agriculture and public health as the reasons for species control being necessary.

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Carrion crow | 46% | 76% | 53% | 5% |
| Magpie | 54% | 97% | 11% | 2% |
| Rook | 17% | 33% | 84% | 20% |
| Jay | 13% | 96% | 7% | 2% |
| Jackdaw | 14% | 50% | 56% | 33% |
| Woodpigeon | 52% | 3% | 99% | 6% |
| Feral Pigeon | 12% | 9% | 87% | 60% |
| Canada Goose | 9% | 15% | 76% | 36% |
| Egyptian Goose | 1% | 55% | 50% | 18% |
| Other species (desired) | 8% | 60% | 55% | 24% |

Synthesis

The large number of responses and high level of engagement from participants in this survey reveals the importance of the General Licensing system for countryside managers across the UK.

For half of the species covered, conservation was the predominant reason for carrying out lethal control of bird species. The other half were controlled most often to protect agricultural interests. No species was predominantly controlled for public health reasons, although this was also an important driver for controlling several species.

Control of certain avian species is considered critical by respondents for conserving ground-nesting birds, songbirds, gamebirds and other species, for example owls. Many describe the devastating impact that predation by crows, magpies, jays and other can have on prey species. The revocation of General Licences in spring 2019 at a critical period for breeding birds, spring crop establishment and lambing was perceived by many participants as having detrimental impacts. Many practitioners carry out control of avian predators primarily for wild bird conservation and are passionate about the effect this has in protecting their local wildlife.

Farmers were one of the largest groups to complete the survey, detailing their need to protect both livestock and crops, as well as stored grain and feedstuffs, farm equipment, silage bales and many other reasons for which the General Licence is needed. Descriptions of lambs, ewes and calves being attacked by some of these controlled species as well as serious crop losses were common and emotive.

The effectiveness of non-lethal measures varied between type of control, the species respondents were looking to control, the type of damage which was occurring and local circumstances. This highlights that effectiveness of non-lethal measures is highly variable.

As well as these widespread typical situations, the results of this survey highlight the importance of the less common or well-known applications which were covered by previous General Licences. Responses include the description of jays or magpies working along a hedgerow and methodically preying on songbird nests, or collared doves inflicting costly damage to an orchard, and the flexibility of the General Licence to cover these situations was important to these individuals.

The insight this survey provides into the experience and understanding of the countryside that practitioners can bring is invaluable. While there is a strong scientific evidence base to support General Licences (see GWCT evidence submission May 2019) it is inevitable that evidence gaps exist.

These knowledge gaps can be filled, and policy guided by drawing on the enormous breadth of knowledge amassed by those on the ground over many years. This working knowledge is developed by observation, by being out in the woods and fields every day for many years.

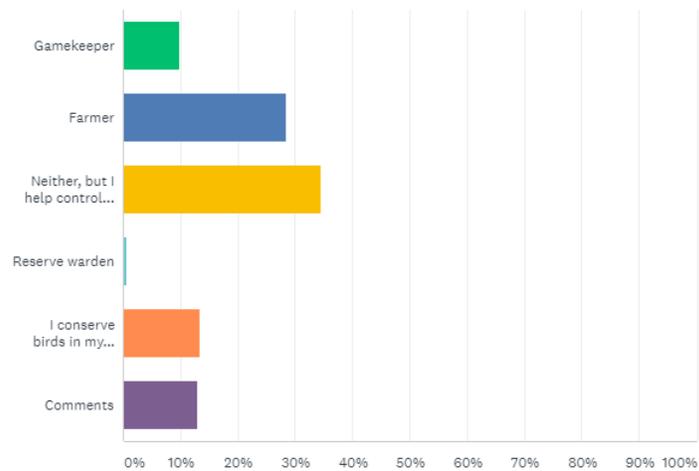
Demographic of the survey participants

Almost three thousand respondents completed the survey. It was distributed to GWCT members, as well as those of the National Gamekeepers Organisation, the Countryside Alliance, Songbird Survival, the Moorland Association, Guns on Pegs, the British Deer Society and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA). One third were GWCT members and two thirds were not.

The respondents came from a range of backgrounds, with the largest group being those who are involved in species control for a farm or shoot (35%). The next largest group were farmers themselves (28%), followed by those who control predatory species to protect species in their own garden (13%). Gamekeepers made up 10% of participants. Ten percent of participants undertake control of avian species in an SSSI, 85% in an area that is not an SSSI, and 5% did not know.

Which of these best describes you?

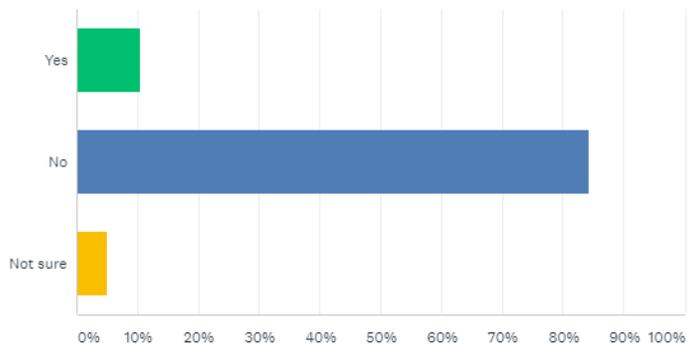
Answered: 1,687 Skipped: 1,264



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|--------------|
| Gamekeeper | 9.90% | 167 |
| Farmer | 28.45% | 480 |
| Neither, but I help control birds on a farm or shoot | 34.50% | 582 |
| Reserve warden | 0.71% | 12 |
| I conserve birds in my garden (or land) by controlling others | 13.46% | 227 |
| Comments | 12.98% | 219 |
| TOTAL | | 1,687 |

Do you control birds within an SSSI or Special Protection Area (SPA)?

Answered: 1,687 Skipped: 1,264



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|----------------|--------------|
| Yes | 10.49% 177 |
| No | 84.41% 1,424 |
| Not sure | 5.10% 86 |
| TOTAL | 1,687 |

Species breakdown

Carrion Crow

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Carrion crow | 46% | 76% | 53% | 5% |

Forty six percent of those who filled in the survey (1,366 respondents) control carrion crows and described the damage they can cause.

The main reason for carrion crow control was for conservation purposes, with three quarters of respondents describing conservation-based reasons for control. Predation of wader and songbird nests were the most commonly cited concerns, among many other damaging impacts including predation on gamebirds. Many of these are highlighted in appendix B.

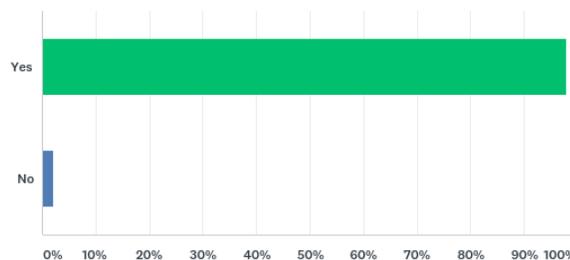
Agriculture is the motivation for half of those carrying out crow control, with the predominant reason being protection of vulnerable livestock, for example newborn lambs, as well as crop damage.

More than half of those who control carrion crows had attempted non-lethal methods, with a range of techniques being met with limited success. Various non-lethal techniques had been used in an attempt to control crows, the main ones being audio-visual deterrents or human disturbance. For 15% of respondents, this led to a positive outcome and solved the problem, but for the remainder the techniques were either ineffective, or was effective only for a short while.

Carrion crow control is considered by our respondents to be essential for the conservation of wild birds, with many participants observing increased numbers in 2019, and reporting reduced numbers of those species they try to protect with crow control. There is a perception that higher numbers of crows contribute to the falling numbers of songbirds, farmland birds, and ground-nesting species. Carrion crow control was also cited as critical to agriculture for the protection of livestock as well as crops. Farmers described in detail the suffering inflicted on lambs, and sometimes ewes, by groups of crows.

Response Graphs

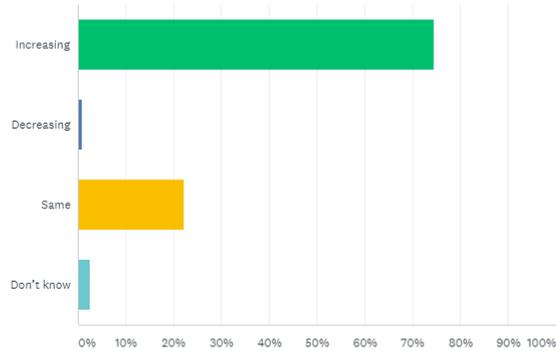
Have you witnessed this damage by carrion crows happening?



98% of respondents had witnessed the damage that they described occurring.

Is your local population of carrion crows:

Answered: 1,366 Skipped: 1,585

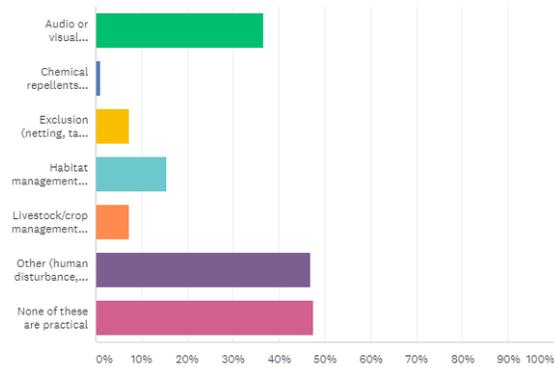


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Increasing | 74.45% | 1,017 |
| Decreasing | 0.88% | 12 |
| Same | 22.25% | 304 |
| Don't know | 2.42% | 33 |
| TOTAL | | 1,366 |

Three quarters of respondents perceive that their local population of carrion crows has been increasing, with some observing substantial increases.

Have you tried controlling carrion crows by non-lethal means?

Answered: 1,366 Skipped: 1,585

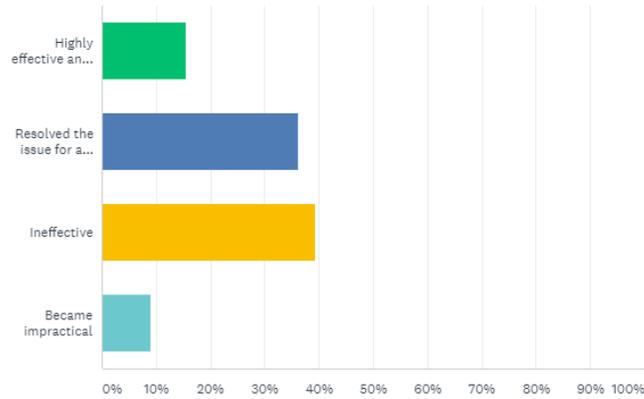


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 36.60% | 500 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 1.10% | 15 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 7.39% | 101 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 15.52% | 212 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 7.32% | 100 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 46.78% | 639 |
| None of these are practical | 47.51% | 649 |
| Total Respondents: 1,366 | | |

More than half of respondents had used alternative methods of control.

If you did try controlling carrion crows by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,198 Skipped: 1,753



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 15.44% | 185 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 36.23% | 434 |
| Ineffective | 39.23% | 470 |
| Became impractical | 9.10% | 109 |
| TOTAL | | 1,198 |

Fifteen percent of those trying non-lethal methods found it solved the problem, the remaining 85% found it ineffective, impractical, or only effective for a short time.

Magpie

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Magpie | 54% | 97% | 11% | 2% |

More than half of the respondents control magpies and described the damage they can cause (1,583 responses). The overwhelming majority of those carrying out magpie control cite conservation reasons as their motivation. This included a range of effects, often reflecting those attributed to crows, being predominantly predation of songbird nests and chicks. Nest raiding, nest robbing and nest predation were very frequently described. Agricultural reasons cited were attacking newborn lambs and other vulnerable animals.

Almost all respondents who control magpies had witnessed this damage, three quarters perceive that their local population has been increasing and many had tried alternative methods of control, but 61% feel that none of the available non-lethal alternatives are practical. Of the remainder who have used non-lethal control, methods such as human disturbance or shooting to scare are the commonest, followed by audio-visual deterrents and habitat management.

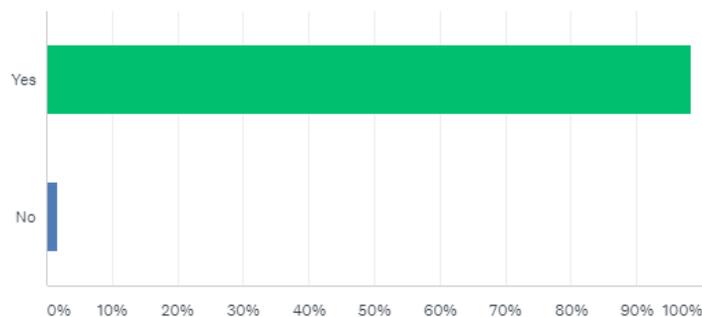
The success of such alternatives was varied, with similar proportions reporting that the method was effective and solved the problem (23%), was effective for a short time (36%), or was ineffective (33%). Eight percent found the methods became impractical.

Many of the respondents in this section refer to the protection of hedgerow birds, small birds, songbirds and ground nesting birds of which magpies are felt to be a major predator at the egg and chick stage. They are described as voracious, destructive and aggressive, causing tremendous damage, and their numbers are perceived to be increasing. There is considerable strength of feeling in the responses of practitioners who care for the wild birds that they feel their magpie control can help protect.

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by magpies happening?

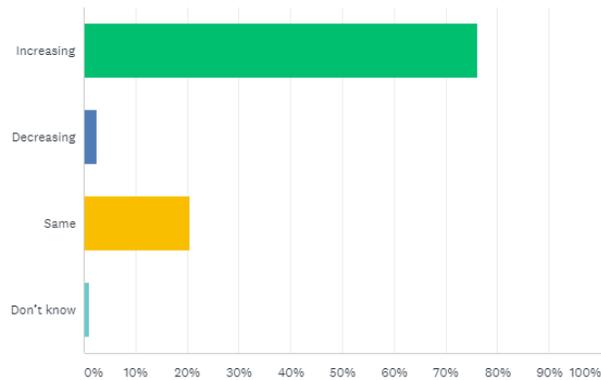
Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368



98% of respondents had witnessed the damage they described by magpies.

Is your local population of magpies:

Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368

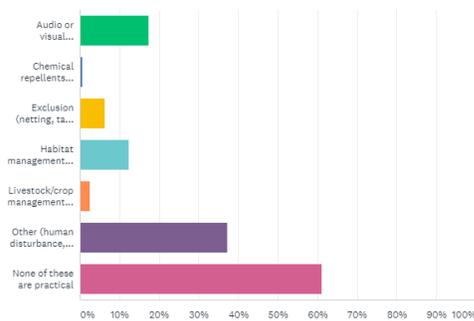


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Increasing | 76.12% | 1,205 |
| Decreasing | 2.46% | 39 |
| Same | 20.40% | 323 |
| Don't know | 1.01% | 16 |
| TOTAL | | 1,583 |

Three quarters of people feel their local population of magpies is increasing, 20% that it is stable and very few have seen decreases.

Have you tried controlling magpies by non-lethal means?

Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368

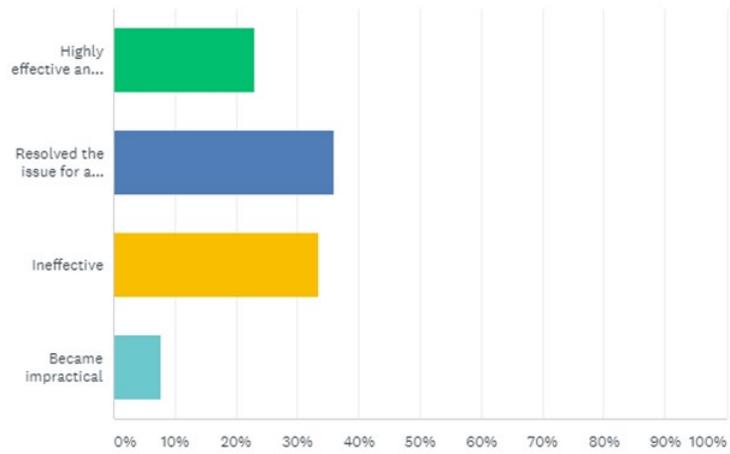


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 17.44% | 276 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 0.63% | 10 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 6.25% | 99 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 12.26% | 194 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 2.59% | 41 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 37.27% | 590 |
| None of these are practical | 61.15% | 968 |
| Total Respondents: 1,583 | | |

More than half feel that alternative methods are impractical, but around 40% have tried non-lethal control.

If you did try controlling magpies by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,360 Skipped: 1,591



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 22.94% | 312 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 35.96% | 489 |
| Ineffective | 33.38% | 454 |
| Became impractical | 7.72% | 105 |
| TOTAL | | 1,360 |

Rook

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Rooks | 17% | 33% | 84% | 20% |

Seventeen percent of respondents control rooks (514 responses). Rooks are primarily controlled for agricultural reasons, with 84% of those carrying out control citing agricultural drivers. The most common reason specified is crop protection, with rooks causing damage to seeds and young plants, but also animal feed. Farmers have specified damage to wheat, barley, maize, oil seed rape, beans and peas amongst others. As with crows, respondents also report attacks to newborn lambs. Once again, almost all (98%) respondents report having witnessed this damage.

Conservation reasons for controlling rooks include that rooks damage headlands that are planted with wild bird seed mix and therefore farmland birds do not benefit as they should from this agri-environment measure. They are reported to raid nests for eggs and chicks as well as attacking broods of ground-nesting birds.

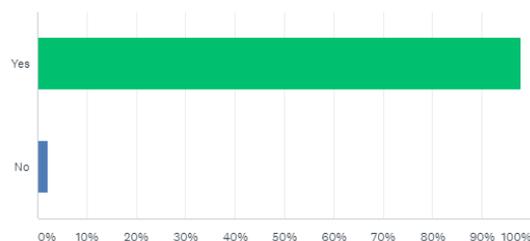
Seventy percent of those controlling rooks have tried non-lethal alternatives, with the most common methods being audio-visual disturbance (65%) and other techniques such as human disturbance and shooting to scare (57%). However, less than ten percent of these found that they could resolve the issue, with broadly similar proportions finding that it was effective only for a short while (44%) or was ineffective (40%).

“Almost all deterrents have been tried including kites, scarecrows, lasers, bird call machines, gas guns, bangers, plastic owls, taste on seed and such, but the rook is intelligent and the local numbers large and increasing”

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by rooks happening?

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

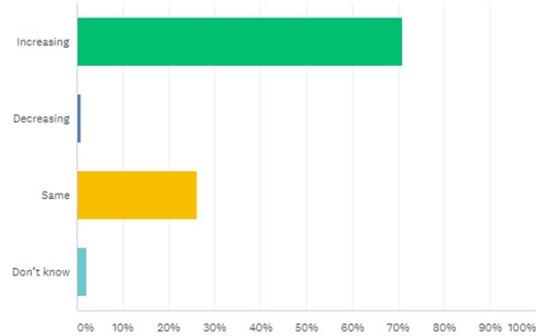


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 97.86% | 503 |
| No | 2.14% | 11 |
| TOTAL | | 514 |

Almost all respondents have witnessed rooks causing damage.

Is your local population of rooks:

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

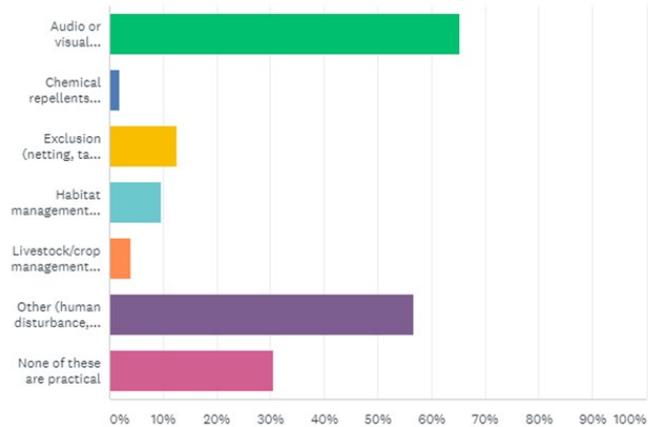


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Increasing | 71.01% | 365 |
| Decreasing | 0.78% | 4 |
| Same | 26.07% | 134 |
| Don't know | 2.14% | 11 |
| TOTAL | | 514 |

Three quarters feel that their local population is increasing.

Have you tried controlling rooks by non-lethal means?

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

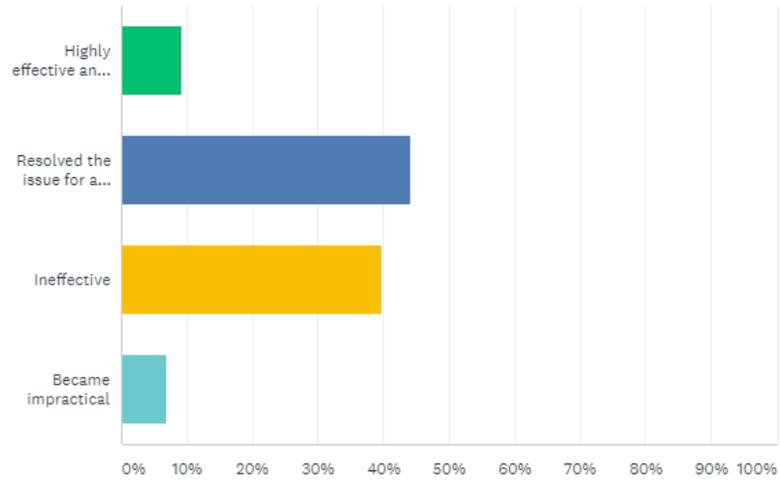


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 65.37% | 336 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 1.95% | 10 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 12.45% | 64 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 9.73% | 50 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 3.89% | 20 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 56.61% | 291 |
| None of these are practical | 30.54% | 157 |
| Total Respondents: 514 | | |

Many respondents have tried alternative methods, mainly audio-visual or other disturbance.

If you did try controlling rooks by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 480 Skipped: 2,471



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 9.17% 44 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 44.17% 212 |
| Ineffective | 39.79% 191 |
| Became impractical | 6.88% 33 |
| TOTAL | 480 |

Very few found that these alternatives solved the problem, with most finding it was effective for a limited time or did not work at all.

Jay

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Jays | 13% | 96% | 7% | 2% |

Thirteen percent of survey participants (368) control jays and described the damage they can cause. Ninety four percent of these had witnessed that damage. Almost all jay control is carried out for conservation reasons, with respondents specifying impacts on songbirds, hedgerow birds, ground nesting birds and woodland birds, with several participants mentioning spotted flycatchers. Jays are considered to cause damage predominantly by taking eggs but also chicks.

Around half of respondents feel their local jay populations is increasing (49%) and a similar number feel it is stable (47%). Of those who carry out lethal control, two thirds did not feel non-lethal alternatives were practical, with a third having tried them. The most common was other methods of disturbance such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. Around 14% found this solved the problem, but the majority found it was only effective for a short time (39%) or it was ineffective (37%).

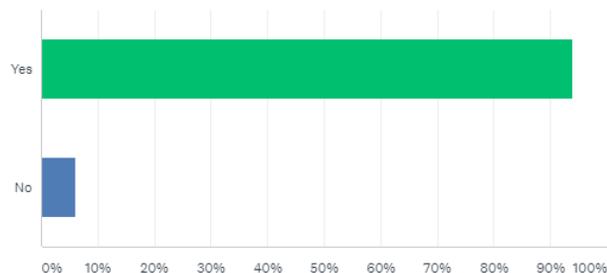
Respondents describe jays as effective and expert egg thieves, with reports of them working along hedgerows and destroying nests of many species. Woodland is particularly mentioned by some, who describe methodical predation which has a destructive effect on many nesting birds.

We control jays via a combination of shooting and trapping to protect the little owl, kestrel, goldfinch, chaffinch, bullfinch coal tit, long tailed tit, nuthatch, tree creeper, wren, spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff, willow warbler, black cap, garden warbler, swallow to name but a few.

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by jays happening?

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583

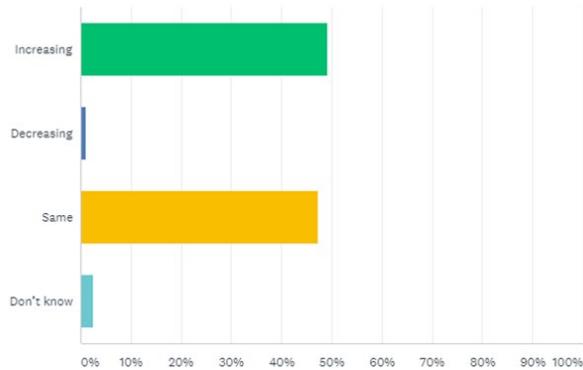


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 94.02% | 346 |
| No | 5.98% | 22 |
| TOTAL | | 368 |

94% of respondents report witnessing jay damage.

Is your local population of jays:

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583

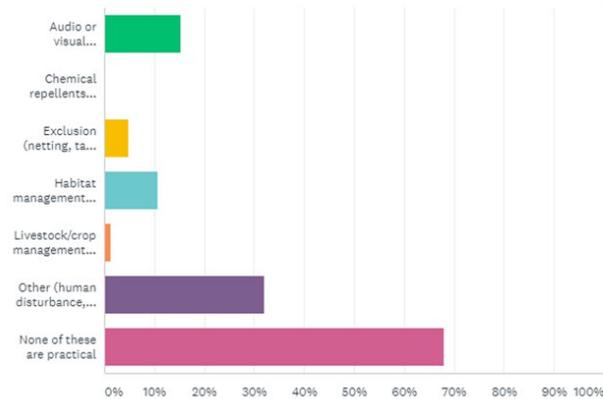


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Increasing | 49.18% | 181 |
| Decreasing | 1.09% | 4 |
| Same | 47.28% | 174 |
| Don't know | 2.45% | 9 |
| TOTAL | | 368 |

Around half of participants consider local jay populations to be increasing and half feel they are stable.

Have you tried controlling jays by non-lethal means?

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583

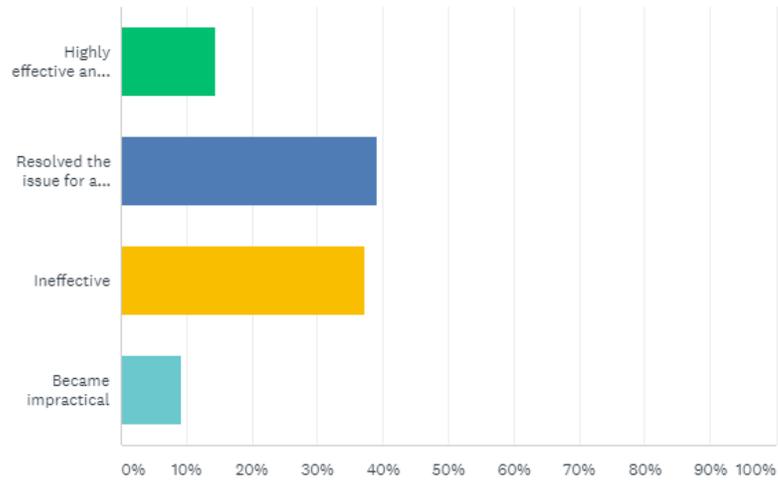


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 15.22% | 56 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 0.27% | 1 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 4.89% | 18 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 10.60% | 39 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 1.36% | 5 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 32.07% | 118 |
| None of these are practical | 67.93% | 250 |
| Total Respondents: 368 | | |

Sixty eight percent did not think alternatives methods of jay control were practical.

If you did try controlling jays by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 284 Skipped: 2,667



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 14.44% 41 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 39.08% 111 |
| Ineffective | 37.32% 106 |
| Became impractical | 9.15% 26 |
| TOTAL | 284 |

Of those who tried non-lethal methods, they solved the problem for 14% but the remaining 86% found it was ineffective, became ineffective, or became impractical.

Jackdaw

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|---------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Jackdaw | 14% | 50% | 56% | 33% |

Fourteen percent of those responding to the survey (423) control jackdaws and described the damage they can cause. There was a relatively even spread of reasons for jackdaw control, with agriculture and conservation being cited by approximately half of respondents and a third describing public health reasons for control.

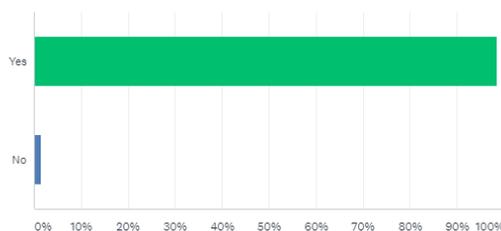
Many farmers describe crop damage, with arable crops being affected, and specific mentions of barley, maize, oats, wheat, and oil seed rape as well as damage to harvested silage. Contamination of feed and water for livestock is often described, with some reports of direct livestock mortality as a result. One respondent reports the loss of a litter of eight piglets because jackdaws pecked the eyes out. Those reporting conservation reasons for livestock like other corvids describe egg and chick predation on songbirds. One respondent specified known effects on bullfinch, whitethroat, redpoll, dunnock, blackbird, song thrush. A risk to public health is felt from contamination in and around buildings, chimney blocking causing a fire risk and damage to buildings also reported.

Again, almost all participants (99%) report witnessing this damage being caused by jackdaws. Eighty percent feel that their local jackdaw population is increasing, with almost all remaining thinking that it is stable. The majority of those controlling jackdaws have tried alternative non-lethal methods, but 40% feel that it would be impractical. Of those that did use alternatives, many (46%) used audio-visual deterrents and a similar number (48%) tried other disturbance, such as human or shooting to scare. Twelve percent of these found it resolved the problem, but equal numbers (40% each) found that it was ineffective, or only effective for a short while. The range of damage caused by jackdaws is wider than for some other species covered by this survey, with many wild birds thought to suffer if numbers are high, as well as a range of agricultural and public health effects also reported.

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by jackdaws happening?

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

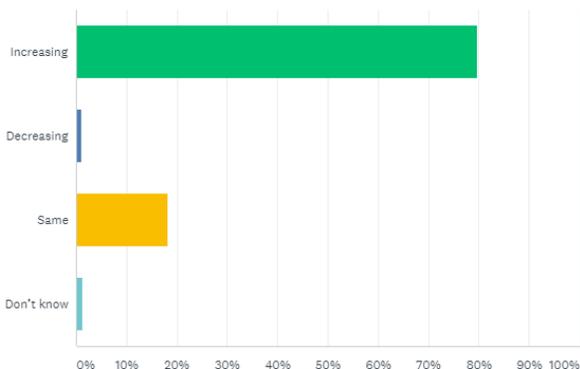


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----|
| Yes | 98.58% | 417 |
| No | 1.42% | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 423 |

99% have witnessed damage by jackdaws

Is your local population of jackdaws:

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

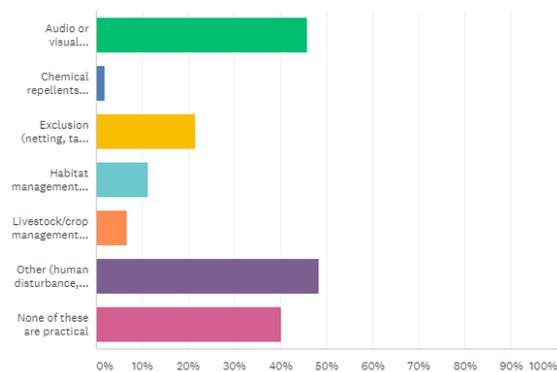


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|----------------|------------|
| Increasing | 79.67% 337 |
| Decreasing | 0.95% 4 |
| Same | 18.20% 77 |
| Don't know | 1.18% 5 |
| TOTAL | 423 |

Eighty percent feel their local population is increasing.

Have you tried controlling jackdaws by non-lethal means?

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

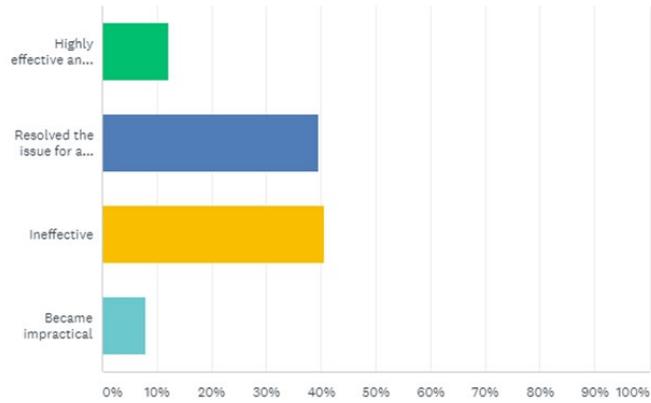


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|---|------------|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 45.86% 194 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 1.89% 8 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 21.51% 91 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 11.35% 48 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 6.62% 28 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 48.23% 204 |
| None of these are practical | 40.19% 170 |
| Total Respondents: 423 | |

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for jackdaw control.

If you did try controlling jackdaws by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 382 Skipped: 2,569



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 12.04% | 46 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 39.53% | 151 |
| Ineffective | 40.58% | 155 |
| Became impractical | 7.85% | 30 |
| TOTAL | | 382 |

However, alternatives solved the problem for only 12% of those who used them.

Woodpigeon

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Woodpigeons | 52% | 3% | 99% | 6% |

Half of those responding to the survey (1,534) control woodpigeons and described the damage they can cause. Almost all of these carried out woodpigeon control for agricultural reasons, with all but four of the 1535 respondents having witnessed the damage they describe occurring.

Farmers overwhelmingly describe crop damage, specifically wheat, barley, peas, beans and many mentions of oilseed rape. The extremely high numbers of woodpigeons are described as causing serious damage to crops, with alternative methods being tested but ineffective.

The conservation reasons reported for controlling woodpigeons are also mainly linked to their high numbers, with damage to wild bird seed mixes or food being taken from feeders reducing that available for wild birds.

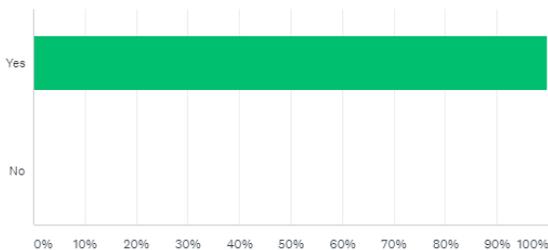
Almost all participants (over 99%) report witnessing this damage being caused by woodpigeons, and 70% feel their local population is increasing, with most of the other respondents feeling it is stable.

Seventy percent of those controlling woodpigeons have tried using audio-visual alternatives, and over half have tried other deterrents such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. However, less than ten percent of these found it resolved the problem. Approximately equal numbers (around 40% each) found that it was ineffective, or only effective for a short while.

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by woodpigeons happening?

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

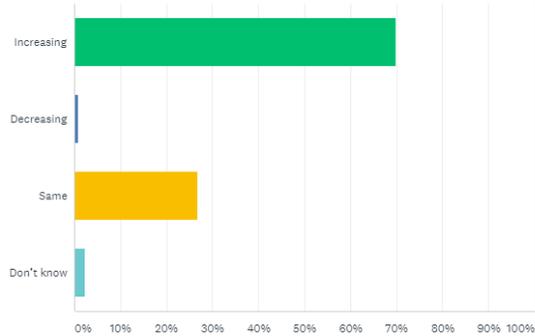


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Yes | 99.74% | 1,530 |
| No | 0.26% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 1,534 |

Over 99% have witnessed damage by woodpigeons

Is your local population of wood pigeons:

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

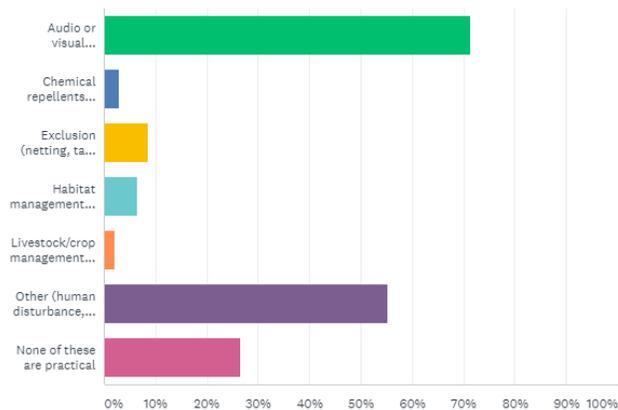


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| ▼ Increasing | 69.88% | 1,072 |
| ▼ Decreasing | 0.91% | 14 |
| ▼ Same | 26.86% | 412 |
| ▼ Don't know | 2.35% | 36 |
| TOTAL | | 1,534 |

Seventy percent feel their local population is increasing.

Have you tried controlling wood pigeons by non-lethal means?

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

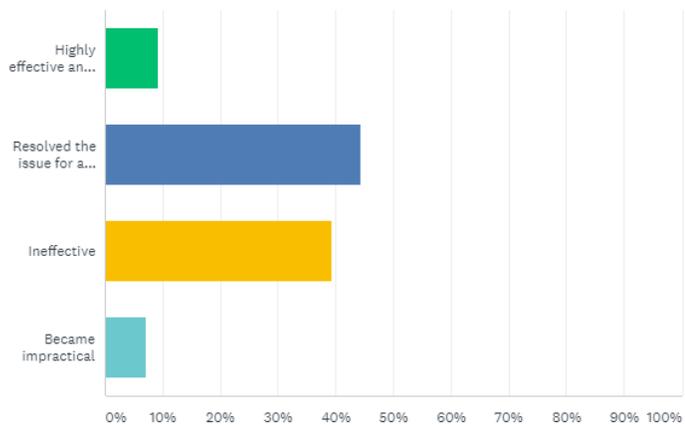


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-------|
| ▼ Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 71.25% | 1,093 |
| ▼ Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 2.93% | 45 |
| ▼ Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 8.67% | 133 |
| ▼ Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 6.58% | 101 |
| ▼ Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 2.15% | 33 |
| ▼ Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 55.15% | 846 |
| ▼ None of these are practical | 26.60% | 408 |
| Total Respondents: 1,534 | | |

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for woodpigeon control.

If you did try controlling woodpigeons by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,448 Skipped: 1,503



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 9.25% | 134 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 44.27% | 641 |
| Ineffective | 39.36% | 570 |
| Became impractical | 7.11% | 103 |
| TOTAL | | 1,448 |

However, alternatives solved the problem for less than ten percent of those who used them.

Feral pigeon

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Feral Pigeon | 12% | 9% | 87% | 60% |

Twelve percent of those responding to the survey (352) control feral pigeons and described the damage they can cause. These are mainly controlled for agriculture and public health reasons.

Farmers describe crop damage, as well as pigeons eating cattle food and damaging silage bales. One describes well the range of damage caused by feral pigeons:

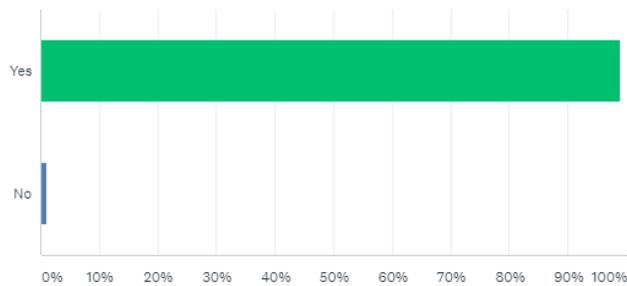
Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxmon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. Feral pigeons are shot with shotgun and air rifle.

Public health reasons for feral pigeon control are mainly based around contamination caused by defecation, of animal or human foodstuffs. Ninety nine percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and most (65%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with limited success. Fifteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (38%), was ineffective (37%), or became impractical (10%).

Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by feral pigeons happening?

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

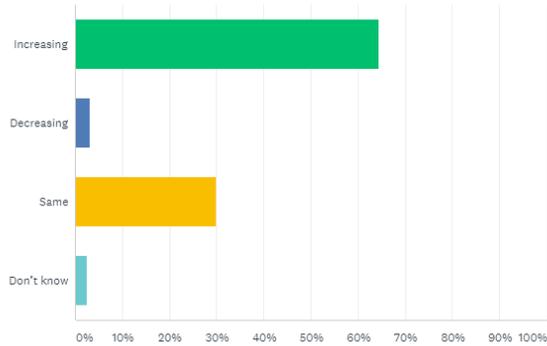


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 98.86% | 348 |
| No | 1.14% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 352 |

Ninety nine percent have witnessed damage by feral pigeons

Is your local population of feral pigeons:

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

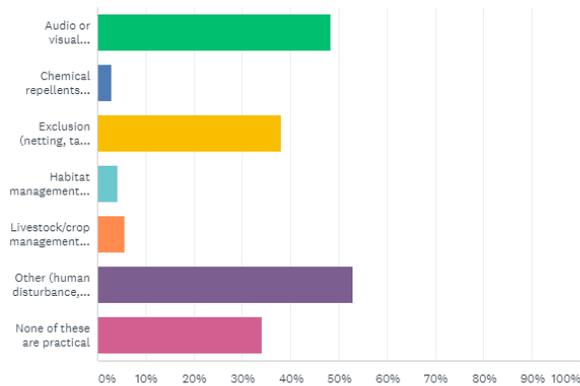


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|----------------|------------|
| Increasing | 64.49% 227 |
| Decreasing | 3.13% 11 |
| Same | 29.83% 105 |
| Don't know | 2.56% 9 |
| TOTAL | 352 |

Two thirds feel their local population is increasing.

Have you tried controlling feral pigeons by non-lethal means?

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

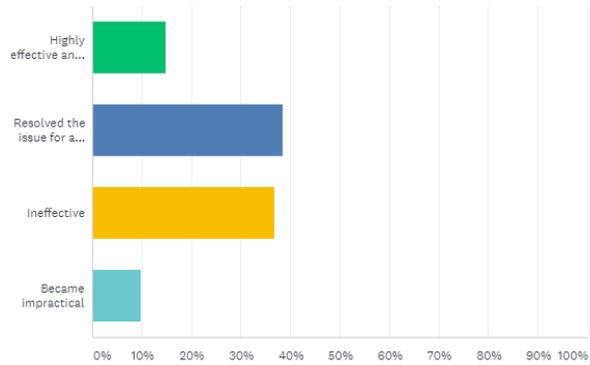


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|---|------------|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 48.30% 170 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 2.84% 10 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 38.07% 134 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles) | 4.26% 15 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 5.68% 20 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 52.84% 186 |
| None of these are practical | 34.09% 120 |
| Total Respondents: 352 | |

Two thirds have tried non-lethal alternatives for feral pigeon control.

If you did try controlling feral pigeons by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 328 Skipped: 2,623



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Highly effective and solved the Issue | 14.94% 49 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 38.41% 126 |
| Ineffective | 36.89% 121 |
| Became impractical | 9.76% 32 |
| TOTAL | 328 |

Alternatives solved the problem for 15% of those who used them.

Canada goose

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Canada Geese | 9% | 15% | 76% | 36% |

Nine percent of those responding to the survey (260) control Canada geese, and described the damage they can cause. These are mainly controlled for agriculture, but some is carried out for both public health and conservation reasons.

Those controlling for agriculture describe the loss of large areas of various crops very quickly, as they are grazed by large flocks of geese. Canada geese also overgraze pasture, both depleting the grass available for livestock, as well as contaminating the areas with their droppings.

I control and shoot Canada Geese to prevent large scale crop damage and loss. Canada Geese are big birds and 100 of them can wipe a whole crop out in a week. Shooting them seems to have been the only effective way of control as scaring tactics have not worked and other preventions are impractical.

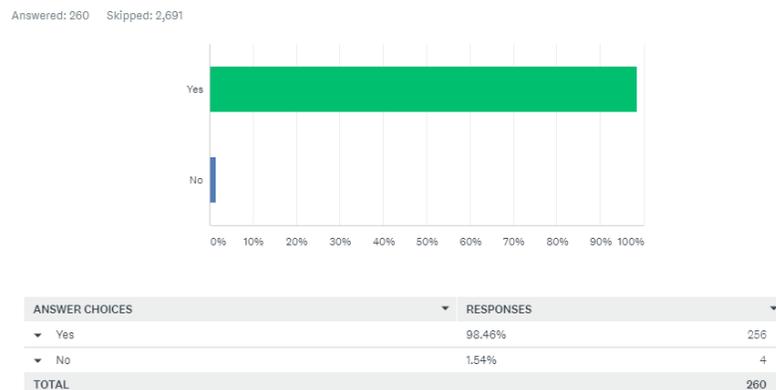
Conservation reasons for Canada goose control include damaging the banks of rivers and lakes, driving native species such as lapwing away from suitable habitat or competing for nest sites. Aggression towards native species is cited as a reason by some.

Public health concerns are once again related to defecation contaminating land, grazing and water courses, including with effects on local fisheries.

Ninety eight percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and many (58%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with limited success. Thirteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (35%), was ineffective (44%), or became impractical (7%).

Response Graphs

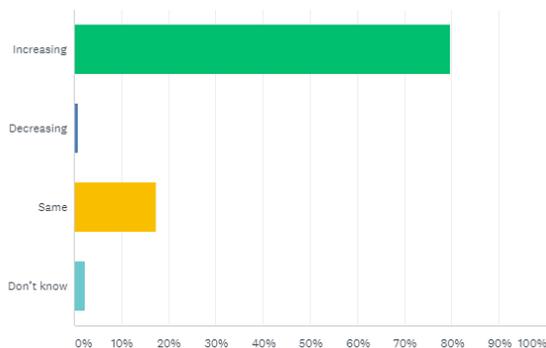
Have you witnessed this damage by Canada geese happening?



Almost all respondents have witnessed this damage by Canada geese.

Is your local population of Canada geese:

Answered: 260 Skipped: 2,691

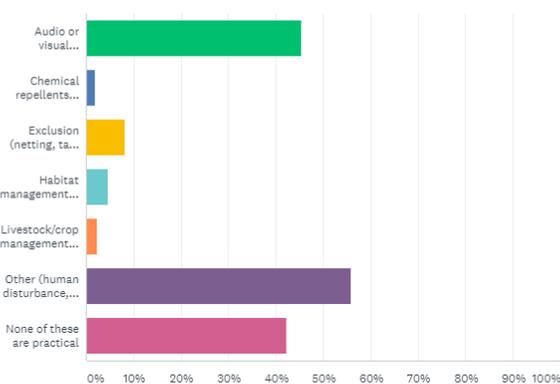


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Increasing | 79.62% | 207 |
| Decreasing | 0.77% | 2 |
| Same | 17.31% | 45 |
| Don't know | 2.31% | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 260 |

Most perceive their local population to be increasing.

Have you tried controlling Canada geese by non-lethal means?

Answered: 260 Skipped: 2,691

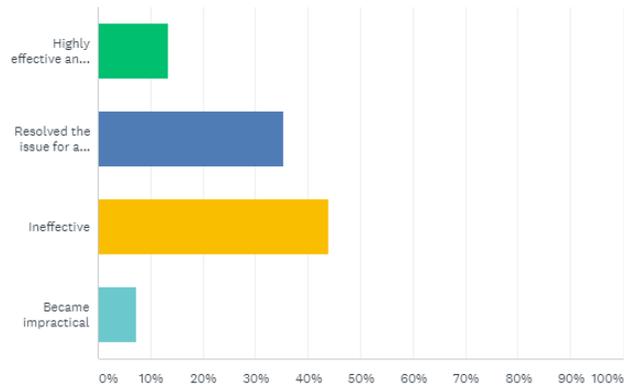


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 45.38% | 118 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 1.92% | 5 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 8.08% | 21 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brush piles) | 4.62% | 12 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 2.31% | 6 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 55.77% | 145 |
| None of these are practical | 42.31% | 110 |
| Total Respondents: 260 | | |

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for Canada goose control.

If you did try controlling Canada geese by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 2,719



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 13.36% | 31 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 35.34% | 82 |
| Ineffective | 43.97% | 102 |
| Became impractical | 7.33% | 17 |
| TOTAL | | 232 |

Alternatives solved the problem for 13% of those who used them.

Egyptian goose

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Egyptian Geese | 1% | 55% | 50% | 18% |

One percent of those responding to the survey (22) control Egyptian geese and described the damage they can cause. The responses are split evenly between conservation and agriculture, with some control carried out for public health reasons.

As with other geese, Egyptian geese are reported to cause damage to crops, including barley, wheat and oats, maize, oil seed rape and peas. Damage is also reported to grass silage and wild bird seed crops.

They come on the pond which is on one of my permission farms and have killed all young ducks & water hens, as an invasive species they should not be here.

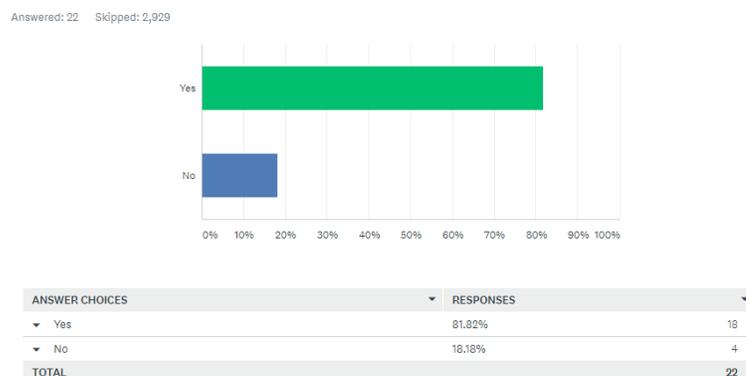
Conservation reasons for Egyptian goose control include aggression towards native species, particularly waterfowl, and competing for nest sites, with native owl species mentioned. Destruction of riverbank habitat is reported. Public health concerns are once again related to defecation contaminating meadows and feedstuffs, as well as buildings.

Eighty percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and many (73%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, mostly audio/visual or other forms deterrent such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. Fifteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (30%), or was ineffective (55%).

As the number of respondents is lower in this category, the proportions giving each response may be a less accurate reflection of the overall cohort of people controlling Egyptian geese in the country, but the experiences and observations of these individuals are equally as valid.

Response Graphs

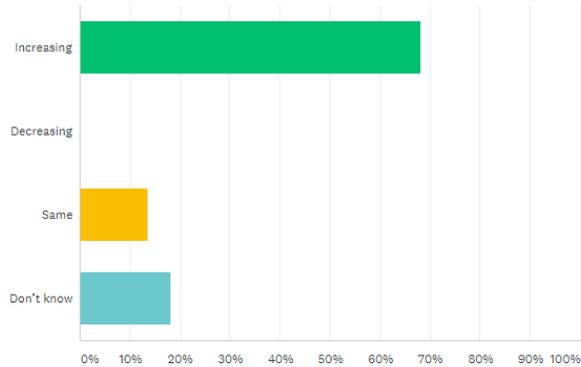
Have you witnessed this damage by Egyptian geese happening?



Over 80% of respondents have witnessed this damage by Egyptian geese.

Is your local population of Egyptian geese:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2,929

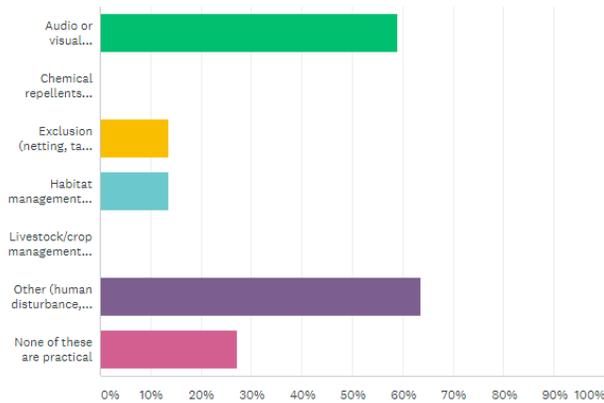


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Increasing | 68.18% | 15 |
| Decreasing | 0.00% | 0 |
| Same | 13.64% | 3 |
| Don't know | 18.18% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 22 |

Most perceive their local population to be increasing.

Have you tried controlling Egyptian geese by non-lethal means?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2,929

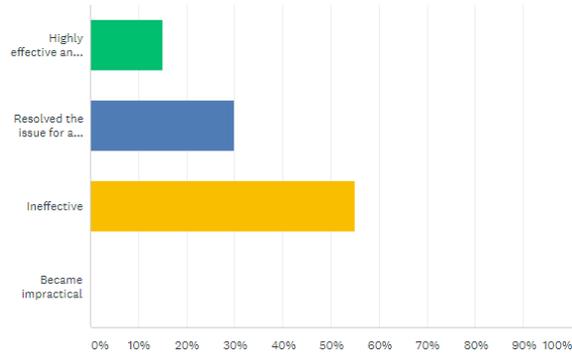


| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|----|
| Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers) | 59.09% | 13 |
| Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop) | 0.00% | 0 |
| Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene) | 13.64% | 3 |
| Habitat management (game cover crops, brush piles) | 13.64% | 3 |
| Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop) | 0.00% | 0 |
| Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare) | 63.64% | 14 |
| None of these are practical | 27.27% | 6 |
| Total Respondents: 22 | | |

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for Egyptian goose control.

If you did try controlling Egyptian geese by non-lethal means, how effective was it?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2,931



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Highly effective and solved the issue | 15.00% | 3 |
| Resolved the issue for a short while | 30.00% | 6 |
| Ineffective | 55.00% | 11 |
| Became impractical | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 20 |

Alternatives solved the problem for 15% of those who used them.

Other species

Overview

| Species | Proportion of respondents | Conservation | Agriculture | Public health |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Other species (desired) | 8% | 60% | 55% | 24% |

The survey also gathered information on other species, not currently included on the general licences, that people would like to be able to control, and the reasons for that. Two hundred and thirty-four people gave information in this part of the survey. The species put forward in this section include predominantly cormorants, gulls (greater and lesser black-backed gulls, and herring gulls), ravens and greylag geese. Respondents also described damage caused by several raptor species, as illustrated in the appendix. The reasons cited for wishing to control fall fairly equally into the categories for conservation (60%) and agricultural protection (55%), with a quarter citing public health (24%).

Some examples of these include the protection of ground-nesting birds including waders and gamebirds, as well as songbirds and barn owls, from birds of prey such as buzzards and kites. Cormorants were often stated to cause damage to both commercial and wild fisheries. The greater and lesser black-backed gulls are thought to impact on ground-nesting waders such as lapwing and curlew. Ravens are cited to attack newborn lambs and predate the nests of ground-nesting birds. Greylag geese are stated to cause damage to crops, and some respondents would like to control sparrow hawks to protect both game birds and songbirds.

Ninety-seven percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage from other species that cannot be lethally controlled. Around half (52%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives. As might be expected for species which cannot be lethally controlled, a wider range of deterrents have been used for these species than for those that can. These alternative approaches solved the problem for 11% of those who used them, or resolved it for a while for 16%. The remaining 73% found them ineffective or impractical.

Eighty respondents described the damage caused by collared doves, particularly since they were removed from the General Licence. The need to control collared doves is felt mainly for agriculture and public health reasons, but some for conservation. Farmers describe the loss of growing or stored grain to collared doves, as well as contamination by defecation. Damage is reported to crops such as oil seed rape, wheat, peas and brassicas. Public health reasons for collared dove control are mainly based around contamination caused by defecation. This is reported for both livestock and human food: grain, hay and other feed stuffs.

All respondents citing collared doves have witnessed the damage they can cause. Most (65%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with around 40% trying audio/visual deterrents, a similar number using exclusion, and around 60% using other methods such as shooting to scare or human disturbance. These were met with limited success but solved the problem for almost 20% of those who tried them. Eighty percent found it worked only temporarily (42%), was ineffective (28%), or became impractical (11%).

We are generally fond of collared doves, but we do try to keep them in balance as like feral pigeons they are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we thus need to control the collared doves in and around our cubicle sheds.

Further information

We also allowed participants the freedom to make additional comments that they would like to direct to Defra. Many of the 731 responses in this section related to the serious damage done to crops and livestock by the birds currently on the General Licences (GL) and the significant financial loss this caused. These pointed to the need to be able to rely on local unpaid shooters to help and the risk that increased bureaucracy would deter these controllers. There was a need to be able to control pest species at short notice and year-round. The inefficacy of non-lethal methods and the risk that they just moved the problem elsewhere was a common theme.

The vast majority of responses related to the importance of the General Licences in the protection of declining species. Evidence indicated strong feeling on the part of most respondents that any changes to the existing system put threatened birds at greater risk of decline or extinction. Many respondents reported that the absence of the General Licences had led to the loss of declining species specifically songbirds and ground nesting species including lapwing, grey partridge and curlew. A common theme was the need for human intervention to maintain a prey/predator balance in the absence of apex predators and in the context of an inevitably managed landscape. It was stressed that this was not to eradicate predator species but relieve pressure on prey species during the breeding season. The increase in abundance of corvid species particularly crow, magpie and jackdaw were referred to, in spite of the General Licences, and the greater challenge of controlling them as a result. In addition, there were many references to the negative impact of increased abundance of protected species such as badgers, buzzards and ravens on species of conservation concern. The inefficacy of non-lethal control methods and the danger that they simply moved the problem elsewhere was a common theme.

Many respondents referred to the demoralising and demotivating impact of the legal challenge to the GLs both in terms of the implied criticism of land managers and upset caused by being prevented from mitigating damage to crops and farmland birds. There was a sense that those opposed to the GLs had a much bigger media platform than those who used them on a regular basis and a call for a more balanced reaction both by the media and Government and the need for more effort to make the public aware of the reasons for their use. They expressed concern that Government gave in to the pressure groups, ignoring scientific evidence and the insight of practitioners on the ground.

The potentially damaging economic impact of any changes to the system were flagged. Both in terms damage inflicted on crops and the fact that many people carry out pest control voluntarily or backed by private investment.

Protected sites

Restrictions of General Licences on or near protected sites were highlighted as a particular concern, with respondents reporting that it could be counterproductive in conservation terms. Many describe the impact that avian predators can have on the species that are protected on their designated sites, and their concerns about their inability to control these.

We have changed our SSSI from unfavourable to favourable in 11 years through working on the woodland and controlling corvids squirrels and foxes for the overall good of our non-predatory birds. If there are any controls added to the common-sense General Licences, I will have to rethink whether to carry on.

Several pointed to the risk that land managers especially on protected sites would not be able to achieve their obligations and that public money would be spent on habitat improvement without achieving the

intended goal. There was a concern that increased bureaucracy would drain Defra and police resources and put off volunteers from carrying out this difficult, time consuming and essential conservation work.

Record keeping

The survey also explored respondent's views on the possible increased requirement for detailed record keeping in future General Licences. 1,687 respondents completed this section, of whom only 13% either already kept such records or felt that it would be easily achievable. Half of participants would comply with these requirements if it was absolutely required but feel that it is unnecessary. Responses from the remaining 37% indicated that there would either be a considerable impact on their practice, with predator control reduced, limited or stopped entirely; or that if they continued carrying out control to the current levels, they may be unable to comply with such requirements.

Overall, many respondents claimed that the previous system had worked very well, it was proportionate, and its rules overwhelmingly observed. A selection of these comments is included in appendix C.

Appendix A: What we asked

Your details:

Your name
Email address
County

Please select a species:

Carrion Crow
Magpie
Rook
Jay
Jackdaw
Woodpigeon
Feral Pigeon
Canada Goose
Egyptian Goose
Other predatory species not on this list (including birds of prey)

The following questions were asked for each species selected in the question directly above:

What damage is being done by *species name*? Please be specific.

Have you witnessed this damage by *species name* happening?

Yes
No

If you have not witnessed it, why do you feel this control is important?

Is your local population of *species name*:

Increasing
Decreasing
Same
Don't know

How do you know?

Observational
Bird surveys (please provide details below)

How have you tried controlling *species name*?

Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)
None of these are practical

If you did try controlling *species name*, how effective was it?

Highly effective and solved the issue
Resolved the issue for a short while
Ineffective
Became impractical

How many *species name* do you kill on your farm, shoot or estate in an average year?

Are there any other bird species you control? ('Yes' returns you to the species list, 'No' takes you to the next part of the survey)

Yes
No

Everybody was asked the following questions:

Approximately how many of the following nests do you have on your farm, shoot or estate?

Lapwing
Curlew
Stone Curlew
Turtle Dove
Grey Partridge
Red Grouse

Do you have approximate nest counts of other species? If so, please list species and number of nests:

Based on your previous experience, what percentage of these nests would be lost if you could no longer control pest birds?

Lapwing
Curlew
Stone Curlew
Turtle Dove
Grey Partridge
Red Grouse
Others (please enter species and percentage)

If next year's licences required you to keep detailed records for inspection by the police (or licensing authority) which included: date, time, location, method and why each bird was killed – which of these would you most strongly feel?

Fine with me because I record this already
I could easily keep these records
I would do if it was compulsory, although I think it's unnecessary
The police have better things to do, I wouldn't bother keeping records
I would reduce or limit the amount of control I did in order to keep these records
Too much bureaucracy, I would stop control

Which of these best describes you?

Gamekeeper
Farmer
Neither, but I help control birds on a farm or shoot
Reserve warden

I conserve birds in my garden (or land) by controlling others
Other

How many days do you spend controlling birds by shooting a year?

How many traps do you use?

Larsen

Larsen mate type

Crow letterbox/multi-catch type

Additional details

What is the approximate size of the shoot, farm, reserve or estate (in acres)?

Do you control birds within an SSSI or Special Protection Area (SPA)?

Yes

No

Not sure

Is there anything else you would like to tell us or Defra?

Appendix B: Illustrative responses

Carrion crow

Conservation

As a pest control manager for a leading UK zoo, I organise crow control mainly by shooting to prevent predation of conservationally sensitive waterfowl species and their eggs.

Carrion crow predate on curlew eggs and chicks. Curlew numbers are declining due to loss of habitat, changing farm practices and increased predation.

Carrion crows are among the most damaging animals to the survival of ground nesting birds (curlew, lapwing and English partridge) on our farm. We historically have used Larsen traps with great success to limit the number of carrion crows on our farm.

Carrion crows are key predators of ground nesting birds on our farm/nature reserve. We have over 300 pairs of lapwing, 250 pairs of redshank, 100 pairs of skylark and 65 pairs of yellow wagtails and many others. Carrion crows have a significant negative impact in breeding success by predation of eggs and young chicks each Spring.

Carrion crows are particularly prominent on this estate and we have witnessed them attacking livestock and the nests of ground nesting birds, they are a cunning bird and difficult to shoot as they are very canny but also very persistent. We have seen them sitting on fences eyeing up and hassling lambs in large numbers at lambing time when the livestock is particularly vulnerable, we have also witnessed them taking eggs from lapwing, curlew, grey and red legged partridge nests and pheasant nests.

Carrion crows cause untold damage by devastating the nests of ground and hedge nesting birds. They are very effective at what they do and should be controlled to a reasonable level. In sheep farming areas they will also peck out the eyes of newly born lambs to eventually kill them and provide an easy meal. I control carrion crows through Larsen traps and ladder traps as well as shooting. It is important to realise how much damage these clever birds can do to the songbird population if left unchecked.

Carrion crows eat the eggs and chicks of many wild birds and I consider it is important to maintain biodiversity. Oyster catchers and curlew are two of the many birds whose numbers have significantly reduced.

Carrion crows regularly hunt the moor searching for eggs and chicks of game birds, waders and songbirds. I control them by trapping and shooting.

Carrion crows take eggs and chicks from ground nesting birds and also take chicks once they are foraging with their parents. As part of my HLS scheme which started in 2006, I targeted the grey partridge as a species I wanted to see in my farm as I had none. I planted appropriate seed mixes around the farm following advice from my FWAG advisor. After 4 seasons I saw my first grey partridge on my farm. Since then, I have been actively protecting them by controlling carrion crows. I now have at least 7 coveys, some of which produce 10+ chicks to adulthood.

Carrion crows take the eggs and chicks of curlew, plover, oyster catcher as well as other vulnerable and endangered ground nesting birds as well as game birds. I control carrion crows and other corvids for this reason by shooting and trapping.

Carrion crow control needed to protect ground nesting birds, damage to and pollution of farm produce/plantings and damage to livestock. As a Natural England volunteer, I control carrion crows to protect red listed ground nesting species, especially snipe on the levels and moors.

Crow numbers are controlled to lower the number of farmland bird nests predated. This will include several finch and bunting species, particularly goldfinch, greenfinch and yellowhammer: Songbirds such as blackbird, song thrush and skylark: Ground nesters including lapwing, pheasant and partridge (both species).

Crows predate young leverets and also raid nests of other bird species but around us especially oyster catchers.

Crows walk along my field margins and hedge side watch pheasants and partridges leaving their nests and then clean the nests out. This was worse this year as the ban made it impossible to control them. Hence our partridge and pheasant numbers are well down on previous years. All our birds are wild.

Agriculture

Apart from decimating the songbird population by taking eggs and fledglings, they also rip open the polythene on the large round bales of haylage, before I have a chance to remove them from the field and even when I get them back to the farm they still attack them. They attack vulnerable newborn lambs and I have on occasions, when a ewe goes down with staggers or some other onset of illness, the crows peck out their eyes before the ewe can be revived.

Attacking newborn lambs pecking eyes out and tongues. We then have to dispatch the lambs putting them out of their misery. We are losing lambs and our profit as a result.

Attacks on sheep. Lambs eyes pecked out even before they are fully born; navels pecked at, so disembowelling and tongues pecked out. Full grown sheep that are on their backs having eyes pecked out and stomachs pecked open. Ground nesting birds' eggs and chicks taken including lapwing, curlew, oyster catcher, redshank, meadow pipit and skylark.

Carrion crows attack ewes and lambs at lambing time, pecking the eyes out of ewes and also pecking their rear. They will quickly kill young lambs. The only practical method of control is shooting all year round and frequently at nesting time. A Larsen trap can also be quite effective in the spring.

Carrion crows cause damage to our corn crops and will actually tread down and flatten areas to feed from the ears of corn. They also peck the eyes from sheep and lambs when the opportunity arises. I have also witnessed them gathering around calving cows looking for an opportunity. These are all understandable behaviours but as a farmer I need the ability to control this bird species.

Carrion crows have done horrific damage to farmers lambs in the fields. I've found a number of lambs with eyes pecked out and bleeding to a slow and painful death. I control them by shooting them on adjacent fields to the livestock to decrease the chances of lambs being attacked.

Crop damage and newborn lamb attacks. I control crows on farmland by shooting to protect crops, wheat oilseed rape and peas.

Crop damage to newly planted crops. Damage in livestock buildings by piercing bales, eating animal feeds and defecating in feeds.

Crop damage, egg and chick predation (various species), fouling and taking of animal feed at farmyard, direct damage to livestock (lambs).

Crows are flattening and eating whole patches of standing wheat in spite of deterring by noise and human presence. Also, I have needed to shoot crows raiding ground nesting game birds and attacking small chicks.

Crows around our fishery are stealing moorhen and coot eggs, taking newly hatched duckling and goslings as soon as they climb out of the water to rest.

Crows cause significant damage to my cereal crops including wheat, barley and oats so I control them by shooting.

Crows like pigeons can be a menace on crops, maize in particular after drilling. Their long thick beaks dig up the maize seed before it germinates.

Damage to curlew nests specifically, also grey partridge and many other ground nesting birds, eggs and fledglings. They also take the eyes, tongues and soft body parts of lambs up to a week old. I have seen a 'murder' of some 30 crows gang up on a ewe with twins, separate the weaker twin and set on it. By the time I crossed to the field involved, the lamb had lost both eyes, its tongue and had to be put down.

Damage to livestock by pecking newborn lambs/calves eyes and navels. Also had cow's vulvas attacked at calving. They destroy ground nesting bird nests by taking chicks and eggs. I control by shooting as this is the most effective.

Magpie

Conservation

I have seen them eating the eggs and chicks of quite rare native birds.

A local expansion in the magpie population is having a very adverse effect on the breeding success of smaller garden songbird species.

As a farmer and custodian of the land and biodiversity around me I control magpies and other corvids by Larsen trapping and shooting to protect the hedgerow nests of all songbirds including turtle dove, thrush, and blackbird.

Attacking songbird nests in my fields. There are numerous magpies and they have a devastating effect on the songbird population.

Attacks on hedgerow birds like great tits, dunnocks, gold finches, blackbirds, and wrens, who nest and fledge on our property by magpies have only controlled by shooting because traps are too dangerous to other species of birds that we also have.

Control by shooting/trapping to prevent them stripping hedgerows of songbirds and ground nesting game birds. A partridge successfully reared 12 chicks on rear garden boundary. Within a week this was down to 5 chicks as we watched crows and magpies attack and kill the chicks in the standing corn despite trying to scare them off.

I control these pests on farmland by trapping and shooting to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and sparrows.

Damage to small farmland birds during spring has been increasing in line with magpie population growth particularly this year following the temporary ban on Larsen trap use. Many nests were robbed over the spring with many smashed eggs in our yard taken and dropped in mid-flight.

Destroying bird nests by taking eggs or fledglings of songbirds nesting along hedgerows and in scrub on the marsh. Thrush species, buntings, blackbird, finches. Magpies are trapped and shot.

I have controlled magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland and trapping in my garden to protect nests of hedgerow, ground and garden nesting birds. Over a number of years, I have observed a significant increase in these species where I have controlled magpies. During the period in the Spring of this year when I was unable to control them due to the revocation of General Licences and the subsequent uncertainty I observed both a significant reduction in successfully reared broods of the species I had previously been able to protect and evidence of increased predation of eggs and young by an observed uncontrolled expanded population of magpies. I have been particularly concerned about the impact upon a colony of yellowhammers which I have encouraged in my garden since a pair first appeared years ago using magpie control as one of my preservation tools to increase the garden population. This Spring, without magpie control, I did not see one successfully reared brood but observed unrelenting predation of nests by expanding uncontrolled population of magpies. My recent observations indicate that I now have only two, possibly three, yellowhammers left in my garden and I fear that the colony may not survive, and my years of effort have been wasted - however I do have a hugely increased garden population of magpies!

I use lethal control on magpies by shooting and trapping as effective ways of conservation of endangered species of wildlife on the farmland. Such species I have witnessed be heavily impacted by magpies taking all the nesting young/eggs of songbirds, blackbirds, thrushes and robins. The magpie population has no natural predator and so the numbers are vastly increasing out of control. Wherever I drive I see at least three or four magpies at a time. On the farmland there are greater numbers. Lethal control is the only way of any hope to keep the numbers from spiralling even higher. Nesting birds don't stand any chance without human management of the magpie population.

Magpies steal eggs from our duck house. Ducks do not lay eggs above ground level so unlike hens who will lay in nest boxes out of direct sight of chicken house door, ducks lay on floor of their house and the magpies see the eggs and enter to steal them. Once they learn, they keep returning as they are territorial and understand their territory.

Magpie numbers are controlled by trapping and shooting to lower the number of farmland bird nests predated. This will include several finch and bunting species, particularly goldfinch, greenfinch and yellowhammer: Songbirds such as blackbird, song thrush and skylark: Ground nesters including lapwing, pheasant and partridge (both species).

Agriculture

I have a small free-range commercial egg laying flock of chickens. magpie and carrion crow populations in our area predate our eggs on a daily basis, we try everything to prevent the problem but these birds are clever, I'm afraid that trapping and shooting them is the only way for our business to survive, they would otherwise eat every egg as it's laid.... literally!!

Extensive damage to Christmas tree plantations, Nordman Fir. Territorial birds perch on delicate lead shoots in May and June, often breaking them. The tree has great difficulty recovering.

Taking eggs and killing chicks from domestic fowl also songbird predation - there are too many of them.

Magpies predate on newly born lambs on our estate also predate eggs from all waders (some which are red listed) and all other ground nesting birds. Also, songbirds and their nests are predated by magpies.

I want to control magpies as they are hugely destructive to songbirds and damage animal feed/crops. As an effective predator I've witnessed a pair clear a hedgerow of young songbird chicks. I don't want to eradicate them just ensure a balanced population.

Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. I control magpies by shooting with a shotgun and air rifle. I also control magpies by trapping with Larsen traps and ladder trap.

Birds on a free-range farm that may be unwell but will be okay after a little treatment or recovery are being pecked out (slowly killed) by magpies. They mob like wolves, attack and then scatter, leaving an unwell but otherwise healthy bird to suffer and die. If there is a quick temperature change e.g. a freak cold snap for a day, then a huge number of birds can exhibit unwell-type behaviour. It is not unheard of to get a call from a friend who may have lost as many as 30+ birds in a week from magpies and other corvids. I shoot magpies and various other corvids to protect the livelihood of many farmers in the area.

This is going to be the biggest killer on farms by injuring newborn lambs that lead to death or have to be euthanized.

Public Health

Whilst eating animal feed and Stewardship wild bird feed, magpies are probably our champion hunter out of songbird nests in our hedges. As they are incredibly wary and usually in groups, shooting is difficult, so we principally control them in spring by trapping. This spring we have not trapped any and we now see about a dozen around the farm buildings most days.

Rooks

Conservation

They have actively destroyed the sparrow, thrush and other songbird populations in the entire area.

They are active predators and this Spring, as an example, a wild duck hatched 12 ducklings and by nightfall all had been taken by rooks.

I control rooks to prevent them predated eggs & young chicks. We have many rare species on the estate including waders such as lapwing, plover, curlew, redshank, peewit, also songbirds & species such as nightjars. the rooks predate the young in the fields & on the moor.

Damage to ground-nesting, and hedgerow-nesting birds, including grey partridge.

I control rooks by shooting and trapping in woodland and wetland areas to protect lapwings, wild pheasants and grey partridges during their nesting seasons.

I control rooks during the breeding season to increase the breeding success of and thus promote the long-term viability of multiple vulnerable bird species including curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher, red grouse, black grouse, golden plover and others. Rooks migrate to open allotments and moorland from lowland areas

during April to May looking to take advantage of any Crane Fly hatch but will also opportunistically predate ground-nesting birds' nest and chicks

Occupying barn owl nests and preventing them from nesting

I control rooks by shooting and trapping on farmland to protect ground nesting birds, as I'm running a grey partridge rehabilitation program.

Agriculture

Destruction of crops. They pull up young maize plants and will eat any other planted seeds (wheat, barley, beans etc) which will get worse with different seed protective coatings being phased out. They spread disease over my rearing field which make reducing antibiotic use very difficult and they will come in on pheasant feeders in release pens eating expensive feed and creating disease hot spots again increasing the need for antibiotics.

On a dairy farm we have a flourishing rookery and welcome rooks to our grass fields where most of the year they pick over the cow pats and eat leather jackets and such. However, we need to be able to control and balance numbers. In spring they do significant damage to our freshly sown maize, cereal and wild bird food crops, and in winter have learnt to attack the face and top of the maize silage clamp and eat animal feeds and standing maize crops. We thus control them principally by shooting on these occasions. Almost all deterrents have been tried including kites, scarecrows, lasers, bird call machines, gas guns, bangers, plastic owls, taste on seed and such, but the rook is intelligent and the local numbers large and increasing.

Damage to crops by large flocks removing leaves digging up roots and fresh seeds. Also, very large flocks in the crew yard eating animal feed and fouling the water troughs. Pecking at sheep's afterbirth and sometimes attacking newborn lambs. Also witnessed lapwing nest being destroyed by dozens of rooks

The explosion of rook numbers has caused untold damage to freshly sown cereal crops and game covers in the spring. They completely ignore all forms of bird scarers, noises and gas guns. The only method of deterring them is to hang up dead rooks over the seedbeds and they keep clear.

Newborn lambs are very prone to having eyes and tongues pecked just after birth.

I control rooks to protect arable crops as the rooks can cause severe damaging by removing the planted seeds straight from the ground after drilling.

I control rooks by shooting and trapping to protect crops and stored animal feed to try and reduce contamination.

Public Health

Damaging the grass sward looking for leather jackets and chafer grubs. When this occurs on grass gallops it endangers horses and riders by creating "false" ground. When racehorses are travelling at speed this sudden change in going or "slip" caused by loose grass can literally be fatal.

1000+ roost on farm over winter carry disease farm to farm.

Contamination of feed stuffs and damage to maize silage clamps.

Damage to crops during drilling and disease risks on pig farms

Damage to crops particularly at the establishment and harvest stage. These birds flock in numbers and contaminate livestock and crop stores.

Jay

Conservation

I constantly observe jays targeting the nests & young of songbirds & other birds to take their eggs kill & eat their young in hedgerows on land I own, and neighbour's land.

Control needed to protect nesting birds, damage to forestry. Rare woodland species such as flycatchers are particularly vulnerable to an overabundance of Jays which are difficult to spot and control. Effective control can only be done in winter when there is less cover for the Jays to take advantage of rather than at the time of nesting.

I control jays by trapping and shooting because we have a small population of willow warblers and the Jays are one of the few species that will hunt and destroy their nests. Jays are plentiful but Willow Warblers are extremely rare so human intervention is required to restore the balance.

Damage to nests of all songbirds, such as song thrush, blackbird, tits, wren, and finches (Gold, Chaff, Bull). Due to the increase in Jays there has been a noticeable decrease in smaller nesting Garden birds and I have seen the result of them destroying eggs and nests.

Egg and young bird predation both game for shooting and other species mainly listed - partridge/lapwings/turtle dove.

I control jays to prevent predation of many small wood/farmland birds their nests eggs and young. Found they target mainly low or ground nesting birds (warblers etc). Seen pairs of jays constantly working woods hedges and scrub for nests or to flush young birds.

I control jays because they raid the nests of game and songbirds. I watch them dive into thick hedges and I hear the alarm calls of songbirds whilst the jay empties the nest. Jays are opportunist thieves and significantly reduce populations of song and game birds. We shoot and trap them.

I control jays to protect game birds, wildfowl and songbirds on an area of land that includes SSSI and HLS land due to the rich habitat and biodiversity in this area. This is essential conservation work that has to continue to support this diversity.

Jays take the eggs, nestlings, fledglings, parent birds and destroy the nests of red listed and migratory species. We control jays via a combination of shooting and trapping to protect the little owl, kestrel, goldfinch, chaffinch, bullfinch coal tit, long tailed tit, nuthatch, tree creeper, wren, spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff, willow warbler, black cap, garden warbler, swallow to name but a few.

We control Jays on the estate to benefit the wild birds that we have here in residence, we have witnessed them stealing eggs and chicks from nests and we have on a recent survey counted 22 red-listed species here and 25 amber.

Agriculture

Damage to songbirds, nests and chicks. They also damage standing wheat and barley crops by picking the grains from field margins.

Taking cattle feed and calf feed. They also raid the pied wagtails and swallows' nests.

Jays predate the nests of songbirds, swallows, martens and ground nesting birds, as well as destroying my crop of cherries. I control these by shooting.

Jackdaw

Conservation

Around nesting season, they look in every nook and cranny in our extensive area of mature willows. It's known that duck eggs on the pond also taken, and suspect black cap nests also disappeared. They also take eggs of game birds, skylark and yellowhammers, kill leveret hares in gangs, kill young game birds and songbirds.

Controlled by shooting to protect fresh drilled and emerging crops and any areas of laid combinable crops. Also, predation of eggs and chicks of ground nesting birds e.g. lapwing.

Damage to eggs and in particular chicks of threatened farmland bird species. Also crop damage at vulnerable times prior to harvest.

Destroy eggs and young of song and game birds. Take over owl nesting boxes. Jackdaws have taken over a box that I had built into a new farm building after it had been occupied by a Barn Owl, the first I had seen in 35 years here. They are very rare in this area.

Jackdaws appear in large mobs and will attack clutches of chicks in mass to make up for their smaller size overwhelming parental defences. They are also adept at reaching protected nests able to pass through narrow obstructions to reach the chicks within. Jackdaws are able to operate in deep cover and on open ground. The birds we protect by controlling Jackdaws include Curlew, Lapwing, Oyster Catcher, Snipe, Dunlin, Ring Ouzel, Grey Wagtail, Song Thrush, Black Grouse, Red Grouse, Woodcock, Stone Chat, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Red Shank, Wild Pheasant, Wild Grey Partridge, House Martin, Sand Martin, Swallow, Little Owl.

I control jackdaws because they damage crops and kill smaller birds. They have a detrimental effect on the swallow population as I have witnessed jackdaws pulling swallow chicks from their nests and dropping them.

Agriculture

Bird control of the species listed is crucial for us. When we stopped controlling jackdaws due to the 'ban' our pig food costs went up by 110% in a week as did our poultry feed. The disease control had to be increased and our egg yield fell as eggs were being taken all of the time. Magpies do a lot of damage on our land as we are next to an urban area where they breed and are not controlled.

Defecating over feed for milking cows and breaking into silage clamps. Causing damage to seed drillings and also damage in livestock sheds and grain stores.

Contaminate animal feed by defecation which poisons the animals resulting in death.

Control by shooting to prevent damage to a friend's wheat and barley crops, and contamination of animal feed in buildings via droppings.

Control jackdaws by shooting to protect agricultural crops when newly sown, like wheat, barley, maize and game cover strips. To prevent damage to harvested crops such as silage.

Damage to agricultural produce and feed in store. Potential spread of disease to poultry and livestock.

Damage to arable and songbirds. I shoot a lot on the crops via decoying, damage is clearly evident on new drills or standing crops. I have observed 1,000 plus on one field.

Damage to drilled crops and feeding in grain stores. Eating feed from outdoor pigs' feeders and covering feed with droppings.

Damage to property, buildings and livestock. Some of our farm buildings are piled to the rafters with twigs from their nests and several chimneys get blocked every year. We had a sow farrow a few years ago and the jackdaws pecked the eyes out of the baby piglets (8 of them). They are filthy and spread disease amongst livestock as well as kill any little chicks they happen to find.

Public health

Building of nests in chimneys, which causes blockages and smoke when fire is used.

Constantly nesting in the house chimneys. Debris brought in for nesting material, including food scraps are dropped down the roof and lodge in the gutters eventually causing blockages in the downpipes and thus overflowing gutters. Waste food has to be a health hazard as it goes mouldy or rots and smells, I have been requested by neighbours to shoot them but since the general licences were revoked, I have undertaken no control whatsoever.

To protect nesting songbirds, to stop them from entering farm buildings eating food and spreading disease, and to keep them out of my neighbour's chimneys.

Woodpigeon

Conservation

I control all carrion and pigeon by trapping and shooting so as to protect the few songbirds left on our territory but in particular to give the ground nesting birds a fair chance of survival.

Damage to wild bird cover areas.

Woodpigeons feed on our bird feeders and deter the pheasants and ducks from feeding at their regular times and strip cover crops and they need to be controlled to maintain a reasonable balance on our ground.

Agriculture

As an arable farmer I control woodpigeons by shooting to protect my crops including wheat, barley, peas, beans and oilseed rape. Non-lethal deterrents simply are not effective, and these birds soon get used to them and as a result without the ability to shoot these birds farm incomes will be significantly reduced.

Crop damage to winter oilseed rape cropping is our key problem. They graze the crop during the autumn, winter and early spring and can reduce the leaf area to such a low level that the plants either die or it seriously reduces the eventual yield of the crop. Although we use a range of methods to scare the pigeons, inevitably we are forced to shoot them to try and reduce their impact on our crops.

Woodpigeon eat various crops throughout the year. They are in such vast numbers it is essential to control numbers in order to prevent this problem from getting worse. Namely, they eat oilseed rape over winter in huge flocks. They will also eat wheat grains in early summer and beans and peas to name but a few.

Woodpigeons are eating and decimating a large quantity of oil seed rape plants. There are thousands of them, and I need to be able to shoot them to protect my crop.

I shoot woodpigeon for local farmers to prevent arable crops being eaten and economically damaged. There have been occasions with several thousand birds feeding on the crops at one time. - horrendous economic damage being done and it will not stop until a) no crop is left or b) they are moved off by disturbance. However, shooting is the only method which reduces the damage done to the next field they move to as they quickly learn to ignore no lethal methods and return to a previous feeding place.

Damage to new seeds and young seedlings, with loss of 30 acres of spring barley in 2019.

Extensive crop damage in my area. I live in a very rural location with arable land opposite my house and have watched pigeons systematically destroy the barley, to the point where the farmer said it was hardly worth putting the combine on it.

Growing salad crops means we are vulnerable during daylight hours to pigeons eating and damaging crops and we predict they cost us circa £200k of damage. We have staff walking fields all day to deter pigeons from damaging crops. Use rope bangers people etc but it's very costly and we still have damages annually.

Woodpigeon have migrated to our garden where they are nesting they will attack and devour any vegetable crop in the garden and pick the buds off fruit trees in spring, decimating the crop. in the winter, flocks of pigeon, sometimes many hundred strong, persistently raid and feed on our neighbouring farmers beans and oilseed rape, and roost in our copse. I shoot them when possible.

Public Health

Cause a health hazard due to excrement in wind damaged buildings.

Crop damage and broad human health concerns caused by their mess everywhere.

Nesting in creepers on side of house, fouling and health hazards from guano, and destroying vegetable garden and fruit tree crops.

Feral Pigeon

Conservation

I shoot Pigeons to preserve the fabric of a Grade I listed house where they nest in the gutters and valleys.

Occasionally flocks attack crops, like Pigeons do. Usually their presence around buildings creates nesting competition with birds we would rather have.

Agriculture

Being relatively tame, they are not afraid of the human presence and encourage Wood Pigeons in as decoys in effect.

I control Feral Pigeons by shooting and trapping on farmland and farm buildings to prevent damage to crops, damage to foodstuff for livestock and to prevent a hazard to health.

Whilst not as numerous as Woodpigeons, Feral Pigeons are just as damaging to newly sown crops and ripening crops.

Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxmon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. Feral Pigeons are shot with shotgun and air rifle.

Feral pigeons are agricultural pests and cause damage to standing crops and around farmyards and grain storage; feeding and defecating on standing and stored crops. They not only damage standing crops but are a health hazard to the human food chain.

Feral pigeons take cattle food and increase disease burden within cattle buildings. They take cereal crops. They can and do pose a nuisance to neighbouring houses. Scare crows, gas cannons, human disturbance and shooting all work in a variety of situations on the farm. Within the cattle buildings, air rifle is used to kill feral pigeons. Since controlling the number of feral pigeons in the buildings the number of cases of mastitis has notably dropped. In fields where non-lethal methods of deterrent are failing, shotgun is used to kill birds. All non-lethal methods tried in and around the cattle buildings have proven to be completely ineffective.

Public Health

Environmental health risk from droppings. Damage to buildings from droppings and nests. Eating livestock feed.

I work as a pest controller and the culling of feral pigeons is sometimes required in food premises and other areas for public health and hygiene purposes. Also, nest egg and chick removal is required during proofing work. The methods of control used are trapping and shooting.

I control feral pigeons in and around food production/ agricultural buildings. Ferals like to roost undercover near to a readily available food source such as stored grain. Feral pigeons allowed to remain and defecate on feedstuff that is fed to animals or poultry for the purpose of meat or egg production, present a direct risk to public health.

Crop damage as well as food hygiene issues. I shoot feral pigeons in work sheds on a couple of mushroom growing farms. They defecate in the food from the roof rafters causing the food hygiene officers to insist that they are removed.

Damage to agricultural crops but tends to be light. Hygiene issues around the farm are of greater importance with faecal mess being an issue if numbers are not controlled.

Feral pigeons are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we need to control the feral pigeons in and around our cubicle sheds. This is not an occasional homing pigeon having a rest, but proper feral pigeons from our local town.

There are six or seven of these birds in the depot where I work messing everywhere. Their mess is a slip hazard and health hazard.

Feral pigeons can cause problems when roosting on buildings, entering food businesses or warehouses roof spaces etc. Proofing and exclusion is usually effective but sometimes nest removal and culling is required.

Canada Goose

Conservation

Aside from driving out other native species including Lapwing, the amount of grass consumed is astounding. Some pastures stripped to below levels suitable for grazing livestock to an extent where the geese themselves suffer from lack of feed.

Bank damage to the rivers and ponds, aggressive towards native wildfowl, crop damage at varying stages of growth. Shooting over decoys, flight line shooting and egg pricking can be effective.

Considerable damage to crops and banks of the river and lakes due to the high numbers of them trampling and defecating on areas which should have ground flora that benefit the wider range of wildlife.

We try to encourage different duck species to our man-made water reservoir and ponds, but the large amount of Canada geese seems to turn grass bank areas to mud in just a few days making it undesirable for other duck to graze from.

On my farm Canada geese sometimes drive other species from their nest sites on ponds and other water bodies and the only way to control the increase in the numbers of Canada geese is by selective culling.

I control Canada Geese to protect habitat for other birds and because The British Trust for Ornithology requested us to do so. This year we could not control them because of Chris Packham and the numbers have gone from 5000 to 10000.

I control Canada Geese on some small lakes I am responsible for. They are very aggressive to other native waterfowl competing for nesting sites and even killing young waterfowl. Also, they foul the shallow water and banks.

Agriculture

I control and shoot Canada Geese to prevent large scale crop damage and loss. Canada Geese are big birds and 100 of them can wipe a whole crop out in a week. Shooting them seems to have been the only effective way of control as scaring tactics have not worked and other preventions are impractical.

Crop damage to my arable land, grazing large areas off over winter and foul from them is poisoning the soils with acidic manure so crops then do not grow the following year.

We have a large wildflower meadow and when it's cropped the cattle are let in to graze it to supplement their winter feeding. The Canada geese fly in from the fishing lakes and leave their droppings all over the meadow which hampers the cattle grazing. I shoot them as they come onto the meadow. They also leave their droppings on the public walks around the estate.

1. Hundreds if not thousands of geese grazing sheep pastures leaving little for the sheep and contaminating their pasture. 2. Hundreds of geese grazing where free-range poultry are. Giving rise to serious concerns over bird flu.

Grazing, paddling and defecating on a wheat field as it starts to grow. Over 100 Canada's feeding all day every day. Farmer erected scarecrows every 30 metres along the 800 metres long field which were useless. Tried firing over their heads in an attempt to scare them off but they either walked to the adjacent canal or flew 100 metres and started to feed again as though nothing had happened. These birds cause serious damage.

Public Health

We have 400 plus geese on our farm. They eat a lot of grass but also foul the land and the lakes. They are a threat to human health.

Damage to crops such as grass for hay, ripe wheat. They leave droppings in public places around a lake on the estate which is a public health concern. Their droppings also affect the water quality of the lakes and surrounding streams.

I control Canada geese by shooting to prevent numbers building, to prevent contamination and spread of disease round fisheries farm reservoirs water supplies and ponds.

I control Canada geese by shooting because they consume human food crops and produce a high volume of faeces which is unsightly and unhygienic.

Egyptian Goose

Conservation

Birds are very aggressive to other native waterfowl.

They come on the pond which is on one of my permission farms and have killed all young ducks & water hens as an invasive species. They should not be here.

Competition for nesting sites with native species of owl.

Eating cereal crops in winter and spring. Also nesting in hollow trees and preventing 3 owl species from using these nest sites. Birds are shot.

Eating crops and aggression during breeding affecting other native ducks.

Impacting the population of native geese.

Agriculture

Egyptian Geese are a recently introduced species; they cause damage to agricultural crops such as wheat, barley and oats and outcompete more native breeds of waterfowl.

I control Egyptian geese on farmland to prevent serious damage to crops such as wheat, oilseed rape, peas and maize.

I shoot Egyptian geese to protect livestock and fauna and to protect public health.

I control Egyptian geese by shooting to protect my crops including wild bird cover strips to feed songbirds in winter.

Messing on meadows and grass ley so that cattle won't eat the grass.

I control Egyptian geese to protect forage crops such as grass silage and whole crop barley.

Public Health

Massive health risk and bank damage on the Norfolk Broads.

Other species (desired)

Collared Dove

Collared doves mess all over our hay and other feed stuffs, they nest and roost in the Dutch barns. A resident sparrow hawk used to thin them, but she disappeared two years ago.

These are having an effect on turtle doves. According to European bird directive there is a direct correlation between numbers as they vie for nest sites and food and more aggressive nature affects turtle dove populations, also human health risk.

Eating all the food from the game feeders and defecating all over them spreading disease to the game birds and wildlife.

Collared doves are a pest that attacks my commercial orchard when the fruit is about to be picked. The damage is serious and costly.

Damage to grain store and animal feed stuffs. They also excrement on farm machinery which can be costly as it strips the paintwork. They can build unwanted nests in the roofs of the cattle buildings. I use an airgun around the farm every few months to keep the numbers at a tolerated capacity.

Serious damage to sown & growing crops, fouling of stored crops e.g. cereal grains, oilseed rape & fouling of farm buildings.

Damage by eating grain in the stores and droppings on the grain storage heaps.

Damage to feedstuff and cereals in store and at harvest.

Fouling of cattle store food areas causing scours chronic diarrhoea.

We are generally fond of collared doves, but we do try to keep them in balance as, like feral pigeons, they are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we thus need to control the collared doves in and around our cubicle sheds.

Cormorant

Under licence we shoot cormorants to protect fish like salmon parr:

They are decimating inland fisheries where their numbers are allowed to grow. Once they have found a fishery, they keep returning often at first light so often witnessed and taking fish until stock are depleted or what fish are left are too big for them to kill and take. A lot of these they still attack, damage and often die. Shooting the odd one or two under license is not enough when there are dozens doing it!

Excessive predation on endangered native stocks of salmon parr and brown trout on inland rivers far from their natural feeding grounds.

Decimation of stock of smaller fish (up to 800g) in UK rivers and lakes. I run a coarse fishery (for 30 years) that is also a SSSI. The stock of roach has gone from being abundant to below a self-sustaining level over

the past 15 years. I have a Natural England licence to shoot 3 cormorants per year! Currently I have 4 cormorants per day on the fishery!!

Huge damage to both wild and commercial fisheries. Massive uncontrolled breeding numbers. They should be added to the general licence for the protection of our waterways.

Greater Black Backed Gull

They are significant predators of waders and other special species. They are opportunist hunters that will take any young chicks or eggs & occasionally adult birds.

Gull populations have significantly increased in recent years and are causing a negative impact on the populations of a number of ground nesting prey bird species including curlew, lapwing, grey partridge and oyster catchers - principally by predateding the young and eggs of these species.

Greylag Geese

Grass and barley destruction. Pond being polluted by large numbers of geese roosting making duck numbers fall.

I shoot geese to protect crops in my local area. One goose will eat as much per day as a sheep and with a few hundred on a crop each day it doesn't take them long to decimate my local farms. Although we are not decreasing the population, keeping it the same stops the population going and becoming unmanageable in my area.

Lesser Black Backed Gull

The lesser black back gull can be devastating to ground nesting birds during breeding season. The lesser black back gull hunts low to the ground, in small packs by one or two birds leading the adult birds away from the nest/chicks and then the other gulls will swoop in and kill the helpless chicks or eat the eggs from an unprotected nest.

I would like to control lesser black backed gulls to protect the eggs and chicks for ground nesting birds, including red listed species such as lapwing and curlew

These large predators start patrolling the Farm from Late April through the Summer - take our declining Plover population and Curlews.

We control by shooting only on the moorland (within the SPA) to prevent predation of ground-nesting birds' eggs and chicks.

Raven

Ravens kill newborn lambs by taking their eyes out or their tongues or by pecking through the backs of their skulls during the first 24hrs of life.

Without doubt, the predator that inflicts the worst damage and suffering to Sheep and Lambs. Increasing in numbers at dramatic rate. Without doubt should be on the general license.

I can't touch them, but they need some form of control. They have been attacking my young lambs but also have had 30 plus ravens on my farm through the spring and summer which have prevented Skylarks and other ground nesting birds from successfully breeding this year.

I have witnessed ravens attacking newborn lambs and pulling their eyes and tongues out whilst they are still alive. Also watched them predateding ground nesting birds' nests and destroying their nests completely.

Taking eyes and tongues out of lambs. Taken eggs from ground nesting birds.

Buzzards

They prey on all mammals from field voles to hares, all songbirds in the UK and ground nesting birds. Grey partridge are devastated by them.

They can drastically decrease the number of game birds especially grey partridge which is a red listed bird. Buzzards are often hunting ground for hours which can affect other birds and mammals like hares and limit their activity.

Explosion of buzzards over past five to six years. From rare to pairs every few hundred acres. They take young birds and any small birds/mammals alive or dead. Will catch and kill young pheasants and partridges.

Killing Curlew, Lapwing, Grey Partridge, Barn Owl, and young Pheasant, particularly chicks. Always flying over game crops and woods and scaring off all bird life.

Taking chicks of ground nest birds and disturbing nests to the extent that other chicks do not survive.

Predation of other birds and chicks. We have seen Buzzards attack and kill our barn owls. Also, pheasant and partridge poults and grouse.

Red Kite

Not only are they becoming a danger to humans, but I believe that since their reintroduction the Hare population has diminished and also have seen them take a partridge.

The red kites kill and unsettle the free-range chickens.

Sparrowhawk

Sparrow hawks are especially lethal to our wild grey partridge and grouse.

The Sparrowhawk will kill at least one grouse per day within a Grouse Moor. Factor in that the Sparrow Hawk occurs all over Europe with over one million breeding pairs. The British Isles is the only place in the world where the Red Grouse is naturally occurring. With the capacity to hold around 500,000 Red Grouse. Currently having to stand by and watch as this happens is a reason to question why the Sparrow Hawk is protected at the expense of the Red Grouse and countless other species.

I feed small birds (garden birds) including various finches, house and hedge sparrow, thrush blackbird etc... Fed regularly, unfortunately it encourages Sparrow Hawks. I have a breeding pair that for the last 4 years have reared a brood of young on our land and late after our small birds have fledged and are easy prey.

Many small birds are taken and especially the young ones as the Sparrow Hawk nests later than most garden birds, means that sparrow hawks kill many to rear their own chicks.

They have increased tremendously since the seventies. They do a lot of damage to our songbird population and they need to be controlled like the corvids. I have seen a lot more of them this year in the woods than last year and the woods are a lot quieter this year. I shoot corvids to protect the songbird population.

A high percentage of breeding Grey Partridge and Turtle Doves are killed by Sparrowhawks annually on the farm I keeper.

Appendix C: further comments to Defra

Comments on SSSI/Protected sites

Without management then the carrion crows and magpies would seriously reduce the numbers and diversity of species of birds in the SSSI and therefore devalue the site.

We have changed our SSSI from unfavourable to favourable in 11 years through working on the woodland and controlling corvids squirrels and foxes for the overall good of our non-predatory birds. If there are any controls added to the common-sense General Licences, I will have to rethink whether to carry on.

The reason we no longer have nesting snipe and curlew in our SSSI is because of the population increase in badgers, crows, magpies and foxes and no-one controlling them. 30 years ago, when the land was used for farming the population of all the ground nesting birds was thriving because farmers were actively controlling predation. It is all about a balance of nature and the corvid has few enemies much like the badger and fox, so intervention is necessary to enable the vulnerable species to survive.

Much of my land is SSSI / SAC including rare chalk stream and water meadow habitat. I rent the farming to the local Wildlife trust for a peppercorn as my passion is to increase the biodiversity of this rare habitat. I am now in the ridiculous position of being excluded from controlling any predators under a general licence and have to watch an increase in predators at the expense of the species we are trying to encourage. You couldn't make up a more ridiculous system.

I control jays to protect game birds, wildfowl and songbirds on an area of land that includes SSSI and HLS land due to the rich habitat and biodiversity in this area. This is essential conservation work that has to continue to support this diversity.

As an Association senior voluntary warden over the last 30 years until last year I organised and led volunteer pest controllers from one shoot and two wildfowling associations without any problems or issues. Until the general licence farrago, we successfully carried out control over several Somerset SSSI and an NNR including for and on behalf of N.E. on their own land at no cost to the taxpayer. It has now been impossible to safely licence our continuing control and we have had to stand helplessly watching the species we've been protecting being decimated before our eyes. Our ongoing 30 project to control mink, fox and corvid predation to increase threatened ground nesting species, (mainly snipe to help meet the natura targets etc.) have been set right back due to the inability to thwart a few anti shooting idiots. Legislation on this matter must be strictly based on known scientific facts and to encourage engagement from those willing and able to volunteer their time and resources be as free from bureaucracy as before or large areas of the countryside will become devoid of key native species. A more legally robust Wildlife and Countryside species open general Licence type system should be re-instated a.s.a.p. It should also be as easy to reinstate control of a species that has reached a population where a sustainable natural harvest is safe (i.e. Brent Geese). With the exception of Pigeon and Dove species that are known to breed throughout the year the pest control should be suspended/closed during nesting season. Specific control licences should be easier and quicker to obtain. The creation of specific rules for 300m SSSI buffer areas are ridiculous especially here in Somerset where the SSSI's are often rivers/streams or ditches.

General Comments

Removal of the General Licences this year was extremely frustrating. We watched crows and magpies mobbing nesting lapwing and saw them attacking hedgerow nests. We do not believe that any lapwing successfully fledged young here this year. The lapwing and yellowhammers are some of the target species

within our Farmer Cluster and our group of farmers are making a big effort to try and reverse the decline of all our farmland birds. We are creating and improving various habitats to help wildlife. But taking away our ability to control predators completely undermines our efforts. Woodpigeons are also thriving in this area with large numbers recorded on our winter surveys. Seeing them damage our arable crops and impact on our ability to make a living is very demoralising.

As I have been involved in conservation and pest control since the 1950s, I can't help but notice that wildlife in this country is out of balance. There is a huge preponderance of corvids, the ratios between these and the vulnerable species that they prey on are way out of kilter. If we are to establish a revival of our threatened species, we must make some critical decisions, do we want a balanced variation of species or do we want virtually nothing but predatory corvids?

Man has upset the balance of nature so there is no going back. We have to control pest species otherwise they will wipe most things out.

How demoralising it is listening to ill-informed people getting credence for inaccurate politically and socially motivated argument to the detriment of genuine conservation.

Let sense prevail. Our wonderful countryside and wildlife are best looked after by practical hands-on conservationists not celebrities with their own agendas who contribute nothing but words.

The control of pest birds by sporting shooters is the only economically viable way for farming and conservation to obtain the necessary benefit on the scale required as it is self-funding.

Without an easy licencing system for control of corvids we will lose the fragile populations of many rare species of birds across all habitat types in the UK. Defra must not cave in to so called protectionists but must listen to sound, practical, scientific research and the experience of those who work in the countryside and see at first-hand the damage caused by corvids.

My professional background is in the rural economy from a science-based view. I am 74 years old and I have observed the changes taking place in the countryside all my life. I recognise the serious imbalances caused by human activity and as a keen conservationist feel it is essential to be able to try to redress some of those imbalances. Many of the pest species benefit from modern farming practice while other species struggle against increasing predator numbers. Conservation should be balanced to suit all species.

The new GLs, I think, are largely unworkable as are the two Individual Licences that I received from NE, so much so that I do not feel totally comfortable using them in order to shoot what were formerly recognised as 'pest species'. If we are to continue with any pest control or shooting for the table I believe that the species controlled must be defined in law as 'takeable', with any necessary caveats. The burden of proof of necessity of culling should not fall on the individual shooter. There is plenty of scientific and other evidence that these 'pest species' cause harm in various ways and in my experience their numbers are certainly not falling. This must be the reasoning used to support legislation to this effect.

The need to control the birds I have listed is critical. Scare tactics such as flags, gas bangers will work in the short term for controlling crop damage, however the only protective measure for nesting birds is lethal control through shooting or more effectively the Larsen trap. On a part time shoot such as mine you simply cannot use scare tactics against the nest predators as they are completely ineffective due to the length of hedgerows/margins across the farm. Having a Larsen which is out on the farm removing the issues at the appropriate time of the year while I'm at work is invaluable and should not have further restrictions applied.

Despite the past long-term pressure from shooting and other control methods none of these birds are declining or at risk, their numbers continue to grow in many cases exponentially. Nonlethal methods of control are insufficient because they do not work, at best, it just moves the problem elsewhere. If lethal methods of control for example by licence and other prescriptive and over involved regulation, it will discourage shooters controlling these species and their populations numbers will explode. The knock on effects financial, health and safety, disease and contamination, and the detriment to other species conservation by any unnecessary interference, will in my opinion be catastrophic.

Almost everyone with fishing interests would like to see cormorants and saw-billed ducks on open licence. Both buzzards and otters are becoming so prolific that control may become necessary if natural balance is to be preserved.

If General Licences are revoked or made too cumbersome the control of pest/predatory species will reduce even further. This would be catastrophic for already small, pressured population of wild farm birds. Any requirement for police inspection would be impractical especially in rural areas.

Need to be able to act quickly without bureaucracy. Jackdaws were a new problem for us, for example. Government need to trust responsible people, not impose bureaucracy that they cannot hope to police.

Country people, who care about the environment, have been doing a pretty good job of it without being piled with pointless paperwork that will take considerable time to complete, and even more time for the recipients, police or whoever, to assimilate. An utter waste of time, the General Licence has worked perfectly well until some ill-informed busybodies, with a political agenda, tried to interfere.

I think that the uphill struggle of trying to keep populations of generalist predators such as crows and magpies under control to help other species that are decreasing is difficult enough without more legislation complicating things.

I have seen first-hand just how much grain, peas, or other crops a pigeon consumes in one sitting from how much is held in their crop. Multiply that by the numbers in a typical flock and the fact that they eat twice a day and it becomes clear just how much human food is being lost every day. Without control, the flocks grow rapidly in size and cause ever more loss of food and income for the farmers.

As there was nothing wrong with the old licence and the way it was implemented, I hope Defra sees common sense and continues to help us look after the countryside.

Any decent countryman will only kill a species if it is having an adverse effect on a smaller or less adaptable one. I would always want to see the odd crow or magpie, they are a part of our world, but they are also intelligent and ruthless and can seriously undermine the population of other equally important species.

Absolutely essential that no further requirements are placed on the police. They can't cope as it is and have far more serious issues to address.

Stop pandering to these anti-everything environmentalist groups and back the science. Don't allow them to keep brainwashing people with their lies, threats and misinformation.

Dissuading pigeons by nonlethal means just pushes the problem onto the next available crop. Likewise, only being permitted to shoot pigeons posing serious damage to crops and therefore restricting shooting on such locations as flight lines and stubble, will not work. Over the last decade or so, pigeon numbers in our area, have increased considerably, to the extent that one can experience crops with between 1,000 and 1,500

feeding on them. This is despite relatively uncontrolled shooting, without which, numbers would be increased.

I have no wish to wipe out magpies, just reduce numbers and thus predation during the breeding season.

Increasing the bureaucracy around the control of clearly identified pest species, especially when the densities of the birds in question is increasing, is both counterproductive and unnecessary. It has been a viable and accepted form of control that, if made so onerous that 'hobbyist' shooters are deterred from carrying it out, would have no cost-effective alternative to the farming community.

It is important that small field and garden owners aid the bird population and control the increasing crows, magpies and jays which prosper by scavenging horse food and bird tables and compost bins. Gardens can promote breeding birds and if many people control prey species it will make a real impact.

One of the biggest problems of where I live is the egg and chick predation of ground-nesting waders on the moors and farmed uplands. Not only by the corvid family but by many species of gulls that live around the reservoirs in this area. In springtime I find countless broken curlew, lapwing, grouse and pheasant eggs on the many footpaths. I have also noticed a steady decline year-on-year of curlews and lapwings in my area.

The crows are out of control in the Peak District and they are limiting the ability of red-listed species to thrive. To lose the ability to shoot these highly successful and opportunist birds will push these highly prized species away. We are so proud to have peregrines and curlew etc nesting nearby and do our best to look after them. Please do not be pressurised by people who put their dislike of shooting before practical conservation. We see the damage every day that crows and magpies cause and their numbers. We are not blood thirsty. We don't like having to kill these birds on the General Licence but recognise that it is necessary for the birds that we prize to thrive.

I cannot overstate the importance of being able to control these species of bird on the estate where I live. The hiatus this year did enormous damage and it was a poor breeding season in any event, particularly for lapwing. We have a very important breeding site for lapwing and curlew and if we lost these species as a consequence of stopping predator control it would be a national disgrace. People that would see this happen are either reckless as to the consequences, or simply do not understand the complex interrelationships between predator and prey species. Despite many years of control of these birds, their populations are increasing. There is simply no justification for changing a system that was not broken. The GWCT science proves the benefits to rare birds from predator control. Please do not ignore it.

I control pest birds on a dozen or so farms in the west Essex area as part of a voluntary crop protection group. We only control birds where there is a clear need. During the year one of our farms sustained such heavy damage to an oilseed rape crop that it was eventually abandoned at a cost of approximately £17,000. This was due mainly to such a large local population of woodpigeons, crows and jackdaws that it was virtually impossible to make a dent in them.