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Gamewise

Research-led conservation for a thriving countryside

Spring 2020

Waders bounce back in the Avon Valley

Waders for Real sees wader populations make a comeback

Uniting for salmon

The Missing Salmon Alliance

The end of an era

Looking back at the research on red grouse management and raptor conservation on Langholm Moor

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Byou it will be spring 2020, and let us hope that by then we will have seen the end of the wet weather that has flooded the water meadows outside my office window and made the autumn drilling of crops at our farm, the Allerton Project, impossible.

Weather has become global news, with climate change moving tsunami-like up the agenda (see page 18). In January last year, the NFU pledged that British farming will be carbon neutral by 2040; in January this year the National Trust promised it by 2030. Within the space of three days last April, Scottish, Welsh and Westminster parliaments all declared a climate emergency. During the recent Westminster election, promises to plant trees emerged faster than beech leaves on a hot spring day.

So how should the people we work with (farmers, gamekeepers, conservationists and other land managers) respond to an agenda that appears to have changed dramatically in less than a single growing season? Keep calm and carry on? Yes, if you are already doing a good job. See it as an opportunity? Definitely. Embrace the change? Yes, because all the people we work with should be part

all the people we work with should be part of the solution.

We know game management, done well, delivers net biodiversity gain – in the uplands and the lowlands, across all shooting types. We believe this should be the test for all shoots, and we would be delighted to help you find out if your shoot is up to scratch – see our shoot biodiversity assessments **www.gwct.org.uk**/ **shootbiodiversity** or page 55. Grouse moor managers are custodians of some of the biggest carbon stores in the UK, in the peat under their feet. The farmers outside my window have



The wet weather over the winter has flooded water meadows and made autumn drilling of crops impossible.

formed a Farmer Cluster and by working together have reversed the decline of lapwing in the lower Avon Valley (see page 26). Other groups want to form to tackle water quality or to consider going insecticide-free and I have not met a farmer who does not want to improve soil quality.

Future farmland support will be for the delivery of public goods and services; farmers, gamekeepers

I have not met a farmer who does not want to improve soil quality" and land managers have a lot to offer and should be considering what their 'offer' is. The GWCT's 2020 Big Farmland Bird Count (supported by the NFU) was a huge success with participants eager to record the birdlife on their land.

We must remember that these birds, in addition to the food that feeds our nation, form an important part of what Britain's farmland has to offer.

2020 will not be any less challenging than 2019; game and wildlife management continues to be under pressure from many directions but thinking about what good game and wildlife management can deliver in environmental terms is a good place to start.

on Dat

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On the cover Lapwing. © Steve Round

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TALKING POINT



Sustainable releasing

Dear Editor

As a farmer/conservationist, I believe it is time for the GWCT to take the lead in condemning the exponential increase in released gamebirds. You have the data to show the unacceptable young stock losses, non-consumption of shot birds and environmental damage from excessive stocking.

The GWCT should actively condemn this practice and promote a blueprint for sustainable levels of release highlighting the proven advantages that these bring to the environment. The Trust should concentrate on its excellent conservation research to attract more members at the risk of alienating others. **Jon Capes**

Roger Draycott replies: Mr Capes makes important points

STAR LETTER

about the sustainability of released game shoots. The GWCT's science-based guidelines on release densities, supplementary feeding, habitat provision and predation control were developed to help shoots ensure that they are delivering a net biodiversity gain. Many of these guidelines are embedded in the Code of Good Shooting Practice and the British Game Alliance standards. It is imperative that all shoots and guns follow the Code. Indeed, if everyone involved in game shooting did so, we would be in a good place. Shooting has never been more popular, with more people involved, more habitat provided and managed, and more income generated for rural communities than ever before. But there is no excuse for poor or bad practice. The GWCT offers a shoot biodiversity assessment

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Please send your letters to: The Editor, Gamewise, GWCT, Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 1EF Email:editor@gwct.org.uk

* We reserve the right to edit letters for inclusion. Best letter is in editor's opinion. Letters are the opinion of the writer and are not necessarily the views of the Trust.

service (www.gwct.org.uk/ shootbiodiversity) to help shoots ensure they are maximising the conservation benefits that a well-run shoot can deliver.

Presenting a positive image

Dear Editor

In this rapidly changing political climate the image that shooting game presents to the general public is vital. I believe much could be achieved by changing attitudes. Firstly the most important is the justification for shooting woodcock. We are the first to criticise Mediterranean countries for killing migratory birds, so how can we promote a responsible image while we continue to shoot this very attractive bird?

My second point is the appalling attitude of some young shots who appear totally indifferent to the game they have just shot. That is of course, the fault of our generation for failing to educate our youngsters. **Robin Combe**

Mike Swan replies:

Mr Combe is right that shooting needs to promote a very positive image. Individual responsibility to do the right thing has never been more important. That said, I disagree with him about giving up shooting woodcock simply because they are beautiful birds. If we follow that logic, then most quarry species should be off the menu. Woodcock are wonderful and should be treated with respect. We should take care not to overshoot them, and GWCT guidelines say do not shoot them until December to avoid the risk of overshooting our home breeding population. However, there is no indication of any decline in wintering numbers in the UK, so taking a modest harvest is entirely justified.

Teaching respect among young Guns is very important and everyone should read and follow The Code of Good Shooting Practice. The GWCT's book The Knowledge provides an excellent explanation of the science behind The Code, and reading a copy should be an essential for every Gun. You can then take the Accredited Game Shot test, to demonstrate that you do indeed have the knowledge (www.gwctknowledge.com).

GWCT LETTERS IN THE PRESS

Allerton Project shows moths are increasing, despite national plunge in population: Our letter published in The Guardian

While moths may be showing a population drop nationally, Dr Callum Macgregor is correct to observe that the situation is not 'almost hopeless' (Moth survey shows steady decline in Britain since 1980s). The Allerton Project research farm in Leicestershire joined the same survey 25 years ago, while making changes to our farming and wildlife management. Since then, both the numbers and species diversity of moths have increased. Outside the common agricultural policy and with the right incentives, other farmers could turn this single result into a national trend. Alastair Leake

Sustainable Ewes: Our letter to Farmers Guardian

The National Trust are correct to be leading the way by increasing tree planting on their land. What a shame though that the approach they propose requires the removal of livestock undermining the viability of their tenants livelihoods. Planting trees in pastureland whilst continuing to graze the grass between the trees, so called Agro-forestry, achieves twin objectives. Evidence is also emerging that the stock benefit from the shade in summer and shelter in winter, and in coppice systems where the wood can be harvested periodically for biofuel, the livestock can benefit from controlled grazing of the foliage, obtaining minerals brought up to the surface by the tree roots.

If we are to tackle climate change let's try to do so in a way that preserves peoples livelihoods, produces income and food, provides habitats for wildlife and improves soil health whilst reducing runoff and storing carbon. Not to do so is a mighty missed opportunity. Alastair Leake

GIVE US YOUR VIEWS Email: editor@gwct.org.uk

Write to: Editor, GWCT, Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Hants, SP6 IEF

In focus



Despite short-term increases, the song thrush population remains substantially lower than in the late 1960s. © Laurie Campbell

Farmers and gamekeepers show they count

his February, farmers, gamekeepers and the wider public have been busily counting the birdlife across Britain's farms. The GWCT's Big Farmland Bird Count, kindly sponsored by the NFU, aims to get more farmers aware of the birds on their land and improve the measures taken to encourage

birds across our countryside. The results of the count are not just a celebration of the individual achievements of the hardworking farmers involved, they give an insight into where certain bird species might be thriving and where more work needs to be done. This national picture also helps to show where subsidies

and environmental schemes are succeeding and where improvements might be needed.

Roger Draycott, our head of advisory said: "Farmers have a vital role play to play in the future of many of our most cherished farmland bird species. As more than 70% of the UK is managed for agriculture, farmers manage our largest songbird habitat,

but their efforts to reverse bird declines are often unrecorded. We believe our Big Farmland Bird Count helps remedy this. We thank everyone for taking part."

Full results will be published in the next Gamewise, but find out more at www.bfbc.org.uk. For more information about what you can do to help farmland birds on your land, see page 58.





Recognition of soil health could be an important step for our farmland. © GWCT

"A big step forward" - our response to the Agriculture Bill

he announcement of a new Agriculture Bill marks a considerable change in the way farming is viewed in UK policy. The recognition of soil as a public good - and the inclusion of support for those ensuring a healthy soil – is hugely significant. This announcement should mark the end of a long campaign for farmers to be supported in protecting our soil -aprecious national resource. In recent years we have argued the case for a commitment to soil health in the halls of Westminster, on the stage of farming conferences and throughout the farming press, so this is a substantial step forward.

A structured focus on food security is also an incredibly welcome addition to the Bill. With the responsibility placed on farmers to deliver biodiversity, their role in feeding our nation is often taken for granted. Over half the food we eat is produced in the UK and British produce provides a key component of our exports.

Regular monitoring will help both farmers and policymakers to react to a changing landscape. This also reflects the Bill's move towards an integrated view of agriculture and the environment. Farmers and conservationists have both been frustrated by a tendency for policymakers to treat the importance of a productive British countryside and the wildlife farms support as largely separate concerns. Hopefully an understanding of the way both aspects go hand-in-hand will be reflected in future policy decisions.

Although a big step forward, there are ways this Bill could be bolder and braver. Those farmers whose effort and innovation have already produced a haven for wildlife, healthy soil or sustainable yields will also be concerned at the focus on 'farmers new to environmental work or hoping to do more'. We must encourage as many farmers as possible to ensure responsible use of the landscape, but what of those already achieving it? How will those Working Conservationists recognised by the GWCT be rewarded for their continued delivery of the Government's aims? We will only truly know once new policy is in place, but we will be monitoring this carefully.

The importance of this Bill cannot be overstated. As we prepare for life outside of the Common Agricultural Policy, the opportunity to reshape British farming will affect not only the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of farmers, but the food on your plate and the climate and wildlife that depends on the farmed environment.

To do this spring

Lose yourself in a book We have expanded our popular range of books available in the GWCT shop. As well as in-house bestsellers like *The Moorland Balance*, you can also pick up books by leading nature authors and support the GWCT at the same time. Browse the whole range at www.gwctshop.org.uk.

Enter the GWCT Julian Gardner awards Open to amateur wildlife

Q

photographers, submit your photos of the UK countryside – be it game, wildlife, habitat or the people who live and work there. Entries are open until 31 May 2020. For more information or to enter, please visit www.gwct.org.uk/photocompetition.

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Send us your gamebag records As the season has ended, please take the time to send in your gamebag records to the National Gamebag Census. The more data we receive, the better the summary trends that we produce. All records are strictly confidential. If you have historical data held in game books, do let us know. Find out more at www.gwct.org.uk/ngc or contact Corinne Duggins 01425 651012.



TAKING THE LEAD?

Almost 4,000 people have completed our survey on the future of lead shot.

Is it time to move away from using lead?



Find out more by reading our joint lead shot statement on page 52.

GWCT in numbers

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of you have become an Accredited Game Shot proving your understanding of responsible use of the countryside. If you haven't yet taken the test, you can do so for free at www.gwctknowledge.com

84%

increase in redshank numbers in the Avon Valley between 2015 and 2019. Find out more on page 27.

17,500

people now follow us on Twitter - giving you access to the latest news and opinions on countryside and wildlife issues.

letters of response published in 2019 - including letters to The Times, Guardian, Independent and the Scotsman - a 30% increase on the previous year.

45,000

supporters now receive our weekly email newsletter. Be sure not to miss out on the latest news bysigning up today at gwct.org.uk/newsletter.

Show your love of lapwing

ou can now add a touch of lapwing flair to your wardrobe and support our research with a new badge and tie. From each purchase of the badge, £5 will be donated to the project that will track lapwing, curlew and woodcock.

Andrew Hoodless, who is leading the project, said: "By buying a badge, you can help us to answer the difficult questions about where our curlew, lapwing and woodcock go, and why.

"Building on our Woodcock Watch campaign, this new tagging project is our most ambitious yet. Every donation will make a vital contribution to us getting this project up-and-running so we can better understand the needs of these much-loved birds and do more to help them."



Special edition lapwing ties are priced at £29.95 and badges are just £9.99. Order yours today at www.gwctshop.org.uk.

Schöffel supports our wader work

ollowing the success of its charitable campaign for Black Friday, premium countrywear

specialists Schöffel Country has announced that it raised a total of £6,890 for the GWCT.

Last year Schöffel Country donated £5 from every order on its website over the Black Friday weekend to the GWCT Wader Tracking Appeal to conserve three beloved wading birds; curlew, lapwing and woodcock.

Marcus Janssen, brand director at Schöffel Country, said: "A highlight of 2019 has unquestionably been our hugely successful Black Friday initiative to raise funds for the GWCT.

It is a brilliant organisation at the very heart of the British Countryside, and it has never been more relevant or important. This particular wadertracking programme will play a vital role in halting the decline of these three iconic species in the UK - so to be able to contribute to that is hugely rewarding for us at Schöffel Country."

You can support this work today by visiting www.gwct.org.uk/wadertags.

∆Schôffel

In Brief

A COOKBOOK which supports our vital conservation work has scooped three national awards. Glorious Game, featuring recipes from more than 101 well-known chefs and food writers, won best Single Subject Cookbook, best Meat Cookbook and best Charity Cookbook at the 2020 Gourmand World Cookbook Awards. Proceeds from each sale go directly towards the GWCT and the Moorland Communities Trust. www.gwctshop.org.uk.

A NEW APP is helping land managers count mountain hares in Scotland. The Epicollect5 app, developed by Imperial College London and tailored by GWCT for count purposes, not only ensures that estates can share the same methodology to track hares but also collects real-time statistics in a single place. We believe that this could become the default means of recording numbers, removing the

need to write out count cards and sending them in for further input. Please contact Ross Macleod rmacleod@gwct.org.uk or 07773 898625.

On the road again

OUR POPULAR series of roadshows is back for a third year. For just £10, attendees enjoy a twohour talk and the chance to find out more about the issues that matter to them. Feedback from previous guests has been extremely positive, with one saying how it had changed the way he would view the countryside for good. We will be visiting North Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Surrey, Somerset, Gloucestershire, London and Hertfordshire this spring, with more locations in the autumn. Andrew Gilruth will be joined by advisory staff, adding practical insight and giving their view on the issues facing the countryside. Book today at www.gwct. org.uk/roadshows. Find out more on page 60.

www.gwct.org.uk/news 💆 🖬 🗐 🛄



ROUND-UP



Variety is the spice of life for wild bees

Rachel Nichols identified a combination of 14 wildflowers that would support most wild bee species. © Will George

armers could help threatened bee species and improve crop yields with new wildflower seed mixes according to a PhD study by Rachel Nichols at the University of Sussex that is supported by the GWCT. Building on recent studies showing the importance of wild bees, the project teamed up with Emorsgate Seeds[®] to identity which wildflowers attracted certain bee species in the plots where the wildflower seed is produced. This provided the bees with an abundance of flowers and was a very rigorous test of their preferences.

The findings of this landmark study also suggest that the current mixes recommended by Defra, might not be as effective as they could be. In fact, the existing nectar flower mix and the flower-rich margin mixes suggested by Defra each contain only one each of the 18 species found to be most attractive in the study. With Government policy moving towards a 'payment by results' approach, it is important that the options available to farmers are as effective as possible.

As wild bees are often better pollinators than

honeybees, the study focused on how best to attract species likely to transfer more pollen per visit. A more diverse mix of pollinator species has also been shown to improve crop yields, encouraging those running the project to find a combination that was attractive to as many different species as possible.

Across the study, 44 different wildflower species were monitored, with 40 different wild bee species spotted. A combination of 14 wildflowers were identified that supported all but three of these. Some bees were shown to be heavily dependent on certain wildflowers, with almost all of the small garden bumblebee visits observed on kidney vetch. In contrast, more common wild bees such as the red-tailed and buff-tailed bumblebee visited a wide range of flowers, demonstrating a preference for wild knapweed. This illustrates the importance of wildflower diversity in any future seed mixes (see page 57). Rachel Nichols is now currently trialling two new mixes to understand how practical it may be to use, both in terms of handling and seed establishment.

Successes



LAPWING pairs on the Avon Valley study area increased from 61 pairs in 2015 to 105 pairs in 2019 You can read all about it on page 26.

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A trial demonstrated that acoustic recorders could be used to monitor woodcock remotely with 500 woodcock registrations identified from 12.5% of the recordings.





THE Langholm Moor Demonstration project showed that heather restoration alone is unlikely to offset predation and increase grouse density.





CULTIVATED plots are associated with both higher greener emissions during field operations and higher carbon dioxide emissions from soil (see page 18).

Survey shows the importance of keepers

survey launched by the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, Scottish Gamekeepers' Association and the GWCT has shown the valuable contribution of gamekeepers. Building on a similar survey from 2011, it shows that the 965 gamekeepers who responded, manage more than 1,625,000 hectares of land. 90% of lowland keepers plant game cover crops and an impressive 98% of all respondents provide supplementary food, providing grain for farmland birds during early spring known as the 'hungry gap'. You can read the full report at www.gwct.org.uk/gamekeeperreport.





General Licence survey backed by thousands of GWCT supporters

THANK YOU to more than 3,000 of you who completed the GWCT General Licences Survey, which is now with Defra. Your responses provide fascinating first-hand accounts from the people on the ground who use the licences, and the relative effectiveness of different types of non-lethal control. This submission also provides a significant body of practitionerbased evidence on the impacts that a range of different common pest and predatory species can have on other wildlife, as well as crops and livestock.

Defra is currently reviewing the General Licensing system that operates in England after Natural England decided to revoke the three General Licences for controlling wild birds, following a legal challenge by campaigners at Wild Justice, fronted by BBC Springwatch presenter Chris Packham.

Stay up to date with all of the latest General Licence news and much more by signing up to our free weekly newsletter at www.gwct.org.uk/newsletter.

Appeal update: your support matters



Understanding fox control

A GROUND-BREAKING study has shone a light on the real impact of fox control. Tom Porteus, a GWCT predation expert, analysed data from 22 shooting estates over three consecutive years using a sophisticated computer model.

Tom was able to reconstruct the unseen processes taking place during fox culling, such as the production of cubs and immigration from other locations. The number of foxes alive within the estate was estimated fortnight by fortnight, so the changes in numbers over time could be clearly illustrated.

He found that all 22 gamekeepers achieved a reduction in fox density when ground-nesting birds are most vulnerable to predation by foxes in spring and early summer. Fox density at the start of this period was on average 47% of what it would have been without culling - and on a few estates it was close to zero. The rate at which culled foxes were replaced by immigration varied among sites, and affected success. On one estate it was as rapid as two foxes per week, highlighting the intensive and sustained control effort that can be required.

To fully understand the context in which we attempt to manage fox predation, it is necessary to consider both the food resources sustaining the fox density in 'source' areas, and resources at the receiving end. We would like to explore what determines fox immigration pressure and answer future questions like where do incoming foxes come from and how do foxes discover game-rich shooting estates?

Informing policy decisions

2019 WAS an interesting year as Government thinking on the future of agricultural and environmental policy developed. There were common themes in many of our responses, including:

- The need for a National Soils Strategy to underpin food security and support longterm sustainable production, by encouraging farmers to de-intensify their rotations to build soil health and resilience.
- The need for 'fit for purpose' metrics to assess environmental actions such as Biodiversity Net Gain and the progress of the 25 year Environment Plan.
- Landowner/manager involvement was an important consideration in a number of our responses as we sought to ensure that John Lawton's 'more, bigger, better and joined' approach to conservation is adopted across the wider landscape.
- We addressed misconceptions about the impact of agro-chemicals to biodiversity and raised the role inorganic nitrogen has had in biodiversity decline.
- We sought to re-balance the debate on upland peatland net zero. This is complicated by relatively low emissions compared with lowland peat, the need to prevent high/uncontrolled emissions from wildfire, the current scientific debate on prescribed burning and the extent to which re-wetting might increase methane emissions potentially negating any beneficial carbon sequestration.

These themes were reflected in our All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) events which covered wildfire, soil health, net zero and licensing for species recovery. We will continue to engage with policymakers through the APPG and consultation responses throughout 2020. For more information, please see www.gwct.org.uk/appg.

GWCT Roadshows are back

Wednesday 11 March - Knaresborough Thursday 12 March - Chesterfield Tuesday 24 March - Farnham Tuesday 31 March - Taunton Thursday 2 April - London

Wednesday 6 May - Cirencester Thursday 14 May - Royston

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Both 12g and 20g models are available to view in the Beretta Gallery

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How others see us

What do other organisations think of our work? This column offers an opportunity to hear their views and helps offer insight into our relationship with them. Here, Rod Greenwood, senior lecturer at Sparsholt College, gives his opinion

Alking through the Sparsholt College campus, it is not uncommon to see students with muddy boots bundled in the back of 4x4s. With its established wide range of courses, stateof-the-art equipment and facilities, and industry-active lecturers, Sparsholt College has an enviable reputation for the outstanding training and development of students in land and wildlife management.

We work with the GWCT to inform our teaching and learning, both in the classroom and out in the field. The scientific theory and practices that the Trust produces are crucial to enriching our courses and developing our students to industry standards.

The relationship between the college and the GWCT has been decades in the making. Since 1973, when only one single-year course was available in this sector, to now, where land and wildlife management courses range across full-time, part-time and apprenticeships. All of these courses are informed by the vast experience and insight provided from the Trust.

Having a great connection with the GWCT is a real asset to students and the college. Through widespread contacts in this industry, students benefit from excellent opportunities for progression, development and hands on experience. Lecturers are still actively involved on a professional basis in the study and management of the countryside and wildlife, spreading this pool of contacts and industry links even further.

This access to exciting work placements means every year, each new intake of students are able to participate and work on projects run by the GWCT. Whether it's clearing derelict hedgerows and boundary lines, monitoring GWCT mink rafts on the Upper Itchen, or managing local estates by fox control and other trapping "The scientific theory and practices that the Trust produces are crucial to enriching our courses and developing our students to industry standards"



methods, the students have access to a wide range of opportunities that enrich their studies.

Former Sparsholt wildlife management student Jodie Case secured a three-week placement as a student research assistant at the GWCT, which led to further volunteering opportunities and eventually a permanent role as research assistant on the Waders for Real project. She now oversees the involvement of current Sparsholt students on the project, which seeks to reverse the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley.

Working with the GWCT means that we are providing the most up to date science and knowledge to our students, and the most varied and expert experiences possible. This gives them the tools necessary to secure successful careers as wildlife managers of the future. $\overset{\frown}{\leftarrow}$

Rod Greenwood Senior Lecturer in Land and Wildlife Management

SPARSHOLT

Surrounded by the Hampshire countryside, Sparsholt College is a leading provider of a range of land-based courses. Students learn in stateof-the-art facilities, under industry experts, to develop knowledge and skills that are valued by employers. www.sparsholt.ac.uk







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Research & demonstration farm

The latest news, research and advice

News

O World Economic Forum/Jakob Polacsek

Natural England Chairman visits Project



We were pleased to welcome Tony Juniper back to the Allerton Project in his new role as chairman of Natural England. Tony visited the Project in the early years and cites the work of the Allerton Project in his book What Nature Does for Britain. On this visit we were able to show him round the new Visitors Centre and introduce him to the extensive research programme on soil management. After the visit he tweeted: 'Fascinating to see research @AllertonProject into how public goods arising from healthy soil (carbon capture, clean water and reduced flood risk) can be combined with profitable food production and wildlife recovery, including fish, birds and insects. An inspiring joining of the dots'.

Project success highlighted in the Lords

We were delighted to welcome Lord Caithness and Lord Shrewsbury to the Allerton Project. Both are regular attendees of our All-Party Parliamentary Group on Game & Wildlife Conservation, with Lord Caithness elected as an officer at the last AGM.

Following the visit and speaking in the House of Lords during the Queen's Speech debate, Lord Caithness said: "Rural land should be used for producing food and for conservation. The Allerton Project farm in Leicestershire is a very good example of how this is done. It is run by the GWCT and I recommend it as a template to the Government because it has 25 years of solid research to prove that this can be done; we do not want our farmers to become just environmental contractors."

Lord Shrewsbury, speaking later in the same debate said: "More emphasis must be placed on nurturing wildlife and the environment forming the basis for a revitalisation of both for the future. In this context I pay tribute to the work of the GWCT. Game shooting and fishing plays an important part in the rural economy, often providing badly needed jobs and income in less-favoured areas. Indeed, wildlife can prosper on well managed shoots and fisheries."

Look out for... Technology

We are keen advocates of taking land out of agricultural production to create wildlife habitat where we can identify the least productive areas to do this with. We have started to use drones to make crop assessments more rapidly and accurately and have been employing a SPAD Chlorophyll meter to help fine-tune our nitrogen fertiliser applications.



Research

Monitoring aphids and BYDV

The recent ban on neonicotinoid seed dressings for cereals has left farmers in the lurch because they provided protection against aphids that transmit the serious disease barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV). As a result, many farmers are now spraying pyrethroid insecticides prophylactically, which doesn't help as it reduces invertebrate levels within fields and runs the risk of polluting waterways where they are very toxic to aquatic invertebrates.

Last winter our Farmland Ecology team along with our partners Agrii, tested whether sticky traps could be used as field-based monitoring tool to predict when and the levels of aphids invading fields in a pilot project funded by AHDB. Initially we conducted a survey of farmers and agronomists to ascertain current practices and to see if there would be demand for such a tool, with 92% responding positively. We conducted field trials of a yellow sticky trap to determine a) predictive capabilities of the sticky trap system, b) practicalities of use by farmers and agronomists, c) whether landscape composition, boundary type and type of tillage affect immigration of aphid vectors. The sticky traps were effective at sampling winged cereal aphids and a single 20 \times 20cm trap was sufficient to identify differences within- and between fields, but insufficient

aphids colonised the

plants to allow us to evaluate their predictive capability. Trials of the sticky trap system by farmers and agronomists showed that their aphid identification skills needed improving, but even with minimal training aphid trends could be detected. The majority were also willing to use the system on their farms in future.

The field trials revealed that at least three times as many cereal aphids were captured in the headland areas of fields, especially next to taller field boundaries driven there by wind currents. This offers an opportunity to reduce insecticide usage by only treating such areas, but needs further research to confirm the impact on whole field populations and the risk to invertebrates in field margins. We found huge variation in aphid immigration between fields, even on the same farm, with 24% having no aphid immigration. Less than 5% of tested aphids carried the virus. Having more grassland in the surrounding landscape increased the levels of aphid immigration.

We used sticky traps to sample winged cereal aphids, which can transmit the barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV).



THE ALLERTON PROJECT

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DON'T MISS THE BETA Certificate in Conservation Management course running from April to November. www.gwct.org.uk/beta



WE HAVE RECORDED up to 800 earthworms per m² in arable fields which is a good indicator of healthy soil.



Climate change

These management approaches are all

examples of adaptation to climate change,

but there is a considerable need also to

develop means of mitigation. We have

previously demonstrated that reduced tillage and direct drilling reduce greenhouse

gas emissions associated with diesel use for cultivations. Most recently, through the

SoilCare project, we can monitor actual

emissions of greenhouse gases from the soil

in relation to different management practices

(see box below). There is growing evidence

elsewhere that direct drilling also has the

potential to sequester carbon in the soil.

to increase tree planting with incentives specifically to increase carbon sequestration.

Trees in the right place and for the right

purpose have an important role, benefiting

food production

and forestry can be

There is also a strong national policy

Rising to the climate challenge

One of our permeable dams with storm water backing up behind it, attenuating downstream flood peaks.

he scientific evidence for humaninduced climate change has been around for a long time. Modelling in the 1970s first presented the convincing case for the need to reduce greenhouse gases associated with the burning of fossil fuels. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been highlighting the issue on the global stage since 1988. In the UK, 2006 saw the publication of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change with a clear message to get mitigation measures underway immediately to avoid more expensive crisis management later.

The 2015 Paris Agreement on tackling climate change was the first ever legally binding global agreement between nations, but it has been followed by a lack of political leadership and action. And here we are. Increased frequency and intensity of storm events and associated flooding are now the reality, and drought and forest fires become more familiar news. The discussion is not about whether coastal settlements could be flooded by a rising sea, but which ones need to be abandoned first.

So, what are we doing? In our landscape scale Water Friendly Farming project, we have demonstrated that creating 'clean water ponds' isolates aquatic wildlife from nutrient pollution which is expected to get more severe because of climate change. We are investigating the potential of permeable timber dams in headwaters to hold back water during storms and reduce flood risk downstream. Recent high rainfall is enabling us to evaluate this approach to protecting vulnerable communities and assets. In our EU-funded SoilCare project, we

are exploring the potential of deep-rooting agricultural grasses which have been bred for

drought resistance to improve water infiltration during storms and buffer against flood risk. The SoilCare project also enables us to investigate ways of addressing the

wildlife, reducing flood risk and improving water quality, as well as storing carbon (see box overleaf). The trade-off between can be a distraction from the need for mitigation through the choices we each make every day"

increasing problem of soil compaction, largely a consequence of using large machinery on increasingly wet autumn soils.

addressed through a range of agroforestry approaches, if only a sufficiently flexible policy can be put in place.

There is a danger though. Tree planting and natural flood risk measures can be a distraction from the need for mitigation through the choices we each

MEASURING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS



Our soil scientist, Jenny Bussell, with the soil gas analyser.

Our Gasmet soil gas analyser measures the flux of different gases. We are particularly interested in carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, the latter having 298 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. As nitrous oxide emissions increase under anaerobic conditions resulting from compacted soils, we were concerned that emissions from our compacted direct drilled experimental plots would be higher than in the cultivated plots, but they are not. Cultivated plots are associated with both higher greenhouse emissions during field operations and higher carbon dioxide emissions from soil, making direct drilling the better option from a climate change mitigation perspective.

THE ALLERTON PROIECT

SONGBIRD NUMBERS ARE 62% above the 1992 baseline with species such as blackbird, song thrush, linnet and whitethroat showing consistent increases.



WE HAD MORE than 2,500 visitors in 2019. To book a visit to see the latest research or join one of our courses, please contact us on 01572 717220.



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TREE PLANTING FOR CARBON SEQUESTRATION



Scientific evidence for short-term carbon sequestration from tree planting on arable land shows clear benefits for both above-and below-ground carbon. The aboveground carbon benefit of tree planting in pasture on mineral soils is also clear. However, the effect on soil carbon of tree planting into pasture is not conclusive because of uncertainties associated with carbon stored in soil. The most recent research by Cranfield University shows that when trees are planted into pasture, carbon sequestration is confined to above-ground growth, rather than sequestration in soil in the early years. Harvesting timber reduces the carbon storage potential, especially in this early period.

Young tree plantation.

make every day – an excuse to continue flying for example. The key point above all others is that addressing the threats of climate change can only be achieved by individuals and businesses taking steps to reduce their impact.

At the Allerton Project, we have been using wood fuel from our own woods to heat our offices and visitor centre for many years, and the latter has efficient straw bale and wool insulation and rainwater harvesting, all of which reduce our direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions. Home working and the multitude of internet services for communication reduce our need to travel, and we use trains for travel wherever possible.

Individually, we need to reduce, and ideally stop flying; we need to reduce meat consumption while maintaining the livestock systems that have environmental as well as nutritional benefits, we need to enjoy local and seasonal food, and to improve household insulation and use of renewable energy. Increasing numbers of investors are now stimulating demand for a carbon neutral economy by divesting from fossil fuels. To quote the IMF's Managing Director, Kristina Georgieva: "We are running out of that most precious commodity – time". We need more meaningful policies for changes to industry, transport, energy and land use, but in the end it's up to us. All of us.



Chris Stoate is head of research at our Allerton Project research and demonstration farm. He is keen to share our research results and show how everyone can help, not just farmers.



LATEST DEMONSTRATION FARM ADVICE



COVER CROP CORNER Over the winter we have been working with the Allerton Project team to support the collation and submission of a new Countryside Stewardship (CS) application for the farm. Having been in Higher Level Stewardship for the last 10 years, the decision to either 'roll' the scheme on for a further year by Natural England or to start afresh needed some careful consideration. Eventually, after reviewing the new options and improved payment rates, it was clear that there was much to gain from submitting a new CS Mid Tier application to commence in January 2021.

Utilising our 'precision conservation' approach, we are working with our colleagues at SOYL to map the farm to record key Natural Capital features, alongside yield, biomass and soil type information. Bringing this data together is helping the farm, shoot and advisory teams to identify unproductive land and pinpoint areas that can further improve the habitat for game and farmland wildlife.

New options for Mid Tier include AB16 Autumn Sown Bumblebird, paying £550 a hectare. This helps deliver critical insectrich brood-rearing habitat for wild game, as well as providing winter food in the second year.While we wait for the Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) to commence in 2024, it clearly pays to earn stewardship revenue in its current form and to demonstrate best practice. \overleftrightarrow

Richard Barnes

Kings Crops provide agronomy advice and supply seed for the Allerton Project farm's game cover, stewardship and green cover crops. kingscrops.co.uk



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SEE THE UNSEEN

Langholm Moor the end of an era

Sonja Ludwig reports on the research that has helped us better understand the conflict between red grouse management and raptor conservation interests



UPLANDS

Since 1992, Langholm Moor has hosted studies that focused on the conflict between moorland management for red grouse and raptor conservation, including the Joint Raptor Study (1992-1996) and the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project (2008-2017). Active grouse moor management ceased in 1999, after rising predation pressure on red grouse caused by increasing numbers of hen harriers and peregrines reduced grouse densities to a point where driven grouse shooting became economically unviable. Keepering was resumed from 2008 to 2016 during the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project (LMDP).

The LMDP, a 10-year partnership project between Buccleuch Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, RSPB and Natural England, aimed to restore Langholm Moor as a driven grouse moor to meet the nature conservation objectives for the Site of Special Scientific Interest (upland habitats and breeding birds) and Special Protection Area (breeding hen harriers). Its main objectives were to increase grouse numbers sufficiently to support economically viable driven shooting, to maintain a viable population of hen harriers, and to extend and improve the heather habitat. From 2008 until spring 2016, five gamekeepers controlled foxes, crows and small mustelids and managed the heather habitat by rotational burning and cutting. To reduce the impact of hen harrier predation on grouse chicks, all hen harrier broods were provided with diversionary food. In addition, agri-environment funds from the Scottish Rural Development

Programme were used to help restore heather cover by reducing numbers of grazing sheep.

Sheep removal helped to reverse decades of heather loss, while reduced predation levels likely contributed to the population

recovery of ground-nesting birds. Hence, the project achieved its targets of increasing hen harrier breeding

numbers and extending and improving the heather habitat. However, it failed to achieve its key target of shooting sufficient grouse (1,000 brace in a season) to ensure the moor reaches a financially viable state. In fact, no grouse were shot during the LMDP, and because of this the keepering part of the project ceased in 2016, two years ahead of the intended 10-year duration. Nevertheless, our research at Langholm has helped us better understand what has constrained grouse recovery, and may thus help resolve the described conflicts between management for grouse and conservation of raptors.

Key findings included:

- Grouse moor management (predator control and habitat management) had a positive effect on abundance and/or breeding success of several ground-nesting birds of conservation concern, including red grouse, black grouse, hen harrier, merlin, curlew and golden plover.
- 2) Diversionary feeding of hen harriers reduced the number of red grouse chicks delivered to harrier nests compared with modelled predictions. However, even together with other management actions, this was insufficient to increase grouse densities to a level considered adequate for driven shooting.
- Survival of adult grouse and grouse chicks contributed most to grouse population changes and reduced the rate of population recovery. Grouse

carcasses we recovered suggested that predation, mostly associated with raptor signs, was the main cause of mortality.

4) Neither grouse breeding success nor survival were related to heather cover. Hence, heather restoration alone is

unlikely to offset predation and increase grouse density, although it has the potential to increase



Sonja Ludwig is a research ecologist in our uplands team, and has worked as project scientist on the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project since 2012.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS?

What do you think is the future for our uplands? Email us at editor@gwct.org.uk

(Below) Langholm Moor's future is now uncertain as the moor is up for sale, but bird species of conservation concern such as curlew, black grouse, merlin and golden plover benefited from the management put in place. Sheep removal also helped to reverse decades of heather loss. © Laurie Campbell/Dave Kjaer

"heather restoration alone is unlikely to offset predation and increase grouse density"

THIS WORK

BENEFITED

ALSO

D Laurie Campbel

UPLANDS

DID YOU KNOW?

Until the early 2000s, heather cover was falling sharply in the UK as a result of overgrazing and commercial forestry, however, a GWCT study showed that management for driven grouse shooting slows the loss of heather from our landscape.



THE CONFLICT: GROUSE MANAGEMENT AND RAPTOR CONSERVATION

Hen harriers can be a risk to driven grouse shooting as they can limit grouse at low densities and reduce shooting bags to the extent that continued shooting becomes economically unviable. Consequently, some hen harriers are killed illegally, which limits their abundance and distribution and has contributed to the absence of breeding hen harriers on many grouse moors in northern England and Scotland.

grouse carrying capacity in the long term. Overall, employment of gamekeepers had greater benefits to grouse density than reductions in sheep grazing and the associated heather recovery.

- 5) Afforestation in the landscape surrounding Langholm (Annandale & Eskdale and Roxburgh, an area of 3,086km²) and the increasing isolation from other heather moors may have hampered grouse immigration and emigration, leading to a grouse population less well buffered against growing predation pressure.
- (6) As buzzards were the most numerous raptor species during the LMDP, a PhD studentship aimed to measure the potential effects of buzzards on red grouse. The results showed that consumption of

grouse by individual buzzards was low. However, total consumption could be considerable given the high numbers of buzzards on the project area. Thus, it is possible that grouse consumption by buzzards contributed to limiting grouse recovery at Langholm, but only if they killed the grouse they consumed.

The final report of the LMDP and links to all scientific papers can be found on **www.langholmproject.com**. However, research on Langholm Moor has now reached a crossroads as the landowner, Buccleuch Estates have put the moor up for sale. It remains to be seen how the management strategy of a new owner will shape the future of this moor and its associated biodiversity.

Research in action... How to count grouse





Counting with pointer dogs

As red grouse can be difficult to detect in heather, we use trained pointer dogs to count them. The dog searches on either side of an observer walking along a line transect, and stops ('points') whenever it scents grouse. The observer can then flush the birds to count them as well as to determine their sex and age (ie. young or old in July). We also record the location of each pair or covey of grouse and their perpendicular distance from the transect line.

Understanding the counts

To translate the number of grouse counted into estimates of density (grouse km²), we use distance sampling. This method is based on the concept that the probability of detecting an animal decreases with increasing distance from the transect line. Using the distance of flush points from the transect line, the program calculates the area effectively searched by the dog, which is then used to estimate grouse density.



Uniting for salmon

Dylan Roberts sheds light on how the Missing Salmon Alliance aims to combine expertise to reverse the decline of Atlantic salmon

he numbers of Atlantic salmon returning to our rivers in 2018 were the lowest ever recorded continuing a sharp decline since the 1980s. Numbers have fallen so low that conservationists fear that if rates continue, wild Atlantic salmon could be lost from many of our rivers over the next 50 years.

This worrying conundrum prompted four of the UK's most prominent salmon conservation charities: Atlantic Salmon Trust; Salmon & Trout Conservation; Angling Trust with Fish Legal; and the GWCT to form a collaboration called the Missing Salmon Alliance (MSA). Masterminded by GWCT fisheries trustee, David Mayhew, the MSA will fight to reverse the devastating collapse in wild Atlantic salmon around the UK by

combining expertise, co-ordinating activities, bringing together research and advocating effective management solutions.

The collaboration will coalesce around a research programme called the 'Likely Suspects Framework' (LSF) which will identify all the pinch points in the salmon life history and look at ways in which they can be overcome to improve salmon conservation. Our existing SAMARCH project and our core salmon Index river work will form a key part of this programme; including identifying for the first time how salmon use estuaries and coastal waters in the English Channel and Scotland. It will also provide information on how salmon survival at sea is impacted by their early juvenile stages in rivers. The collaboration will have

global reach and the LSF mirrors a similar initiative undertaken for Pacific salmon.

The MSA was launched in November at Fishmongers Hall, who kindly sponsored the event. The Prince of Wales, Patron of the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Salmon & Trout Conservation, said in a video message to the forum: "The very future of a species that has been swimming in our oceans and seas for over six million years will be in jeopardy. We simply cannot allow this to happen in our lifetime. Having our four leading salmon conservation organisations working together through the Missing Salmon Alliance, with support from both the private and public sectors, is hugely encouraging.' www.gwct.org.uk/salmon

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period the programme will contribute approximately €3.4 billion more. LIFE provides 50% of our funding.

© Dave Kjaer



0.7 fledged young per pair per annum are needed to maintain a stable lapwing population

WADERS

Waders bounce back in the Avon Valley

Lizzie Grayshon reports on the Waders for Real project which has seen wader populations make a comeback



Lizzie Grayshon is our ecologist who is in charge of the Waders for Real Project and has been working closely with local farmers to help them restore their wader populations. he farmer-led Waders for Real project started in 2014, seeking to reverse the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley, a river floodplain of high biodiversity interest, part of which is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

In 1982, the Avon Valley constituted one of the top eight lowland wet grassland sites in England and Wales for breeding waders. Since then surveys at six to seven year intervals have shown a dramatic decline in the number of breeding waders, mirroring trends seen across Europe. By 2010, the number of lapwing pairs had fallen from 208 in 1990 to 71, pairs of redshank had dropped from 117 to 22 and common snipe from 29 to one.

Monitoring of lapwing breeding success before LIFE Waders for Real, showed that productivity was too low to maintain a stable breeding population, with low nest and chick survival attributed to high levels of predation. In addition, to predation issues, the increased prevalence of intensively grazed short swards, inappropriate water levels and encroaching scrub were reducing the extent of suitable sites within the Avon Valley for breeding waders. To halt the decline of lapwing and redshank, work was needed to improve breeding success by reducing predation and increasing habitat suitability.

In a time of increasing threat to our wildlife, the good news is that this initiative which involved conservation organisations working closely with landowners, farmers and gamekeepers has helped Avon Valley wader populations make a comeback. During the project, the lapwing population is now holding stable at 70-80 pairs with a record year recorded in 2019 of 105 pairs, the highest seen since 2010. The number of breeding redshank has increased from 19 pairs in 2015 to 35 pairs in 2019, drumming snipe were also heard on the water meadows in 2018 and 2019.



AVON VALLEY



(L-R) Shallow wet scrapes are important for foraging wader chicks. Three four-week-old lapwing chicks, an adult redshank and its brood can be seen on this photo from an Avon Valley scrape taken in 2018; temporary electric fences were used during the wader breeding season to exclude foxes and badgers and improve nest and chick survival.

Establishing an environment to aid wader recovery has focused on the creation of wader hotspots, where a combination of intensive habitat improvements and management of wader chick predators has been conducted. In-field wet features provide optimum conditions for foraging wader chicks, supplying a rich source of invertebrates to eat and soft soil to facilitate probing.

Waders select open landscapes, avoiding places where predators perch and hide. With the help of students from Sparsholt College (see page 15), over two kilometres of old fence lines and willow scrub have been removed and 125,885m² of wader breeding habitat protected from terrestrial predators by electric fencing. In addition, intensive camera trap monitoring has improved the efficiency of predator control already conducted on parts of the study area by private landowners to assist wader recovery.

The red fox was identified as the main predator of lapwing clutches in several studies prior to 2014. However, very little was known about fox hunting behaviour, particularly in wet grassland habitats. Foxes in the Avon Valley were fitted with GPS collars to evaluate their use

of particular habitat features in this landscape, including temporary electric fencing. Red fox scat and stomach sampling was conducted to investigate the diet of this predator and assess the importance of wader prey items. This information will be used to inform our approach to the issue of mammalian predator management. 🖉

We monitored foxes with GPS collars to find out more about their diet and how they use habitat features in the landscape.



DID YOU KNOW?

When they hatch, lapwing chicks weigh only around 15-17g. They can start to forage by themselves, but rely on their mother to brood

them, as they are unable to regulate their own body temperature. They are very vulnerable at this age, relying on the parent birds to alarm call at the sign of danger and their camouflage to protect them from predation.

THE PEOPLE ON THE GROUND

The successes seen through the project have only been possible with the help and support from the farmers, keepers and landowners involved. Their commitment and passion for conserving waders has been paramount throughout the project.



WADERS FOR REAL CONFERENCE

The Waders for Real project held an end of project conference in 2019 to celebrate the successes, difficulties and lessons learnt through the LIFE Waders for Real project. Delegates from a variety of organisations including the RSPB, Natural England,



the NFU, other NGOs, as well as private landowners/managers/ farmers and GWCT staff were invited with around 60 attendees. This was an opportunity for discussing best practice, current knowledge gaps and future research opportunities.

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Countywise

Your update on county events and fundraising Spring 2020



















Our popular clay days are held around the country. © Black Fox images, Charles Sainsbury-Plaice

Don't miss our clay days

Whether you are looking for a fun day out to entertain clients, or a social, action-packed outing, our clay days are definitely for you. Single guns or teams of four are available, so please book in advance to avoid disappointment. We are enormously grateful to all the landowners and supporters. If you would like to get more involved by way of sponsorship or donating auction prizes, please get in touch with Lottie Messon at **cmeeson@gwct.org.uk**. The current list of events is displayed below, but please check **www.gwct.org.uk/events** or with your local committee to find out more throughout the year.

County	Where	When	No. per Team	Cost per Team	For more information, please contact
Cambridgeshire	Six Mile Bottom	2 May	4	ТВС	Katy Davis; katy.davies@marshalladg.com
Cheshire	West Midlands Shooting Ground	24 April	4	£600	John Whitcliffe; john@birchencliffe.co.uk
Devon	Ugbrooke Park, Chudleigh	25 April	TBC	ТВС	devon@gwct.org.uk
Essex	Park Farm, Saffron Walden	05 June	4	£675	James Hamilton; office@ghamilton.co.uk
Lancashire	Claughton Hall Estate	14 June	3	£180	Mike McKendry; mike.mckendry@davis-bowring.co.uk 01524 274410
Leics & Rutland	Prestwold Hall, Loughborough	21 May	4	£500	Lottie Meeson; cmeeson@gwct.org.uk 07976 207113
London	West London Shooting School	l 2 June	4	£600 (or £150 pp)	Eleanor Usborne; eusborne@gwct.org.uk 0207 290 0110
Northumberland	Hulne Priory, Hulne Park, Alnwick	25 June	8	£1,600	(4 guns + 4 loaders) Sophie Dingwall; sdingwall@gwct.org.uk
North Wales	Bob Valentine Shooting School	16 September	4	ТВС	Rupert Bevan; rupertbev@hotmail.com
Powys	The Rocks, Stanage Park	18 April	TBC	ТВС	Amanda Harris-Lea; aharrislea@gwct.org.uk
Scotland (SE)	Crookston	tbc September	4	ТВС	Malcolm Leslie; malcolmandgeorgina@ btinternet.com
Staffordshire	Bagot's Park, Abbots Bromley	June TBC	4	ТВС	David Dale; fdaviddale@yahoo.co.uk 07881783298
Suffolk	Euston Hall, Thetford	15 May	4	£750	Rebecca Gatens; rebecca.gatens@ashtonslegal.co.uk 01284 762331
Sussex	Northall Farm Fletching	26 June	4	£400	Fleur Fillingham; ffillingham@gwct.org.uk

調問利

EVENTS



(L-R) Kaylie Bloxham, George Juer & Zoe Philips; Marina Gibson; guests enjoying the fanastic ballroom in The Savoy. (Inset) Auctioneer Charlie Thomas.

40th Anniversary ball celebrates in style

jolly crowd headed to The Savoy on the Strand for the GWCT's 40th Anniversary London Ball in November, which was generously sponsored by Hook Norton Brewery, 8 Vodka and Mainbrace Rum. The evening kicked off in style with more than 200 guests tucking into delicious game inspired canapés at the Louis Roederer champagne reception, before listening to Ball chairman David Ross, who in his welcome highlighted that there has never been a more vital time for people to show their commitment to the GWCT. The evening raised more than £130,000, a critical contribution to the GWCT's research, policy and

communication work, all of which was only made possible by the generosity of numerous individuals and organisations.

A delicious dinner of wood pigeon followed by a succulent duo of Highland venison was served, during which guests were entertained by Kieron the Mighty Magician's captivating tricks. Guests sipped on Mainbrace Rum cocktails as Charlie Thomas of Bonhams conducted the auction, with lots including a holiday to the

private island of Mustique; a day's shooting at Gunnerside; a Kenyan safari and

the chance to have a VIP tour of the McLaren Formula One centre, Afterwards attention turned to the laser shoot, mirror photobooth and, of course, tearing up the dance floor.

Overall, the evening was an incredible success, pulled together by the wonderful committee and we would like to thank everyone who supported the 40th Anniversary Ball.

Gamey Jaimie snatches victory

THE GAME On dinner and auction in Battersea Park was a highlight of a rather



Jamie Haselock preparing his heavenly venison and blackberry vodka jus.

wet October. Top game chefs Jaimie Haselock (Gamey Jaimie), Will Alldis (the Shot Gun Chef) and Alix Caiger (Caiger & Co) prepared three outstanding game dishes for the chance to win the coveted GWCT Game Chef of the Year Award 2019. The aim for the game chefs was to prepare a dish that was simple enough that it could be replicated at home or in the field. Judged by James Knowles, Lisa Linard and the BGA's Tom Adams, who also generously sourced all of the game, each dish was fantastic in taste, ease and appearance. After much deliberation the judges crowned Jaimie Haselock the winner for his stupendous venison and blackberry vodka jus; one of the judges commented: 'by the time the venison got to us it had heavenly wings'.

For a copy of the full recipes please email london@gwct.org.uk.



Diary dates

Clay day - 12 June London Ball – summer GWCT lecture series – autumn Game on Event - October

For more details please contact Eleanor Usborne eusborne@gwct.org.uk or 07702 559422.

EVENTS



The fabulous shoot walk at Caldecote.

Hexton to host

t was a busy start of the year for Bedfordshire with the ever popular **quiz** in March, followed by another record turnout for the **shoot walk** at Caldecote in June, courtesy of Simon Maudlin.

A quiet autumn prepares the county for the year ahead and a range of Bedfordshire events will be published shortly. Of particular note, by kind invitation of Hugo and Gallia Grimston, is the popular **shoot walk** to be held at Hexton Manor on 18 June. Don't miss out and keep your eye on the diary of events.

Bristol & N Somerset Cider success

uests were treated to a fascinating tour of Thatchers Cider at Sandford in July. Kindly hosted by John Thatcher, guests visited the orchards, the highly impressive processing facility and enjoyed a delicious lunch at The Railway Inn with cider tasting to follow.

The inaugural **Winter Ball** took place at Wick Farm Barn, near Bath in November. Guests enjoyed prosecco and canapés on arrival, followed by a three-course dinner with cheese and complimentary wine, an auction then dancing. Another great success for this committee.

Wick Farm was the fantastic venue for the Winter Ball.



Buckinghamshire Join us at the Tower of London

e are delighted to announce a unique event taking place in the moat of the Tower of London. a first in the 1,000 years of the castle. Details will follow but please register your interest with Gay Wilmot-Smith at gwilmotsmith@ gwct.org.uk. It promises to be an amazing evening with a master class in dry fly-casting, followed by dinner at the Royal Fusiliers Mess, ending with the Ceremony of the Keys. Other forthcoming events include simulated game days, shoot walks and ferret racing.

The new unique event will take place in the moat.



Cambridgeshire Dutch Master on show

he Cheffins Fine Art preview sale and drinks took place in September, with guests treated to a talk about some key sale items, including a Dutch Old Master. Jim Paice spoke about topical issues facing the GWCT both here and at the Sporting Ball at Burloes Hall in October. The **ball** was a spectacular night, raising more than £20,000 and was generously supported by headline sponsors Hardcastle

Burton, Savills and Tees Law. It also saw the launch of the **Sporting Partridge Raffle**, tickets which are available at f30 each from Claire Smith claire@russellsmithfarms. co.uk to win a double gun day on a partridge shoot plus other prizes. The draw will be held on Friday 24 July. The next **clay shoot** is confirmed at Six Mile Bottom on Saturday 2 May (see page 32 for more details).

Cornwall Adam Henson entertains

ornwall had a fantastic year with Caerhays Castle the venue for members to receive **research** updates on woodcock and the success of the Cornwall grey partridge recovery project.

June saw a well-attended **shoot walk** at Trewithen. Mike Swan and the Trewithen estate owner, manager and gamekeepers spoke to about 80 inquisitive country folk about the shooting valley.



Caerhays once again held the hugely successful clay shoot in August thanks to the Williams family, and the year culminated with the **dinner** and auction in October at the Hotel Bristol, Newquay. Guest speaker, Adam Henson, delighted the packed audience with

his anecdotes and clear countryside knowledge.

Adam Henson delighted Cornwall guests with his anecdotes and clear countryside knowledge.



EVENTS

Cheshire Superb Colshaw lunch

heshire's superb Colshaw Hall **lunch** and **clay shoot** at Hodnet in March, kindly sponsored by Savills, raised more than £17,000. Wrekin Sporting of Shropshire very generously offered an auction lot at the lunch for a partridge day at the Wappenshall shoot. Roderick Bailey, the successful bidder, enjoyed a day in September, accompanied by Oxfordshire online auction winner Richard Rae. Roderick said: "The day was fabulous and I would certainly recommend Wappenshall as a great classic driven partridge experience."



(L-R) Lucky winnners Richard Rae and Roderick Bailey.



Competitors at the Levens Team Challenge took part in clay shooting, fly-fishing, stone skimming, axe throwing and much more. \odot Tom Sykes Photography

he joint Cumbria/Lancashire Levens Team Challenge, kindly hosted by Richard and Naomi Bagot at Levens Park in May, was well-supported by teams enjoying fantastic challenges including clay shooting, archery, gundog scurries, fly-fishing, quadbike and trailer driving, stone skimming and axe throwing. Our thanks to sponsors Rathbones and Saffery Champness. The popular **pub quiz** at The Plough at Lupton in November, was enjoyed by more than 80 people with a brilliant auction, run by Bradley Thompson, helping to raise a fantastic £6,200. Thank you to sponsors Gilkes Hydro, Hewetson & Johnson and Oglethorpe, Sturton and Gillibrand. Look out for this year's events including a shoot walk and pub quiz.

Derbyshire & S Yorkshire

Really Wild success

he **Really Wild Dinner** at Hassop Hall in February was a huge success. Thank you to all our auction donors, generous bidders and Stephen Salloway for his auction prowess.

Auctioneer Stephen Salloway.



A most enjoyable **shoot walk** was held at Wentworth in June, by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam family and organised by Anthony Barber-Lomax and his team. Wet weather didn't deter guests who enjoyed a private view of the estate's historic monuments and its work to re-establish the historically designed parkland and woodland.

Also in June, chairman Mark Parramore and his team attended the annual **Chatsworth clay day**; the GWCT are one of the beneficiaries of this outstanding event.



The Devon High Four day in November. © TI Media

n June, we teamed up with the Devon Wildfowling & Conservation Association as its guests at the Exe Estuary 'Sannaville' marsh site for a **conservation walk**. Later in the month, guests enjoyed a simulated **game shooting day** in the beautiful surroundings of the Great Fulford estate, generously hosted by Guy Imray. The very popular auction was held at the **cheese and wine evening**, kindly hosted by Dave Dicker, which was another great success.

The year ended with the spectacular Devon GWCT **High Four Day** in November where the lucky winner enjoyed a 'money can't buy' day with seven friends staying at the High Bullen Hotel and shooting the signature drives at Heanton Satchville, Great Warham, Hall and Portledge. The day culminated with a banquet back at Hall. Our thanks to all those involved for their support and generosity. Devon will be launching another GWCT **High Four** in May for the 2021 season.

Dorset

Dorset on target

he unique Inter-Shoot challenge requires you to fire an airgun, work a dog, drive a 'Mule' and complete a countryside quiz – not to mention a team flush, catapults and fly casting. Thanks to hosts Mr and Mrs Wurfbain, last year's challenge in April was enhanced by a lamb and venison roast and raised funds for the GWCT and the Rainbow Trust.

A busy **shoot walk** in July on the Cranborne Estate, was led by Tim Hall, Beau Witney and Mike Swan, and included a lively debate on subjects from seed mixes to fox snares. Thank you to Lord Cranborne and his staff.

The unique Dorset Inter-Shoot Challenge.





Walking in the ancient woodland at Gosfield wood, which the GWCT is aiming to restore to its pre-1950 state.

Restoring Gosfield wood

rs Nina Fiske hosted the **clay day** at Debden Hall in June. A record 53 teams enjoyed some testing, imaginative stands. Moatwood 1485 served a delicious gin reception, while guests sampled Country Food Trust meals by Duncan Clarke of Braxted Hall. With a well-supported auction, the day raised more than £36,000, including a donation to the Air Ambulance. Thanks to sponsors SRC Aggregates and other local businesses, and to James Hamilton for a successful day.

In July members visited **Gosfield wood**, bequeathed to the GWCT by the late Mrs Diana Marcia Rothenstein. Under the guidance of GWCT's Roger Draycott, the aim is to return the ancient woodland to its pre-1950 state.

The **Best of Essex raffle** is selling fast. For a chance to win nine guns to shoot four outstanding drives on Hammonds Farm, Charity Farm, Great Hayes Farm, Gardens Farm, go to **www.gwct.org.uk/bestofessex** or contact Ed Rout by email **edward.rout@struttandparker.com**.

GCUSA

New York auction raises £275,000

he trustees and members of GCUSA were fortunate to welcome GWCT Chairman Sir Jim Paice and Lady Ava Paice to GCUSA's 33rd annual **New York charity auction** in November at the University Club. Jim Paice brought the assembly up to date on the urgency of the conservation challenges in the UK that are being addressed by the GWCT.

The audience was well primed for Hugh Hildesley of Sotheby's New York, who deftly coaxed £275,000 from the auction enthusiasts. The successful bidders will be enjoying the privilege of shooting days in Dorset, Northumberland and Wiltshire, generously provided by GWCT supporters.

GCUSA is pleased to announce the election of three **new Trustees** to its Board: George W Banks II of Jupiter Island, FL, Jeffrey J Keenan of Okeechobee, FL and William C Winget of Fairfield CT.

Our **spring outing** will be held at the Pawling Mountain Club in Pawling New York on 16 May. Contact GCUSA at **info@ gcusa.org** for more information. Renew your membership using the reply card on the enclosed letter, or via **www.gcusa.org**.

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Hampshire

New year events

Vith a refreshed committee on board, several events are planned for the coming year. A river walk is planned for June followed by a GWCT Hampshire Country Fair and Gundog event to be held at Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge on Sunday 21 June. A hip flask challenge will be on the agenda for later in the year, including the opportunity to bid for a selection of exciting auction items.



(L-R) Tom Noest, Mark Ashbridge and Peter Creed at the venison dinner at The Little Bell.

Game dinners

Restaurateurs Peter Creed and Tom Noest have adopted the GWCT as their charity and are planning game dinners at their restaurants The Bell at Langford and The Little Bell at the Soho Farmhouse. The first of these was held at The Little Bell in November, with a theme of venison. There will be further dinners throughout 2020, culminating with a dinner and auction at the Soho Farmhouse in September. Keep an eye out for future dates.

Hertfordshire

Outstanding ball

ertfordshire combined forces with Cambridge for a fantastic evening at the **Sporting Ball**, Burloes Hall in October. With more than 200 guests and generously sponsored by headline sponsors Hardcastle Burton, Savills and Tees Law, the evening raised in excess of £20,000. The night started with a champagne reception, followed by a three-course dinner and auction. The **Sporting Partridge Raffle** was also launched at the Ball with prizes including a double gun on a partridge day. Limited to 150, tickets cost £30 and are available from claire@russellsmithfarms.co.uk.

Herefordshire

A masterclass in gundog steadiness

erefordshire enjoyed a **gundog demonstration** at Bishops Wood House in August, by Ben Randall of Beggarbush Gundogs. Ben who has won the cocker championship on several occasions gave a very impressive display, using young dogs to demonstrate the importance of starting training at an early age and how to achieve that steady dog all sporting people would love to own.

Ben Randall's gundog display focused on young dogs and the importance of starting training at an early age.


EVENTS

ancashire teamed up with Cumbria for

the popular Levens Team Challenge in

the spring (see Cumbria section).

at the very successful **sporting dinner** at

the stunning Inn at Whitewell, with guests

enjoying a delicious game dinner followed

who regaled them with his informative and

by lan Coghill, former GWCT chairman,

entertaining sporting tales. The evening

concluded with an auction conducted by

Jason Fildes. Thanks to hosts Charlie and Lou

Bowman and sponsors Savills and Brabners.

Future events include a **clay shoot** at

Claughton Hall, Preston, on Sunday 14 June.

In October, more than £9,000 was raised

Lancashire

Levens challenge and dinner



Precision driving at the Levens Challenge. © Tom Sykes

Another busy year

he **quiz** at the Crown Inn, Tur Langton in March, was well-supported with some testing questions from quizmaster Will Young.

We were then blessed with the most amazing weather for the **clay** shoot at Prestwold Hall in May, with more than 20 teams taking part in a fiercely fought competition, professionally co-ordinated by Honesberie Shooting School. Huge thanks to our hosts the Packe-Drury-Lowe family and to all our sponsors



Clay shoot competitors at Prestwold Hall in May.

for making the event so successful. Check the diary for this year's quiz and clay shoot.

Thanks also to Lord Hazelrigg and his staff for hosting an interesting estate walk at Noseley Hall. Despite the rather cold

Kent

Kent on target

WCT and the Demelza Hospice Care for Children arranged another outstanding **clay day** at Chevening in May, raising £20,000. Richard Thomas of BTF Partnership then organised and sponsored a great clay shoot and auction at Court Lodge Farm in June, raising more than £15,000.

Godmersham Park was Kent's **shoot walk** venue in July, by kind permission of Fiona Sunley. Led by GWCT's Mike Swan, shoot captain Ben Palmer and head keeper Adam Horn, guests learnt about the improved habitat and wild bird mix feeding on the estate on a perfect summer's evening.

Lincolnshire

Dinner success

et again the sell-out **Partridge dinner** at Washingborough Hall Hotel in October, was a huge success. A huge thank you to all our sponsors - Streets, Thompson and Richardson, GFP Agriculture and to everyone at Washingborough Hall Hotel for making the event so enjoyable and such a success. Look out for our events this year, which will hopefully include a clay shoot.

June evening, everyone enjoyed the tour, encompassing all aspects of the estate and its important history.

Norfolk

Trust stalwarts recognised

oger Draycott and the BGA's Tom Adams, spoke to a packed audience at the **spring meeting** last March. Chairman, Henry Edwards, also presented treasurer Steve Bennington with an engraved glasses set in recognition of his 17 years' service to the GWCT.

May saw the first **golf day** for many years, sponsored by Brown & Co, Strutt & Parker, Electric Wheels and 15 others. A great day finished with an auction raising more than £5,000. Thanks to Tim Power and host Robert Barnard.

Roger Draycott led a fascinating **shoot walk** at South Repps in June, at the invitation of Chris Sladden and sponsored by Keepers Choice.



Tim Power masterminded the GWCT stand at the **Royal Norfolk Show**, kindly sponsored by Durrants. Don't miss out on the chance to win a unique day for eight guns on five of Norfolk's best drives in the Norfolk Big Five Raffle. Visit gwct.org.uk/ norfolk5 for details.

(L-R) Treasurer Steve Bennington and retiring chairman Henry Edwards.



Henry Edwards

William and Eva Edwards very kindly welcomed the Norfolk committee and friends to a **drinks party** at Hardingham Hall in October. Sir Jim Paice awarded chairman Henry Edwards a Life Fellowship in recognition of his huge contribution to the Trust. Henry has served on the committee from its inception for 43 years and led as chairman three times. Henry's passion for the countryside and the Trust has been reflected through his monumental fundraising efforts, but also his desire to provide a wide range of events with something for everyone to enjoy and learn more about the vital work of the GWCT. We are pleased that Charlie MacNicol has taken on the role of chairman.

EVENTS



Guests enjoyed a visit to Courteenhall.

Busy year ahead

t was a busy 2019 with the summer drinks party and tour of the Arboretum at Courteenhall, the **clay day** at Warren Farm, along with the **shoot walk** at Wakefield Lodge Estate. The committee have been planning events for 2020 including a talk at Heygates, a gala dinner, shoot walk and a series of pint nights, so it promises to be another busy year. Keep an eye out for future dates.

Oxfordshire

Farm walk

xfordshire held its wetland walk in September, by kind permission of Daylesford Organic Farm. Thirty people toured the farm and wetlands, receiving an insight into its conservation work from Alastair Leake and Daylesford's Tim Field.

We are extremely grateful to **Simon** Scott-White who is standing down as chairman after three years in the post because of work commitments. Simon has worked hard to establish a wider range of appeal for the Trust throughout Oxfordshire and held a very memorable dinner at Blenheim Palace with guest speaker Lord Heseltine. We would like to thank Simon for all his hard work and support.



Competitors at Widemerpool clay shoot.

Northumberland & Durham Fantastic sporting opportunities

orthumberland & Durham are holding a **clay day** on Thursday 25 June at Hulne Priory, Hulne Park, by kind permission of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, with El Churchill operating the clay shoot. For £1,600 teams of four guns and four loaders will enjoy breakfast, shooting at six varied stands, drinks reception, lunch, sporting auction and raffle. For further information, please contact sdingwall@gwct.org.uk.

Win the ultimate **wild sport weekend** in Northumberland, including grouse, pheasant, roe stalking, duck flighting, rabbits, salmon fishing on the North Tyne and an overnight stay at the Lord Crewe Arms. Kindly donated by the Wanwood Shooting Syndicate, Willy Browne-Swinburne, Lady Cowie, Edwin Taylor, Jeremy Herrmann and the Lord Crewe Arms, and sponsored by GSC Grays and Womble Bond Dickinson. Tickets are £20 each www.gwct.org.uk/wildsport.



Simon Scott (I) and new chair Charlotte Marrison (r) present outgoing chairman Tim Main with a woodcock painting in honour of his work for the GWCT.

Thank you Tim

drinks party was held in November at Leighton Hall, hosted by Camilla and Maco Corrie, sponsored by Savills, FBCMB and Handelsbanken and Willo Game. Guests heard Professor Nick Sotherton warn against anti-field sport hysteria and champion the GWCT's research. Simon Scott presented a woodcock painting to retiring chairman, Tim Main, for his tireless work including spearheading the first GWCT High 4 raffle and fundraising more than £100,000.

Nottinghamshire

Clay shoots, walks and cookery

ore than 20 teams attended the clay shoot at Widmerpool in April, kindly hosted by Chris and Julia Butterfield, and run by the ever efficient Honesberie Shooting School with a very amusing 'trick' shooting display by Mickey Rouse. Thanks to our teams, sponsors, auction donors and buyers for making the event so successful.

Thanks also to Robert Thomas Farms for hosting an informative **estate walk** at Blidworth in May. Led by Austin Weldon, some 50 guests enjoyed a wonderful evening looking at all aspects of diversification, renewable energy projects and land management for conservation.

Around 70 people attended the delicious game cookery evening at the School of Artisan Food, Welbeck Abbey in November. Guests were taught how to prepare different game dishes by Michelin star chef Alex Bond and his team from the Alchemilla Restaurant. Thanks to all our sponsors for their support.



Alchemilla staff prepare for the delicious game cookery evening at Welbeck Abbey.



Somerset



lan and Sally Haddon, who are retiring from the Somerset committee after 20 years.

Thank you to Ian and Sally Haddon

an and Sally Haddon have announced their retirement from the Somerset committee after 20 years. Both have worked tirelessly for the GWCT – lan was chairman of the committee from 2001-2015 while Sally has been the driving force behind many of the events. Among many highlights, was having then agricultural minister, Jim Paice, to speak to a crowd of more than 300 at Taunton Cricket Club. They were also very pleased to hold the first Somerset 'draw for four' shoot raffle which raised nearly £20,000. Ian has also chaired the membership committee, is a Trustee and sits on the lowland research steering committee. He and Sally will be sorely missed from the Somerset committee. Chairman Nick Evelyn calls them 'irreplaceable'; the GWCT agrees.

The winner of the Somerset **Draw for Four** shoot raffle was Jamie Strong from Dawlish with ticket number 103 drawn by Melanie Gibbs. The raffle raised £15,000 and we would like to thank the generosity of the four shoots Wood Advent, Triscome, Wood Vellow & Harwood Farm plus Crowcombe Court for dinner and accommodation.

Sussex

Breaking records

nother record-breaking year raised more than £28,000 for Sussex. This was raised from the 37th shoot evening and auction, followed by the clay day and a unique shoot walk at the Beech Estate with its ancient wildflower and insectrich meadows. The final event of the year was the GWCT Sussex Four Shoot Raffle, featuring four of Sussex's premier shoots. Thank you to our sponsors Charles Stanley, Strutt & Parker, CLM, Adams & Remers, Batchellor Monkhouse and Burgoyne Hallam.

This year begins with the **shoot evening** at Clair Hall on Wednesday 4 March, followed by a **shoot walk** at Sutton Hall and a **clay day** at Northall Clay Pigeon Club in June.

Staffordshire

Bagot's Park success

Shropshire joined forces with Shropshire for a fantastic **evening** at the Hales Estate, Market Drayton in June. Host Alexander Hall revealed how wetlands created by his father 25 years ago are attracting a wide range of rare and special visitors including curlew, green plover, oystercatcher and redshank.

The following Sunday, David Dale organised a very enjoyable **clay shoot** at Bagot's Park, Abbots Bromley. Teams were invited to shoot on four flush stands and one individual stand shooting 690 clays. A day of challenging shooting around the estate was followed by an excellent lunch.



The Classy Clay Breakers (L-R Barbara Eckersley, Amanda Burrow, Amy Bratt and Mandy Berrisford) at the Bagot's Park clay shoot in June.

Suffolk

A countryside celebration with Will Garfit



Will Garfit at the Suffolk Jockey Club meeting.

www.gwct.org.uk/events 🖉

n February, guests enjoyed a **countryside celebration** with Will Garfit at Newmarket's iconic Jockey Club, along with a variety of gunsmiths and purveyors of jewellery, gin, art and clothing, thanks to sponsors William Powell.

ABF, The Soldiers' Charity joined us again for the **clay day** at Euston in May. A record 40 teams competed on flush and competition stands including an exciting new Gnat stand. The Country Food Trust then talked about its vital work, by invitation of the Duke of Grafton. Thanks to sponsors George Bramley of Knight Frank and other local companies, Charlotte Harrison of the ABF and Ruth Elwood of Elwood Landscape Design for a successful day.

David Watson hosted the **shoot walk** at Frostenden in June. David and Roger Draycott demonstrated Frostenden's amazing conservation work while Trevor Oram's talk about his Christmas tree plantation was a highlight. The evening was organised and sponsored by Tom Verrill of Birketts Solicitors.

Ed Tollemache and his mother, the celebrated garden designer Xa Tollemache, kindly invited us to explore the beautiful Helmingham Hall **gardens** in September. Moatwood 1485 provided a delicious gin reception, while Xa discussed the fascinating development of the garden. The evening, sponsored by Knight Frank, finished with supper and a talk by Roger Draycott.

EVENTS

SE Wales

Shoot success

wenty teams took part in the clay shoot at Cefn Tilla Court in September, by kind permission of Rob Evans. Despite the weather, the teams enjoyed the testing layout created by Rob. Some fine food and a brisk auction, conducted by Roger Thomas, helped raise £8,000. Thanks to main sponsors Geldards LLP and Sinclair Land Rover, and supporter sponsors Cooke & Arkwright, Holts Gun Auctioneers, DB Francis Ltd, Browne & Browne, Blue Storage/Maltings, NFU (Newport) and Ashdown Construction.



The fantastic Thruxton go-karting.

Excellent end to the year

hirteen teams competed for the top spot at Thruxton **kart circuit** in September, a perfect day weatherwise for racing. Thanks to Henry Pelham for his generosity, to all the staff at the circuit for making the day run so smoothly and to John Reynolds of Titan Property.

More than 40 people attended the **drinks party** and auction in December, at the fabulous Casterley Barn with its stunning views across the Pewsey Vale. Beanie Davidson provided the canapés and with the auction in the capable hands of Charles Lucas, aided by some generous donations, £20,000 was raised for the Trust. A big thank you to Strutt & Parker and all the auction lot donors and buyers.



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Bryn Williams warns guests that they all need to promote the benefits of eating game or risk losing it.

busy year included a **fish talk** by GWCT's Dylan Roberts at Mostyn Hall in March, a **shoot walk** at Gwaenynog Hall, a **fish talk** at Rhug Hall, and an informative **woodcock talk** by wildlife artist Owen Williams, thanks to Glynnlyfon Agricultural College.

The centrepiece was the fabulous sporting dinner in November at Bryn Williams at Porth Eirias – the AA Restaurant of the Year (Wales). Speakers Sir Gareth Edwards CBE and Lynn Davies CBE, regaled guests with tales of their sporting past and were interviewed by international Welsh rugby player Rupert Moon. Bryn Williams then talked about the importance of managing, promoting and eating game with the clear message, 'If you don't use it, you'll lose it'. The award-winning bistro, game on the menu, sporting heroes and fantastic guests proved a winning combination. The evening was sponsored by Clwyd Agricultural, Dragon Investment Managers and Savills.

N Yorkshire

Four moors success

espite challenging weather conditions, the Four moors day in October was a huge success. Kindly donated by the Wilkinson family, David Ross, Olly Foster and George Winn Darley, Simon Cotton and his team had an amazing experience shooting grouse on the renowned Bransdale, Rosedale/Westerdale, Egton and Spaunton moors with lunch provided by Lizzie Rohan. Keepers Andrew Orr, Jimmy Brough, George Thompson and Murray Wilson made sure the day ran smoothly and kindly donated their tips to the GWCT. The **pub quiz** at the White Bear, Masham was a sell-out in November and raised £6,500. Dingbats, smells, countryside knowledge and guessing the animal scats were just some of the ingenious questions put together by Nick Barnard. Thanks to wine merchant Jamie Goodhart (Bon Coeur Fine Wines) and his team, sponsors Savills and Theakstons Brewery.

Forthcoming events include shoot walks, a pub quiz, a clay shoot and the game gourmet dinner at Swinton Park. Keep an eye on the diary of events.

The Four moors day in October was an amazing experience for all, despite challenging weather. © George Gunn



he popular **dinner** and auction at Òran Mór in February again raised a new record amount, topping £90k. Guests were treated to gin cocktails by Kinrara

Gin and then, following a delicious dinner, were expertly taken through the auction by Angus Kerr. A superb evening was rounded off by one lucky guest winning a diamond in our Hamilton & Inches sponsored raffle. Thanks as always

to our sponsors (RK Harrison, Turcan Connell, Macleod Letting, Graham Mackinlay Gunmakers), lot donors, ticket purchasers, committee and chairman David MacRobert, for their support. To attend this year's event on 12 March please contact rdonaldson@gwct.org.uk to book.



Grampian

A game bonanza



The committee at the record-breaking dinner and auction.

ore than 150 attended the sporting auction in April at Lochter Activity Centre, helping to raise a record £43k. The guests were fed some of Scotland's finest game-based food, including smoked goose, before sitting down to a diverse auction hosted by Andrew Dingwall-Fordyce. A Finzean McNab and silver cufflinks from Malcolm Appleby MBE were just a few items up for grabs. Thanks to the sponsors RK Harrison, Miller Plant, Brewin Dolphin, Turcan Connell and Omni Surveys. Rory Cooper and his committee also hosted a fascinating shoot walk at the Scottish Demonstration Farm at Auchnerran in August. Save 23 April for this year's event.

Scottish Auction

Auction returns

he hugely popular Scottish Auction took place last May, and raised more than \pounds 140,000 which is a fabulous result. We're looking forward to another tremendous event on 14 May this year, sponsored once again by Pentland Land Rover, Saffery Champness and Rathbone Investment Management. For further information please contact Angela Walker scottishauction@gwct.org.uk.



Guests at the Scottish Auction (L-R) Chris Home, Florence Dowsett, Clare Brownlow, Marina Gibson, Alistair Phillips.

Edinburgh & SE Scotland

Mark French triumphant again

he Edinburgh & SE Scotland Committee had another busy year with four events raising more than £10k. First was a relaxed drinks party in May at new chairman Malcolm & Georgie Leslie's home, Crookston House, followed in June by a fun shoot walk at Cathpair Estate, hosted by Mark French.

In September the Clay Pigeon Conservationists won the **clay day** at Bisley at Braidwood for a third successive year, while Mark French then won the hip flask challenge for the second year, pipping his

son Luke to the post. Thanks to Malcolm Leslie and his committee along with Psigma, Gillespie MacAndrew, Corney & Barrow, Bruce Stevenson and Hampden & Co for their generous sponsorship across the year.

Mark French (L) wins the hip flask challenge again.



Highland

Northern delight

ames Macpherson-Fletcher and his committee organised another superb dinner and sporting auction at The Storehouse at Foulis in March. As always, the food served by Quentin Stevens and his team was exceptional and the variety of auction lots was of its usual high standard, including a walked-up day for four at Ralia which included grouse, ptarmigan, pheasant, duck, partridge and two nights' accommodation. Brilliantly hosted by Sam Ferguson, the auction helped raise more than £17,500. Thank you to the sponsors RK Harrison and Saffery Champness. This year's event is on 26 March – don't miss it.



Thai green partridge curry was served at the dinner.

Auction raises a record £32k

he wonderful Guardswell Farm was the new venue for the dinner and auction in November. Guests had an excellent night and were treated to a delicious Thai green curry using local partridge. The auction, superbly hosted by Dugald Hamilton, raised more than £32k, surpassing the previous record for the region. Thanks to sponsors RK Harrison, Thorntons and Savills, the lot donors and guests, and Mike Clarke and his committee.

Www.gwct.org.uk/events

Diary March to June

We advise checking with the organiser before attending any of the events listed. For a full listing see www.gwct.org.uk/events

March

- 2 LONDON 15th anniversary Le Gavroche dinner and sporting auction, Le Gavroche, Eleanor Usborne 020 7920 0110.
- SUSSEX shoot evening and auction, 4 Clair Hall, Haywards Heath, Fleur Fillingham ffillingham@gwct.org.uk.
- 5 ISLE OF WIGHT predation & woodcock talk, Isle of Wight, Fleur Fillingham ffillingham@gwct.org.uk.
- W OF SCOTLAND dinner & 12 auction, Oran Mor, Glasgow, Rory Donaldson 07718 780700.
- NORFOLK spring meeting, 19 Bawdeswell Village Hall, Bawdeswell, Charlie MacNicol Charlie.MacNicol@stodyestate.co.uk.
- 26 HIGHLAND dinner & sporting auction, The Storehouse, James Macpherson-Fletcher james@macpherson-fletcher.com.

April

- 18 POWYS clay shoot, The Rocks, Stanage Park, Amanda Harris-Lea aharrislea@gwct.org.uk.
- **GRAMPIAN** sporting auction 23 and social evening, Lochter Activity Centre, Oldmeldrum,

Rory Cooper rory@upperbalfour.co.uk.

- 24 CHESHIRE clay shoot, West Midlands Shooting Ground, Hodnet, John Whitcliffe john@birchencliffe.co.uk.
- DORSET Inter-Shoot challenge, 25 Chitcombe, Dorset., dorset@gwct.org.uk.
- 25 DEVON Ugbrook clay day, Ugbrooke Park, Chudleigh, devon @gwct.org.uk

May

- CAMBRIDGESHIRE clay shoot, Six Mile Bottom, Katy Davies katy.davies@marshalladg.com.
- **SCOTLAND** Scottish auction. 7 Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, Angela Walker scottishauction@ gwct.org.uk.
- 14 NORTH WALES shoot walk, Hendre Farm, Llangernyw, Rupert Bevan rupertbev@hotmail.com.
- 15 SUFFOLK clay day, Euston Hall, Thetford, Rebecca Gatens rebecca.gatens@ashtonslegal.co.uk.
- 21 **LEICESTERSHIRE** & Rutland clay shoot, Prestwold Hall, Prestwold, Loughborough, Lottie Meeson,

cmeeson@gwct.org.uk.

lune

- 5 ESSEX sporting clay day, Park Farm, Saffron Walden, James Hamilton office@ghamilton.co.uk.
- NORTH WALES river walk, 10 The Llanrwst Anglers Club, River Conwy, Rupert Bevan rupertbev@hotmail.com.
- 12 LONDON clay shoot in partnership with Sportarm, West London Shooting School, Eleanor Usborne eusborne@gwct.org.uk. LANCASHIRE team shoot, 14

Claughton Hall Estate, Claughton on Brock, Mike McKendry, Mike. McKendry@davis-bowring.co.uk.

- 21 HAMPSHIRE country fair and gundog event, Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Fleur Fillingham ffillingham@gwct.org.uk.
- 25 NORTHUMBERLAND/DURHAM clay shoot, Alnwick Castle, Zoe Smith zoe.smith@struttandparker.com.
- 26 SUSSEX clay shoot, Northall Clay Pigeon Club Fletching, Fleur Fillingham ffillingham@gwct.org.uk.





Sophie Dingwall Yorkshire (N,E &W), Northumberland/Durham sdingwall@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07925 597676

Lottie Meeson S Yorks/Derbys/Lincs/ Notts/Leics cmeeson@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07976 207113

Lizzie Herring Essex/Norfolk/Suffolk lherring@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07885 897647

Gay Wilmot-Smith Bucks/Cambs/Northants/ Beds/Herts gwilmotsmith@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07501 064828

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Pippa Hackett

Cheshire/Cumbria/Lancs/Staffs/ Shrops/N Wales phackett@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07880 359331

Rory Donaldson

Edinburgh & South East Scotland/West of Scotland/ West Tayside/East Tayside/Fife & Kinross/Grampian/Highland rdonaldson@gwct.org.uk Tel: 07718 780700/ 01738 554822

We have an exciting calendar of events for 2020. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch.

www.gwct.org.uk/events





www.gwct.org.uk

Research

A crucial boost for wildlife this winter

he EU Interreg North Sea Region funded PARTRIDGE project aims to give many farmland species a helping hand, especially during the colder months. Wild bird seed mixes, developed for the project by Oakbank and Kings Crops with the GWCT, not only provide food for seedeating birds, but also contain broad-leaved plants providing partridges, brown hares and other birds and wildlife with a place to hide when other areas are more exposed.

We are constantly assessing the seed mixes that we use and looking for ways to improve them. At the meeting of the EU PARTRIDGE project partnership in Göttingen, Germany in 2019, we discussed the successes and problems that farmers across Europe have encountered during the project and came up with a number of possible solutions to help farmers and wildlife get the most out of the habitat we provide. These include different soil preparations, adapting seed mixes and cutting the blocks differently, providing a more mosaic-type habitat with more variety for wildlife.

In Scotland we have focused on supplementary feeding for partridges and other farmland wildlife from October to March when food is scarce. We also undertook partridge and brown hare surveys during the winter and spring at Balgonie, Fife and Whitburgh, Midlothian/ East Lothian, our demonstration sites.

A grey partridge covey taking advantage of the supplementary food put out at Balgonie.



Denis Critchley-Salmonson

A passion for snipe



Jane and Denis Critchley-Salmonson. A Trust has been set up in Denis' memory to help fund new research on tracking snipe migrations.

hen Denis Critchley-Salmonson, chairman of Caledonian Brewery, died in spring 2019 he left a void in the lives of many friends who had enjoyed so much sport with him over the years. His passion was snipe and the habitat at Dunsyre Estate, Lanarkshire was ideal, and his friends soon began to understand why the snipe was such a special species.

Brought up in Suffolk, Denis learned to love the wild game of that county. But it was on the bogs of Dunsyre, where he had encouraged farmers to put cattle out to create the boggy areas, that occasional epic wisps of snipe were attracted, with more than 600 being counted on one occasion.

His family and friends have launched a Trust in his memory with funds raised going towards GWCT research into snipe and their habitat. Although the GWCT has already done some work, the next step is to start tagging birds and monitoring movements. This project is a great way to remember Denis' love and understanding of the countryside.

The project aims to tag a sample of snipe with GPS tags to track their migrations. Having learned a great deal from a similar experiment with woodcock, the GWCT is confident that the work can be replicated with snipe, showing the timing, origins and routes of migrant birds wintering in Britain.

The survey sites will be Dunsyre and Auchnerran, the GWCT Scottish Demonstration Farm in Aberdeenshire, where there is also a good population of snipe. Tags cost more than £1,000 each and it is hoped to raise a minimum of £10,000 for the fund. Please contact Andrew Hoodless **ahoodless@gwct.org.uk** for more information on the project or to make a donation contact Andrew Dingwali-Fordyce **adfevents.gwct@gmail.com**.

Schools art competition success

The GWCT schools art competition, now in its 17th year in Perth and Kinross, was won by Clara Holt Brook from Arngask Primary for her wonderful otter and Sana Javed of Kilgraston School with her family of swans in the senior section. In a new addition to the competition this year, Dottie Buchanan from Kinnoull won the 50 best descriptive words for the primary category with Hannah Braithwaite of Perth Academy winning the senior award. Thank you to sponsors Blackadders Solicitors, The Royal Highland Educational Trust and Julian Jardine Gallery and Workshop, and the support of Perth & Kinross Council.

2019 also saw the art competition expand into the Marr area, Aberdeenshire, sponsored by The MacRobert Trust with prizes donated by local artist Mel Shand and the Royal Northern Countryside Initiative. The winners were Mateo Masserotti from Midmar Primary for his drawing of a fox and Charlotte Reynolds from Aboyne for her image of a puffin in the senior category. Joshua Simms of Torphins won the 50 best words in the primary category with Oliv Stephenson winning the senior award. *Clara Holt Brook and her winning otter picture.*





The public agree strongly that Scotland's heather moorland is important in providing a valuable habitat for a wide range of biodiversity.

Scotland's heather moorland

ith all the review and debate happening in Scotland over grouse moors, their management and other related issues, the GWCT thought it was the right time to ask the Scottish public how they view what is regarded as a national landscape asset. The conclusions to our poll, undertaken by fastmap last summer, were unequivocal.

- That the vast majority of Scottish citizens (89%) have either a positive or very positive association between heather moorland and the Scottish landscape.
- That a greater majority (92%) agree or agree strongly that Scotland's heather moorland is important in providing a valuable habitat for a wide range of biodiversity.

- A lesser proportion (69%) recognised the Scottish uplands as a source of healthy food.
- A majority (73%) recognised Scottish heather moorland as an important source of rural employment.

Heather moorland is a managed landscape. It exists because of the work that is done by upland land managers to retain it, whether through grazing or burning, but its main economic driver and the incentive for investment in it and management of it is grouse shooting. Take that away and the heather moorland that we have and the benefits that it delivers by way of biodiversity, food and rural employment, will diminish too.

2019 Grand Grouse Draw

he 2019 Grand Grouse Draw, which this year offered the prize of an exhilarating day in pursuit of driven red grouse on the Roxburghe Estates in the Lammermuirs to be taken during the 2020 season, has been won by grateful GWCT member Mr Dawson, who said: "I am delighted to be the winner of the 2019 GWCT Grouse Draw. In being lucky enough to win this, it is impossible not to reflect on the enormous generosity of the late Duke of Roxburghe for his, and his family's incredible gift of a day's grouse shooting to support the GWCT's fundraising



activities. We all owe enormous gratitude to all those who support the Trust, from larger gifts to the smaller regular donations. I look forward to the day with gratitude to all those involved in the countryside and the conservation of our precious wildlife and its habitat."

In brief



Reaping rewards at Auchnerran

2019 WAS AUCHNERRAN'S first year in the Agri-environment and Climate Scheme (AECS), which offers payments in return for implementing environmental measures, which has allowed significant progress in replacing our dilapidated fencing, much of it dating back to the 1960s. Now we can better control the movement of the sheep and grazing pressure in various areas, and we have access to a further 70 hectares (ha) or so of rough grazing, which altogether puts the farm in a much better shape for the future.

One of the key AECS options chosen is 'wader grazed grassland' (reduced stocking density to protect wader nests) which applies to 55ha of pasture in total, reflecting the importance of Auchnerran for breeding waders. Other options we have put in place on the farm include 'wild bird seed for farmland birds' (seed-bearing crop-mixes that provide food for birds over winter), 'forage brassica crops for farmland birds' (providing invertebrate food and shelter), 'water margins in grassland fields' (to buffer watercourses from run-off) and some newly-planted hedges. The hedges comprise a mix of species including goat willow, dog rose and hawthorn, which should provide valuable food and shelter for a range of wildlife, from nectar for pollinators to nesting sites for pheasants.

The 2019/20 shooting season hosted 10 fast-paced rabbit days and three mixed species days that were again hugely popular with our guests. Merlin Becker's infamous 'five B' hot-pot rabbit stew and local refreshments ensured all our guests were kept warm and watered.

DATES FOR THE DIARY See page 41 for the Scottish round up of events.





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Policy straight from the farm

fter responding to the 'Sustainable farming and our land' consultation in October, we took Welsh officials out onto farms to discuss future funding and how it might work on the ground. We welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to co-production of the new scheme and are championing our three-legged stool approach; habitat restoration, predator control and supplementary feeding in the winter, which is proven to reverse wildlife declines in just three years. We are continuing to promote the benefits of our science and development

work to help reverse biodiversity decline, so that they may become part of the next farming scheme which has the potential to deliver significant outcomes. With our help another farmer-led group have been successful in joining the 50 Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) projects that are now in place throughout Wales, which get people working together to deliver

on a shared vision across large landscapes. The most recent project is at Cors Caron, on farms neighbouring the 2,000-acre nature reserve managed by Natural Resources Wales. We will be working with farmers to demonstrate how to reverse wildlife declines using our proven science.

News from the Powys Moorland Partnership SMS will feature in the next Gamewise along with the new Camlad SMS which has links with Curlew Country.

Farmers and Welsh Government officials discussing future farming schemes at a dairy farm last year.



Species suffer in licence debacle

WCT

Wales

does

Natural Resources

Wales (NRW) on

are a number

of changes to

be aware of,

not support



Changes to General Licences no longer offer protection to green-listed species such as blackbirds

which can be found at www.gwct.org.uk/ nrwreview. We particularly object to the changes in GL004 which no longer offers protection of green-listed species.

GWCT advisor Matt Goodall said: "At a time where species are declining across Wales and scientific evidence demonstrates predation control's role in halting and reversing these declines, it is nonsensical that certain species are no longer offered the protection of GL004."

The new General Licences are also not authorised on a number of designated sites which are listed on each licence. Those wanting to undertake activities previously permitted on the sites listed will need to apply for an individual licence from NRW.

Although the GWCT does not support the new Welsh licences, it is essential that those undertaking activities permitted by the licences are aware of the changes and are fully compliant with them.

Championing biodiversity

WCT Wales continues to make strides forwards in Wales, pressing home its biodiversity message to Welsh Government officials, the farming unions and developing opportunities with Bangor University, wildfire forums, NGOs and landowners. As an example we recently spoke at a commons gathering organised by the National Sheep Association to show that biodiversity can be hugely improved by following the GWCT's three-legged stool approach.

In brief



Advisor Matt Goodall is running training courses throughout Wales during 2020.

Are you up to date with new legislation? MATT GOODALL, our Welsh advisor delivered a range of training courses last year to drive forward best practice predation control in Wales. This includes the Welsh Police Wildlife Crime Officers. covering best practice snaring, updates to the Welsh General Licences and forthcoming legislative changes to tunnel trapping. There are a number of training courses planned throughout Wales in 2020 which can be found at www.gwct.org.uk/ wales. Practitioners need to be up to date with the new Welsh General Licences, changing legislation surrounding tunnel trapping (see page 59) and there is a big push from Welsh Government to quantify code-compliant best practice snaring as continued use of non-code compliant snares and bad practice threaten the future use of snares in Wales.

MORE INFORMATION Dates for the diary:

- 18 April, Powys clay shoot, The Rocks, Stanage Park, Amanda Harris-Lea 07970 570137.
- 14 May, N Wales shoot walk, Hendre Farm. ● 10 June, N Wales river walk, River Conwy. To book for the N Wales events please contact Rupert Bevan rupertbev@hotmail.com.

See page 42 for a full list of events and check www.gwct.org.uk/wales for Welsh events.

GWCT Director Wales: Sue Evans. Email: sevans@gwct.org.uk or call 07977 908126. GWCT Wales, E Tyndall St, Cardiff, CF24 5EA.

Reviews

Invasive Aliens by Dan Eatherley



Ithough its title and cover might suggest otherwise, this is often a tale of one species – humans - and its impact on wildlife. *Gamewise* readers might be well-versed in what (or who) brought the Reeves muntjac to these shores, but there is something for everyone to learn in these pages. Dan Eatherley gives balance to the tale of species - both plants and animals introduced to Britain and those which were taken overseas, often as a reminder of 'home'. Much like the unintended proliferation of muntjac, little did the Shakespeare-loving ornithologist who brought starlings

to Central Park expect to end up creating the continent's most abundant bird. A fascinating social history, particularly about those with a romantic ideal of what nature looks like. £16.99 www.gwctshop.org.uk

James Swyer, Press & Publications Manager

Game & Gatherings by Rachel Carrie

Rachel Carrie's beguiling story of how she returned to the pot-hunting days of her ferreting childhood,



after a spell of vegetarianism, is most refreshing. Here, we have an authentic hunter gatherer who is clearly connected to Mother Earth, and who really cherishes all the delicious wild foods that she offers. When I first opened the book, the page fell to a recipe for rabbit stew with nettle dumplings – an inspired dish and one of many that I shall most definitely be trying. £30 www.gwctshop.org.uk

Mike Short, Field Ecologist

.....

New Manor & Co 12 bore shotgun

anor & Co is a new English gun company launched by Gerry Coulter, a keen sportsman with a background in aviation engineering and metallurgy. Gerry has come to the market recently with several new guns and the 12 bore over and under is the subject of the brief review here. This particular model is put together in France but includes German, multi-choked barrels and is London steel shot proof. Gerry is also working in association with makers in Italy and Spain, and is producing rifles as well as shotguns.

First impressions of this new $7\frac{3}{4}$ pound over and under are good. The form is pleasing. It has a rounded action bar with sideplates, a single, non-selective, mechanical, single-trigger and a ventilated 6mm sighting rib (with a solid option). It is definitely a model 'deluxe', with subtle gold inlays, an extended trigger guard and steel cap to the grip. The level of finish – oiling of the wood and hand chequering – is well above the norm. The figure of the wood is particularly good too.

Putting the substantial gun to the test on clays was a happy experience and I only missed the last target. It was a very pleasant gun to shoot, with good handling qualities and low felt recoil. The gun is not inexpensive at £20,000 (with other models from £7,000) but it impresses both with the level of finish and its performance. Every gun is bespoke, moreover. Any gun ordered by GWCT members will include a donation to the Trust, so please mention *Gamewise*. For more information please contact Manor & Co. www.manor.london/bespoke-shotguns 0207 9932 222.

Michael Yardley





Each gun is bespoke, with the level of finish - oiling of the wood and hand chequering - well above the norm.

Greening Welsh grassland

Denbighshire dairy farmer Ant Griffith says a new approach to agri-environment schemes could reverse wildlife declines

Farm Facts

Location: Trefnant, Denbighshire Type of farming: Dairy Acreage: 1,500 (120-acre woods and 150 acres tenanted) Funding grants: None Conservation measures: Extensive grazing, hedge and tree planting, woodland management, pond creation, hay meadow reversion, cover crops, supplementary feeding, fenced off watercourses, unploughed field margins, tussocky grass and scrubland areas

Conservation in numbers

50 acres of fenced off rough grassland and scrub
16km of hedges managed for wildlife
3.5km of fenced off watercourses
15 ponds

f 🖸

enbighshire dairy farmer Ant Griffith believes a fresh approach to farmland conservation could reverse wildlife declines in Wales. He said: "The old agri-environment scheme, entry level Glastir, was discontinued because it didn't have the hoped-for impact, but it was never farmer friendly. We must keep it simple to get farmers on

board." Ant runs the family's 1,500-acre Plas Newydd estate and is in a share farm agreement with his partner Rhodri Ellis who manages their organic dairy herd. No pesticides or fertilizers, except for manure, are used, but Ant recognises that pasture alone does not provide the necessary range of habitats. He said: "Though we are organic, we have what you might call an 'intensive' system as our grass leys have only three species, are grazed hard and cut for silage so we need to work at restoring biodiversity."

Agriculture in Wales is predominantly livestock based, so it is vital that future schemes are better geared to intensive grassland management than previous more hill-

farm focused agreements. It's harder for livestock farmers to create field margins as they need to be fenced ways of making space for nature: "In the old scheme there was no option for fencing off corners of less

productive land. The bits that I've done off my own back are now full of native plants and insects, so why shouldn't they be funded?" The farm has taken 50 acres of such land out of production. In addition, there are several areas of tussocky grass, which are lightly grazed by cattle in September and topped every three years. No longer being in a scheme means Ant can decide when to cut

"We must give people the off, but Ant believes there are other flexibility to manage their conservation areas well"

them. He said: "Farming is dependent on being able to do things when the timing is right. We must give people the flexibility to manage their conservation areas well."

The switch to grass monocultures in Wales has seen an increase in predator species that feed on worms in the soil such as crows and jackdaws, but has drastically reduced the availability of food for smaller birds such as finches. To mitigate this, Ant sowed a field of spring barley and left it unharvested. Frustratingly, the crop was devastated by wireworm, but by late May it was re-drilled with a wider variety of seed to cater for a greater range of birds. He said: "It has been a learning curve for us as we are inexperienced at arable. I think this will be the same for many farmers in Wales and good advice on cover crops will be essential."

Another aspect of the old schemes which Ant feels put people off, was the box-ticking culture that would instantly fine farmers for any deviation from the regulations even if it was an honest mistake. He said: "Towards the end of my agreement, I was fined £3,500 because I failed to describe winter stubbles as a secondary crop on the form and send in a copy of my dairy contract, yet I had gone way beyond fulfilling my conditions. They only backed down five days before my appeal hearing. I was saddened by the whole thing as it seemed counter to the idea of a partnership."

As well as the unnecessarily aggressive enforcement of bureaucracy, Ant is convinced more 'easy wins' would

make the schemes more appealing. One of these could be paying farmers to cut hedges every two years rather than every year, which would hugely increase the amount of hedgerow fruit available to birds. Another simple measure being

introduced on the farm is permanent pasture margins. This mitigates for the organic system, which requires grass to be ploughed and re-sown every 10 years to help keep weeds at bay. Leaving grass margins uncultivated allows the thatch of organic material that is home to insects to develop. Ant said: "Eventually I want us to have unploughed margins around every field on the farm.





loe Dimbleby is our specialist writer working in the communications team.

(Below left) Good advice on cropping could avoid failures such as Ant's seed mix, which had to be redrilled. (Below right) Fifty acres of field corners have been taken out of production allowing wild plants and insects to thrive.





CASE STUDY

WORKING CONSERVATIONISTS

Wildlife Highlights











Tree sparrow Swift

0



The river has been fenced off to prevent erosion and slurry runoff. (Inset) One of several ponds dug on the farm to support greater biodiversity.

My partner Rhodri was sceptical at first but he's coming round to the idea."

Fencing off watercourses to stop livestock damaging rivers is another 'easy win' for Ant. Through one of the measures under the previous Glastir agreement, he fenced the mile of the River Clwyd which runs through the estate. The poor health of Wales' rivers is why the Welsh Government is increasingly focused on protecting water catchments from farm pollution and is offering grants to improve waste management systems. Plas Newydd has invested in a new slurry lagoon to avoid having to spread muck at the wrong time. Ant said: "There is no justification for polluting streams and rivers, we have to take responsibility. Natural Resources Wales is rightly going to hammer those caught polluting, but really we need a cultural shift where farmers want to avoid it because it's wrong, rather than because they will be punished."

Ant believes part of the reason why the farming culture is slow to change is a lack of understanding of the long-term impacts modern farming practices have on ecosystems and ultimately farm businesses. He said: "Since the War, Government policy focused only on production and so it is understandably deeply engrained in farming culture. Farmers are much more likely to take up conservation measures if they can see the reasons for them, so it's vital this information gap is bridged." With this in mind he recently hosted a day for farmers to visit Plas Newydd and hear talks by experts from the GWCT. Ant said: "We had some very positive feedback from the day. I think the penny finally dropped for many of those who attended that you can farm profitably while making a real difference to the environmental health of your land."

Ant is optimistic about the future, provided Government policy actively engages with farmers, schemes are adequately funded and advice is readily available. He is planning more permanent pasture margins and areas of scrubland and wants to carry out a biodiversity assessment to measure increases in wildlife. He said: "Everywhere you look the Welsh countryside is bulging with livestock. I realise I am lucky to have enough land to be able to fence

off 50 acres, but if every farmer was supported in taking five percent of their farm out of production, it could create a habitat network with a real chance of returning some of the wonderful wildlife we have lost." 🗟

Working with farmers, Sue Evans, GWCT Wales director

GWCT research on its Allerton Project demonstration farm shows that even in a relatively intensive farming system, it is possible to increase biodiversity and food production at the same time. The



science also shows that to boost bird numbers every leg of the three-legged stool of habitat, protection from predators and food must be in place, which is why in Wales where farms are mainly grassland, it is even more important to provide crops for birds through the winter and early spring. The dairy farmers at our soils and biodiversity event at Plas Newydd were all keen to help the declining species they remember such as curlew, lapwing and hare. Improving the farmed environment for wildlife is something every farmer could easily do and it would have an immediate and significant positive effect. We are working with farmers in Wales to develop more suitable schemes and talking to the Welsh Government about incorporating them into policy. As part of this we are looking for partner farmers to help us demonstrate wildlife-friendly measures in the context of a working farm. We are also planning to build a network of volunteers to help measure biodiversity on farms and offer training for farmers to do surveys themselves. This citizen science approach has proved successful through the GWCT's Big Farmland Bird Count and Farmer Clusters where volunteers monitor barn owls, harvest mice and other species. It's very rewarding for a farmer to hear praise from a conservationist monitoring wildlife on their farm.

FOCUSING ON LEAD

BIODIVERSITY

Moving away from lead shot

Andrew Gilruth explains why a joint statement on the use of lead shot has never been more timely

Ithough the debate around the impact of lead shot on wildlife seems topical, it has been running for longer than you might expect. Mr J Hindle-Calvert raised his concerns about it poisoning pheasants in The Field magazine as far back as February 1876. With more than a dozen investigations about lead ingestion since, this is one of the vexed issues that has deeply divided opinion. It is certainly a subject which concerned the GWCT's director general, the late Dick Potts. Because grey partridges are believed to mistake spent lead shot for seed or grit, he published a paper in 2005 which estimated

that 75% of the partridges that ingest lead shot will die as a result. The development of satisfactory alternatives to lead shot was prioritised by manufacturers in 2009 after the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), which represents hunting interests in more than 84 countries, requested that practical solutions are found.

With more focus on lead shot that ever before, a joint statement on future shotgun ammunition for live quarry shooting has been agreed by BASC, Countryside Alliance, CLA, GWCT, NGO, British Game Alliance and the Moorland Association.

JOINT STATEMENT

⁶⁶ In consideration of wildlife, the environment and to ensure a market for the healthiest game products, at home and abroad, we wish to see an end to both lead and single use plastics in ammunition used by those taking all live quarry with shotguns within five years. The shooting community must maintain its place at the forefront of wildlife conservation and protection, and sustainability in our practices is of utmost importance.

It is 20 years since wildfowlers stopped using lead, and we believe it is necessary to begin a further phased transition. Recently, there have been significant developments in the quality and availability of non-lead shotgun cartridges and plastic cases can now be recycled. For the first time, biodegradable shot cups for steel shot, with the necessary ballistics to ensure lethality, are available. These welcome advances are continuing at an everquickening pace, in response to demand from a changing market. Such advances mean that over the coming years a complete transition is achievable.

We are jointly calling for our members to engage in this transition and work with us, the Gun Trade Association and the cartridge manufacturers to ensure that further viable alternatives are developed for every situation involving live quarry. This is an opportunity to take the initiative and ensure the reputation of the shooting community, as custodians of the countryside, is both maintained and enhanced.

CAN LEAD BE DANGEROUS TO WILDLIFE?

Yes. When any bird or mammal ingests spent lead ammunition by mistaking it for grit or foodstuffs, or by scavenging unretrieved shot quarry, it can result in lead poisoning. In addition, animals that are shot but not killed may carry lead shot in their bodies and this adversely affects their wellbeing. Lead ammunition degrades very slowly and so may take several decades or longer to become unavailable to foraging wildlife.

Effects of lead poisoning have been documented extensively in waterbirds, and also in terrestrial birds including game and predatory species. In some species present in the UK, namely mallards, whooper swans (pictured right) and golden eagles, recent studies have shown effects at lower blood concentrations than previously reported. This development reflects conclusions that there is no clear threshold below which human health is not affected by lead exposure.



(Top) Restrictions to protect wildfowl have been in place for many years. © Peter Thompson



ndrew Gilruth is our director of communications and has been part of the team reviewing the scientific evidence of the impacts of lead ammunition.

DID YOU KNOW?

Data from Denmark suggest that changing to non-lead ammunition does reduce environmental lead.

In Denmark, compliance with the ban on lead is close to 100% and wildlife exposure has reduced, benefiting the environment, the species and also the hunters.



Q&A

What are the organisations calling for?

Collectively we are calling for a phased transition away from the use of lead shot in shotgun shooting for all live quarry. We are also calling for the end of single use plastics in all shotgun ammunition. We feel that both goals are achievable within a five-year timeframe, allowing suitable time for the industry to respond with new product development and ensure adequate supply.

Why now?

Recent technological developments have made non-lead ammunition more effective, more widely available and more affordable. Equally, biodegradable wads are now a possibility. These advances are continuing at pace and it is now time for the wider live quarry shooting community to join the wildfowlers, who have used non-lead alternatives successfully for the last 20 years.

Why is it important?

Lead has been progressively removed from substances, such as petrol and paint, because it is harmful to both human health and wildlife. With wildlife in trouble, and suitable alternatives to lead shot cartridges increasingly available, we should transition towards better options.

To read the GWCT's Lead – Your Questions Answered and a Q&A on moving away from lead shot and the alternatives available, please go to www.gwct.org.uk/leadshot. \measuredangle



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Shooting and conservation

The latest news, advice and events



Year of the Gamekeeper



that history, and put the Trust on a firm footing for the future, 2020 has been declared Year of the Gamekeeper. Alongside a fundraising target of \pounds 220,000, the Trust celebrates the role of the profession in managing our wonderful countryside. The ask is simple, do just one thing for GWT during 2020, and please do not step back from your normal support of other charities in any way.

Game Farm Audit launched

The British Game Alliance (BGA) launched its Game Farm Audit in January with exclusive access to the first validated Mycoplasma test for gamebirds for BGA members. The BGA has worked in conjunction with the Game Farmers' Association and leading gamebird veterinary specialists to develop the new audit and Game Farm Standards, which have been written based on the current code that Defra produced, specifically relating to gamebirds used for sporting purposes. For more information go to britishgamealliance. co.uk/game-farm-audits.

Look out for...

Our new BASIS Certificate in Game Management – lowland (p59). There is currently no formal qualification for professional game managers, but this new course is aimed at individuals who have responsibility for managing shoots, including keepers, estate managers, land agents, landowners, shoot managers and shoot captains. www.gwct.org.uk/basisgm.





Brown hares. © Markus Jenny

Rotherfield Shoot

The post-harvest wild game counts reflected the poor weather in June with a total of 63 grey partridges, 119 redlegs and 396 pheasants. The 600-tagged cock pheasant poults are released in August/September which allow us to hold 10 to 12 shoot days, with a mixture of walked-up and driven days, along with three spaniel days. The shoot season went well and we were pleased to see the first pair of grey partridges in December, lots of hares and a good show of woodcock were also seen on the driven days. Along with many areas of England, the very wet autumn with more than 555mm of rain since the end of harvest, has made it very difficult for drilling winter crops on the farm. Let's hope we have a drier spring.

GWSDF Auchnerran Shoot

With the successful establishment of the farm's first kale crops in 2019, the same game cropping programme will be adopted in 2020. This involves two Alba mixes for the shoot's main covers, three Highland wild bird seed mixes and one species rich grassland plot, all kindly supported by Kings Crops. Rabbit fencing will be erected around the unfenced game crop plots and the existing netting checked for any breaches. The farm team will need to keep an eye on our breeding wader nest sites as the cultivated game strips create optimum nesting habitat, particularly for our lapwing and oystercatchers. Corvid control will be of paramount importance at this time of year as fox control is expertly handled by the grouse keepers on the surrounding estates. Decoying rooks, jackdaws and carrions will be our main focus.

Allerton Project Shoot, Loddington

We have counted game and wildlife on this site since 1992 and we urge all shoots to carry out monitoring as natural capital becomes yet another buzz word to add to our dialogue with policy makers. Using independent third parties has much merit for demonstrating the benefits that good game shooting can deliver for wider wildlife. The end of the season signals the start of woodland thinning and replanting to improve and maintain woodland habitat which also benefits migratory warblers. Our stewardship scheme expires in 2020 so we need to ensure that the new scheme delivers for wildlife and also provides a financial benefit. Stewardship plays an important part for wildlife throughout the year, but many people overlook the use of wild bird seed mixes and well chosen pollen and nectar for holding and showing gamebirds. Integrating stewardship into our game covers delivers many benefits and a reduction in maize and associated species such as rats and corvids can only be a good thing. *C*



OUT AND ABOUT... this spring

CREATE A to-do list of things to fix or improve for next season so you can make a plan for the summer.

GET ON top of your predation control, it will pay dividends later in the year.

TOP TIPS Butterfly banks pro-

vide ideal breeding

habitat for butterflies

and moths but be

practical, easy access

is key to maintaining

and monitoring

the bank.





SPRING FEEDING IS crucial to ensure your wild game and songbirds are fit and healthy heading into the breeding season. Feed until there's plenty of natural food available, usually around May but sometimes as late as lune.

EVERY EFFORT SHOULD be

made to protect leftover birds from the season on your released bird shoot. Comprehensive predation control in the early spring is vital to produce wild stock and will also help to protect other farmland birds and hares in the breeding season.

ARE YOU UP to date with the changes to legislation affecting predation control in your country? Join our predation control courses across the UK to receive the latest training on predation control law and best practice to ensure you're fully compliant and getting the best results for your efforts (see p59).

COULD YOU INCREASE

the amount of non-woodland drives your shoot delivers? Start planning your game cover, making alterations or creating new drives. This could give you some early season shooting, resting the woodlands until later in the year and providing additional food and cover for other wildlife.

Butterfly habitat

How to deal with butterfly banks

utterflies and moths are highly sensitive indicators of the health of the environment and play crucial roles in the food chain as well as being pollinators of plants. However, 76% of the UK's resident and regular migrant butterflies declined in abundance, occurrence or both over the last four decades. Creating a butterfly bank is an easy way to create ideal breeding habitat for butterflies and moths. There is plenty of bare ground, lots of food for caterpillars and multiple aspects which can be advantageous for a variety of species. Tailor the bank for specific species by using caterpillar foodplants. For example, using bird's-foot trefoil for dingy skipper or kidney vetch for small blue. A butterfly bank also supports other animals by providing nectar resources for bumblebees and high protein caterpillar snacks for farmland birds. Take time to plan the construction and location of the bank - ideally it will provide an unshaded south-facing slope. Also, survey the existing habitat making sure you do not destroy rare plants or archaeology.



Cover with calcareous aggregate. If you have surplus, place some encompassing the bank.



Sow seeds of locally-sourced plants which are caterpillar food and adult nectar sources. Supplement the bank with plug plants throughout the year as appropriate.



Manage by removing vigorous weeds, periodically cutting dense vegetation on a rotation and by adding more aggregate.



Monitor butterflies that are using the bank. Either count the adult butterflies on a sunny day or carry out timedegg counts. This will monitor the effectiveness of the bank as breeding habitat for butterflies and moths.

Adam McVeigh is a research assistant in our farmland ecology team who is keen to help landowners improve habitats for butterflies and moths.



Invert the soil by removing topsoil from the site and place into a pile. Dig a narrower trench in the now uncovered subsoil and place the subsoil in a second pile. Fill the trench with the topsoil and put the subsoil on top. Scrape around the bank so it is above ground level.

FIND OUT MORE

For more advice ring 01425 651013 (England/Wales) or 01738 551511 (Scotland) www.gwct.org.uk/ advisory



KEEP FEEDING. Move hoppers to areas of good nesting cover where male pheasants are defending territories.



HAVE A quick tidy up. The aesthetics of your shoot can influence how the locals view shooting.



REMEMBER TO count your grey partridges and submit your data to the Partridge Count Scheme.



Biodiversity

DID YOU KNOW?

New research has shown that we need to include more plant species, including weeds, to support wild bees than traditionally thought, so leaving scruffy areas or allowing weeds to survive in the crop also has value. Top weeds include bristly oxtongue, corn poppy, charlock, dandelions, dead nettles (lamium species), perennial sow-thistle, smooth hawksbeard, scentless mayweed and bindweed. Hedgerow plants should also be encouraged such as hogweed, angelica, wild parsnip and primrose.

Creating the ultimate... wildflower margin



John Holland is our head of farmland ecology and has carried out many years of research into different farming systems, cover crops and beneficial insects.

hese days farmers face many pressures including producing food sustainably and using more natural ways of controlling pests now key insecticides have been banned. Planting wildflower margins can help as they support pollinators and natural enemies of pests, sequest carbon and brighten up the landscape. However, they can be tricky to establish and manage, so here are a few basic principles that can help.

- Location: Select sites that don't have existing noxious weed problems. Less fertile soils are better at discouraging grasses that can quickly swamp broadleaved plants. Choose sunny spots away from woodland with hungry deer and sow wide areas to avoid ingress from the edges.
- Seed choice: Mixes can be designed to support bumblebees, natural enemies of pests and parasitic wasps (www.gwct.org.uk/flowersforbees). Select plant species appropriate for the soil type and climate; seed companies can tailor mixes to your conditions. If plants already occur on the farm, this is a good guide to their likely successful establishment or source local green hay as another option. Grasses can be included but usually establish anyway.
- **Establishment:** Having too thick a cover of weeds can prevent wildflowers establishing. To reduce their density, repeat the process of cultivating and letting weeds emerge before broadcasting on to a fine seedbed then roll. **Sow** when warm and into a moist soil, which can be March/April or August/
- September or in-between avoiding dry periods. Seed companies can advise on seed rates for the site conditions.
- Management: Mow to 4-5cm several times during the first year as soon as annual weeds start to dominate, though not if yellow rattle has established. Remove cuttings if there's a lot of debris or mow more frequently and leave them. In following years cut annually July/early August is best to encourage flowering plants. Avoid cutting all areas at the same time to ensure that flowers are constantly present. Removing the cut vegetation is critical otherwise the debris will smother those carefully nurtured and expensive wildflowers. Once a few areas have been successfully established then the green hay can be used to establish new areas.

For a specific list of flowers and a guide to habitat creation and management for pollinators see www.gwct.org.uk/flowersforbees. $\hat{\mathcal{Q}}$



ale yellowhammers are unmistakeable with a bright yellow head and underparts, brown back streaked with black and a chestnut rump. They are often seen perched on top of a hedge or bush singing, but its recent population decline, 59% over 50 years, make it a Red-List species.

They are found across the UK but prefer a mixed farming landscape with well-managed hedgerows and scrub. In winter they favour winter stubbles, natural regeneration, game cover, livestock farmyards and feeding stations where grain cleanings have been left out for finches, sparrows and buntings.

Manage open landscapes to provide low thick nesting cover, such as tussocky grasses and shrubby vegetation. Laying hedges and fencing out stock is beneficial.



Delay cutting of margins and hedges until as late as possible given that they are a late nester. They breed from early spring through to late August



Provide supplementary winter food, such as cereals from either wild bird mixes and/or feeders, and insect-rich habitat such as field margins and unimproved grasslands for brood-rearing.



Adopt a range of trimming styles and hedge types. Maintain some short dense hedges and allow others to develop into taller, untrimmed features.



Manage ground predators and corvids to help improve productivity. Yellowhammers nest close to the ground in short dense hedgerows, field margins, scrub and woodland edges.

DID YOU KNOW?

The rendition of the familiar song of the yellowhammer as a 'little bit of bread and no cheese' was made popular by Enid Blyton in her children's novels.

(L-R) Whitethroat, brown hare, com bunting, Essex skipper, grey partridge. (© Dave Kjaer/Peter Thompson).

THIS WORK ALSO BENEFITS:









Barn owl

Habitat: Barn owls prefer a mixed farming habitat with spinneys, ditches, rough pastures and wellmanaged field margins. Grassland makes good hunting ground, along with hay meadows. They are often found around farm buildings, barns and the edge of villages. A breeding pair of barn owls needs around 1.5 hectares of rough grass.

Food: Short-tailed field voles are the preferred prey species, making up to 60% of their diet. Barn owls will also hunt for mice, shrews, small rats and birds. Nesting: Barn owls will breed from April to August, and a second brood may be reared when food sources are plentiful. A breeding pair will use the same nest site year after year if undisturbed. The female lays four to seven white eggs in an unlined hole of a tree or barn. They will nest in good owl boxes that are a sufficient size, in a good habitat location and draught-free. Song/call: 'Shreeee'. A shrill, hoarse shriek, often repeated. The begging call of young is more wheezy.

Beneficial management

- Maintaining and creating field margins will provide good hunting areas. Areas of uncut grass for a year or more will hold good numbers of prey species.
- Unfertilized grass, buffer strips and rough grazing will also provide excellent hunting grounds.
- Retaining old, mature trees will provide prime nesting opportunities. Also consider putting up nest boxes in prominent trees or farm buildings.
- Barn owls can be vulnerable to rodenticide poisoning. Care must be taken when baiting. ²

MORE INFORMATION

Farmers and gamekeepers are vital in helping to ensure the future survival of many of our most cherished farmland bird species, but frequently their efforts to reverse bird declines are largely unrecorded. We believe our Big Farmland Bird Count will help remedy this. www.bfbc.org.uk

BFBC is sponsored by

Tackling challenges at GAME 2020



eing up to date with the challenges game shooting faces has never been more important for our community. For the third year we will be running our annual game manager's conference, this year in Shropshire on I April for the benefit of both English and Welsh delegates. Each year we choose topics which are relevant to the shooting community to ensure the audience is updated by industry leaders. This year's talks will cover lead shot, best practice management from a veterinary perspective, an overview of the challenges game shooting faces, AIHTS and trapping (see below), General Licences and the ecological impacts of pheasant releasing. This is your chance to meet industry experts and ask important questions around the future of game shooting. Tickets are £45 per person and available online www.gwct.org.uk/game2020.

Loss of Fenn trap from 1 April



New traps are needed to target stoats from 1 April.

rom the 1 April 2020 the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards comes into full force throughout the UK making it illegal to target stoats with Fenn-type trap designs, Magnums, WCS tube traps and Kanias. Traps which meet the new requirements include the Tully, all DOCs and GoodNature A24. We

are also expecting the approval of a trap manufactured by Perdix Wildlife Supplies, the PX3 although it is very unlikely that this trap will find its place on an amended Spring Traps Approval Order by I April. We strongly advise all trap users to carefully read the comprehensive information on our website, along with the relevant Spring Trap Approval Order for the country where they will be operating and their 2018/19 Amendment. This is an opportunity both to embrace a significant improvement in trap humaneness, and to re-evaluate how we use traps to best advantage. The continued use of trap designs contrary to the new regulations represents a serious reputational risk to the shooting community. www.gwct.org.uk/aihts.

Worried about managing your shoot? You don't have to get in a flap

The GWCT advisory team runs courses on:

- Best practice predation control
- Sustainable management of pheasants
- Grey partridge conservation
- Identifying farmland birds
- Managing woodlands
- Shoot biodiversity

Get the latest advice first by signing up to our shoot management newsletter at www.gwct.org.uk/shootownersnl

Training



NEW - BASIS Certificate in Game Management - Lowland

10 March/7 July • Allerton Project, Loddington Leicestershire • £685 This new certificate is designed to

encourage best practice across the game management sector, while providing qualified individuals with a professional accreditation that demonstrates assurance of high standards of practice to employers, customers and the general public. Aimed at everyone running a shoot, the three-day training course will include various modules covering predation control, gamebird releasing, shoot and land management, game crops and industry regulation. www.gwct.org.uk/basisgm 01425 651013.

Short courses

Our certified training courses can be organised for gamekeepers, land managers and other professionals. These cover the latest developments in snare and corvid trap use, tunnel trapping, night lamping, heather burning, grouse health and disease control and are designed to provide the user with a full understanding of best practice and legal requirements.

9/10 March • Glenlochy Estate, Morayshire

- 7 April Amulree Village Hall, Perthshire
- 8 April tbc, Morayshire

9 April • Hopetoun Estate, East Lothian For more details and to book please visit www.gwct.org.uk/scotland/events.

GWCT & BASC Shooting Syndicate Course 2 May • Loddington, Leicestershire • £100 www.gwct.org.uk/shootcaptain.

Scottish Young Shooters Day 22 July • GWSDF Auchnerran, Aboyne, AB34 5PT • £50

For youngsters aged between 12-15. www.gwct.org.uk/youngshots 01738 554821.

Part-time Keepers Course 11-13 September • Loddington, Leicestershire • £420 inc. VAT

Whether you're an amateur or professional keeper, our three-day course provides practical advice and guidance on game management and will make sure you leave with new ideas. Topics will cover rearing and releasing pheasants and partridges, growing game crops, predation control, woodland management, feeding regimes and much more. www.gwct.org.uk/ptkc 01425 651013.



Sign up your syndicate and save 20%

ARE YOU part of a shoot syndicate? If so, you can sign up as a syndicate and receive premium membership for just £79 each – provided eight or more of you sign up. You can download an application at www.gwct.org.uk/syndicate or contact our membership team on 01425 651024 or membership@gwct.org.uk.



Draw winners announced

THE WINNERS of the 2019 GWCT Gun Draw were: Ist prize: Peregrine Moncrieffe. 2nd prize: Ryan Lane. 3rd prize: John Donald.

Mr Moncrieffe - a long-time supporter of the Trust - was delighted to win a pair of guns and a day's driven grouse shooting worth £25,000. He noted: "The contribution of the GWCT to the conservation of rare habitats and vulnerable species represents a cause dear to my heart. My success in this draw, like my shooting, is down more to luck than skill. I am fortunate and delighted to win this outstanding and timely prize, so kindly donated by William Powell."

The runners-up won a full William Powell tweed shooting suit and an embossed leather gunslip and cartridge bag respectively. To enter our 2020 draw, please visit www.gwct.org.uk/draw.

Members

The results are in

ildlife management, predation control and wader research were the main topics of interest in the GWCT membership survey. More than 1,600 of you sent in a response, which helps us to understand the issues that matter to you.

Despite 86% of members saying that they are either happy or very happy with the membership, there is still room for improvement, with a quarter of members feeling we need to improve the way we get our message out to the media and one in five saying that we could improve our accessibility to 'ordinary' shooters. We have taken this on board in recent years with informal roadshow events costing just $\pounds 10$ and a greater variety of events, courses and more online communication available free of charge.

The winner of the prize draw was D Jarman from Somerset, who wins a pair of Seeland Buckthorn trousers worth £89.99. 86%

are happy or very happy with their GWCT membership

20% attended a talk or roadshow in 2019

74% would like us to do more research into wildlife management

Legacies

Gun legacies raised more than £22,000

e are continuing to work with Holts Auctioneers to offer a solution for what to do with your guns when they are no longer needed. In most cases guns and sporting items are left to a family member or sold by Executors with the proceeds becoming part of the estate. Sometimes people choose to bequeath guns to the GWCT

or allow the charity to benefit by having Holts sell it on their behalf and donating part or all of the proceeds.

This option is also available to supporters simply giving up shooting or who have a gun that is no longer used. Quite often this allows the GWCT to claim Gift Aid on the proceeds.

If you are interested, we would be happy to talk to you

in confidence about the process and the best way to proceed. Please contact Daniel O'Mahony by email **domahony@gwct**. **org.uk** or 01425 651060.

Holts Auctioneers, long standing GWCT trade members, are pleased to give preferential rates to anyone wishing to do this and will also include an appropriate note (if wanted) in the lot description.

GWCT Roadshows are back

Wednesday 11 March - Knaresborough, North Yorkshire Thursday 12 March - Chesterfield, Derbyshire Tuesday 24 March - Farnham, Surrey Tuesday 31 March - Taunton, Somerset Thursday 2 April - London Wednesday 6 May - Cirencester, Gloucestershire Thursday 14 May - Royston, Hertfordshire

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COOKERY

Devilled kidneys

Mike Short shares his passion for food and foraging in the countryside

'he classic deerstalker's breakfast consists of the deer's fried liver, perhaps with a fried egg, and delicious it is too. I am a big fan of eating offal, especially liver and kidneys, mainly for their unique flavour but also out of a mark of respect for my quarry, by using all the edible meat. A rule of thumb for eating the stalker's perks, is that they're so much better when eaten super-fresh, preferably within a day of the deer's demise. If you can't eat the liver and kidneys before that, my advice is to either freeze them for later use, after you've put your rifle away, or give them to someone who appreciates delectable wild meat.

Although the sweet and silky texture of a pan-fried venison liver is rightfully hailed as food for the Gods, I love eating the kidneys too. Some people freeze them, saving them up for a venison steak and kidney pie, but I find that long stewing can leave kidneys a tad rubbery for my liking. Instead, I like 'devilling' them in a rich and piquant sauce, and serving them on a thick slice of toast for a twist on the classic stalker's breakfast, or for a light supper if you are out stalking towards the end of the day.

A classic stalker's breakfast – devilled kidneys on toast.

"Although the sweet and silky texture of a pan-fried venison liver is rightfully hailed as food for the Gods, I love eating the kidneys too"

Probably needless to say, that the size of a deer's kidneys varies according to species and age. The quantities below are for an adult fallow doe; if you are using kidneys from a smaller deer, like a muntjac, adjust accordingly or your dish will be a bit on the 'saucy' side.

Ingredients (serves one)

2 fallow deer kidneys
Olive oil and butter
50ml dry sherry
1 tbsp sherry vinegar
1 tbsp chilli jam
1 tsp hot paprika powder
2 tbsp crème fraîche
Salt and pepper
Good bread, for toasting

Method

 Toast a thick slice of your favourite bread and keep it warm.
 Halve both kidneys lengthways and cut out the whitish core. Slice each kidney half into quarters. **3.** Add a splash of olive oil and a knob of butter to a hot frying pan. Let it melt and then fry the kidneys for a minute, tossing them around in the hot fat until they have browned.

4. Add the sherry, followed by the sherry vinegar and deglaze the pan. Quickly stir in the chilli jam until it melts away and then add the hot paprika. Give everything a good stir and let it bubble for another minute. By now, the kidney pieces should be cooked through, but check that they are.

5. Take the pan off the heat. Add a good pinch of salt and a twist of black pepper and stir in the crème fraîche until you have a consistent velvety sauce. Spoon the devilled kidneys over your toast, and there you have it. Savour the tang. $\hat{\measuredangle}$



Mike Short is our senior field ecologist specialising in mammal research. He is passionate about harvesting wild food, and here shares his enthusiasm for tasty ingredients found in the great British countryside.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Kidneys are an excellent source of protein and very rich in iron.
- Rich in nutrients and proteins, kidney meat contains omega 3 fatty acids. It is also known to contain antiinflammatory properties and to be good for the heart.
- To 'devil' is an early 19th Century culinary term, meaning to cook something with fiery hot spices.
- Some chefs like to soak kidneys in milk for an hour before cooking, to lessen their distinctive taste.

Marketplace

Schöffel Oakham fleece gilet

New this season from Schöffel is the Oakham gilet in moss green. Designed to be dual purpose, first as a mid-layer product when using a traditional threelaver system under a shooting jacket for colder/wet days, and second as a stand-



alone piece to be worn over a shirt or t-shirt as a warming layer to keep out the cold. The Oakham is very comfortable, the fleece itself is soft and luxurious and the Alcantra trim around the collar, zip and sleeves adds to the quality feel. Schöffel make fantastic products that perform well in the worst weather, last for years and are incredibly hard wearing. • 01572 772480 • www.schoffelcountry.com



Gavin Gardiner Limited

Auctioneers of Fine Sporting Guns since 2006, Gavin Gardiner Limited holds regular auctions at Sotheby's prestigious London salerooms as well as the annual auction at the Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. Holding free valuation days around the UK during March, Gavin Gardiner has more than 30 years experience and is happy to provide free informal valuations for sale and insurance purposes. Highlights from the forthcoming auction will include this superb 12-bore single trigger sidelock ejector over and under gun by London's most famous gunmaker, James Purdey & Sons.





Longthorne Guns

Longthorne Gunmakers is pleased to announce the imminent arrival of its brand new boxlock, which will be available at selected dealers very soon. Incorporating Longthorne's dynamically optimised patented barrels aimed to reduce recoil, these will be available in three different models, with 30" or 32" barrels with sporting or raised tapered rib.

• 01772 811215 • www.longthorneguns.com



Ian Coley Sporting Limited

Celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year, the Gloucestershire-based shooting school, gun shop and sporting agency was established in 1970 by six-time GB Olympic coach, Ian Coley MBE. 2020 sees an expansion of its sporting layout, as well as a number of important dates for your diary – a special 50th Anniversary 120 ESP 3-5 June; Open Days on 6 June and 5 September; and a Ladies Open Sporting Competition on 12 September.

• 01242 870391 • www.iancoley.co.uk



New tractor drawn shoot trailer

Access Trailers new range of tractor drawn shoot trailers have fully galvanised steelwork, fixed alloy sheet roof/sides with hydraulic brakes and leaf spring suspension. They can be supplied on either a single or tandem axle chassis. Fitted with agri tyres and improved ground clearance, they are ideal for operating over more difficult terrain.

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Melvill & Moon

SHOTGUN SLIP £239 inc VAT Modelled on the classic gun slips of old, it is well padded, lined with pig skin (or suede - to order), has solid brass fittings and a leather trim. A waterproof lining and water resistant outer canvas makes it rot and bug proof, and the slip unbuckles at the stock end with a brass buckle leather strap.

Length 137cm | Width 25cm | Height 5cm Weight I.4kg

RIFLE BAG £320 inc VAT

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pigskin patches in the lining, (or suede – to order) to protect more fragile areas of your rifle such as the telescopic sight. All bags come with a high-quality brass zip which allows the bag to be opened all the way round, strong leather handles and a leather trim, plus an inside pocket for your licence.

Length 130cm | Width 26cm | Height 5cm Weight I.5kg

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Beretta Gallery

Chapuis Artisan shotguns are hand engraved by master engravers and feature long extended trigger tangs, double triggers and highly figured straight hand stocks. The Artisan range features upgraded walnut woodwork that can be ordered to specific stock dimensions. This particularly beautiful gun has been specifically ordered for the London Beretta Gallery and features a long stock, 28" fixed choke barrels at $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$, a vacant silver stock oval, $2\frac{3}{4}$ " chambers and is balanced exactly at 5lb 7oz. Chapuis RGP - Artisan, Side-by-Side 28 bore. £7.075 inclusive of VAT

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Research in practice

Adam Steed is passionate that we all need to play a part in wildlife recovery and celebrate the great work done by farmers, land managers and gamekeepers

art-time gamekeeper Adam Steed showed that hard work and passion pay off when he scooped the coveted East Anglian Grey Partridge Award last year. Adam's conservation efforts, including providing particularly good all-round habitat, have seen numbers of grey partridges soar at Red House Farm, Bacton, from four spring pairs in 2012 to 28 pairs in spring 2019, with an autumn count of 92 young from 16 coveys. A PE teacher by day, Adam has been gamekeeping at Bacton for the past 10 years, running shoot days and carrying out conservation work to encourage wildlife.

What motivates you?

Doing a job well and making a difference. One of the great pleasures of gamekeeping is seeing first-hand the difference you make. When I visit the combined fields on a late summer's evening and the young partridge broods take to the wing, it reminds you why you put all that hard work in.

What's the best advice you've received?

Play the long game. Educate and work with people as much as you can. Galvanise relationships with the farmers, estate workers, neighbours and walkers where at all possible. Putting up barn owl boxes on the farm and inviting people to watch us ring the owlets has become an annual event. Engaging people is key to changing attitudes and developing their understanding. You will never win everyone over but you can lead by example.

Can social media help to show the real conservation story in Britain?

Most certainly. Estimates suggest more than a third of the world's population is using some form of social media platform. That means there is a worldwide platform to celebrate the



Steed in a minute

Favourite food? Baked ham. Last book you read? Memoirs of a Gamekeeper. How do you relax? Have a cup of tea and

watch the football. Favourite place? Australia.

Most inspirational person?

Sir Alex Ferguson Favourite bird? No competition. The grey partridge

Follow Adam on Twitter: @magicmagpie34

great work done by farmers, land managers and gamekeepers. I try to present a positive message on Twitter and highlight how shooting and conservation go hand-in-hand. Social media is an instant way of communicating, but taking time to consider other views and letting emotions settle is an important discipline when using these platforms.



Winning the East Anglian Grey Partridge Award in 2019 was a huge compliment. I have been working hard to restore partridge numbers on the estate for some years, so to win this award was very special.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to be a part-time gamekeeper?

Follow GWCT best practice advice. Whether you are controlling predators, releasing birds or feeding, you have a responsibility to do things in a professional manner. People could make a judgement on all gamekeepers based on what they observe on your ground. I have also sought advice from some fantastic keepers so don't be afraid to pick up your phone.

How important is it to show what can be done on a small-scale shoot?

For farmland wildlife to recover on a landscape scale, everyone managing land must play a part. Although we are a small shoot, we certainly punch above our weight in terms of the value we add to biodiversity. All the work we do is for the love of the countryside, often sandwiched around a day's work with no financial gain. There are hundreds of small shoots across the country doing excellent work, and we need to share this message with the public.

Why should people support the GWCT?

The GWCT are the gold standard research organisation. Without its scientific research, the $\ensuremath{\tilde{O}}$ General Licence challenge could have been a disaster for agriculture and wildlife diversity. This is a prime example why we must continue to canvas support for the Trust from fellow fieldsports enthusiasts. Complacency to communicate the benefits of shooting could lead to more than the extinction of our sport, it could lead to an extinction of experience, from which wildlife would never recover. 🖉

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