



# Grey partridge News

Issue 9: Summer 2008

## Introduction

As I write this in the first half of July, I have a feeling of déjà vu, because once again it is pouring with rain outside, as it was when I wrote the introduction for the *Grey partridge news* this time last year. I don't think it has been as bad this year with less rain and the temperatures not as low as in 2007. I really hope this is the case across the country – we will see in a month or so.

On the 6 of May I gave a presentation to the 'All Party Group on Conservation and Shooting' at Westminster, updating the committee on the progress of the grey partridge Biodiversity Action Plan. The assembled group was very impressed by the amount of action taking place on behalf of this gamebird, especially the fact that nearly 1,000 of you are counting your partridges and sending in your returns to us.

I was able to show them that among those of you who count your greys, we have recorded increased populations (between 2000-2008 numbers increased by 34%) because you are improving the habitats and practicing predator control whereas, across the country as a whole, the population is still in decline.

It is so important therefore to count your partridges and return the forms to us so that we can, in turn, show the data to the people who will, in the end, decide the future of this beloved gamebird.

Peter Thompson  
Biodiversity Officer

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## Plan launched to save partridges

By MICHAEL POLLITT  
Rural affairs editor

FIVE POINT PROGRAMME

### Grey partridges hit the headlines

Over the past few years we have issued a regular stream of press releases to the media to highlight the plight of grey partridges. As a result our stories have amassed a huge amount of column inches on partridges in all sectors of the media.

There is certainly no shortage of

material and we regularly write on subjects such as the Partridge Count Scheme (PCS), habitat management, country group launches, regional grey partridge award winners, research findings, the Royston project and so on. It is probably the most publicised bird in the country!



[www.gct.org.uk](http://www.gct.org.uk)

Special thanks to all those individuals, gamekeepers, landowners and estates, who have contributed to the Partridge Count Scheme.



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*Partridge Count Scheme*

# Encore for the partridge family

Duff Hart-Davis on fluttering hopes for a species that came close to its last squawk

dedicated immense amounts of time, energy and money to building up wild partridge stocks at Rothwell, his estate in the Lincolnshire Wolds. Not only did he employ 14 gamekeepers to suppress predators such as foxes, stoats, rats, crows and magpies, but he also paid farm workers two shillings for every nest they found and gave them strict instructions not to disturb the birds during the

Scientists regard them as an important indicator: if they flourish, many other

for protein during their first weeks of life. More recent research has confirmed the importance of arable weeds and flowers such as fat hen, field pansy, knotgrass and chickweed for many farmland birds, among them skylarks, yellowhammers and whitethroats. In attempts to reverse the depopulation, the Trust pioneered various innovations, among them the creation of beetle banks –

Hertfordshire. There acres of rolling chalk along the northern Chilterns, the Trust 10-year project which highly encouraging the same principles – clearance of preda and summer, impro habitat and nesting t supplementary feed throughout the year

The spacing calls of grey partridges, which drift

Our 'Back from the brink' conference last October certainly acted as a focal point for media stories and attracted important national coverage. We were pleased to achieve a half-page article in the *Saturday Telegraph*, which helped to ensure that we gained a maximum capacity audience at this ground-breaking event. The paper also featured a story after the event and a news item also appeared in other nationals such as the *Daily Express*. As well as being featured in the sporting press such as *Shooting Times* and *Shooting Gazette*, the farming press also covered the conference and *Farmers Weekly* took the opportunity of writing about habitat management recommendations, as well as urging readers to join the PCS.

The launch of our various grey partridge groups across the country has also helped to generate great press coverage and the recent launch of the Cumbria and Lancashire group was no exception. Good press coverage before an event helps to raise the profile of the local group and ensures good attendance at the launch event. We had a particularly good media response to the Cumbria launch in

local papers such as the *Whitehaven News*, *Cumberland & Westmorland Herald*, *Carlisle News and Star* as well as achieving a substantial feature in the *Manchester Evening News*.

'Group therapy' was the snappy title of an article by Peter Thompson in the latest edition of *Fieldsports*. In the piece Peter explains how the emergence of county groups could make all the difference for the future well-being of the grey partridge.

Some of you might have seen the April edition of *The Field*, which included an extensive article on grey partridges (see page 7). This well-researched article by Elizabeth Walton investigated whether the continuing decline of grey partridges and the loss of set-aside habitat could see the species removed from the quarry list. We

provided extensive background material for the piece, which looked at the history of partridge decline as well as highlighting the concerted campaign that we are mounting to save this bird. The article also featured many grey partridge champions including a number of our regional partridge group chairmen.

Most recently we have issued a press release on the fact that although many people are providing nesting

**'The decline of grey partridge can be stopped', says GWCT**

habitat, there is a distinct lack of insect-rich habitat, which is so important when chicks first hatch. The story has already generated media interest and was featured in well-read publications such as *Country Life*. At the CLA Game Fair at Blenheim our theme was the grey partridge, as we launched our new re-establishment guidelines (see page 6).

## Set-aside changes

I suppose you could say, from the beginning, we have had a love/hate relationship with set-aside.

When it first appeared in the 1980s, and especially after it became mandatory in 1992, the things that really irritated us were; (a) it was brought in without any consideration whatsoever for the environment – this applied both to the principle and the stupid rules that farmers had to adhere to, and (b) it completely undermined the approach to farmland conservation that we had spent the best part of half a decade working out. Our

conservation measures for cereal headlands and field margins for partridges, wild flowers, butterflies and small mammals were working, and were gradually being adopted into agri-environment schemes.

Further, set-aside seemed to be taking farming in a direction we thought was bad for wildlife – namely, less farmland but more intensively cropped. We would have preferred the same area of land, but being farmed less intensively.

Anyway, we had to make the best of it so, as a priority, we lobbied to change the rule that required set-aside to be mown

just when birds were nesting, and also to allow farmers to use a herbicide instead. Later, we were able to persuade the Government to permit the use of 'wild bird cover' provided the farmer did not make any commercial gain from it.

When we took on the Allerton Project farm at Loddington the lay-out of the set-aside became an integral part of our conservation plan. Wide bands of wild bird cover were distributed around the farm, some adjacent to hedgerows, but others across the middle of bigger fields. The seed mixtures we used were designed to provide



Research has shown that a wide variety of birds use set-aside.

good brood-rearing cover for game chicks or as a winter cover with seed bearing plants like second-year kale or quinoa. We think the substantial improvement in some songbirds, pheasants and hares that we saw at Loddington was partly due to our constructive use of set-aside. (A bigger part, no doubt, was due to the fox and corvid control that was brought in by our

gamekeeper at the same time.)

There is other evidence too. A large-scale field survey by the British Trust for Ornithology showed that a wide variety of birds used set-aside fields, usually preferring the rotational set-aside that was allowed after 1992.

Although the amount of land in set-aside has varied over the last 15 years it

had become a feature of arable farmland – that is, until last summer. While it was becoming increasingly likely that set-aside would eventually disappear, the sudden announcement by the EU that it would put the rate of set-aside at 0% for this year meant the requirement was eliminated at a stroke. So, the EU Commission, acting in the same imperious manner that it had when it brought it in the first place, has now booted it out, without giving a thought for the environment.

We and other organisations, like the RSPB, created a fuss and so, rather belatedly, Secretary of State Hilary Benn lamely urged farmers not to grab it all back into cultivation.

So what has happened since? Well, a unit within Defra (the Environmental Observatory) picked up that about 85% of the rotational set-aside went within months, but only around 35% of the non-rotational had gone by the end of 2007. Almost certainly this difference is because it is simpler to bring the rotational back into cultivation, than the land that has to be ploughed and cleaned up before it is any use. However, we suspect that a proportion of the non-rotational land may never come back into cultivation because Single Farm Payments are now based on farm area, not the area under cultivation, as used to be the case under the Arable Area Payments Scheme.

We are hopeful that we can put some of this right if Defra lobbies the EU for suitable new measures under the Common Agriculture Policy 'health check' that is under negotiation this summer. The EU has stated formally that it wants to retain the environmental benefits of set-aside, but without the set-aside of course. Difficult; but we think if we retained around 1/10 of the former set-aside and managed it along lines designed for conservation, we might get a lot more biodiversity per hectare than we did with the old arrangement. So, we will have to wait and see whether Defra and the EU really mean what they say.

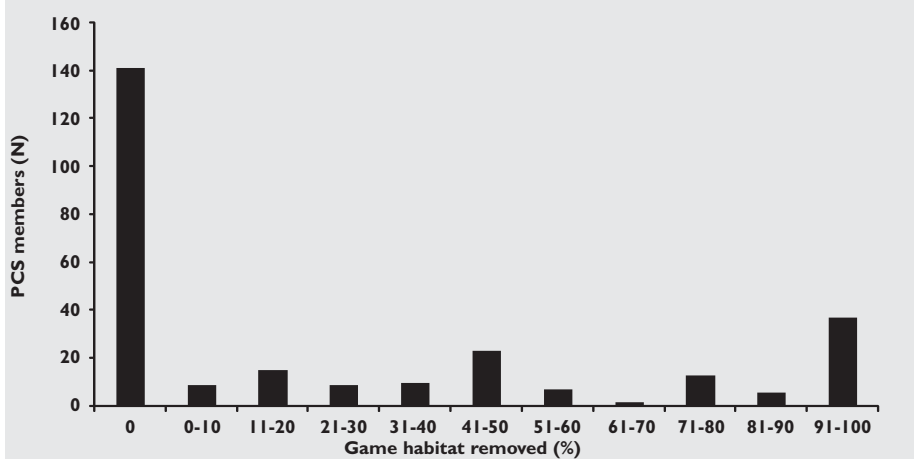
## Have you kept yours?

This spring we sent out a supplementary questionnaire with the count forms to investigate the amount of game habitat that had been removed by PCS members as a result of set-aside being set to 0%. We asked whether set-aside had been used for game habitat, and if so, what proportion of this PCS members intended to, or had already, removed. We hoped that members would keep much of this habitat despite the loss of set-aside, and a majority did, with a number of members actually increasing the amount of habitat they have. It is, however, inevitable that some game habitat will be lost along with set-aside and this questionnaire aimed to estimate the proportion that was removed.

Of the 550 questionnaires returned, 514 (93%) provided information on habitat and set-aside. Of the 272 (53%) who reported having used set-aside for game habitat, 141 (58%) said they had kept all their game habitat despite the loss of set-aside while a further 66, reported keeping at least half their game habitat, indicating that 207 (76%) of those who used set-aside for game habitat retained over half of this habitat. Only 34 (13%) members who had used set-aside for game habitat removed all of it as a result of set-aside loss. There was no relationship between the amount of game habitat removed and grey partridge over-winter survival ( $r=0.174$   $p=0.143$ ).

### Figure 1

The proportion of game habitat removed from the 272 PCS members who used set-aside for the provision of this habitat.





*Farms that have been active in their grey partridge management have been rewarded for their success.*

# The Partridge Count Scheme

The results of this year's spring counts from the Partridge Count Scheme (PCS) are summarised in Table 1. The weather was not always obliging for those who counted this spring. A cold start for some sites kept birds in cover and delayed pairing, elsewhere warmer but showery weather boosted crop growth, making counting difficult.

Yet, while mailing count forms in February, before the spring conditions became apparent, the PCS team anticipated a significant reduction in the number of participants who would count this spring; an undesirable consequence of the low chick-survival last year. But we hoped that PCS members would appreciate the importance of assessing the bad times as well as the good and the majority did not disappoint us.

Despite the difficulties that participants faced this spring, it is encouraging to have received a total of 844 spring counts (down from 977 in spring 2007) counting an area greater than 241,500 hectares (596,700

acres). Although nationally this equates to a 14% drop in returns compared to spring 2007, it illustrates how one bad year (summer 2007) can have a detrimental effect on the number participating in the following count. With this in mind, we extend our thanks to everyone in the PCS who did manage to undertake a count this spring. We hope the results and feedback will be put to good use and benefit your partridge conservation efforts.

The low production of young last summer is reflected in the numbers of pairs counted this spring, a total of 7,535 pairs were recorded compared with 10,108 last year (-25%). Note that this drop is proportionally greater than the decrease in the number of counts returned. The long-term index of partridge density, controlling for the location of the different count areas (see Figure 2), shows that this is the first significant drop since that seen in 2000/2001. The drop in numbers on the long-term estates and farms appears to

be relatively higher (16%) than that seen on the areas of members who have joined more recently (6%).

The national trend hides some regional variation. The Northern region continues to make progress having produced steady growth since 2001. A significant part of this can be attributed to a number of farms that are particularly active in their grey partridge management and have been rewarded for their hard work. England's Southern region also saw an increase, if only by a whisker. Disappointingly its spring pair density hasn't really progressed much in the past five years and remains low, with a density that is half that recorded in Scotland, despite what might be considered as a more traditional area for producing grey partridges. However, there are some participants in the south who have put in the time, effort and management needed and are benefiting with an increase in their partridges.

Comparing the number of participants involved in counting this spring, the UK region with the highest percentage return-rate of count forms was Scotland with 42% of the forms sent. East Lothian and The Borders made up the majority of this region's returns (71%). Over the next few years we hope to interest more Scottish farms, especially in the eastern lowlands, to use the PCS to aid grey partridge recovery on their land. Just behind Scotland, in terms of return rate, was the Eastern region with 40% where again two counties dominated; Norfolk and Lincolnshire combined returned 64% of this region's counts.

The weather this summer, while not breaking any records for sun or drought, is better than that last year. The MET

**Table 1**

Regional spring pair densities for grey partridges in Great Britain for 2007 and 2008

Region	Number of sites*		Change	Spring pair density per 100ha		Comparison
	2007	2008		2007	2008	
Southern	165	141	(-15%)	1.7	1.6	(-6%) ↓
Eastern	265	218	(-18%)	5.8	5.1	(-12%) ↓
Midlands	170	152	(-11%)	3.4	3.3	(-3%) ↓
Wales	3	3	(0%)	1.3	0.9	(-31%) ↓
Northern	210	190	(-10%)	5.5	4.8	(-13%) ↓
Scotland	164	140	(-15%)	3.8	3.5	(-8%) ↓
<b>Overall</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>(-14%)</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>(-9%) ↓</b>

Office reported 'average' weather around peak hatching (3rd week of June) and although we had some showery weather it was still warm. It is likely that there will be reasonable chick survival (certainly in comparison to last year). We also experienced average conditions in May and even July's periodic heavy rain should be too late to have had an effect on all but the latest coveys. If PCS sites have in place effective brood-rearing habitat there will be enough chick food insects to meet

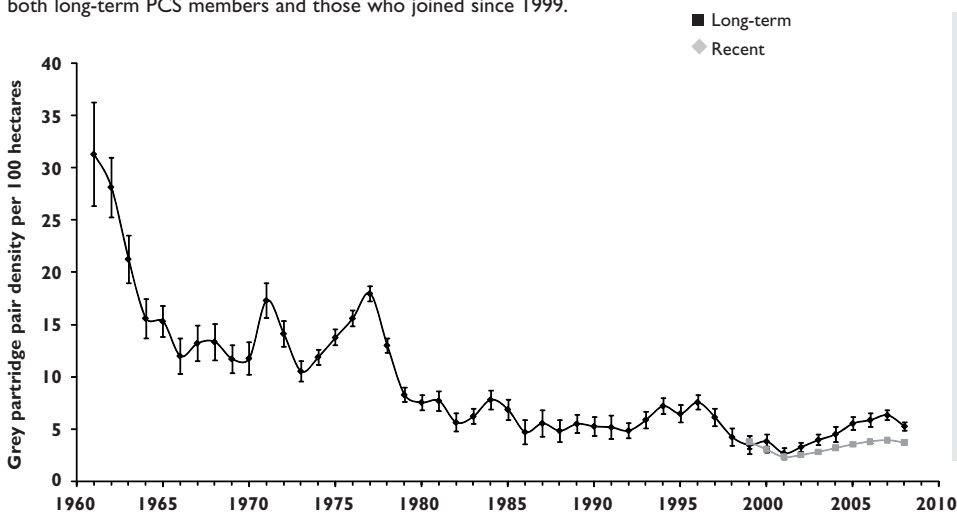
the dietary demands of young partridges during their first two weeks. So, with the expectation that this summer's chick production overall will certainly be better than last year, we strongly encourage everyone in the PCS to count this autumn and make a proper assessment of the breeding success of the partridges on your ground.

Please remember that we have a set of free fact sheets on the 'basics' of grey partridge management and habitat

requirements for anyone who would like some guidance. For any readers not involved in the PCS, but in a position and having the desire to help the grey partridge, we urge you to get involved (regardless of how many grey partridges you may have). For the fact sheets, further information about the PCS, or to join, go to [www.gct.org.uk](http://www.gct.org.uk), contact us on 01425 651066 or email [partridgecountscheme@gct.org.uk](mailto:partridgecountscheme@gct.org.uk)

## Figure 2

Trends in the indices of grey partridge density, controlling for variation in the different count areas, for both long-term PCS members and those who joined since 1999.



### Comparing Table 1 and Figure 2

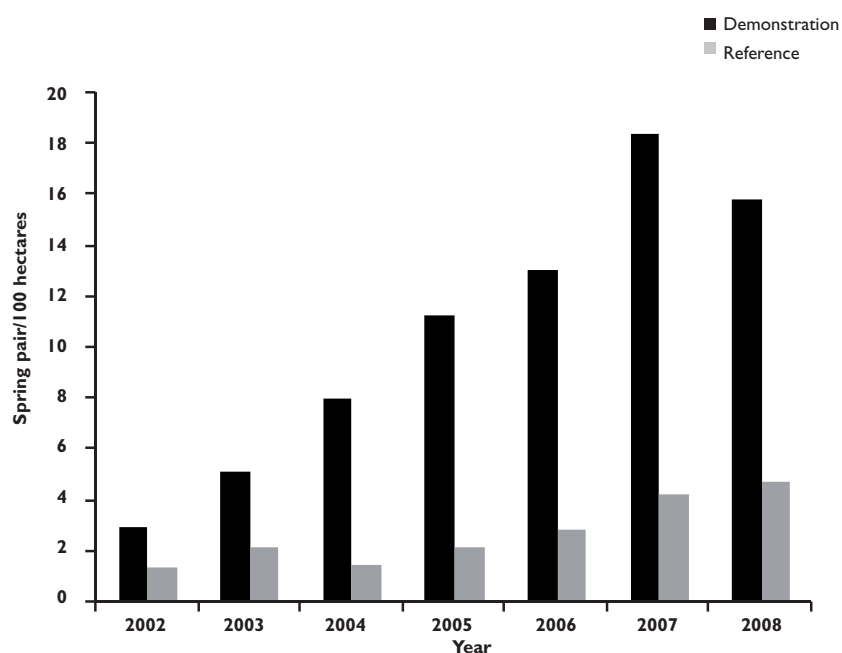
Readers will note the disparity between the results of Table 1 and Figure 2. More complex analysis is used to produce Figure 2 which, unlike Table 1, looks at the between-year changes within each site, then averages those changes across sites. This adjusts for the fact that counts are not available for all sites every year and includes only sites with more than one spring count. This gives a more accurate long-term overview than is provided from Table 1.

# Grey Partridge Recovery Project Update

The number of grey partridges counted this spring on the Grey Partridge Demonstration Area at Royston was lower this year than last year. On the demonstration area Malcolm Brockless recorded 158 grey partridge pairs (density of 15.8 pairs per 100 hectares) compared to 184 in spring 2007 (see Figure 3), with 62 pairs on the reference area compared with 55 pairs the previous spring. This was not surprising considering the low chick survival recorded on the demonstration area last summer (27% compared with an average of 48% over the previous five years). Difficulties in crop establishment in autumn/winter 2007/08 contributed to a marginally lower over-winter retention of birds than in 2006/07 (40% versus 42%), but the effect was negligible relative to that of the low chick survival rate last summer. A summer with good chick survival (as has been the case in 2002-2006) should, however, result in a 2009 grey partridge pair density that exceeds that of spring 2007.

## Figure 3

Density of spring pairs of grey partridge on the demonstration and reference areas within the Grey Partridge Recovery Project from 2002 to 2008.



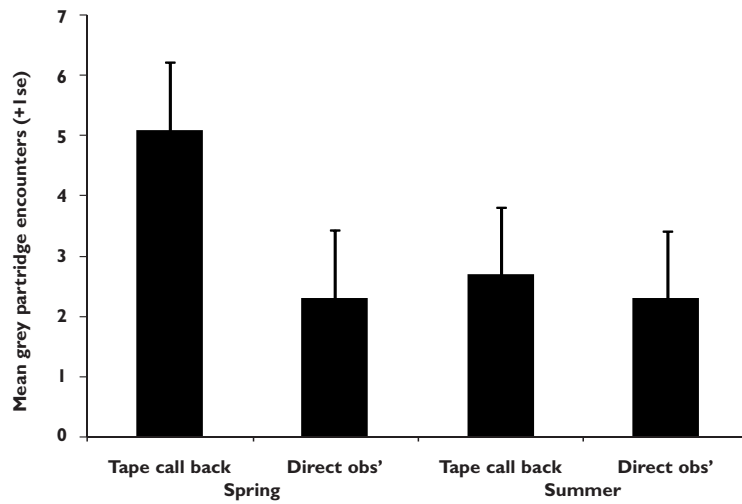
# Surveying grey partridge in the upland fringe

Little is known of the status and distribution of grey partridges which frequent the rush-infested pastures, hay meadows and white moor habitats characteristic of the moorland fringe in northern England. Tall rushes, long grass, bogs and limited access means that surveying grey partridges using the lowland method of counting partridges by driving around headlands in spring when crops are established and in late summer post-harvest, is likely to be virtually impossible.

In similar situations where tall vegetation has made surveying birds difficult, playing taped calls to elicit a response has been used effectively. Male grey partridges are known to respond to tape call back and in this study we have assessed whether tape call back was a more effective method for surveying grey partridges in the uplands than an observation only method. The study was undertaken along 14 separate four kilometre road transects, six of which were in Upper Teesdale, County Durham, four at Otterburn, Northumberland and four at Catterick, North Yorkshire. Partridges were counted along these routes at dawn and dusk in spring and summer using both the Partridge Count Scheme method of observation only; and by surveying using tape call back, whereby an audio recording of a male grey partridge was played for 15 seconds, with the observer listening for

**Figure 4**

The mean numbers of partridge encounters using the tape call back and direct observation methods in spring and summer (All raw data were log transformed, mean and standard errors were calculated and then back transformed).



responding birds and repeating this four times at 400 metre intervals along the route.

In spring, the tape call back method proved to be more effective than the observation only method, encountering twice as many grey partridges (see Figure 4). There were no differences in the numbers of grey partridges encountered between the two methods in summer, but the lower encounter rates may have been explained by the low breeding productivity

of grey partridges last summer as a result of the prolonged wet weather. In years when breeding success is higher, the tape call back method may prove to be more effective.

Tape call back provides a useful method for surveying grey partridges in the uplands. It is important that we learn more about the status and distribution of grey partridge in the upland fringe as these populations may make an important contribution to meeting Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

## Re-establishment guidelines launched



Between 2004 and 2007 we have been working on a ground-breaking research project, aimed at identifying the best methods of re-establishing grey partridges through releasing in areas where they have disappeared.

We are delighted to announce that, based on the research, we have now produced detailed guidelines explaining the 'when, where and how' to re-establish grey

partridges. The guidelines were successfully launched at this year's Game Fair at Blenheim Palace.

These new guidelines are in-line with internationally accepted procedures for re-introductions produced by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Prof. Robert Kenward, Chair for Europe of the Sustainable Use Specialist Group (Europe) of IUCN-SSC said: "I was greatly impressed by the GWCT re-establishment guidelines. By combining an enormous volume of research into straightforward guidelines for the grey partridge, the GWCT has set a precedent in simplification for others to follow. We badly need such condensations of information to encourage effective restoration of species that have often been lost unwittingly. Otherwise, we shall not merely lose opportunities to restore species but also continue to lose biodiversity."

We believe that this new project is important in the history of species re-introductions as different releasing strategies for a single species have rarely been scientifically evaluated as thoroughly as in this project. Our new guidelines form another 'egg' in the basket of grey partridge conservation measures. They emphasise the need to restore or recreate nesting, brood-rearing and over-winter habitats before releasing (for detailed summary see Annual review 2006) – we do not advocate attempting to re-establish grey partridges in areas of unsuitable habitat. We are hopeful that in the future, many of you who have lost grey partridges will be encouraged to re-establish them according to our new guidelines. This will undoubtedly help to restore this magnificent farmland gamebird to its former range. It is help that it very much needs! To receive a copy please contact Lynda Ferguson on 01425 651013.

# Out in The Field

The April edition of *The Field* magazine led with a hard-hitting, yet objective article entitled *The end of partridge shooting?* that drew on interviews with ourselves, the



BTO and RSPB, Hopefully it will open the eyes of all who read it.

The Partridge Count Scheme (PCS) has a long association with shoots, but it is not exclusively made up of

them. On a good number of sites, shooting plays no part in their desire to conserve grey partridges. Nevertheless, the bird as a quarry species (now and into the future) is a major part of the reason that many areas want to increase and sustain numbers.

Many areas across the country also release and shoot red-legged partridges and these will often be the main source of a shoot's income. Regrettably conserving the grey partridge may not seem applicable

to shoots with a strong redleg interest. However, the success or failure of grey partridge recovery has a direct bearing on shooting and will shape how partridge conservation is directed in coming years.

The Government's 2005 national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) target to 'Halt the decline of the grey partridge' was missed by an uncomfortably wide margin. A re-assessment was made and this time, with our involvement, new targets were set which are essentially achieving the same numbers, but over a longer time-frame. However, the British Trust for Ornithology figures continue to show a decline in grey partridge numbers and it is these figures that the Government will use to assess progress.

To quote some of the article in *The Field*: "Consider what would happen if target numbers required tweaking for a second time and Defra was minded to ignore the countryside and the GWCT and amend the Game Acts. It could either curtail the partridge season or remove the grey partridge from the quarry list. With misidentification already flagged as a danger, redleg-shooting could collapse on the back

of such a move. And while redleg-shooting represents the profit margin on many a commercial pheasant-shoot, what price pheasant-shooting?"

Public opinion and political interest on shooting remain undecided, and it is unwise to think that the grey partridge wouldn't be taken off the quarry list if nationally progress outside the PCS isn't forthcoming. The grey partridge cannot be saved in zoos or nature reserves, it needs actively managed farmland and the interest of those on it! As the PCS is already showing, many farms and shoots are helping the recovery of their grey partridges, but many more need to demonstrate an interest, or be recognised for work they are already doing.

Most of *The Field* article can be found online by searching through its website's 'Features' pages ([www.thefield.co.uk/features](http://www.thefield.co.uk/features)). Read it, consider its wider issues and then make everyone you know read it. To say that it will be a bitter pill, but probably a necessary one – if it hits home hard enough.

## Effect of June weather on partridges

The PCS holds over 70 years of partridge data from across the UK and provides a robust dataset to compare with long-term weather data. Following last summer's abysmal chick survival, we looked at how pair densities from our data were affected by weather in the previous year using Met Office Hadley Centre data from 1961 to 2005 for the UK. Our previous studies have focused on smaller areas and fewer years, but here we look at the entire UK, over a much longer period and accounts for regional variations.

As expected, reduced rainfall and increased hours of sunshine in June (but not July) were found to significantly increase spring pair densities in the following year, controlling for over-winter survival (see Figure 5). This agrees with partridge ecology as the third week of June is the time of peak partridge hatching. As partridge chicks start out little bigger than a bumblebee, they can only produce (by themselves) about a third of the heat necessary to keep warm. At this size they can only feed for short periods of time before they need the warmth of brooding parents. A direct effect of good weather is the chick's ability to dry out in

the sun after rainfall events. Even more important is the indirect effect that mild weather has on insect abundance, the most important (but often overlooked) factor in partridge chick survival directly after hatching.

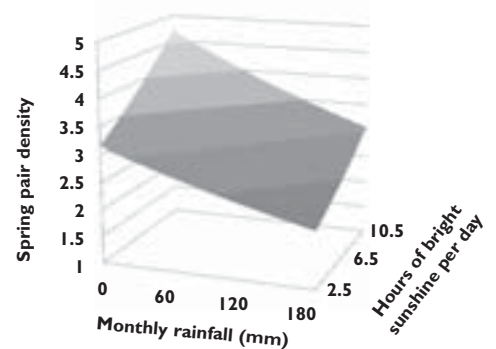
### How does this work relate to 2008 spring counts?

June 2007 witnessed well above average rainfall for the majority of the UK, with some areas having their wettest June on record. Sunshine across the UK was below average, particularly in east Scotland and north-east England. This resulted in a lower chick survival last year and fewer grey partridge pairs recorded this spring. A prediction for spring pair density in 2008 was calculated using rainfall and sunshine values for the UK average in June 2007. The 2008 predicted value was 2.6 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> ( $\pm 0.2$ ), but the average pair density recorded in the PCS this spring was 3.6 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, PCS members appear to have done better than expected considering the weather and the long-term average pair density.

This year June appears to have been more sympathetic to partridges. Compared

**Figure 5**

Grey partridge pair density in relation to rainfall and average hours of direct sunshine per day in June the previous year.



with June 2007 we experienced only 58% of the rainfall and 125% of the sunshine hours, close to the June average of the last 20 years. Based on these figures, the predicted value for 2009 spring pair density recorded this spring at 3.2 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> ( $\pm 0.1$ ) is higher than the 2008 value. Therefore we expect spring pair counts to be even better next year, all things being equal, so it is definitely worth making the effort to conserve and count partridge.



## Regional round-up

The activities started back in April with the South-West, Cotswold, Wessex and North-West groups all holding meetings to discuss the methodology of releasing grey partridges as part of a re-introduction programme. Research Biologist, Francis Buner, gave a practical demonstration of the dos and don'ts of raising grey partridges and how best to release them. Underpinning the success of such a programme is the need to have top quality habitat already in place providing nesting, brood-rearing and winter cover, and then follow up in the spring with a good predator control plan.

Around 150 attended these four days and learnt from Francis that success levels of breeding are low following reintroduction. However, if a concerted campaign of release over a number of years takes place, establishment of a viable self sustaining population is potentially viable.

To complete the coverage of England, the Lancashire and Cumbria grey partridge group, was launched at James Carr's estate, at Warwick on Eden in Cumbria. An extremely successful launch took place, with over 60 people attending, despite the main road being completely closed on both sides of the venue, due to an overturned lorry! This area still has some good, if not localised, populations of grey partridges and the enthusiasm shown during the day should ensure that we see numbers start to increase once again in the north-west.

The next six group meetings in East Anglia, South-East and Central England, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk looked in-depth at predator control, especially new advances in snaring and tunnel trapping.

It was very good to have the 'two Mikes' to deliver these days. Mike Swan who ran three events with his usual enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge and Mike Short, a research biologist based at Fordingbridge, who brought first-hand experience of

the development of fox snares and the work he is doing with the department of conservation in New Zealand on the DOCTrap.

The 175 people, who attended these meetings on predator control, obviously learnt a huge amount and questions came thick and fast. It was most satisfying that so many came up to me at the end to say how good the meetings had been and how incredibly practical they were, as only the Trust can do! Indeed, one person commented that it was the best outdoor training day he had ever been on.

The final grey partridge meeting was held jointly with Northumberland and the Durham and Northern Dales groups, who met in Upper Teesdale on the Raby Estate to discuss grey partridge management on the hill fringe. Partridges in these habitats, especially where predator control is in place, can often be found in good numbers.

Phil Warren, our black grouse researcher who is based in Teesdale, gave plenty of practical advice on how much of the management he is implementing for black grouse, also benefits grey partridges. Hugo Straker, our advisor for the area, was also on hand to brief people on his Scottish experiences with grey partridges. The group of around 30 people (which we were delighted to see included Lord Barnard, owner of Raby Estate) also hugely benefited from Lindsay Waddell's (Head Keeper of Raby Estate and Chairman of the National Gamekeepers Organisation) input to the day. Lindsay's huge wealth of knowledge in this area is very highly regarded. The result was a fascinating meeting and discussion on various management techniques and their pluses and minuses! Everyone had a very enjoyable time, in beautiful sunny weather and went away much the wiser.

It is so rewarding to get our research biologists out in front of our membership

*Our spring meetings looked indepth at predator control.*

to impart their wealth of knowledge and to meet the people who will be putting their research into practice.

So, overall the spring/summer events have been well attended and warmly received. We now just have to keep our fingers crossed for the weather to be kind for the rest of the summer!



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For more information on our grey partridge research and further copies of this newsletter, please contact:

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust  
Fordingbridge, Hampshire, SP6 1EF  
Tel: 01425 652381  
Email: [info@gct.org.uk](mailto:info@gct.org.uk)

**[www.gct.org.uk](http://www.gct.org.uk)**  
Registered charity no. 1112023