Grey partridge News

Issue 17: Summer 2012

Introduction

With skies still grey and rain forecast once again, I seem to have played the role of a Samaritan for much of the summer, with both keepers and farmers frequently ringing up for a chat, hoping for reassurances that things are not really as bad as they appear to be. Although the next few weeks will reveal all, common sense tells us that the constant rain we have experienced this summer has to have resulted in a poor breeding season.

However, the weather has always played a part. Looking at old game record books from the Eleveden Estate in Norfolk, one particular breeding season had been cold and wet, prospects were appalling and a very poor shooting season followed. Then the following year, a fantastic summer resulted in wild game being everywhere across the estate. So don't despair if the autumn counts are slim, work hard to ensure that you look after the stock that remains – next year it could all be so different.

To help minimise winter losses, double your efforts not to over-shoot or even decide not to shoot at all. Remember, do not shoot wild grey partridges if you have fewer than 20 birds per 250 acres (100 hectares) in the autumn. Below this level the population has little ability to compensate for shooting losses. Stop shooting wild grey partridges as soon as the threshold of 20 birds per 250 acres (100 hectares) is reached, for the same reason. Get the guns on a shoot day to talk to each other, as it is often easier for a gun to distinguish a covey of greys from the side rather than straight in front. Greys are often easiest to identify as they take off because they invariably call, so perhaps have a whistle or similar system to warn guns that a covey has been flushed. These techniques help to decrease the numbers of wild greys shot accidentally.

Don't forget to supplementary feed your grey partridges over winter, particularly in the first few months of the year. However, do couple this with targeted rat control. Block baiting holes near to hoppers and moving the hopper a short distance away will be effective. Once a hole is baited, cover it over with top-soil so that death occurs underground, limiting any chance of secondary poisoning. Visit shortly after and re-bait any holes that have re-opened.

It is important to provide plenty of cover for pairs to hide in during the late winter and early spring as they can suffer losses of over 50% during this vulnerable time. Strips of chicory or cover crops coming into a second year are ideal and will help relieve some of the pressure. If you don't have these established leave part of a grass margin uncut and areas such as field corners unmanaged, as this all helps to provide cover.

Hopefully next year could provide us with a 'flaming June' and as I so often have said in the past, grey partridges lay more eggs than any other bird in the world, so the chances of them staging a stunning comeback is huge.

Peter Thompson Biodiversity Advisor

Inside this issue:

Page I...

Introduction; News in brief; **Page 2-3...**

Insect-rich for chicks;

Scottish demonstration project; Partridges: Countryside Barometer Page 4-5...

The Partridge Count Scheme; Page 6...

Swedish grey partridge project; **Page 7-8...**

News from around the regions; Contacts.

News in brief

Wash out in Upper Teesdale

This summer has been disastrous for grey partridges in our Upper Teesdale study area, with no chicks produced by any of our 12 radio-tagged hens or by the nine pairs where only the cocks were tagged. Our longer term studies have shown breeding productivity of grey partridge and black grouse in the upland fringe are strongly associated with rainfall in June and this has been the wettest since records began in 1910. This is a serious setback to grey partridge populations which had begun to recover and recolonise former habitats following previous severe winters. We need further research in to measures that increase breeding productivity when weather conditions are favourable to buffer against poor breeding in wet summers. The availability of insects, particularly sawfly larvae when chicks hatch, is a key issue. We are grateful to the SITA Trust and the County Durham Environment Trust for funding this project.



www.gwct.org.uk

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







(L-R) Flower rich margins provide ideal habitat for insects; an excellent example of wild bird cover comprising quinoa, kale and triticale; grey partridge chicks can eat up to 2,000 insects per day.

Insect-rich for chicks

Next summer's grey partridge chick survival seems a long time away, but now is the time to plan your insect-rich habitats. Over the last few years we have been investigating these habitats and the potential of annual or biennial plant species used in wild bird seed mixtures and flower mixes, to provide insects. The latter have the advantage that, once established, they are less time consuming to look after and are not prone to the vagaries of our climate which can severely restrict the establishment and growth of annual covers.

Habitats that consistently delivered the most chick-food insects were perennial habitats comprising grasses and wildflowers, legume mixes and wild bird seed mixtures. The grasses and wildflowers became the farmer's favourite in the Farm4bio Project (where we looked at the ability of agri-environment schemes to deliver for farmland birds). They enhance the landscape with their brightly coloured flowers and attract insects, especially bees, butterflies and grasshoppers. They also encourage natural pest enemies such as hoverflies.

To improve the establishment of perennial covers, the seed mix should only include the less competitive fine grasses (crested dog's-tail and sheep's fescue) and never tussock-forming grasses such as cock's foot, as they will quickly swamp any flowers. Increase success by using flower species that already grow well around the farm (see p60 GWCT Review of 2011 for more information). Stale seedbeds, sprayed off with glyphosate, can greatly reduce competition from annual weeds during establishment, but avoid areas close to invasive weeds (thistles, brome and couch grass). Once established cut several times during the first year and thereafter

annually in late autumn, and always try to remove the cuttings. On more fertile soils, a cut in early spring will improve access for chicks later in the year. Essentially, manage them as you would a wildflower meadow. Unfortunately, wildflower mixes are only funded in England.

Our work with Conservation Grade and Kings Game Cover and Conservation Crops clearly showed that the success of wild bird seed was heavily dependent on the presence of broad-leaf plants in the mix and only then did they exceed our target level for the grey partridge chick-food index. Leaf beetles, weevils, caterpillars and plant bugs are essential for growing chicks that can eat up to 2,000 protein-rich insects per day. Wild bird seed mix consisting only of cereals, failed to provide sufficient insects. In fact, 10% of the area needs to be covered by these broad-leaf plants to provide sufficient insects.

We also found that autumn sowings of mixes were more reliable at providing sufficient growth by mid-June, especially in dry springs. The ideal mix would consist of winter-hardy varieties of cereal, kale and linseed, but if the cover of broad-leaf plants is low, then mustard can be broadcast in the spring just before rainfall. Wild bird seed mixes are funded throughout the UK and can be reduced to six metres wide. Linear strips are ideal as they are more likely to be close to the nest site than blocks. Placing them beside a beetle bank provides chicks with insects as soon as they leave the nest.

However, when establishing these habitats there is always a compromise between farming commercially and providing for wildlife. To produce wild bird seed, yet keep the land required to a minimum while maximising yield, it needs to be grown using optimum seed rates and agro-chemical inputs. In winter, birds prefer areas sown as blocks of one-two hectares. In contrast, linear strips next to hedgerows of less dense crops are better for chick foraging. Likewise, conservation headlands with no fertiliser will provide foraging habitat on medium to light soils which is ideal for chicks, but give low seed yields. Similarly, a nectar flower mix allowing chicks access would provide fewer flowers than one aimed at producing lots of flowers for bumble bees, such as a legume mix. Therefore have a clear idea of what you want to achieve and it may be that a combination of blocks and linear habitats will be needed to provide both spring/ summer food and winter cover.

To encourage uptake, these habitats must be easy to establish, grow reliably, be achievable and be economical. One simple option to encourage chick-food insects is to use autumn-sown, wild bird seed containing kale. Locate the strip close to appropriate nesting areas (hedgerows, beetle banks) and sow in halves in alternate years to ensure that second-year habitat is always available.

Further information on how to establish and manage insect-rich habitats is available on our website and in the recently published HGCA guide *Enhancing arable biodiversity through the management of uncropped land*. To download your copy go to www.hgca.com

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the farmers involved, the funders of the Farm4bio project, Conservation Grade Ltd, Kings Game Cover and Conservation Crops, Oakbank Game & Conservation Ltd and Cotswold Seeds.

Scottish demonstration at Whitburgh

An innovative new project which aims to demonstrate how best practice grey partridge management can benefit biodiversity as part of a commercial agricultural operation was launched in July. We have joined forces with Whitburgh Farms at Pathhead in Midlothian to manage farmland to benefit the grey partridge and in doing so establish and develop the next generation of agri-environment prescriptions for Scotland.

This is the first project of its kind north of the Border and we hope the results will build on our successful partridge group schemes run in East Lothian and the Borders by informing and improving farming practice, increasing public knowledge and potentially influencing policy. To achieve this, the key aspects of the project are:

- Demonstrating and encouraging best practice management of Scottish farmland for grey partridges.
- Showing public benefits of combined game conservation and productive agriculture, notably how these activities support farmland biodiversity.
- Testing 'multi-purpose' proposals for habitat, disease control and predator control options for grey partridges in future Scottish agri-environment schemes.
- Highlighting whether adaptive management is required to address predation pressure on grey partridges by badgers, sparrowhawks and buzzards and grazing by brown hares.

Conservation headlands at Whitburgh Farm, the site of a new Scottish demonstration project.



Policy aims for the project

We would like to see the grey partridge included in the list of 'key' species in the Scottish Government's Rural Priorities in the next Common Agricultural Policy reform, due to their significant decline across the UK. This would provide farmers with an identifiable and attractive species to manage for, and a bundle of management measures which would support not just grey partridges, but many other farmland species. The supported measures should include managed headlands with seed bearing crops, predator control and supplementary winter feeding to ensure a rounded approach to supporting and enhancing biodiversity. The correct seed mixes can improve breeding habitat, cover and most importantly insect densities which partridge chicks along with a host of other farmland species depend on. Governmental support for an advisory service would be able to direct farmers on how best to incorporate agri-environment prescriptions and compulsory greening measures, while limiting the effect on farm production. A seasonal and targeted approach to controlling common predators can relieve the predation pressures that declining populations face to ensure successful breeding and subsequent species recovery. We have criticised the lack of support from Europe for predator control as a conservation measure. The Whitburgh project will highlight how important and valuable predator control can be for declining biodiversity.

Partridges: Countryside Barometer

In 1986, Dick Potts, then director of research at The Game Conservancy Trust, wrote *The Partridge: Pesticides, Predation & Conservation,* which aimed to bring together all the important ecological research on partridges, to explain the reasons for the enormous decline of the species and promote methods of conservation to arrest the species decline. Winner of The Wildlife Society's wildlife publication award, even after 26 years the book remains of value to ecologists, game conservationists, naturalists, and those engaged in agricultural and countryside environmental management.

Now, in *Partridges: Countryside Barometer*, Dick explores how mankind and partridges have evolved together and how plants and insects that partridges and other birds eat thrived on farms for thousands of years until the modern era. Today there is great concern about the long-term viability of many species in the countryside, from the effects of pesticides to climate change. The research on partridges is unique. Changes in distribution can be traced over millions of years and in numbers since 1826. Nest predation, the diet of adults, the survival and diet of chicks and the availability of food have been followed since the 19th century. The book also includes new information about red-legged and Chukar partridges and is truly global in its approach; it is wonderfully illustrated in colour throughout.

In a definitive account of the restoration of numbers on the Norfolk Estate in the Sussex Study area, Dick shows how wild grey and red-legged partridges flourish in a productive and profitable system of farming. In a small corner of England, farmland wildlife, raptors included, is

now able to thrive much as it did before pesticides were introduced. All this has been achieved through the motivation of partridge shooting.

Partridges: Countryside Barometer is released on 27 September: For further details visit Collins' New Naturalist website (www.newnaturalists.com). An e-book version will be available from Amazon and iTunes. ISBN: 978-0-00-741870-1.



The poor summer weather wasn't ideal for chick production. Autumn counts will accurately measure the partridges still on the ground.

Partridge Count Scheme

The results from this year's spring grey partridge counts are summarised in Table I. We would like to thank members of the Partridge Count Scheme (PCS) for their time and effort in undertaking a count and submitting their findings.

The weather since late winter certainly varied to say the least. The mildest winter we have experienced in the last three years and a dry January, was followed by a two week cold snap in early February. Despite the snow, February was a particularly dry month with much of east Scotland and eastern, central and southern England receiving less than 75% normal rainfall; the driest on record for both East Anglia and Lincolnshire.

Nationally, spring rainfall was close to average, but there was a division between a drier north-west and a wetter east and south, plus large fluctuations between months; March being one of the driest for a century. Drought conditions occurred across East Anglia, the Midlands and southern England, while late in the month, the area officially in drought was extended into Yorkshire. This was then followed by the wettest April on record.

Despite the difficulties that many PCS members faced this spring in trying to plan and execute their count, we are pleased to report that we received a total of 834 spring counts, covering an area of nearly 245,900 hectares (ha) (607,600 acres), an increase of over 13,000ha from last year. This 5% increase in returned counts is the highest response received since spring 2008. Except for Scotland, all regions improved on the number of counts returned compared with last spring and it is also encouraging to see the return of Wales into the results table with four sites providing details (see Table 1).

Table I					
Regio	nal spring pair	densities of grey	partridges in G	reat Britain for 2	2011 and 2012
	Number of sites		Spring pair density per 100ha		Comparison
Region	2011	2012	2011	2012	
Southern	126	133	1.4	1.7	(21%)
Eastern	219	234	6.3	7.7	(22%)
Midlands	146	158	3.4	4.4	(29%)
Wales	0	4	0	1.9	(190%) 🕇
Northern	186	194	4.9	5.6	(14%) 🛉
Scotland	121	111	3.1	3.8	(23%)
Overall	798	834	4.2	5.1	(22%)

A total of 13,414 pairs were recorded compared with 11,064 last year (an increase of 21%). This PCS spring count is of particular note, being exceeded only by the spring count of 1962 when 15,850 wild pairs were recorded. However, those birds were recorded from only 118 sites that were participating at that time; a reflection of higher partridge densities 50 years ago.

Even with the additional counts returned this year, the average count area remains around 300ha (292ha in 2011 to 301ha this spring). The national pair density has increased by 22% from 4.2 to 5.1 this year (see Table 1).

Looking in greater detail at the longterm index of grey partridge density (see Figure 1), which looks at the between-year changes for sites that have returned more than one count, we found that pair density indices had increased by 14% over the past year, from 5.6 to 6.4 pairs per 100 hectares. The increase was seen in both long-term and recent sites (12% and 16% respectively) and is reassuring following last year's improved young-to-old ratios. Although it is recent members who recorded the greater proportional increase, they are predominantly those sites with much lower densities. The national pair density index has reached a level last recorded by the PCS in 1980 (see Figure 1).

The national trend obscures widely varying regional trends. Eastern England recorded its third year of strong density increase and achieved 9.7 pairs/100ha, up 15% on last year; while the average increase over the past three years was 26% per year. Since 2000, despite several damp summers and cold winters, the yearly average increase was a respectable 11%.

The Midlands region also recorded an increase for the third year, up 25% to 5.3 pairs/100ha. This is from a low of 1.3 pairs/100ha in 2002.

The density in the northern region also increased, and despite a more modest average yearly increase of 6%, it has been less erratic rising to 5.8 pairs this spring from 2.9 in 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.

It is disappointing to report the on-going lack of recovery seen in southern England. Over the past decade spring densities have averaged 1.5 pairs/100ha and this year it was 1.7 pairs. Although certain sites can be commended on their work to improve partridge numbers, their efforts are eclipsed, and it is disheartening that we aren't seeing improvements across the region.

The long-term index for the whole of Scotland is also worrying having seen a creeping decline since 2007. Although pair density in southern Scotland rose from 1.9 to 4.3 pairs/100ha between 2000 and 2007, this has since fallen back to 3 pairs/100ha. Meanwhile the limited number of farms and estates participating north of the Clyde-Tay divide have seen a small increase to 2.2 pairs/100ha, up from 1.5 in 2007. We hope that the recent Grey Partridge Project established at Whitburgh (see page 3) will help boost Scotland's interest in conserving its native partridge.

Overall this has been a good spring count and the increase in pairs will maximise



Providing quality winter holding cover and supplementary food will help maximise winter survival.

potential broods, given this summer's weather and the expected poor productivity.

We now look forward to the 2012 autumn brood count, wondering how great an extent the endless summer rain of June and July will have had on the summer's chick survival. We hope all PCS members will make every effort to count their land after harvest.

To manage any shooting sustainably, we cannot stress enough the importance of counting this autumn and accurately measuring what is on the ground. Sites wishing to shoot should reacquaint themselves with the Six Golden Rules for Game Shooters in our guide Conserving the Grey Partridge (available to download from www.gwct.org.uk) to ensure they do not over shoot any surplus; it may even be judicious to avoid shooting any wild greys this autumn. Shoots where grey partridges are not on the quarry list must make every effort to prevent accidental losses. Finally, regardless of shooting, all sites need to maximise their winter survival by minimising predation, providing quality winter holding cover and supplementary food from at least late winter onwards.

Help expand the PCS

It is only with the interest and involvement of those participating in the PCS that we are demonstrating that grey partridge recovery is achievable. We need to expand this progress to the wider farmed landscape and encourage everyone to get involved. Together, a national recovery in partridge numbers and an expansion in their range back to areas where they used to occur is achievable, but we need your help. If you have neighbours, friends or family who can get involved, please encourage them to join. Every one counts! Go to www.gwct.org.uk/partridge or contact Neville Kingdon, PCS co-ordinator at nkingdon@gwct.org.uk or call 01425 651066.

Comparing Table 1 and Figure 1

Readers will note the disparity between the results of Table I and Figure I. More complex analysis is used to produce Figure I which, unlike Table I, 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 I.





18

Grey partridge pair density per 100 hectares

Trends in the indices of grey partridge density, controlling for variation in the different count areas.

2015



(L-R) Conservation headland left after harvest; bumblebee on phacelia in brood-rearing cover; a strip of hemp for winter holding cover at the Torup experimental area.

Swedish grey partridge project

In November 2008, Annelie Jönsson started a four and a half year grey partridge project in Scania, the southern-most province of Sweden, It was modelled on the GWCT demonstration project at Royston, but focused on habitat management only. Predator control continues as before at a high level, according to Swedish standards, with a professional gamekeeper. However, due to strict laws such as shooting from a vehicle and snaring not being permitted, as well as the protection of all breeding birds (including corvids) in the breeding season, predator control in Sweden, when compared with Britain, may best be described as modest. Some supplementary feeding takes place during winter.

The aim of the project is to understand the reasons behind the severe decline of grey partridges in Sweden, and to develop and evaluate conservation measures that may benefit partridges as well as other farmland biodiversity. The aim is also to use the results to influence the development of new agri-environment schemes. Unlike the wide range of options available in the British schemes, the Swedish schemes are not tailored to this kind of conservation work. Thanks to the great generosity of the Högestad & Christinehof Estate, who is hosting the project and funding the practical work with the habitat restoration, it has been possible to implement habitat restoration measures as suggested by the GWCT, without having to be limited by any agri-environment rules.

Most of the conservation work has been directed at improving chick food. This has been combined with some strips sown for winter cover. On the two experimental areas, new 'partridge strips' have been created every year to increase the amount of brood-rearing cover. Since the start of the project the area set aside for partridge strips on either of the experimental areas (416 and 518ha respectively) in any one year has ranged from 0.3ha to 10.4ha.

It has become clear that Sweden is some way behind Britain when it comes to farmland conservation. Implementing the proposed habitat improvements has been more difficult than anticipated. In general, since the requirement for set-aside was removed there is no real economic incentive for farmers to sacrifice parts of their land for biodiversity.

We are fast approaching the end of the project with only the 2012 autumn count left to complete, but without having performed any statistical analysis we don't yet wish to draw any firm conclusions. However, at a first glance at the spring counts, numbers have declined on all four areas, but it seems that the decline has been lower on the experimental areas. Declining Nesting cover (sown autumn 2010) along a stone wall as well as around a drainage access point. The farm manager refused beetle banks but instead sowed a six metre radius of grass around the 50 plus drainage access points in this particular field.



numbers are not what we were expecting when setting up this project, but having experienced two harsh winters with deep snow cover for a couple of months in the first two years, followed by two cold and wet summers in the last two years, we may have good reason to blame the weather.

Looking into the centre of the Baldringe experimental area. A strip of brood-rearing cover containing flowering sunflowers in front of a newly-restored wetland, and behind that a block of hemp for winter holding cover.



News from around the regions



(L-R) Managing Director of Dods of Haddington Joe Harper; Jamie Younger of JH Younger and Co and Hugo Straker, GWCT.

East Lothian

The 2011 East Lothian Dodseed Grey Partridge Trophy was presented to Jamie Younger in recognition of his activities on Baro Farm in support of wild grey partridge conservation. The trophy underpins on-going farmland conservation work being carried out by East Lothian farmers as part of the East Lothian Grey Partridge Recovery Project. Dods of Haddington not only sponsor the trophy, but also provide participating farmers with bags of appropriate seed mixes to be sown on their land in places where partridges are known to favour.



The Lincolnshire Jas Martin grey partridge trophy presentation. (L-R) Des Wykes, gamekeeper on Willoughton Estate; Richard Williamson of Strawberry Farm (winner); Roger Cowling of Harpswell Farms (runner up); Lord Taylor of Holbeach.

Central England

2012 hasn't been the best year for grey partridges, primarily due to a wet spring and summer. Driving around three Lincolnshire farms in early June to judge the winner of the Jas. Martin and Co. Lincolnshire Grey Partridge Trophy, we saw a lot of pairs, few single cock birds and no broods. Scope for second broods also seems poor and, it also proved a very challenging year for establishing seed and cover crops for wild partridges. Striving for a positive note; those of you that had established good broodrearing crops, fed though until May/June and kept on top of your foxes, have given the partridge chicks that did hatch the best possible chance of survival. We are hoping for a more productive 2013.

Norfolk

Thelveton Estate in south-east Norfolk was the winner of this year's Mills & Reeve Grey Partridge Trophy. Sir Rupert Mann, owner of the estate received the award from Justin Ripman of Mills & Reeve Solicitors at the Norfolk show. With the help of dedicated keeper Adam Johnson, Thelveton Estate achieved a count of 107 pairs this spring – a fantastic achievement, especially considering the estate is outside the traditional core grey partridge areas of the county. A patchwork quilt approach to cropping and plenty of grassy fallow areas on ex-set-aside land has undoubtedly helped boost partridge numbers.



Sir Rupert Mann, owner of the estate (left) received the award from Justin Ripman of Mills and Reeve Solicitors at the Norfolk Show

In May the Norfolk partridge group visited the Barton Bendish Estate near Swaffham, where a grey partridge shoot has been created in under five years. The success of this shoot is due largely to the hard work of gamekeeper David Chandler, who works in close collaboration with the farm and environment managers. A new Higher Level Stewardship scheme is now in place and hopefully the estate will be able to build on their success. We are very grateful to Albanwise Farming Ltd for allowing us to visit and to Oakbank for sponsorship.

East Anglian

Members of the East Anglian partridge group will have the opportunity to visit Caldecote House Farm in Bedfordshire on 12 September at 5pm. Simon Maudlin has created a haven for grey partridges and other wildlife on this farm and was joint winner of the Purdey Award for Game Conservation in 2011 and winner of the East Anglian Partridge Group trophy in 2011 too. To book contact Lynda Ferguson on 01425 651013 or email Iferguson@gwct.org.uk

All change in the North

This year we decided to combine the Northumberland and Durham & Northern Dales groups to form the North-East group. The groups' have individual trophies so will continue to be judged as two separate groups. Malise Graham has kindly agreed to become the chairman and Gray's Chartered Surveyors has generously agreed to sponsor the group. We would like to take



(Second from right) George Farr is retiring as Northumberland group chairman.

this opportunity to thank George Farr, who stands down as Northumberland group chairman, for all his support and dedication over the past four years.

We would also like to thank Kenelm Storey who has retired as chairman of the Yorkshire group. Kenelm has been an enthusiastic and dedicated chairman since the group's launch.

To date the Yorkshire and Cumbria & North Lancashire groups have held their annual meetings. The Yorkshire group visited Dalton Estates to discuss wild game, while the Cumbrian group visited Lorne Farm to look at the conservation work being done for farmland birds and waders. The North-East group's meeting will be in the autumn and will focus on winter cover and food.



(Fourth from left) Kenelm Storey is retiring as chairman of the Yorkshire group.

Mike Swan leading the South-East group.

Group news continued

South-East group

It is too early to say how partridges have fared during the cold wet summer of 2012, but there are definitely some coveys out there despite the weather. It is also probably fair to say that those who have plenty of good quality brood-rearing habitat in place will hold their own. The South-East grey partridge group was treated to an inspirational afternoon visit in early July, courtesy of Tim Steel. He has taken the idea of restoring the grey partridge population at lleden in Kent very seriously indeed, and has put a text book Stewardship scheme in place to support the entire partridge life cycle, under the guidance of GWCT's advisor Peter Thompson. With dedicated keepering by Bob Brown and Lee Ward, the lleden pair count has risen from five in 2010 to over 20 this year. In recognition of this tremendous achievement the lleden team were also awarded the South-East Grey Partridge Trophy, sponsored by BTF.



The South-East trophy was awarded to the lledon team. (L-R) Peter Setterfield (chairman) Bob Brown (head keeper) Tim Steel, Lee Ward (under keeper) and Mark Ansell (last year's winner).

Hampshire and Wessex

The Hampshire and Wessex grey partridge group held a combined meeting at Richard Wills, Willesley Warren Farm in Hampshire. About 60 people turned out on a beautiful summer's evening to see the amazing work that Richard and his team have being putting into place – resulting in a spring pair count of 32. The evening finished with a delicious barbeque. The event was kindly sponsored by Smiths Gore and Oakbank.

The 2012 Wessex Grey Partridge Trophy was awarded to Andrew Hughes of the Trinley Estate, near Andover. Andrew has been striving to create a good area for grey partridges on the estate for a number of years now, and in the last few years numbers have really increased with this year's spring pair count reaching 60 pairs. An extremely worthy winner.



(L-R) Peter Thompson awarding the Wessex Grey Partridge Trophy to Andrew Hughes.

Cotswold group

The Cotswold Grey Partridge Trophy was presented to Charles and Sam Phillips during the summer event held at Ola Baalack's Dartley Farm. The Phillips family have done a huge amount of work on behalf of grey partridges at their Macoroni Farm, Eastleach, and richly deserve to be awarded the trophy this year. Both the event and the trophy were kindly sponsored by Ruffer LLP, whose generosity enabled everyone to enjoy a delicious lunch.



(L-R) Charles and Sam Phillips winners of the Cotswolds Grey Partridge Trophy, with Jane Tufnell.

Stop press

We have pleasure in announcing that the Yorkshire and Durham & Northern Dales trophies have just been awarded. The Yorkshire trophy, sponsored by Savills, was awarded to Tim Coleman of Church Farm. Bempton. The judges were impressed with his enthusiasm for the grey partridge and extensive nature of the work being put in to support grey partridges given the nature of the commercial farming operation that he runs. The Durham & Northern Dales trophy was awarded to Peter Dowson from Eppleby near Richmond who runs a mixed grassland and arable farm with his son and who takes particular interest in supporting the greys and running the farm shoot. In both cases the judges were impressed with the work being put in to support grey partridges and in particular the provision of different habitats, some in rotation to ensure over winter cover and food, supported by hopper feeding and the control of key predators.

For more information on all the grey partridge groups and to register for all of the events go to www.gwct.org.uk/courses or contact Lynda Ferguson on 01425 651013.



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@gwct.org.uk

www.gwct.org.uk Registered charity no. 1112023