

## Members' Conference 2014 - Speaker Biographies

### Guest speakers

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**Mike Clarke**, CEO RSPB, has led the RSPB as CEO since 2010, having previously been the charity's Operations Director. Mike believes that the scale of the world's environmental challenge demands collective impact for common cause. He is a Global Council member of BirdLife International, the world's largest civil society partnership for nature conservation, spanning 120 countries. He was appointed by the Government to the Independent Forestry Panel on 2011, and has over 30 years' experience of a wide spectrum of land-use issues. Prior to the RSPB, he worked for the Nature Conservancy Council in Hampshire and the Chief Scientists Team, where he contributed to the Geological Conservation Review and the National Vegetation Classification, and carried out research with the Soil Survey of England and Wales. His PhD was on the ecology of the New Forest. Mike has served on Southampton University Council, and has been a director of the country's largest schools federation. He is a Patron of the access and disability charity, Birding For All.

**Sir John Randall MP** has lived in Uxbridge all his life and his family have traded in the town since 1888. Born in 1955, he went to school in Hillingdon and Northwood. He studied Serbo-Croat at London University, and also speaks Russian and French. He has always been passionate about wildlife and conservation, having been a member of the RSPB since 1964. He's also been a professional bird watching tour leader. Apart from wildlife he is keen on sport. John was first elected MP for Uxbridge in July 1997 after the death of Sir Michael Shersby. He was then appointed an Opposition Whip in 2000. In 2003 he resigned to vote against the war in Iraq, and was reappointed later the same year. He became Government Deputy Chief Whip in 2010, and resigned from the government in 2013. John has now also become very involved in the fight against modern-day slavery as well as taking a close interest in conservation matters. He is a Privy Counsellor and received a Knighthood in 2014.

### Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust speakers

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**Mrs Teresa Dent** (BSc Agriculture, Reading). Teresa has lived and worked all her life in the countryside. The initial part of her career was as a farming consultant with Strutt & Parker where she was a partner for 13 years. She joined the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust as Chief Executive at the end of 2001. In this role, she has been able to combine her practical and business experience of farming and land management with the conservation prescriptions and policy produced by the Trust scientists. Teresa believes in practical, pragmatic conservation that finds space for wildlife alongside economic land uses. Teresa is a Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society, England and a Board Member of the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement Partnership.

**Ian Coghill B.Sc.** spent his working life in the Public Sector retiring in 2008 as Director of Environment and Community Safety for the City of Birmingham. As well as a lifelong interest in the countryside and Country Sports, he has been a committed conservationist since before the term was invented.

He first became involved with the then Game Conservancy Trust when he joined the Wetlands and Predation Research Steering Committee in 1992 and he has remained involved ever since. He has been a Trustee over several terms and has been Chairman of the Lowland Research Steering Committee for some seven years. In 2010 he was elected National Chairman of Trustees, a role he continues to discharge enthusiastically.

**Dr Alastair Leake** (BSc Horticultural Science, Reading; PhD Organic and Integrated Farming Systems, Leicester). Alastair worked as a Production Manager for a large-scale tomato nursery in the UK before moving to the Co-Operative Farms to establish a 10-year ground-breaking farm-scale comparison of organic, integrated and conventional farming techniques at a 200ha site. Alastair took over as Head of the GWCT's Allerton Project from 2001, based on a 300ha estate in Leicestershire. The project seeks to reconcile highly productive agriculture with a wide range of environmental objectives. Alastair has been a member of the Advisory Committee for Pesticides (ACP) for seven years, and latterly

Deputy Chairman, the BBC's Rural Affairs Advisory Committee & LEAF Advisory Board; a Director of The Arable Group (TAG), the Rural Energy Trust and Chairman of the UK Soil Management Initiative (SMI).

**Peter Thompson**, GWCT's Biodiversity advisor, gives advice to farmers on practical methods of implementing conservation programmes developed by the Trust's Farmland Ecology Unit. He is BASIS qualified and spent 10 years advising farmers on agronomy before joining the GWCT. He sits on numerous committees including Defra's Species delivery group and arable expert group. He is conservation advisor and assessor for Conservation Grade and is involved in the Marlborough Downs Nature Improvement area – the only farmer-led NIA amongst the 12 nationally appointed NIAs. He is CFE co-ordinator for Hampshire.

**Dr Andrew Hoodless** (BSc Applied Biology, Southampton; PhD Ornithology, Durham). Andrew is Head of Wetland Research. His PhD on woodcock ecology was funded by the GWCT and he subsequently joined the Trust in 1994. He is currently regarded as one of Europe's leading authorities on the Eurasian woodcock. He has broad cross-taxa ecological experience gained through work on birds, mammals, invertebrates and plants on large-scale multi-site projects and has worked on waders and gamebirds in the uplands and lowlands. He led the Upland Predation Experiment during 1999-2002 and became Head of Wetland Research in 2010. His research interests include woodcock migration and sustainable population management, wader population ecology and the effects of agri-environment and game management on wildlife.