



ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY
GAME AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION GROUP

Meeting and AGM Minutes

“The necessity of predator control in conservation”

Thursday September 15th 2016
12:30-1:30, Jubilee Room, Westminster Hall

Attending:

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Rt Hon. Sir Nicholas Soames	MP	Amanda Anderson	Moorland Association
Andrew Hoodless	GWCT	Robert Benson	Moorland Association
Mary Colwell	Curlew Media	James Barrington	Countryside Alliance
Martin Harper	RSPB	Rob Yorke	Rural Commentator
Teresa Dent	GWCT	Phillip Merricks	Hawk & Owl Trust
Andrew Gilruth	GWCT	Tom Orde-Powlett	Bolton Castle Estate
Sofi Lloyd	GWCT	Gareth Morgan	RSPB
Alastair Leake	GWCT	Phillip Astor	GWCT Trustee
Holly Howe	GWCT	Ian Coghill	GWCT
John Joliffe	Barrister	Heather Wheeler	MP
Angela Smith	MP	Owen Patterson	MP
Rishi Sunak	MP	Bill Wiggin	MP
Charles Walker	MP	Henry Bellingham	MP
George Hollingbury	MP	Cheryl Gillan	MP

Running order:

Time	Agenda Point & Details	Lead
	<p>AGM</p> <p>For Chairman:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed – Sir Nicholas Soames MP Proposer – Angela Smith MP Seconded – Henry Bellingham MP <p>For Vice Chairman:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed – Angela Smith MP Proposer – Sir Nicholas Soames MP Seconded – Rishi Sunak MP <p>For Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed – Lord De Mauley Proposer – Sir Nicholas Soames MP Seconded – Angela Smith MP 	NS

	<p>For Officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed – Kate Hoey MP Proposer – Sir Nicholas Soames MP Seconded – Henry Bellingham MP 	
12.40-12.47	<p>Presentation by Andrew Hoodless, Head of Wetland Research at GWCT</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial decline in populations of our four most widespread breeding waders in the previous 40 years Poor breeding success underlies population declines BTO ring recovery data indicate that 0.7 chick per pair per year is needed to maintain a stable lapwing population Agri-environment fallow plots only delivering 0.5 chick/pair and lowland wet grassland only delivering 0.4 chick/pair on average Predation control can improve the situation in some circumstances. For instance, in the GWCT’s Upland Predation Experiment 51% of curlews raised a brood and the population increased by 14% a year with predation control, whereas only 15% raised a brood and the population declined by 17% a year in the absence of predation control Targeted swift action is required to reverse wader declines 	AH
12.47- 12.55	<p>Presentation by Mary Colwell, Director of Curlew Media</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As curlews use so much of our landscapes, uplands, lowlands etc., they are the ideal indicator species to track and conserve Wildlife “keeping” should be considered Many things affect curlews breeding, not just predation but habitat loss, forestry and farming intensification. Although in places predation is very high In the Stiperstones area, Shropshire, not one curlew nest hatched in 2 years studied No funding for predator control, and NGO’s nervous of member’s reactions Lack of wildlife education needs addressing 	MC
12.55-13.05	<p>Presentation by Martin Harper, Conservation Director of the RSPB</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Habitat is being created by RSPB RSPB report of 2007 showed clear evidence for population effects of predation on waders. A revised version is being worked on RSPB policy on predator control; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Killing should be a last resort Clear evidence of predation required Non-lethal options deployed first where relevant Only to be used on non-conservation predator species Admits RSPB has been slow to address predation control Using predator fencing has seen improvements in wader numbers in some areas 28 reserves operate some predator control which has been successful Curlew management project is largest ever RSPB project and aims to 	MH

	<p>determine what the best habitat and predator control intensity is best. So far those with active management are more successful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going forward we need to do whatever we know works to help reverse the declines of waders 	
13.05-13.25	<p>Summary by Sir Nicholas Soames MP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We all agree what action is required to address these declines 	NS
	<p>Questions:</p> <p>Q: Henry Bellingham</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lots of support for predator control now. Schools even get the point so there need not be worry about communicating that predator control is happening. Dog walking is a big issue in the disturbance of ground nesters <p>A: Martin Harper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree, we have been better and will aim to communicate more openly with members Sustainable Urban Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) take some pressure away from ground nesters but need more <p>Andrew Hoodless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree that dog walking is another pressure, it is increasing too, predation isn't the only reason for declines <p>Q: Cheryl Gillan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much are local residents involved in being asked to avoid nesting habitats? Most would be helpful if they knew the issues. <p>A: Martin Harper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We hope we are involving them and will check this is so <p>Q: Amanda Anderson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Martin Harper: with regards to the reserves with predator control, is there more productivity i.e. more chicks, or more pairs? <p>A: Martin Harper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More productivity for other waders but for specifically curlew, unsure <p>Q: Mary Colwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Martin Harper: any lowland areas to be included in the trial management project? <p>A: Martin Harper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus has been on strongholds but yes will look to involve lowland areas <p>Q: Owen Patterson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many are not planting broadleaved woodland because grey squirrels are destroying the young trees. Predation control is pivotal, as it is here. Reserves i.e. Phillip Merricks' are more successful where there is predation control than neighboring RSPB reserves. Should not be a last resort because death in nature is a natural part of the chain and RSPB should be more open and honest about it. Take Brexit as an opportunity to ensure that grants are not made available to create habitat unless predator control is in place. 	

	<p>A: Martin Harper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All organisations need a policy and ours is killing is a last resort. Predator control in relation to waders should be targeted to hotspots. <p>Mary Colwell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change needs to be made about how we present wildlife to the public, with more openness and honesty. We give mixed messages at the moment. <p>Bill Wiggins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some rural groups are opposed to moving footpaths even when it is for their own safety so any help to educate the public will be advantageous to them and wildlife. <p>Andrew Hoodless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree that the message needs to be changed. We are running out of time, we need to use the tools that we have and we know work now and also train wildlife wardens to undertake predator control <p>Q: Phillip Astor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Martin Harper. If the control and managed plots are close can you distinguish the benefits of management on one and not the other? <p>A: Martin Harper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, think so but will check <p>Phillip Merricks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The political difficulty could be resolved by insisting that where habitat was created, it would have to be deemed predator free also to “count”. RSPB message is that it likes all creatures but must be responsible for telling the whole story <p>Ian Coghill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are over discreet with communicating the need for predator control. The public are more comfortable with the message than we assume. More honesty is needed. If the RSPB openly commented on predator control it would make such a difference. <p>Teresa Dent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrees with virtually all that has been said. Time is critical and predator control needs to be introduced into agri-environmental policy ASAP. <p>Q: Robert Benson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Martin Harper: Do use traps to control stoats and weasels too? We have found they have positive impacts on moorland <p>Andrew Gilruth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seems everyone is in agreement. We do need to be more honest and open about predator control. The very recent State of Nature report mentions it twice only. <p>Charles Walker</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grouse moors clearly have healthy populations of waders so is Chris Packham’s group personally biased? 	
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	<p>Round up</p> <p>Sir Nicholas Soames</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are all in agreement. This subject requires a good understanding and the science is conclusive in respect of ground nesting waders. <p>A Hoodless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Glad that we are all agreed that predation is a major issue and we should be taking swift action in relation to ground nesting waders. We are running out of time so targeted action is required. <p>Mary Colwell:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Science is vital. We need to change peoples' opinions with clarity and honesty and take a targeted approach to predator control <p>Martin Harper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A shared agenda is important if we are to secure funding for nature in a post Brexit environment.	
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