

Boost for Scottish black grouse



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The southern Scotland Black Grouse Recovery Project was launched at the Scottish Game Fair. (L-R) Ian Ross, SNH chairman, Teresa Dent GWCT chief executive and Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity.

A new conservation plan for black grouse that has been developed by the Trust, was launched by Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity, at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair.

The new plan describes management required to stop the decline of black grouse

in southern Scotland, increase numbers and encourage recolonisation of lost range. The project is funded by the GWCT, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Lammemuir Moorland Group, Scottish Borders Council and RSPB Scotland.

Fergus Ewing said: "Black grouse are among Scotland's

most iconic and impressive species but I am aware numbers in southern Scotland have fallen in recent decades. To halt this decline, it is therefore vital that we work together to take the right conservation action in the right places.

Philip Warren our research scientist said: "This provides an important platform for all

parties to deliver black grouse conservation objectives in southern Scotland. In the short term we need to target resources to secure remaining populations, while in the longer term putting in place a network of habitat corridors to enhance connectivity and facilitate future range colonisation."

Balgonie open days

Conservation crops have been shown to support red-listed birds, butterflies, bumblebees and important mammals. However, the difficulty of producing a mix of crops in the same plot, plus the fact that Scotland's agri-environment schemes only allow annual mixes, has led to some apprehension.

To counter this, we are working at Balgonie Estate, Glenrothes to develop a simple conservation crop designed for the medium-term, providing umbrella cover that allows easy, safe access for wildlife to multiple food resources through the year, reducing soil erosion, runoff and carbon emissions by virtue of reduced soil tillage.

The project is researching the suitability of chicory as the main component in a conservation crop mix that will perform well for at least three years, hopefully five, without the need to re-sow.

Thanks to the involvement of Kingdom Farming, Scottish Agronomy and Kings Seeds, we are developing novel science and ensuring a wider education programme. We have now begun

demonstrating the conservation crops to farmers at Balgonie with open days hosted by Scottish Agronomy, providing first-hand feedback on the future of this work.

Dave Parish explaining about the new chicory cover crops at Balgonie Estate.



Hope wins award



The winners, runners up and sponsors of the 2016 Golden Plover Award.

Hopes Estate near Gifford was the winner of the 2016 Golden Plover Award for moorland management, kindly sponsored by Lindsays.

The Golden Plover Award, now in its fourth year, celebrates the best of integrated, sustainable upland management, and this year's theme was sheep farming. The Hopes, owned by former GWCT chairman Scotland Robbie Douglas Miller, impressed with its breadth and

variety of management. Grouse bags have steadily increased over recent years, and sheep have been successfully introduced to complement existing aims and provide a profitable enterprise in their own right. Significant investment has gone into restoring blanket bog, and the estate's management strategy also takes into account the needs of a biomass boiler, planting 28,000 trees on the moorland margins to provide fuel and biodiversity.



Scotland's premier event

The 28th annual GWCT Scottish Game Fair was a great success, attracting over 33,000 visitors to Scone Palace.

Scotland's most popular outdoor country sports event was once again a true celebration of rural Scotland with visitors enjoying a showcase of game, wildlife and countryside management with a packed programme of food, drink, country sports, competitions, main ring events and 'have a go' activities.

The GWCT's flagship stand reflected the environment of the Trust's new demonstration farm, Auchnerran, which proved a real success. CKD Galbraith and Kings Seeds supported walking tours of the 'pop-up farm' for rural business professionals and GWCT

"...Scotland's most popular outdoor country sports event was once again a true celebration of rural Scotland..."

members, while Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Fergus Ewing was also given a tour.

The Royal Marines Unarmed Combat Display team entertained the main ring with their dramatic performances and the new Strathearn horse logging demonstration gave visitors an insight into this environmentally sensitive means of timber extraction. Visitors also enjoyed terrier racing, falconry, dog and duck show, World of Gundogs, fishing and The Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for working hill ponies, which was won by Invercauld Estate.

Next year's Fair will be held at Scone Palace from Friday 30 June to Sunday 2 July. Please see www.scottishfair.com for more information.



(L-R clockwise) On the GWCT display: Teresa Dent, Andrew Salvesen, Dave Parish, Fergus Ewing and Adam Smith; Three Sisters Bake – one of the headline attractions; Andrew Reid with Corran, winner of the Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for working hill ponies.

Auction success

A record-breaking 485 people attended the Scottish Auction at Prestonfield in May. The dinner was exceptional with a rabbit starter (supplied directly from the demonstration farm at Auchnerran), followed by roast loin of roe deer. Charles Graham-Campbell of Bonhams acted as an excellent auctioneer, helping to raise a fantastic £135,000.

Auction chairman Bryan Johnston said: "It was a great privilege to preside over this event for the first time. I am extremely grateful to all our sponsors, donors and bidders alike for supporting and enabling us to raise such a contribution to GWCT Scotland's funds."

Thank you to the sponsors Pentland Land Rover, Saffery Champness, Highland Game, Brewin Dolphin and Strutt & Parker.

Tickets for next year's auction will go on sale early in 2017.

Whitburgh's shining example

The East Lothian Grey Partridge Trophy has been awarded to Whitburgh Farms. The trophy, sponsored by Dodseed, was presented by GWCT advisor, Hugo Straker to Alastair Salvesen, owner of Whitburgh Estate, his headkeeper Graham Rankine and farm manager Jim Nichol. Whitburgh Estate is now well known in Scotland's conservation circles, being the home of the GWCT's Scottish Wild Grey Partridge Recovery Project. The team's work offers a shining example of informed conservation and an inspiration for other farms to follow. Commitment to the Recovery



(L-R) Graham Rankine (headkeeper), Alastair Salvesen (owner), Hugo Straker (GWCT advisor) and Jim Nichol (farm manager).

Project since 2011 has resulted in a grey partridge abundance which is regularly higher than regional and national totals despite the familiar setbacks of poor summer weather and raptor predation, and have responded well to field margin

strips of nesting, brood-rearing and winter holding covers and diligent predation control at key times of the year.

To join the Partridge Count Scheme please contact the Scottish HQ on 01738 551511 – please unlock those secrets.