

New Scottish Chairman

DELIGHT AND regret combine as we welcome a new Scottish chairman but say 'au revoir' to the previous chairman Andrew Salvesen. David Noble, well known to many as the director of our Scottish Game Fair between 2011-2016, took on the role of chairman in January. He brings a wealth of Scottish charity experience and said: "I am delighted to be re-engaging with the GWCT at a time when there are many challenges and opportunities for game and wildlife in Scotland and I am particularly interested in improving younger generations' understanding of these issues. I believe this will fit well with what Andrew Salvesen has achieved over the last five and a half years, and for which we owe him an enormous debt of thanks."

Andrew Salvesen will continue to serve on a number of key committees, continuing a particular interest in the Trust's Scottish Demonstration Farm at Auchnerran.



New Scottish chairman David Noble.

Grouse moor panel review

A POTENTIALLY influential review started in Scotland in January, which the GWCT will be advising. In May last year the cabinet secretary for environment, climate change and land reform made it clear an independently led group would be formed to examine how to ensure that grouse moor management continues to contribute to the rural economy, while being environmentally sustainable and compliant with the law.

The review group, chaired by Prof Alan Werritty who headed a recent SNH-led assessment of moorland sustainability, comprises specialists in environmental law, moorland ecology and the management for driven grouse. This expertise will be needed, as the panel will be considering the environmental impact of wildlife crime on moors, and consider grouse moor management practices such as muirburn, the use of medicated grit and mountain hare culls (see page 9).

It's thought the group will reach a view on the need for regulation including licensing and other measures, and how these might be achieved. It appears likely that the principal consideration will be given to whether a 'risk-based' approach (similar to that used by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) is needed and feasible. The merits of self-regulated approaches and primary legislation will also be considered. The report from the group will be submitted to the cabinet secretary no later than June 2019.

A review of grouse moor management in Scotland started earlier this year.



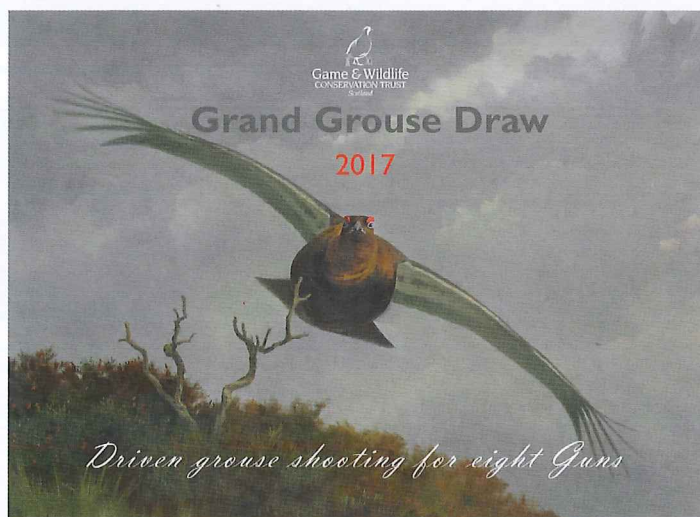
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Come and help celebrate the 30th anniversary of the GWCT Scottish Game Fair.

30 years celebrating conservation and the countryside

PLANS ARE well underway for the 30th anniversary of the GWCT Scottish Game Fair which takes place in the grounds of Scone Palace from Friday 29 June to Sunday 1 July. To commemorate this special occasion, Scone Palace Parklands will play host to memorable new events as well as the return of the Four Nations International Gundog competition.

Trader applications from the country's finest clothing, crafts, and food and drink producers are flooding in and a standalone cookery theatre with big name chefs and The Estates Challenge will launch in 2018 in conjunction with Clark Commercials. Please visit www.scottishfair.com to order tickets.

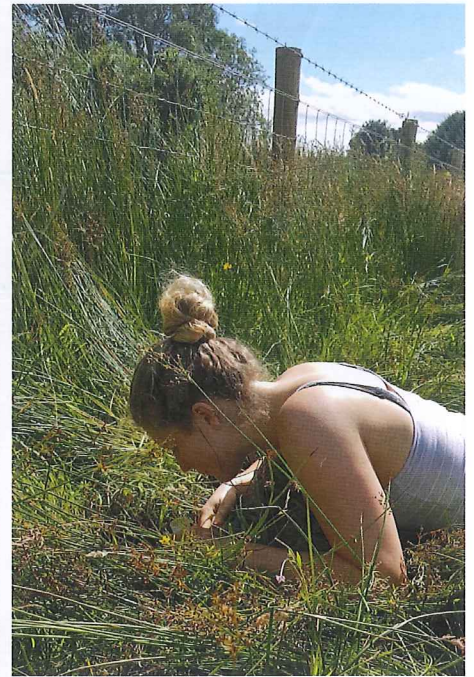


The 2017 Grand Grouse Draw was won by Toby Milwright.

Grand Grouse Draw winner

TOBY MILWRIGHT of Burton Farm, Wiltshire is the lucky winner of the 2017 Grand Grouse Draw. Toby was completely bowled over when draw organiser, Hugo Straker, called him to share the good news. A long-standing GWCT member who has only dreamt of shooting grouse, he can now invite seven chums to share his good fortune, thanks to the extreme generosity of the Mar Estate, Upper Deeside. Toby, along with his chosen team, will also enjoy truly luxurious accommodation in a totally unspoilt rural setting in the Mill of Dess Lodge, kindly donated by Lower Dess Estate.





(L-R) There are now 60 pairs of lapwing at Auchnerran; Marius Nicolai is counting mud snails as part of a project looking at the effects of liming.

Counting snails and much more at Auchnerran

There's been all manner of counting at the GWCT's Scottish Demonstration Farm at Auchnerran – not least the number of visiting individuals and interest groups that have come to the farm in the last few months.

We were delighted to host Fergus Ewing, cabinet secretary for the rural economy & connectivity, and Jonathan MacLure, policy officer for the environment & forestry directorate of Scottish Government at the farm in September. We had some interesting discussions about future agri-environmental schemes in Scotland, the potential of the GWCT Farmer Cluster concept, and the importance of integrated land management after Brexit.

Other visitors to Auchnerran included a group of wildlife and land managers, among them representatives from Transport Scotland and the SNH wildlife operations unit, to discuss the LIFE Laser Fence project and its applicability to a variety of situations.

Graeme Dey MSP, convener of the environment, climate change and land reform committee of the Scottish Parliament, and Andrew Proudfoot, senior assistant clerk to the committee, were given a tour of the farm and shown improvements to the farm system including a healthier and more productive black-faced sheep flock than when we took on the tenancy.

We have continued to count bird and wildlife populations. It was evident when we

started that the management on site prior to our tenancy had resulted in excellent conditions for breeding waders in general, with the unusual extensive farming system and intensive predator control resulting in high breeding densities of lapwing, oystercatcher, snipe, curlew and woodcock. 2017 counts on 480 hectares of land now show: lapwing c 60 pairs; oystercatcher c 20 pairs; curlew c10 pairs; and woodcock 26 roding males.

Lastly, we have been counting mud snails as part of a wider project with the Moredun Research Institute and James Hutton Institute to better understand the effects of liming on soil chemistry, invertebrate biodiversity and soil composition.

Budding wildlife artists



Junior winner Prithvi Sudarshan.

In 2017 the Perth and Kinross schools' art competition received a record 500 entries across 23 schools giving the judging panel of representatives from Blackadders, Julian Jardine Art Studio, The Royal Highland Educational Trust and Perth and Kinross Education department a difficult task.

The junior winner was Prithvi Sudarshan (Longforgan Primary School) with his picture of a brown trout, and the senior winner was Luisadh Leck (Pitlochry High School) who painted a lapwing.

Sarah Ballantyne, our head of events, said: "It was great to see all the hard work done by the young artists and we were delighted to see a stunning selection of species being submitted."

Senior winner Luisadh Leck.



Hopper feeding

The North Sea Region Interreg PARTRIDGE project, led by the GWCT, is busy in Scotland with crucial habitat being developed at our Balgonie Estate and Whitburgh Farms sites, with hopper feeding also introduced at Balgonie. We were visited by Russell Griggs of the Scottish Government's advisory group on greening issues, which will be making recommendations to the Government ahead of 2020.

