



# Game & Wildlife CONSERVATION TRUST *Cymru • Wales*

## GWCT Wales response to Call for evidence to inform the review of NRW's approach to regulating the shooting and trapping of wild birds in Wales

### **Respondent information**

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### Our specific interests in this consultation are as:

Academic/scientific/research  
Animal Welfare  
Farming - arable Farming - livestock  
Fishery or fish stock management  
Gamebirds  
Landowner/occupier/manager  
Pest control  
Wildfowling  
Wildlife conservation

### **Who we are**

This submission has been produced by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in Wales (GWCT), a research and education charity that has had over 1,000 scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals over the past 80 years, more than 100 of which were on issues relating to predation and farmland and moorland birds. On the basis of our scientific expertise, we regularly provide advice to statutory bodies as well as providing practical advice to farmers and landowners on how to manage their land with a view to improving biodiversity. Our Advisory team have, for many years, run industry-leading best practice predation control training courses. These courses are based on practical experience backed up by GWCT science.

Much of our research is undertaken in collaboration with other institutions and organisations, including Cardiff University, the British Trust for Ornithology, the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, and the RSPB.

## Executive summary

- 307 people participated in a GWCT Wales survey which mirrored the 2019 England wide GWCT survey to which 2,951 people responded, many of these providing information on more than one species.
- The responses given in the Welsh survey in terms of species and impacts within parameters measured closely matched those given in the England wide survey and therefore the same conclusions can be reached in Wales as to the rest of the England.
- Ten species were included in the survey, with the majority of respondents controlling several of them.
- The main reasons for controlling these species were for conservation and agricultural purposes.
- Almost all participants report having witnessed the species they control causing the damage that they describe
- The results highlighted that the respondents showed a high level of belief that the ability to manage these species is critical to the conservation of certain wild bird species, particularly ground-nesting and hedgerow birds and to agriculture, particularly the protection of livestock and crops.
- The survey revealed a wide range of impacts, experiences and concerns around many of the species covered
- Further analysis is possible from the Welsh data with further time and resources
- Presented in this report is:
  - Extensive first-hand evidence in the words of individuals of particular species of wild birds in Wales causing problems, such as damaging crops, livestock or fisheries, posing a risk to public health or safety, or harming the conservation of other species
  - Evidence about the effectiveness of lethal methods of controlling wild birds (through shooting, trapping or destruction of eggs/nests) as a way to prevent damage to crops or livestock or for protecting public health or safety
  - Evidence that lethal control of corvid species (the 'crow family', which includes carrion crow, magpie, jay and jackdaw) leads to increases in populations of other species of birds.
  - Evidence about the effectiveness of alternative non-lethal methods of addressing problems that wild birds may be causing, such as damaging crops, livestock or fisheries, posing a risk to public health or safety, or harming the conservation of other species
  - Information from users of NRW's general licences allowing the lethal control of wild birds
  - Reference to published/unpublished reports, surveys or other evidence about the use of cage traps to catch wild birds as well as information from individuals who use a cage trap to catch wild birds in Wales
  - Other evidence relevant to this review
- We are happy to take part in a more detailed survey on the use of cage traps in Wales

## **Our approach to answering the Call for Evidence**

In response to your consultation questions GWCT carried out a survey in Wales for a period of only 4 weeks over the Christmas period of 2020 to mirror the GWCT General Licence survey results December 2019 which was done in response to Defra's Wild Birds General Licence Survey in September 2019. The GWCT developed a simple online survey, based on the survey published by Defra, but tailored to the needs of our members and with the assurance of anonymity. It was open for seven weeks and received 2,951 responses.

The results from the Welsh, survey which was completed by 307 people mirrored that of the far larger UK wide survey as you will see below. The full written answers describing what they have witnessed as damage being caused by each species has been included in section 2c.

We have concerns about some of the questions posed within this consultation which we believe could put individuals who provide the information requested at risk of being targeted by those with malicious intent who will be able to access their names through a request under the Freedom of Information Act. Our survey anonymises the information provided to protect those who have responded.

### **Index:**

1. The Evidence
2. The Welsh Survey
  - a. We include the outcome from our survey which provides answers to multiple questions. Each species has its own separate heading with comments made by people who completed the survey included below.
  - b. Questions asked within the Welsh Survey
  - c. Individuals answers provided in their own words
3. Questions which were not addressed within the survey have been answered beneath
4. GWCT General Licence Survey Results 2019.
5. GWCT's Written evidence submission to the 2019 Defra consultation into General Licences. This report provides far more analysis of the whole dataset collated in 2019 the findings of which are very closely aligned with those of the Christmas 2020 Welsh Survey

# I. The Evidence

The evidence base is International and not just found in populations of ground-nesting birds in the UK. Predation issues are a major concern for ground-nesting wader birds across Europe.

Key Reference - Macdonald M.A. & Bolton M. (2008) Predation on wader nests in Europe. *Ibis* 150: 54-73

## I.1. Removal experiments

### **GWCT Evidence - Salisbury Plain**

The GWCT's Salisbury Plain Experiment was a large-scale trial that studied whether legal predation control in spring and summer could improve breeding success and population growth for wild grey partridge. Predation control was carried out on one study area, while a second similar area nearby acted as a comparison without predation control. After three years, predation control switched from the first area to the second. The predators targeted were fox, stoat, weasel, rat, carrion crow, magpie, jackdaw and rook. The birds were removed under the General Licence.

This experiment showed unambiguously that controlling predators allowed 75% greater production of young. Despite shooting, this improvement carried over into successive years, so that spring breeding numbers increased by 35% each year and were 2.6 times greater after three years of predation control. Autumn numbers, before shooting began, were 3.5 times greater after three years. Clearly, this set of common predators was having a substantial impact on the local partridge population and controlling them from March to September relieved much of the pressure.

Key reference - Tapper, S.C., Potts, G.R. & Brockless, M.H. (1996). The effect of an experimental reduction in predation pressure on the breeding success and population density of grey partridges *Perdix perdix*. *The Journal of Applied Ecology*, 33: 965.

### **The Upland Predation Experiment – The Otterburn Experiment**

20 years later, the GWCT conducted a similar experiment on moorland in the north of England. The Upland Predation Experiment showed predation control led to benefits for breeding red grouse, but also curlew, lapwing, golden plover, black grouse, grey partridge and meadow pipit. With predation control, these wading birds were able to breed well enough for population growth, an important threshold that was not reached in the absence of predation control.

The effect on the curlew population was marked – in the absence of predation control, curlew numbers were dropping by 17% per year. When legal predation control was implemented, curlew numbers rose by 14% per year (after a lag period as the new chicks reached breeding age). We have calculated that the low breeding success seen in this experiment on moors where predators were not controlled could lead to a drop in lapwing and golden plover numbers of 81%, and curlew of 47%, over ten years. This prediction has not yet been tested, but studies have shown higher curlew density on kept moorland.

Key reference - Fletcher, K., Aebischer, N.J., Baines, D., Foster, R. & Hoodless, A.N. (2010). Changes in breeding success and abundance of ground-nesting moorland birds in relation to the experimental deployment of legal predator control. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 47: 263-272).

### **GWCT's Corvid Removal Study**

There is new scientific evidence that corvid removal does positively impact songbird populations locally. The GWCT is concerned that this might be overlooked and wants to highlight three recent studies. Previous national scale studies suggest that local effects have no impact on national population trends, with weak links between magpies and songbird populations. However, the new evidence strongly suggests that the national figures will mask local patterns. The evidence summarized below indicates that the ability to apply targeted corvid control at short notice can be beneficial, where breeding hedgerow nesting and probably other songbirds are exposed to breeding corvids.

In their recent comprehensive review Roos *et al.* (2018) state (in the abstract) that they found little evidence that predation limits populations of passerines but that they do limit waders. This, however, is not a full and balanced reflection of the results, and a key finding of the review, highly relevant to this call for evidence, is easily overlooked. Table 5, which refers specifically to experimental predator removal studies, shows songbirds increased in 40% of 20 studies following predator removal. For waders, it was similar, at 44% of 29 studies. The conclusion from this is that the science available prior to 2017 tells us that corvid removal can lead to an increase in songbird population size.

Since Roos *et al.* (2018) conducted their review (in 2016), the GWCT has published the results of a large field study over four years that looked specifically at the effect of corvid removal using, primarily, Larsen traps (Sage & Aebischer 2017). The study applied randomised corvid control treatments to one plot in each of 16 pairs of study plots and documented nest success in hedgerow nesting passerines, using fledged brood counts and occupancy modelling. Overall songbird productivity was increased in the removal plots by on average 10% over the four years and by, on average, 16% in the three study years when it didn't rain heavily throughout spring (suppressing both songbird and corvid productivity). While both crows and magpies were removed from study plots, the ecology of these two birds suggests that magpie control using Larsen traps was probably the main cause of the improved songbird breeding success documented in the study. Control reduced but did not eliminate magpies or crows from any of the 16 study sites.

The third strand of evidence relates to a PhD study supervised by Exeter University and the GWCT and successfully defended in 2018 (Capstick 2018). The PhD examined factors that might cause variation in the effect of corvid predation on songbirds in a UK agricultural landscape. Three chapters are of specific relevance to this consultation:

- Chapter Two (paper in review): This review of the literature found that 25% of all reported songbird nest predation was attributed to corvids. Some songbird species were more susceptible than others, depending on their nesting biology and breeding season. Corvid removal can lead to increases in the breeding success of species especially vulnerable to predation.
- Chapter Four (paper in press): The study found that artificial nests (mimicking hedgerow farmland songbird nests) were more vulnerable to predation by magpies, inside magpie territories and at the peak of the magpie's breeding season.
- Chapter Five (paper in prep.): Site choice and success of songbirds in an agricultural environment were examined and indicated that songbirds may be actively avoiding nesting near magpie nests and, as a consequence, could be choosing suboptimal sites.

Key References:

Capstick, L. A. (2018). *Variation in the effect of corvid predation on songbird populations*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter.

Sage RB & Aebischer NJ (2017) Does best-practice crow *Corvus corone* and magpie *Pica pica* control on UK farmland improve nest success in hedgerow-nesting songbirds? A field experiment. *Wildlife Biology*. DOI: 10.2981/wlb.00375.

Roos S, Smart J, Gibbons, DW & Wilson JD (2018). A review of predation as a limiting factor for bird populations in mesopredator-rich landscapes: a case study of the UK. *Biological Reviews*. DOI: 10.1111/brv.12426.

## **1.2. Other manipulations**

Of the replicated, randomised removal experiments represented by work on Salisbury Plain, Otterburn and the Corvid Study are at the top of a 'quality' research methodology scale. Large-scale manipulations over large areas and over time are the next quality down. The GWCT has conducted or overseen many such studies.

## Loddington

This is the GWCT's first demonstration farm, set up in 1993. It represents 330ha of unexceptional land on heavy clay in Leicestershire. Between 1993 and 2001 we began a programme of management for wild game species and songbirds, which included habitat enhancement, winter feeding and legal, seasonal predator control using the General Licence to control corvids. In that time, we recovered songbird numbers to their 1960s levels. Also, in that time, a similar increase was not observed in national breeding bird data. Additionally, our wheat yields matched national and regional figures. The increase in bird numbers was not caused by a de-intensification of farming; in fact, the reverse was true.

However, songbird increase was not thought to be attributed to predator control alone. What role did habitat and feeding play in this increase? To answer this, we removed predator control between 2001 and 2006 whilst maintaining habitat improvements and feeding. Over this time, songbird numbers fell and continued to fall when the feeders were also removed between 2006 and 2010.

During this period, we collected data on nest survival. For selected species, but not all, survival rates increased during periods when predators were controlled compared to periods when they were not. e.g.:

	<b>Keeper</b>	<b>Unkeepered</b>	<b>% change</b>
Blackbird	25.7	8.9	+65
Songthrush	23.6	11.6	+50
Chaffinch	28.1	14.2	+50
Yellowhammer	32.3	16.9	+48

### Key References:

White, P.J.C., Stoate, C., Szczur, J. & Norris, K. (2008). Investigating the effects of predator removal and habitat management on nest success and breeding population size of a farmland passerine: A case study. *Ibis*, 150: 178-190.

White, P.J.C., Stoate, C., Szczur, J. & Norris, K. (2014). Predator reduction with habitat management can improve songbird nest success. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 78: 402-412.

Stoate, C., & Szczur, J. (2001). Could game management have a role in the conservation of farmland passerines? A case study from a Leicestershire Farm. *Bird Study*, 48: 292.

Stoate, C. & Szczur J. (2006). Potential influence of habitat and predation on local breeding success and population in Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*. A short report. *Bird Study*, 53: 000-000.

## Royston

Between 2002 and 2008 we ran another demonstration of best practice management for grey partridges on several farms across the chalk ridge between Baldock and Royston. The principles were the same as those applied on Salisbury Plain, but at Royston there was no switch of keepered and unkeepered plots. On the keepered area, grey partridge densities increased from 2.9 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> in spring to 18.4 pairs. On the adjacent unkeepered area spring densities increased from 1.3 to 4.2 pairs. Keepered and unkeepered plots were adjacent so there was no barrier between the management areas. Again, corvids were controlled under the General Licence.

Key Reference: Sotherton, N.W., Aebischer, N.J. & Ewald, J.A. (2014). Research into action: grey partridge conservation as a case study. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 51: 1-5.

## **Arundel, Sussex**

On private land in West Sussex, an estate owner has taken the management package devised by the GWCT to recover grey partridge numbers and implemented it on his farm. The package includes predator control including corvid removal under the General Licence. The farm is one where the GWCT has been counting partridges since 1968 and has done so every year since then. At the start, grey partridge spring densities were high (up to 40 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>), but by 2003 numbers had fallen to three birds! At this point the tenancy ended, the land came back in hand and the management began.

Population recovery was spectacular, increasing to nearly 90 pairs across the farm (or from 6.3 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> in 2003 to 19.1 pairs in 2015). On other parts of the study area without this management, numbers varied between 0.8 and 2.4 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. Autumn densities at Arundel increased from 1.1 to 140.6 birds per km<sup>2</sup>. Songbird numbers have also increased, but this work has not been reported in the scientific journals. But it does represent what is happening on many private estates aided by the licensed control of corvids.

Key Reference: Aebischer, N.J., Ewald, J.A., & Kingdon, N.G. (2018). Working towards the recovery of a declining quarry species: the grey partridge in the UK. In: Baxter, GS, Finch, NA & Murray, PJ (eds) *Advances in Conservation Through Sustainable Use of Wildlife*: 55-62. Wildlife Science Unit, University of Queensland, Gatton, Australia.

### **1.3. Surveys comparing areas with and without predator control and subsequent monitoring**

#### **Lapwings in the Avon Valley, Hampshire**

GWCT work here involves finding lapwing nests and following their fate. Then we try to attribute losses to particular causes. Between 2008 and 2012, from a sample of 296 nests monitored, 158 failed (53%). Among these failures 129 (82%) were lost to predation. By placing temperature loggers in nests during incubation, we discovered that 41% of nests were lost during the hours of daylight. From this, we assume the nest was raided by day-active as opposed to nocturnal predators (fox, badger). Day-active predators include the corvids. We also calculate crow densities in the valley and have found a powerful negative correlation between daily survival rates of lapwing and carrion crow density. At crow densities of 0.1 per hectare, daily lapwing survival rates were 85-90%. At crow densities of 0.55 per ha, survival rates were 55%. This work is ongoing and not yet published.

#### **Curlew breeding success in relation to grouse moor proximity: estimating abundance and breeding success using behavioural data**

##### Interim summary report

This summary paper outlines the potential fate of one of the UK's most threatened bird species if corvids are not legally controlled.

The breeding population of Eurasian curlew (hereafter 'curlew') is declining across almost all its range, with estimates suggesting a 20 to 30% decline in the last 15 years. For this reason, the IUCN classifies curlew as 'Globally Near Threatened' on its Red List of Threatened Species. The UK population represents about a quarter of the global breeding population, but here it is estimated that the breeding population halved in the last 25 years. Accordingly, it is considered the bird of greatest conservation concern, with high UK decline rates having a greater adverse impact on the global population than those of any other country.

Poor breeding success, often attributable to predation, typically by foxes, stoats, crows and gulls, is a mechanism for decline. In Europe over half of published studies quote less than the 0.5-0.6 fledglings per pair per year required to offset adult mortality and to maintain a stable population. Declines appear less in some upland parts of northern England and Scotland where driven grouse shooting is a major land use and both habitat, and generalist predators are managed. This link between grouse moor management and sustained numbers of breeding curlew was established by the GWCT's Upland Predation Experiment at Otterburn in northern England (2000-08) (see above). Here predator control

led to a three-fold increase in the breeding success of curlew and other waders and annual increases in breeding numbers.

It is evident that managers of driven grouse moors have a pivotal role in conserving curlew in the UK and hence globally, but this link, whilst weakly acknowledged by the RSPB and statutory conservation bodies, is also massively played down by them. To that end, in 2016 the GWCT started a three-year project to quantify curlew breeding success on or adjacent to a range of kept and non-kept moorland edges to determine whether results from the Otterburn experiment were representative of those from wider moorland in the UK.

Study sites were paired, with one site on the fringes of moorland managed for driven red grouse shooting, and thereby receiving active predator management, the other on equivalent habitat type without adjacent grouse shooting and keeping. 18 paired sites were selected across most upland regions in the UK, including North Wales (Berwyn), northern England (Bowland, Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, North York Moors and Northumberland), the Scottish Borders (Lammemuirs, Southern Uplands) and the Scottish Highlands (Perthshire, Strathspey and Morayshire). Pairs of sites were each surveyed in one breeding season during the three-year period (2016-18). Sites were sufficiently large (approx. 1.5-4.0 km<sup>2</sup>) to yield a breeding success estimate based on at least 10 pairs of curlews.

To produce estimates of the number of breeding pairs of curlew and their breeding success, each site was surveyed five times spread between mid-April and early July. Curlew were classed as having chicks if they alarm called vociferously and persistently. Conversely, adults lacking such behaviour and readily flying off when disturbed were classed as not having chicks. These parameters were also recorded for other waders, mainly golden plover and lapwing, but also redshank, snipe, oystercatcher, ringed plover and greenshank.

On unkept plots, curlew pairs were approximately half as numerous on kept plots. Expression of aggressive behaviour by adult breeding curlew and the time period in weeks over which this behaviour was exhibited suggest that the proportion of curlew pairs fledging one or more chicks was almost four times higher on grouse moor fringes (0.67) than away from grouse moor fringes (0.17). This difference was consistent between regions and years and, of the 18 paired sites, breeding success was higher amongst the kept sites at 17 of the pairs of sites and similar to the unkept site at only one of the pairs. At no pair of sites was breeding success higher where predators were not managed. Assuming curlew need to rear an average of 0.6 chicks per pair to off-set adult mortality and maintain stable numbers, then this was achieved at a minimum of 14 of the 18 (78%) kept sites, but at none of the 18 unkept sites. These rates assume that only one chick was reared per pair, but curlew can successfully rear up to four chicks, and these provisional rates will be corrected upwards using estimates of brood size at fledging during final analyses.

By looking at curlew behaviour in relation to the timing of each of the five surveys at each site, the data suggest that greatest losses occur during incubation and that an index of carrion crow abundance was negatively associated with breeding success. This suggests that clutch predation by carrion crows could be the primary cause of poor breeding, especially at sites where corvids are not routinely controlled. Breeding success may also vary between habitat types, but provisional analyses suggest that whilst sites overall differed in habitat, those within each pair of sites did not. Hence, differences in curlew breeding success in relation to corvid abundance were consistent across habitats and regions of the UK. Final analyses will include patterns of abundance and breeding success of the other wader species. To date, these reflect those of curlew, with higher numbers and better breeding success on sites where predators are managed by gamekeepers.

These results closely support those from the ten-year experiment at Otterburn, suggesting that those findings are representative of what is happening across the wider UK uplands. It is now 11 years since the Otterburn study was completed. Since then, the Ministry of Defence's Training Area at Otterburn has received no systematic predator control. Re-surveys of ground-nesting birds began last spring and predictably showed not only markedly fewer curlew, golden plover and lapwing – all species that flourished on the kept plots during the experiment – but the local extinction of black grouse and grey partridge. Surveys are being completed this spring and results will be reported this autumn.

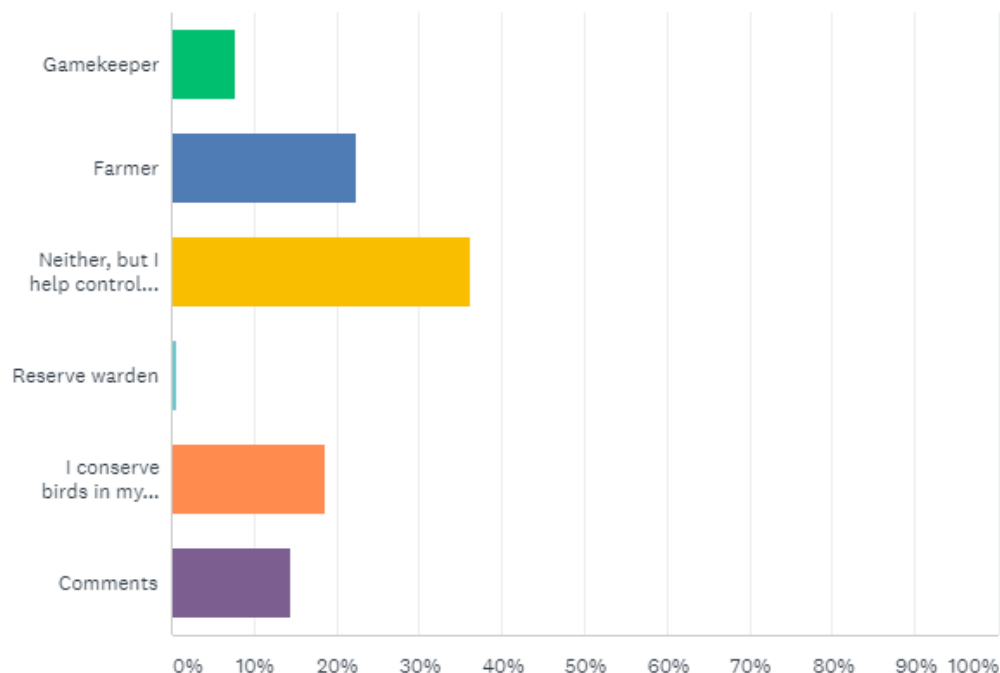


In conclusion, expanding predator management, particularly of corvids, currently done routinely on grouse moors, to peripheral unkept areas is a practical step that could quickly help stem the current rapid decline of curlew, other waders and ground-nesting birds in general in the uplands and marginal farmlands of the UK. This should be included as a funded component of agri-environment schemes where there are qualifying numbers of ground-nesting birds.

## 2. Outcomes from the GWCT Welsh Survey conducted over Christmas 2020

Which of these best describes you?

Answered: 166 Skipped: 141



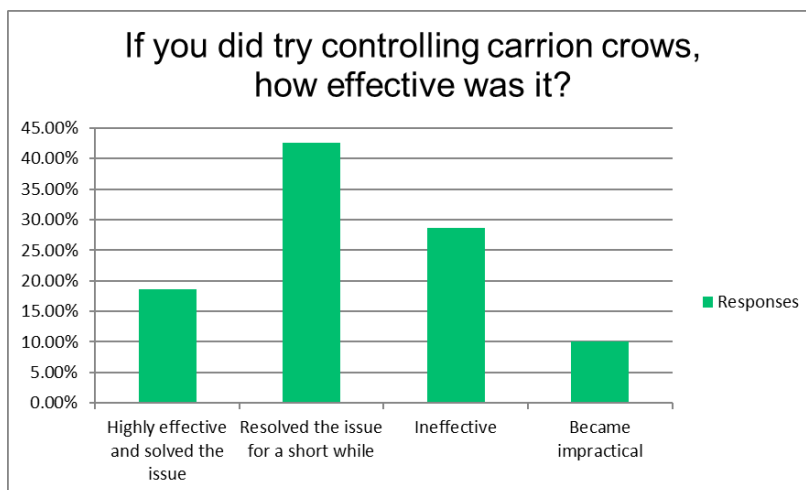
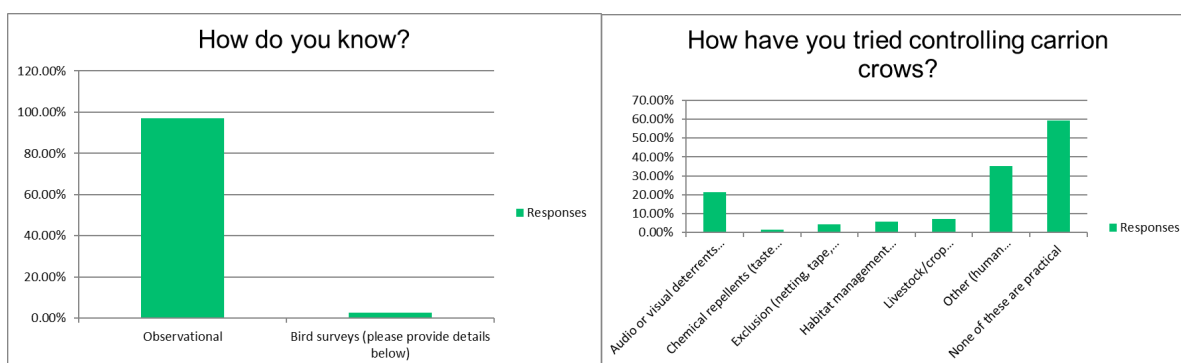
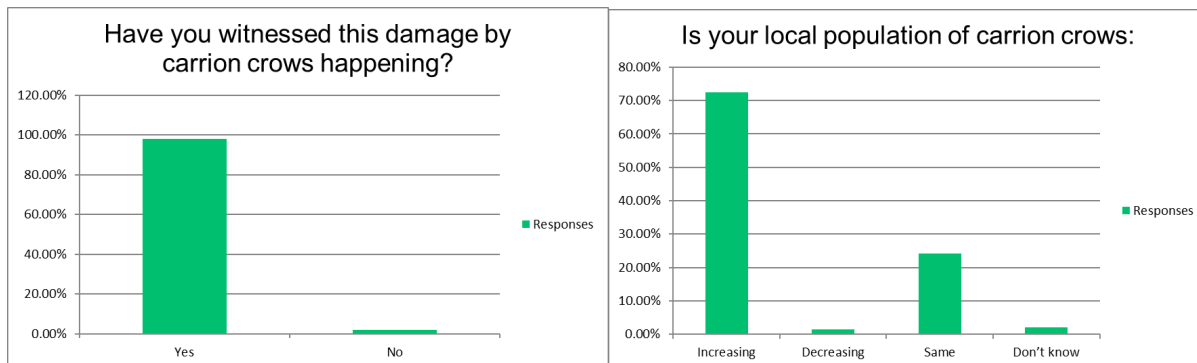
### Wales GL survey species summary

Species	Number of respondents controlling this species	Proportion of respondents	Reason for control			
			Conservation	Agriculture	Public health	Other
Carrion crow	145	47%	50%	82%	6%	0%
Magpie	171	56%	93%	28%	8%	1%
Rook	37	12%	19%	95%	16%	3%
Jay	32	10%	94%	6%	0%	6%
Jackdaw	54	18%	44%	72%	39%	6%
Woodpigeon	94	31%	1%	99%	5%	0%
Feral pigeon	27	9%	4%	93%	70%	0%
Collared dove	5	2%	20%	80%	60%	0%
Canada goose	21	7%	33%	67%	38%	5%
Egyptian goose	2	0.7%	0%	50%	50%	0%

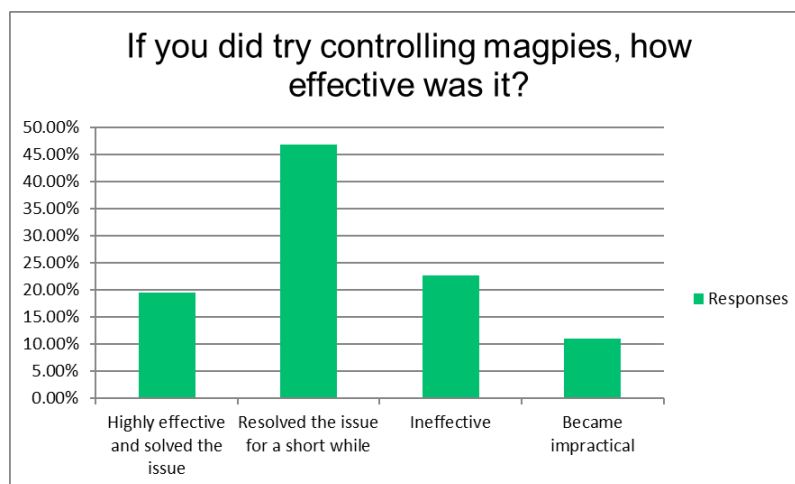
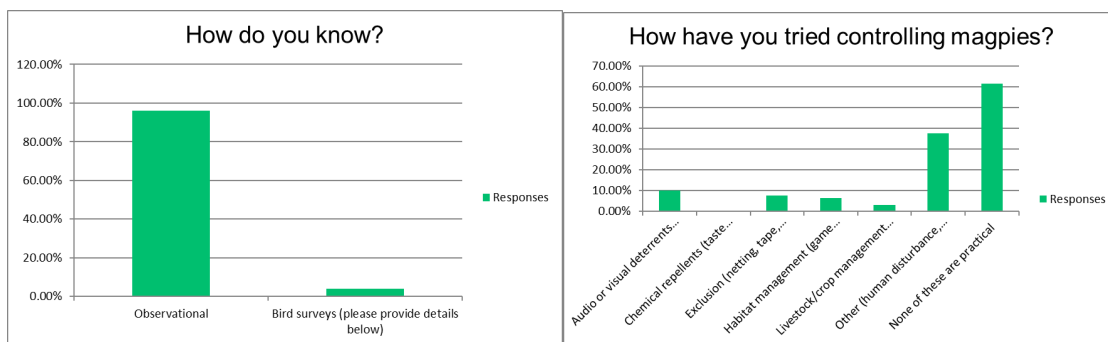
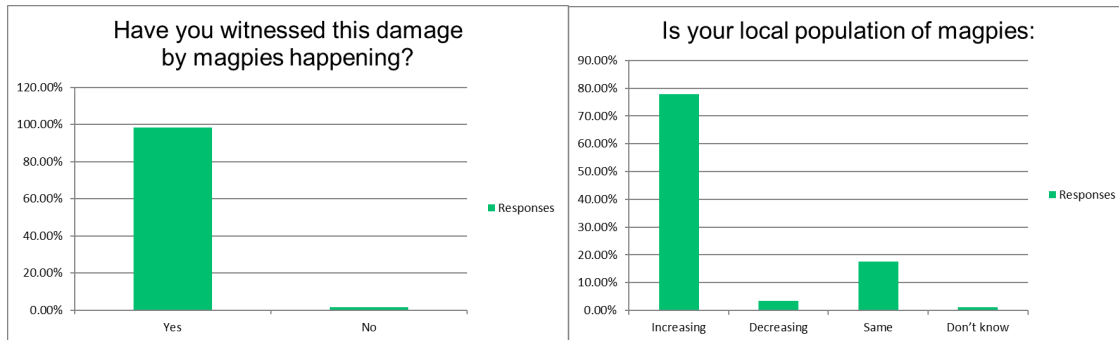
Many respondents reported several reasons for controlling a given species, for example that crows both take the eggs of threatened birds as well as attacking lambs, and we therefore record that they perform control for both conservation and agricultural purposes.

Of the people who reported having witnessed and taken part in each species control please see their answers on the following boat:

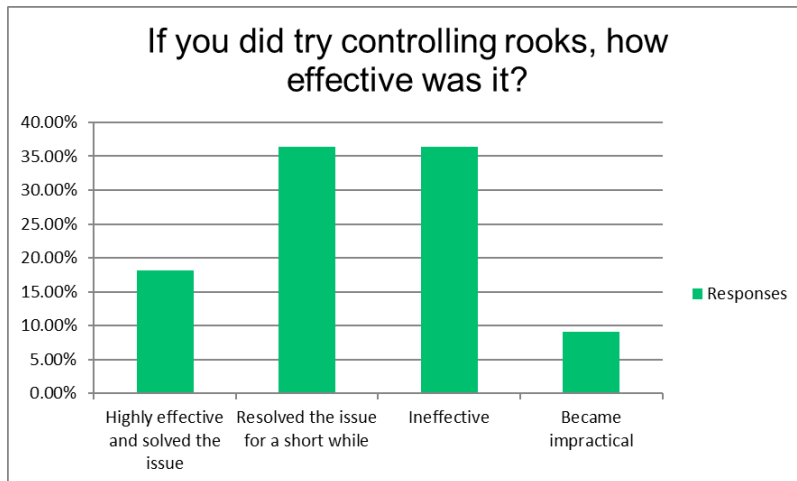
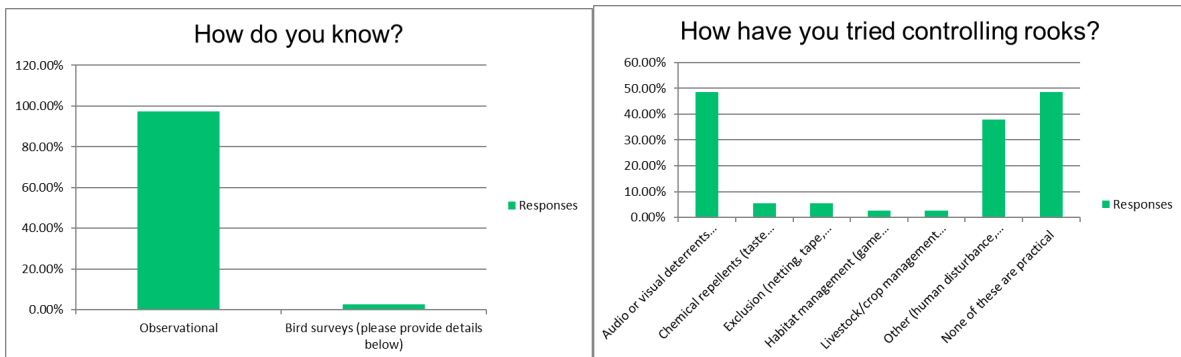
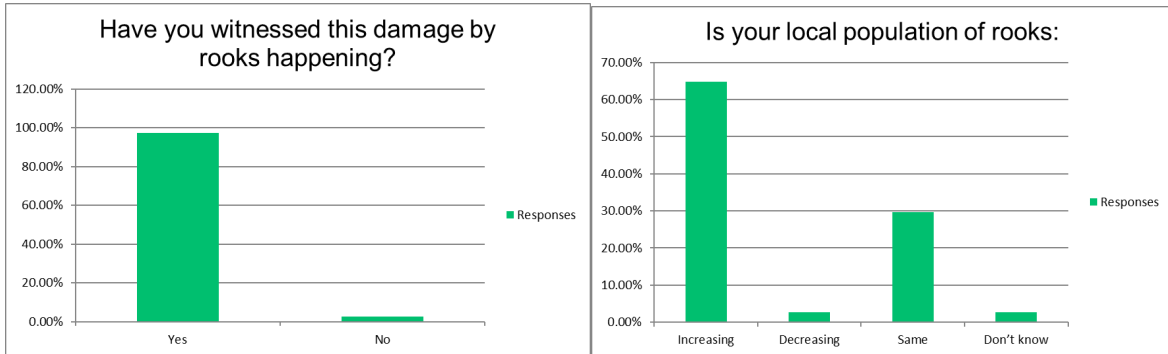
# Carrion Crow



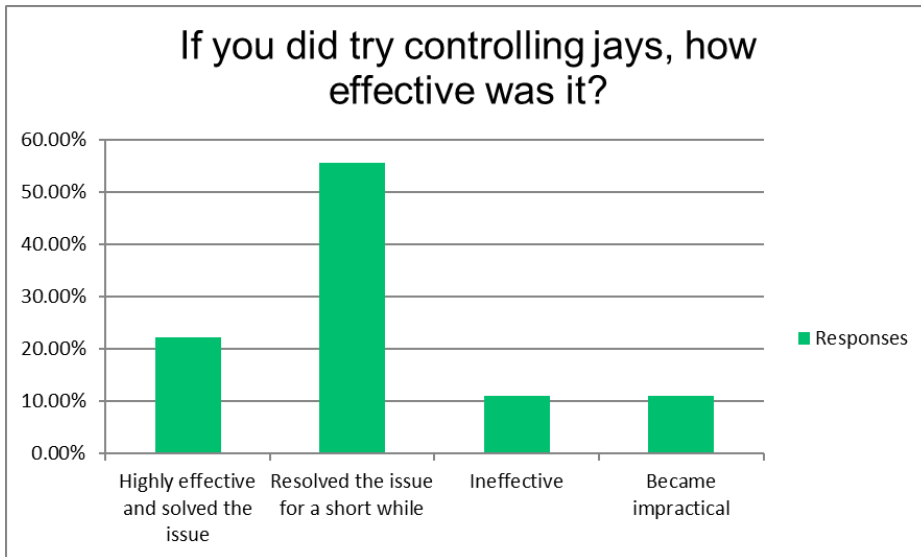
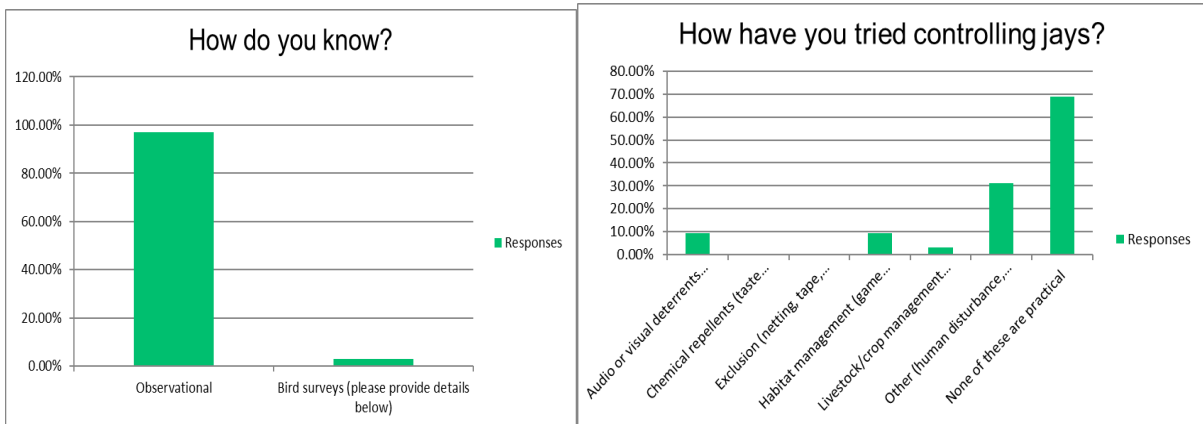
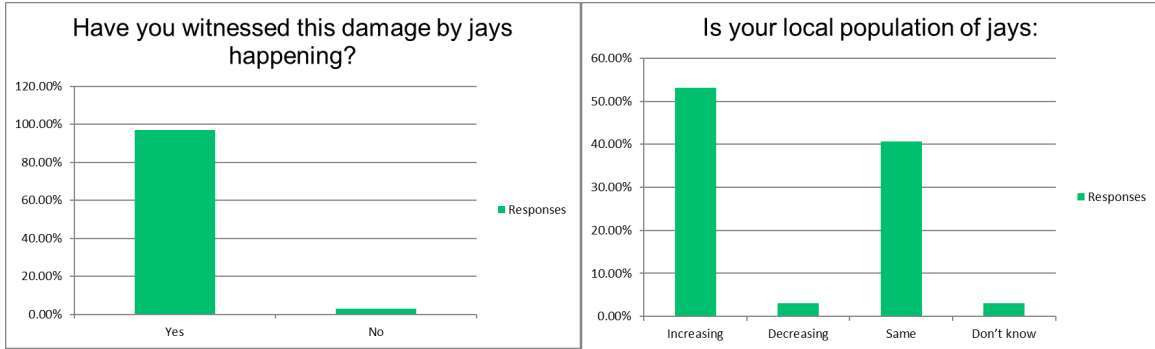
# Magpie



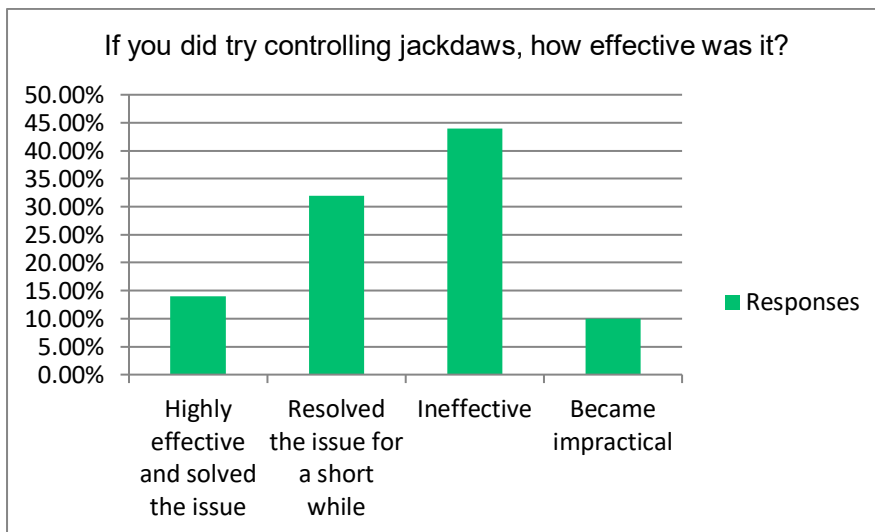
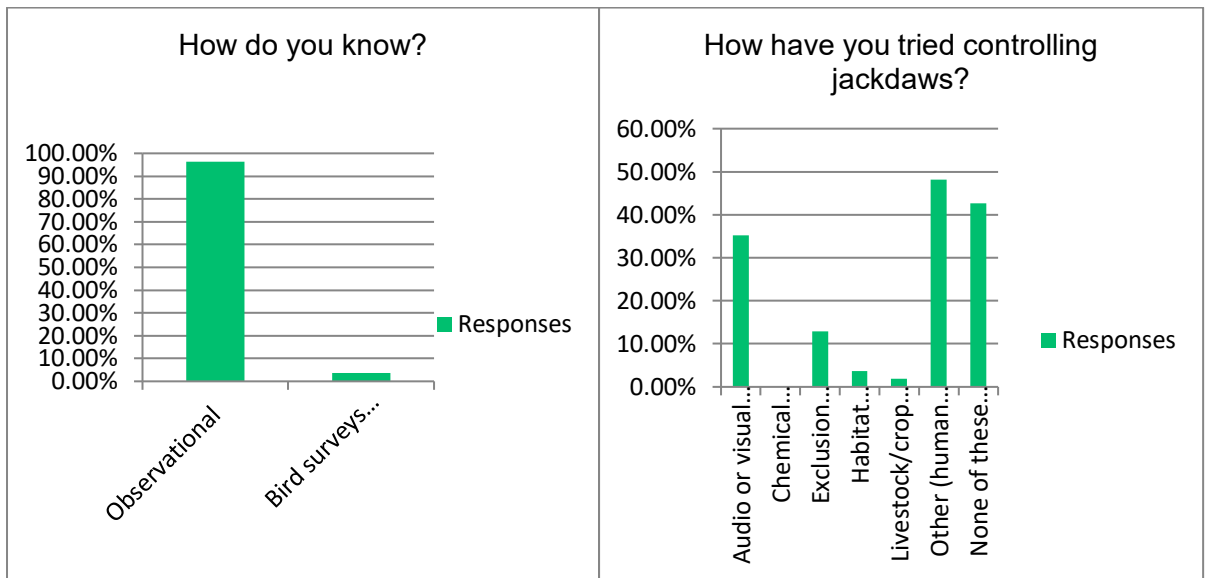
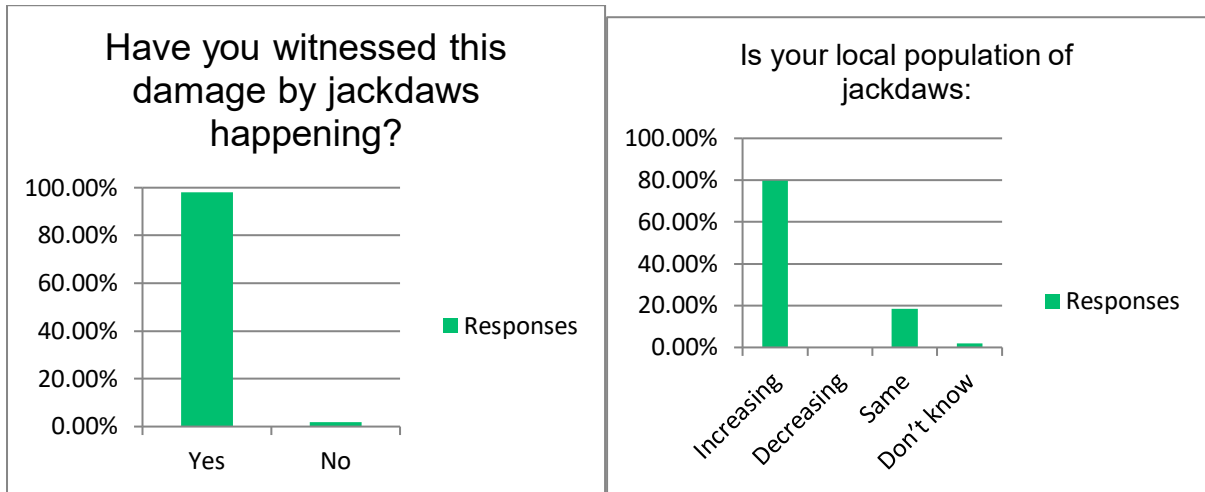
# Rook



# Jay

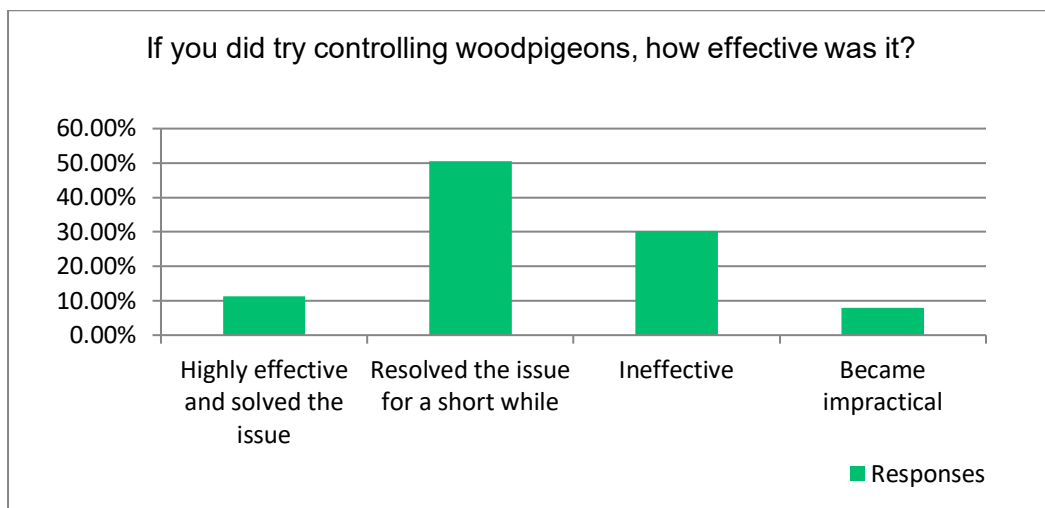
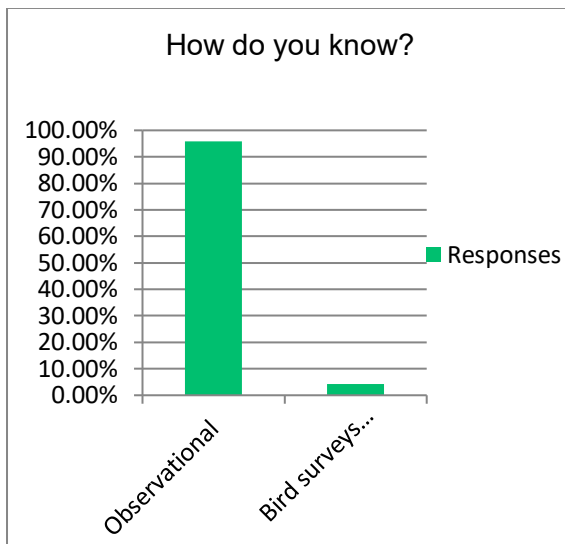
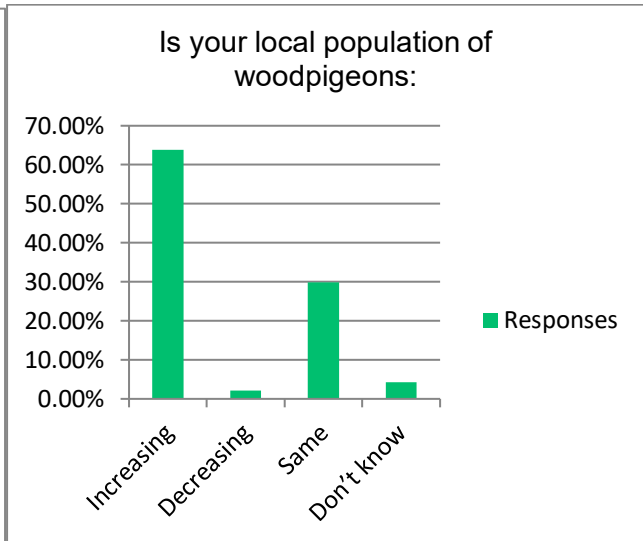
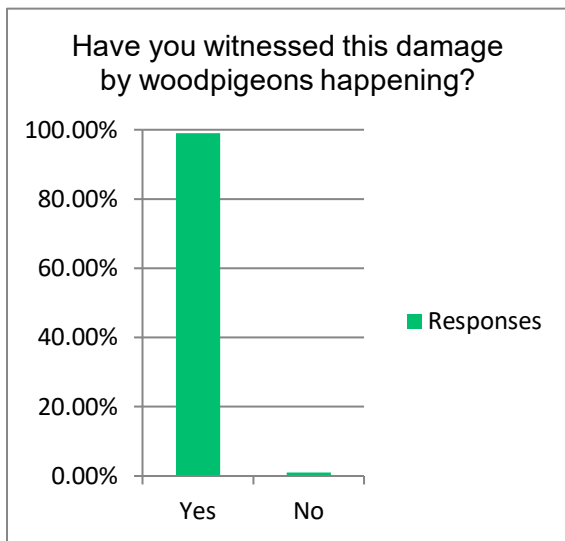


# Jackdaws

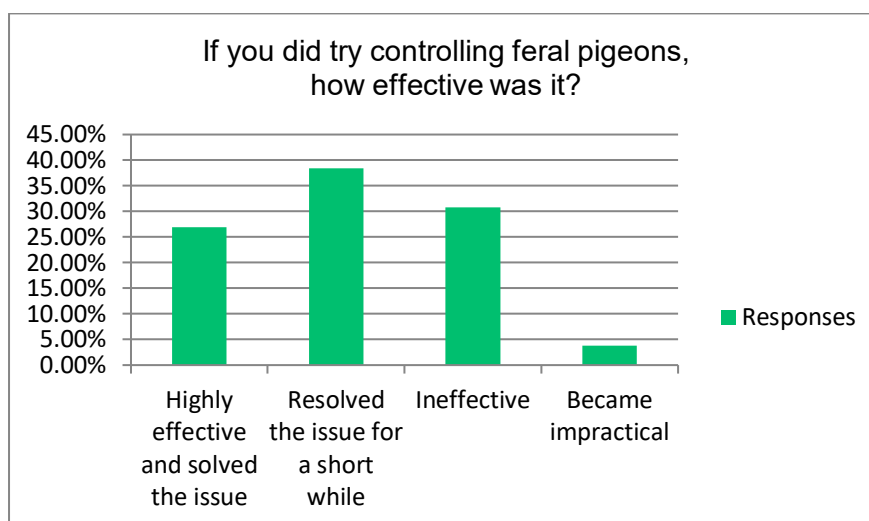
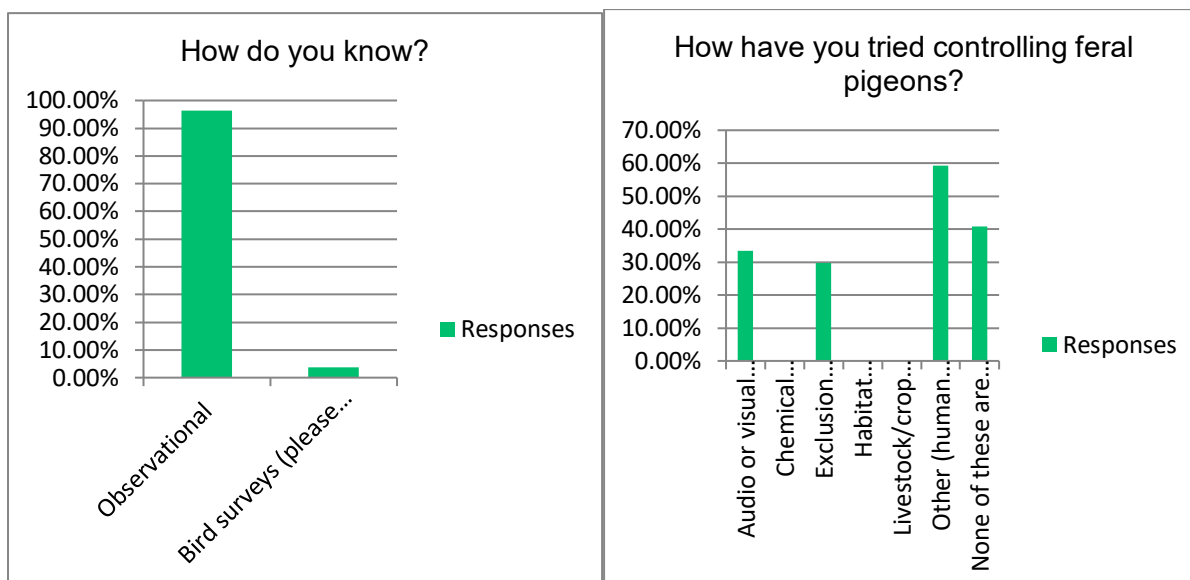
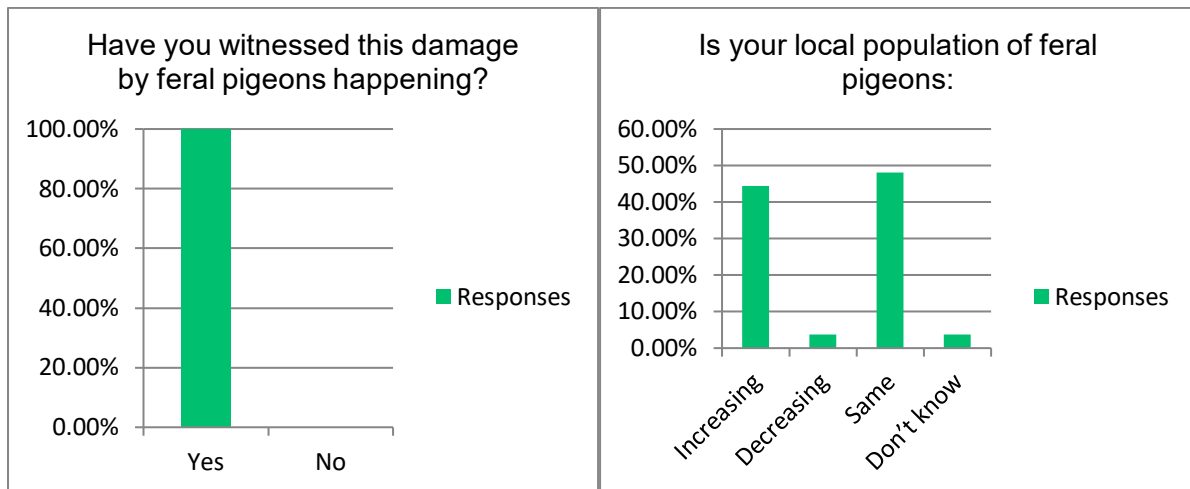




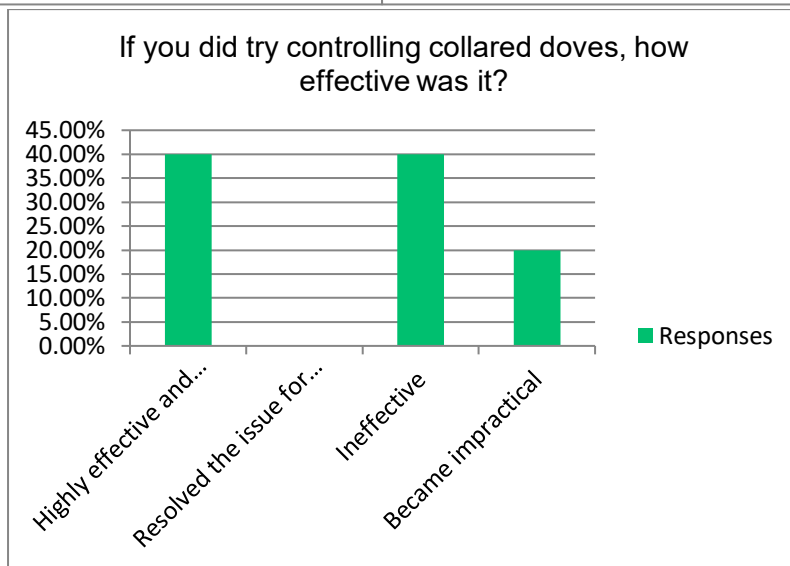
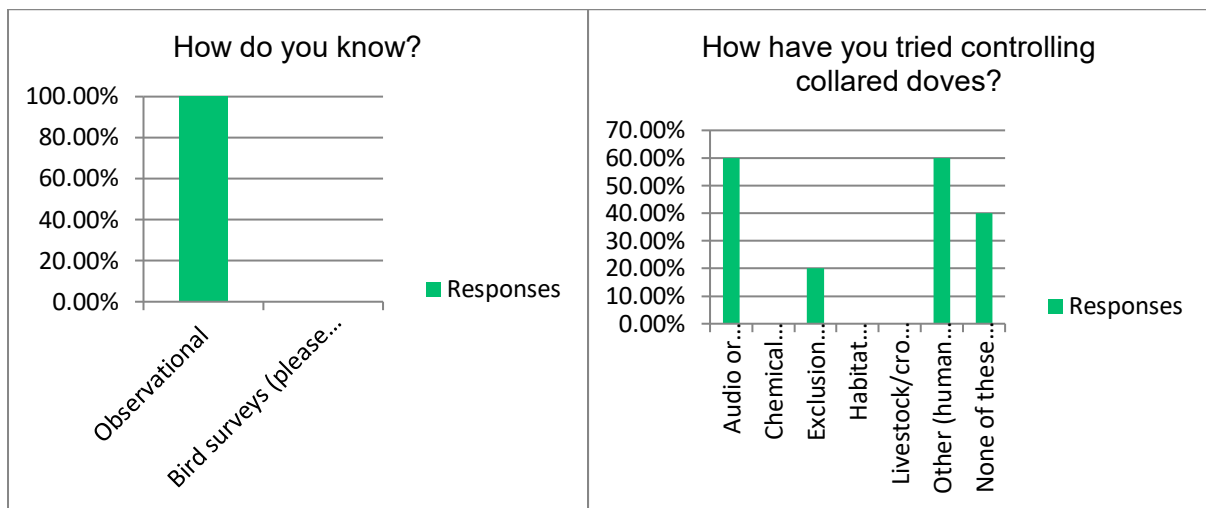
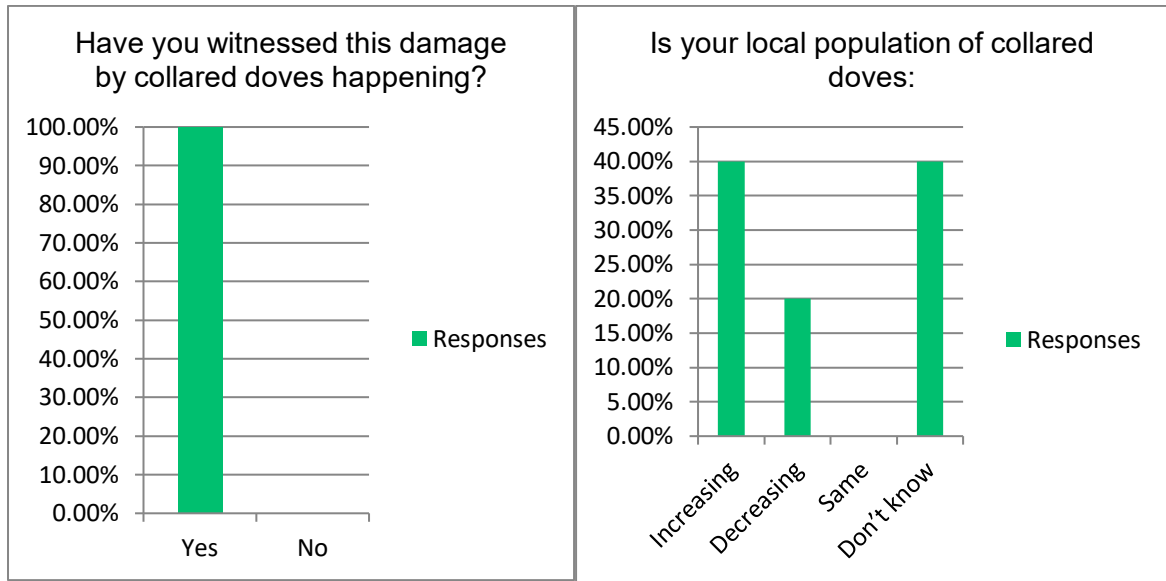
# Woodpigeons



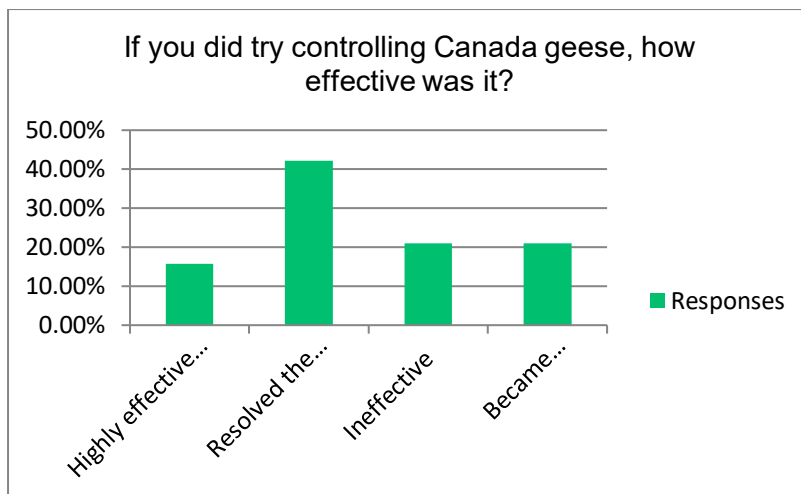
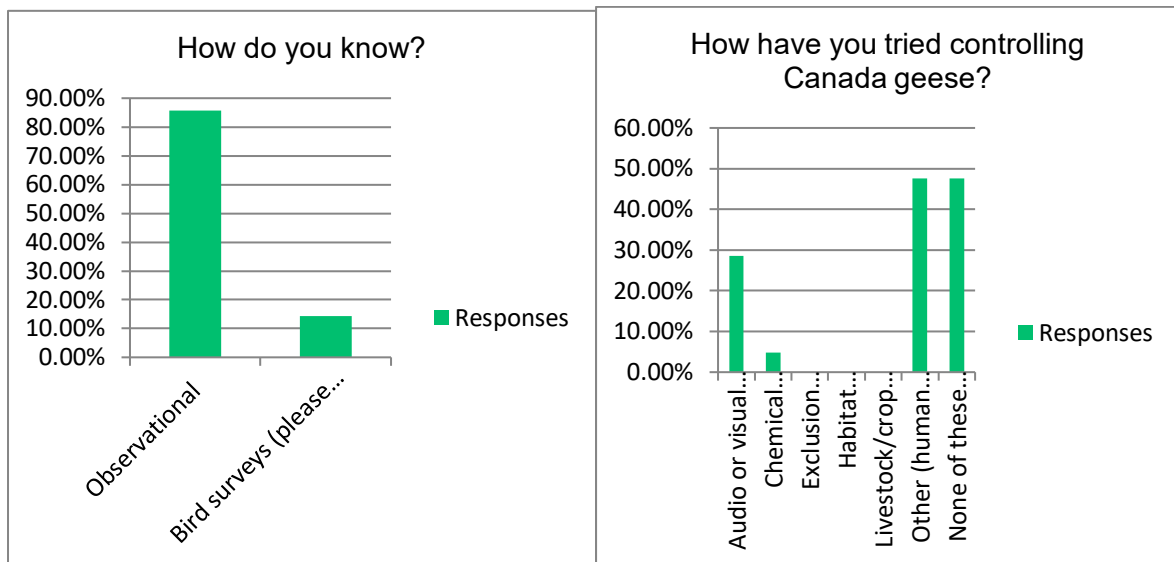
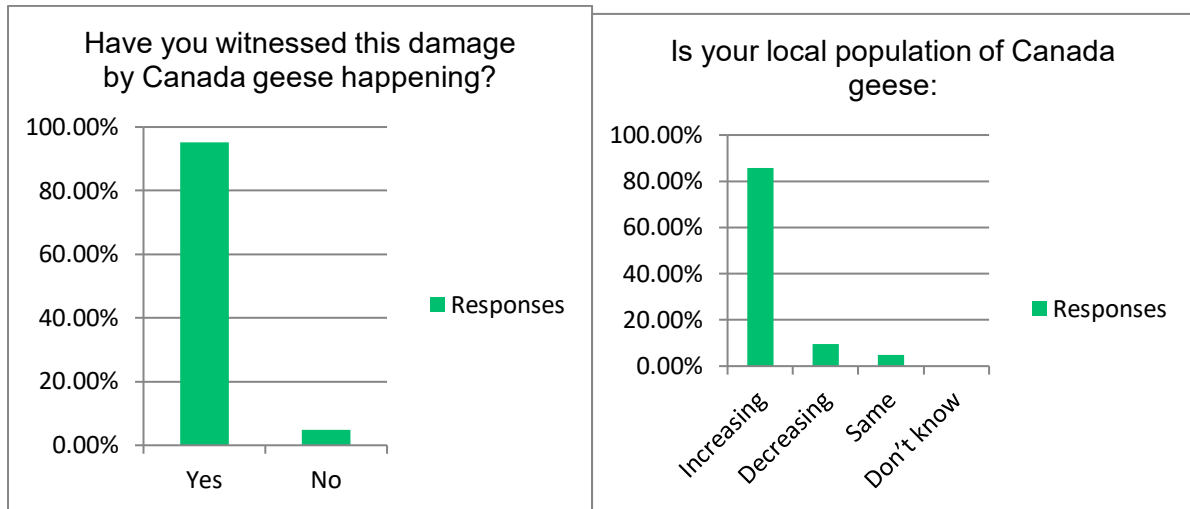
# Feral pigeons



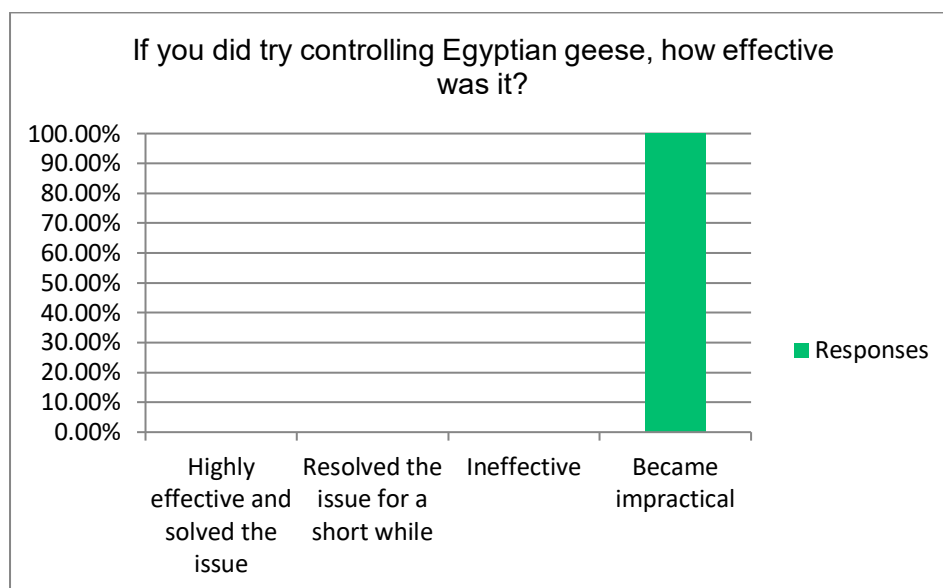
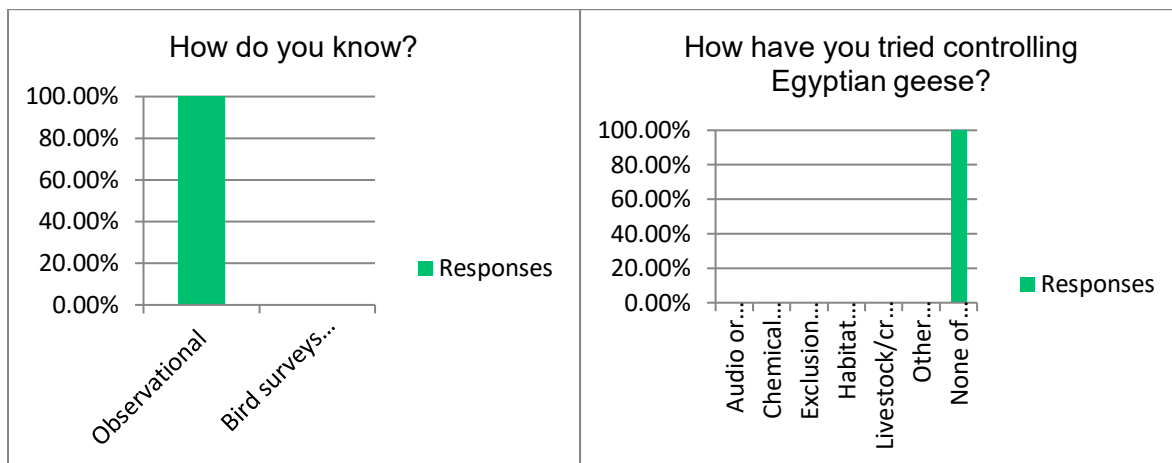
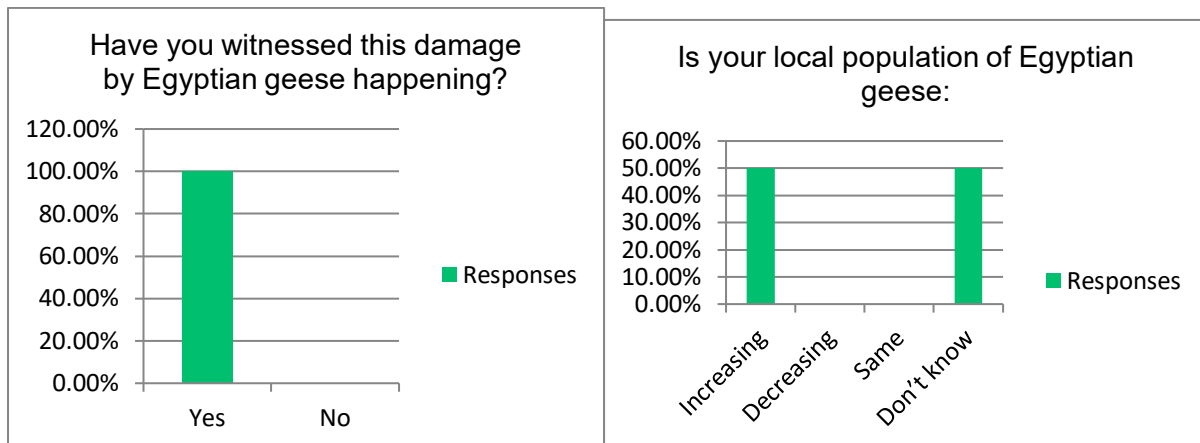
# Collared Doves



# Canada Geese



# Egyptian Geese



## 2b - What we asked in our Welsh survey

### Your details:

Your name  
Email address  
County

### Please select a species:

Carrion Crow  
Magpie  
Rook  
Jay  
Jackdaw  
Woodpigeon  
Feral Pigeon  
Canada Goose  
Egyptian Goose  
Other predatory species not on this list (including birds of prey)

*The following questions were asked for each species selected in the question directly above:*

What damage is being done by *\*species name\**? Please be specific.

Have you witnessed this damage by *\*species name\** happening?

Yes  
No

If you have not witnessed it, why do you feel this control is important?

Is your local population of *\*species name\**:

Increasing  
Decreasing  
Same  
Don't know

How do you know?

Observational  
Bird surveys (please provide details below)  
How have you tried controlling *\*species name\**?  
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)  
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)  
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)  
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)  
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)  
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)  
None of these are practical

If you did try controlling *\*species name\**, how effective was it?

Highly effective and solved the issue  
Resolved the issue for a short while  
Ineffective  
Became impractical

How many **\*species name\*** do you kill on your farm, shoot or estate in an average year?

Are there any other bird species you control? ('Yes' returns you to the species list, 'No' takes you to the next part of the survey)

Yes  
No

*Everybody was asked the following questions:*

Approximately how many of the following nests do you have on your farm, shoot or estate?

Lapwing  
Curlew  
Stone Curlew  
Turtle Dove  
Grey Partridge  
Red Grouse

Do you have approximate nest counts of other species? If so, please list species and number of nests:

Based on your previous experience, what percentage of these nests would be lost if you could no longer control pest birds?

Lapwing  
Curlew  
Stone Curlew  
Turtle Dove  
Grey Partridge  
Red Grouse  
Others (please enter species and percentage)

If next year's licences required you to keep detailed records for inspection by the police (or licensing authority) which included: date, time, location, method and why each bird was killed – which of these would you most strongly feel?

Fine with me because I record this already  
I could easily keep these records  
I would do if it was compulsory, although I think it's unnecessary  
The police have better things to do, I wouldn't bother keeping records  
I would reduce or limit the amount of control I did in order to keep these records  
Too much bureaucracy, I would stop control

Which of these best describes you?

Gamekeeper  
Farmer  
Neither, but I help control birds on a farm or shoot  
Reserve warden  
I conserve birds in my garden (or land) by controlling others  
Other

How many days do you spend controlling birds by shooting a year?

How many traps do you use?

Larsen  
Larsen mate type  
Crow letterbox/multi-catch type  
Additional details

What is the approximate size of the shoot, farm, reserve or estate (in acres)?

Do you control birds within an SSSI or Special Protection Area (SPA)?

Yes

No

Not sure

Is there anything else you would like to tell us or NRW?



## **2c. Individuals responses from our Welsh survey in their own words which includes information on the type of control used as well as the damage cause by these species which has been witnessed**

### **Carrion crow**

#### **What damage is being done by carrion crows? Please be specific.**

*I control carrion crows by trapping and shooting both along the coast, where declining waders nest in spring and summer - ringed plover and oystercatchers - as well as inland where carrion crows pose a threat to other ground-nesting birds such as skylark and snipe. I also control carrion crows as they represent a year-round threat to sheep as well as being particularly destructive during lambing time in spring.*

*I control carrion crows to protect declining species of waders on and around the coastal area where I live. Carrion crows are also an ever present danger to both lambs in the spring time as well as adult sheep throughout the year.*

*When I've grown beans or maize have had crows going down the lines pulling out crop.*

*when there are more crows than there is carrion to feed them they regularly predate on lambs and ewes which are in trouble ie. difficult birth prolapse etc. Crows also predate on birds nests. for many years i have succesfully used larson traps in the spring to control numbers*

*"Damage to freshly planted brassica plants, cauliflower, cabbages. The birds pulled the freshly planted plants out of the ground to look for food, resulting in total plant loss.*

*Food producer planted 8.5 acres of cauliflower on a Thursday and by the Sunday they had stripped the whole field.*

*Farmer estimates the loss/cost to him at over £10,000. Bangers, kites and similar items are used but to little effect. The staff drive around to try and keep them off as well. Shooting has to be utilized to reinforce the other methods employed*

*They attack the newborn lambs born in the field.*

*"PECKING YOUNG LAMBS TONGUES OUT AS THEY ARE BEING BORN .TAKING EGGS AND CHICKS OF LAPWING"*

*Damage caused to ewes & lambs.*

*I control crows for the protect of wild birds, livestock, small mammals (leverts) and crops. I control these birds by shooting and trapping.*

*We control carrion crows because they attack sheep*

*"Predation on sick ewes and lambs"*

*I control Crows by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and blackbird"*

*I control corvid species to protect all hedgerow and ground nesting birds.*

"I control Crows because of damage to small nesting and ground nesting birds by taking eggs and young.

I also assist local farmers who suffer losses particularly at lambing time when crows peck the eyes out of new born and young lambs and also attack their rear end pulling out their intestines etc causing death. Calves and all species of farmed and wild deer are also attacked in this way."

"I have witnessed attacks on livestock, both newly born lambs as well as older sheep.

**I have witnessed predation of birds eggs more often with ground nesting birds. Specifically Mallard eggs, but also on occasion Curlew and Red grouse. Also predation of chicks, again Mallard chicks, but also Snipe.**

In my opinion Shooting and trapping of Carrion crows should be common place and actively encouraged amongst the farming, conservation and game management fraternity's "

Killing of songbirds, killing of lambs and pecking of eyes of lambs. Control of Carrion Crows by shooting

"Damage to Lambs when having difficult births. Removal of eyes and tongs wen still alive.

**Raiding the nests of many bird species but mainly concerned with ground nesting birds. Have seen 20 crows sitting on fence posts near to curlew nest waiting for a chance to get the eggs have photo of crow approaching nest. No egg shells found in abandoned nest strongly suggests crows"**

**I control crows to protect curlew nests in an area of north wales. Although current GE allows that to happen when nesting is occurring, it doesn't allow pre-emptive reduction in numbers of crows prior to nesting starting. This leaves is in a position where we simply do not have the time or manpower to effectively 'constantly patrol' the area to remove crows only when they are already stealing eggs/chicks.**

"Protection of song bird nests

Crop control damage

Protection of ewes at lambing time

Controlled by both trapping and shooting

crop damage

predation on songbird nests and chicks

Decimating silage stores by making holes in silage clamps & wrapped silage bales. Getting into animal feed storage areas & feeding areas contaminating feed, bedding & water supply with droppings. Pecking at newly born lambs or even lambs being born. Killing the young of wild birds.

Nest and chick predation of song birds and game birds

I nurture one of the last remaining Lapwing breeding colonies in Wales . The list of predators that eat them is long . Wales has a legal duty under the Rio Convention to protect endangered species .

Damage to young crops and livestock

*I control carrion crows by shooting to protect hedge and ground nesting birds , farm livestock i.e newborn lambs and silage bales from damage also for crop protection*

*Eating the eyes and tongues of new born lambs*

*Predation of song birds Nests and chicks and predation of lambs*

*damage to lambs*

***Nest predation - we have (had) good numbers of Grey Partridge but every year our count goes down. The land is on the shore and Curlew used to be common here but Curlew numbers have plummeted year on year; the few birds we see are fighting a losing battle as every year their nests are predated - if Crows don't find the eggs they take out the chicks.***

***Lambing time is a nightmare as when Ewes are birthing Crows peck at their rear ends ripping them apart and peck out the eyes and tongues of the lambs. We try to keep on top of Fly strike but I have seen several Ewes laying on their backs with their eyes pecked out. We use ladder and Larsen traps along with shooting to try to keep their numbers at a balanced level; the majority of the shooting is undertaken by volunteers over crops as the Crows damage/eat the maize and wheat and these mostly local volunteers do this willingly as they understand the problems of uncontrolled Corvid numbers and their impact on the songbird numbers here***

*I control Carrion crows by shooting to protect new born lambs and sheep in labor.*

*I control crows by trapping and shooting to protect young lambs and crops from damage and death .*

*Killing lambs, stealing and defecating on cattle and sheep feed. destroying standing corn crops*

*stealing hens eggs*

*Damage to nests and predation on chicks of song birds and other species.*

*Control carrion crows by trapping and shooting to prevent the killing of lambs and ewes by packing their eyes and tongues out.*

*Song birds and livestock in equal measure*

*Control crows for the same reason as magpies, to protect small vulnerable species and also to protect during lambing season.*

*Carrion crows need to be controlled they damage sheep production. They peck the eyes out and this can cause a loss of lamb or sheep.*

*Carrion crows need to be controlled to protect song birds from predation especially during the nesting season when chicks and eggs are particularly vulnerable to predation.*

*Attacking sheep and new born lamb.*

*To protect new born lambs, as well as hedgerow and ground nesting birds, and crop damage.*

*Predation Carrion crows will attack and kill young lambs. Also will destroy smaller birds nests.*

*I control carrion crows by shooting to protect livestock (specifically lambs) and ground nesting birds(specifically snipe) and to generally protect game birds and wild bird species from predation by carrion*

crows

Attacking new born lambs and incapacitated ewes.

carrion crows eat the tongues of new born lambs which then die

predation of songbirds their Nests and chicks

they peck out the eyes of weakly lambs

being a full time keeper I shoot and trap carrion crows to protect livestock and nesting birds in general

I control predators on several local farms. Carrion crows cause two types of problem. They consume feed meant for livestock and contaminate it. Where lambs are born outside they will attack the lamb as the ewe is giving birth especially if it is a prolonged birth. They generally peck the eyes and it is not unusual to have the odd pet lamb on farms that have survived but are partially blind.

1. Can kill or injure Lambs and adult sheep, especially at lambing time.
2. Often eat eggs & chicks of all species of birds and waterfowl.
3. Damage crops."

I control crows to help prevent them from damaging livestock.

Protect livestock

I control carrion crows by shooting as we lamb outside and during lambing it almost a daily occurrence to see them taking eyes, tongues and ripping their backside from lambs and ewes during birth and after

Damage to livestock (young lambs) crops, song birds (taking eggs and attacking young).

I trap and shoot carrion crows to protect a range of nesting migratory and local garden birds including wild duck on my lake

**In my case this is for protection of lambs and sheep and also curlews, whose nests I have seen robbed of eggs.** They are also a problem when farmers have to feed animals in the field, because they quickly learn to steal the feed before stock can get it.

Attacks on new lambs are nothing out of the ordinary, but I've known even full-grown ewes to be attacked when stuck on their backs."

I trap and shoot them to protect newborn Lambs, ground nesting birds such as Curlew and predation of Leverts

The crows steal eggs from chicken run and kill chicks

Animal ( new born lambs) and ewes to stop eyes being pecked and for crop protection.

take eyes and tongue out of ewes if down when lambing or take tongues out of lambs when born

they predate songbirds chicks and will peck the eyes out of newborn lambs

Taking Eggs and chicks

Pecking out lambs eyes and sheep

*They peck the eyes out of new born lambs and will attack a ewe if she can't get up. They also take eggs and chicks of ground nesting and song birds. The whole crow family are voracious predators.*

*Attacks to the nests of ground nesting birds including Grey Partridge, Lapwings and Curlew.*

*Lamb attack (remove eyes and tongue) and predation of ground nesting birds curlew, lapwing, red and black grouse.*

*Crows prey on newborn lambs and ewes while lambing or on their backs.*

*eating songbirds stealing eggs*

*Pecking ewes eyes and killing new born lambs*

*New born/young lambs are being attacked and their eyes/tongues pecked out. Also, Ewe's that have cast (rolled on their sides) and can't get up have been targeted and have their eyes/ mouths, and body pecked, which kills them.*

*"Large lambing area lots, of issue with lambs being attacked at birth, lots of lapwings are getting nests robbed, chicks killed, also I release grey partridge to re establish, in other words they are not shot for sport, lots of issues with chicks being taken I have even witnessed them trying to kill a baby hedgehog, So for me it's wildlife protection in general "*

*I shoot Carrion crows to protect my new born lambs from having there eyes pecked out*

*Pecking eyes out of lambs at lambing time and just a pest*

*Attacking lambs*

*Crop damage, livestock damage, damage to foodstuffs /cattle feed etc*

*The crows are defaecating in animal feed , predated on the birds and scaring birds from nesting.*

*The pulling out of young shoots on crops and the pecking out of lambs eyes*

*To protect live stock ( sheep) the protection of wild birds for conservation of waders and ground nesting birds. The methods used are shooting and trapping.*

*Making holes in the plastic wrapping on the big round bales of hay and so spoiling the hay.*

*Carrion crows predate the eggs and chicks of red listed birds in our estate. I control them by trapping and shooting*

*I control carrion crows by shooting on farmland to protect the songbird population and also my lambs*

*I control carrion crows by trapping and shooting for the same reason I have given for magpies but also for crop protection*

*Attacking my rare breed chicken poults also taking eggs. They also destroy birds nests ,taking eggs & chicks*

*Pecking the eyes of ewes when they get on their backs, and pecking young lambs when they are born*

*Serious amounts of damage during lambing time and persistent amount of damage to the song bird*

population.

*Pulling up freshly sprouting corn*

*Mutilation of ewes in labour and newborn lambs*

*The crows are killing ewes that get stuck on backs by pecking out their eyes and tongues, and pick at young lambs till death*

*They peck ewes rear ends and lambs tongues when giving birth.*

*Damage the silage and attack the new born lambs*

*Carrion crows regularly attack ewes and young lambs, blinding, pecking out thier eyes and tongues.*

*There are many lambs born on the farm where I shoot and given half a chance they will have there eyes out.*

- *killing new born lambs, lambed in the field.*
- *pecking the eyes out of lambs, ewes and tups.*
- *pecking the soft belly of lambs, to get to the intestines.*
- *pecking the lambs arse hole and pulling out its intestines."*

*Wreck crops, eat eggs and chicks from nesting ground birds, eats sheep/lambs eyes*

*I shoot carrion crows to stop the damage and death outdoor born lambs, songbird nest raiding and other egg predation.*

*Protection of livestock is a huge part of rural living. The farming of animals (mainly sheep, but also cows) in Wales are impacted greatly by Corvids which take advantage of young or even newly born lambs/calves causing severe damage to eyes and tongues via pecking, whilst they are vulnerable and the mother is unable to protect them (often occurs during birth).*

***Corvids also impact greatly on song bird populations massively by killing hatchlings, and stealing eggs before they reach hatching stage.***

*I shoot crows, to protect livestock, to protect against disease and feaces in animal feed, and to protect song birds.*

*To protect farming livestock.*

*Damage to lambs and defecating in animal feeds*

*Attack live lambs*

*Pecking cast ewes eyes out. Killing and maiming young lambs*

*I control carrion crows because they take eggs and chicks of rare birds during breeding season.*

*Mutilating and killing new born lambs in spring time. Attacking ewes during lambing.*

*attacking young lambs and ewes which are stuck.*

*Danage to crops and small bird life.*

*I control Carrion Crows by shooting before and during lambing season to help reduce the damage done to livestock at this time.*

*Nest predation of ground nesting birds-notably Lapwings*

*Drilled crops and those ready before harvest Each bird stuffed it's crop full several times a day And nesting song birds*

*Damage to wheat barley and peas*

*Again killing of young birds and taking eggs at Spring time. A bigger problem is with eating newly planted crops.*

*they peck out the eyes and tongue of lambs which are slow being born, also peck out the eyes of ewes that for some reason (lambing, stuck on back) are down.*

*During lambing I have seen crows take the eyes out of new born lambs. The crows congregate around the lambing enclosure and as soon as the ewe gives birth to one lamb they prey on that first born as the ewe is struggling to birth the twin.*

*Pull lambs eyes and tongues out also pull the naval of new born lambs*

*I control carrion crows by trapping and shooting in farmland to protect the nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush etc, Also to protect lambs during the lambing season as carrion crows will pick their eyes out.*

*Nest predation of song and game birds.*

*I control Carrion Crow by shooting and trapping on farmland to protect hedgerow nesting birds/*

*I control crows on my farm as they will peck any soft flesh on sheep if they ever get stuck in a fence, stuck on there backs and will take the soft flesh of lambs being born*

*I control the crow population to protect wildlife in hedgerows and to stop them pecking eyes out ewes when they get stuck on there back*

*I shoot Carrion Crows to try to prevent the blinding of sheep diring lambing. They also take young mammals and songbirds sometimes decimating the already depleted numbers on the farms I am called upon to assist in avian predation control.*

*I control carrion crows to minimise their impact on newborn lambs.*

*I control crows to protect mainly ground nesting game ,to avoid pecking of lamb and ewe eyes in the lambing season, and other vulnerable species on the estate like lapwing and curlew*

*some crop damage. big impact on all nesting birds shooting/nest destruction is the only practical solution.*

*I control carrion crows for the way the peck out the youngest and eyes of new born lambs*

*Attacking lambs*

*Predation of wide range of bird eggs and chicks , predation of lambs*

*I control carrion crows to protect seedling crops and sheep and new born lamb*

*Control of corvids is very important for protecting such as new born lambs which are very susceptible to carrion crows in particular.*

*Same as magpies for predation of curlew nests and chicks.*

*Deadly at lambing & during waterfowl & songbird nesting seasons*

*Attacking sheep and lambs. We control them using falcons and radio controlled falcons. [www.rofalconry.com](http://www.rofalconry.com)*

*Destroying pasture looking for grubs and threat to my small flock of sheep especially at lambing time .I try to keep numbers down by shooting this not only protects my flock it protects nests of smaller birds as well ie thrush,blackbird , chaffinch .*

*Predation on ground nesting, and hedgerow nesting birds.*

*I control crows by trapping and shooting to protect crops including wheat, barley and oats*

*Crows attack ewes during lambing or if the ewes gets cast ,pecking their eyes out and the lambs eyes and tongs as they are being born also I have seen rectums pecked out.*

*Attacking lambs*

*Taking small and song birds*

*I need to control crows to prevent lambs ewes and even rams being attacked I control with an airgun*

*I shoot crows ,magpies ,jays and pigeons to protect crops and live stock*

*I have seen them attacking sheep and lambs. Any weak lambs are singled out and attacked. Any sheep that are on their backs lambing are pecked in the eyes.*

*Constant attacks on nesting and fledged lapwing chicks,and wildfowl nests and chicks.*

***I control carrion crows by shooting and trapping to protect moorland ground nesting birds including red grouse and indeed hen harriers. They also kill and injure lambs and ewes on the hill.***

*Carrion crows cause damage to nests and fledglings of ground and hedgerow nesting birds and eyes of lambs and sheep*

*To protect my lambs in Spring I shoot and use a Larsen trap.*

## **Magpies**

### **What damage is being done by magpies? Please be specific.**

*I control magpies by shooting and trapping on land which I manage for shooting in order to offer some protection to species of woodland and ground-nesting birds of which magpies are significant predators, particularly of eggs and nestlings.*

*I control magpies by shooting with an air rifle and trapping with a larsen trap. Magpies predate on chicks and torture adult birds. I have seen magpies attacking a blackbird, pecking out it's eyeballs, in my garden.*



*Have seen many small bird nest being raided by magpie*

*They steal the duck eggs.*

*NEST PREDATION OF VARIOUS SMALL SONGBIRDS ,DUNNOCK TREE SPARROW SONG THRUSH  
MISTLE THRUSH IN FACT ANY BIRD NEST THEY CAN FIND.PECKING OUT EYES AND GUTS OF CAST  
SHEEP*

*I control magpies for the devastating damage they inflict by predated on the nests of all garden/ hedgerow nesting birds.*

*I control magpies for the protection of wild birds, mammals (leverts) and live stock (free range chickens with chicks and eggs. I control these magpies by shooting and trapping.*

*I control Magpies because we have only a few wild grey partridge and the magpies predate the nests*

*I control magpies by trapping and shooting because they attack my sheep and newborn lambs. They take out eyes and tongues and attack rectums. I also know that they attack little birds and their nests. What is the point of me providing food for small birds if their nests/young are destroyed.*

*Raiding of nests of songbirds in field boundaries and poorly protected house sparrow nests in agricultural building.*

*Predation of 100% of eggs from ground and hedgerow nests. I witnessed the loss of 5 clutches last year alone, and filmed one.*

*Stealing eggs ( hens), attacking lambs and aged ewes, pecking eyes specifically. Decimating wild bird population , currently have gold crest, spotted flycatchers, blackcap, bull finches and many other species trying to nest around our farm. I currently shoot magpies each year but am having little impact on their population.*

*I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and blackbird*

*As before*

*The taking of all birds eggs and the young of song birds and game birds {pheasant and partridge}and other ground nesting birds*

*I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, blackbird etc., and pheasant & partridge chicks*

*Robbing small bird nests and killing the young. I use a Larsen Trap. They are raiding nests of small bird species such as song thrushes, mistle thrushes and hedge sparrows.*

*Predation of avian species, very similar to the Carrion crow. Will predate eggs as well as young chicks.*

*Will target tree nesting birds more than Carrion crows, therefore they have a detrimental effect on the songbird population. Particularly hedge nesting birds, such as Yellowhammers. I have witnessed Magpies raiding Yellowhammers best for eggs*

*I control magpies by shooting and trapping on farmland to protect hedgerow nests of blackbirds and thrushes. Magpies also attack new born lambs and do so in packs.*

*Killing of songbirds, killing of lambs and pecking of eyes of lambs. Eating of sheep feed and pooing in water sources and feed sources - contamination*

*Raid small birds nests and damage to lambs having difficult births. Damage to hens eggs*

*Killing small birds and raiding their nests*

**Same reason as previously supplied for curlew nest protection. Currently GE doesn't allow us to pre-emptively reduce numbers prior to nesting starting. This leaves us in a position where it is simply not possible to control magpies & crows in a manner that offers tangible conservation benefits for red/lamber listed species.**

*protection of bird nest and young birds controlled by shooting and trapping*

*Killing of wild nesting birds & their eggs, Lapwings, song birds, game chicks.*

*I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland and woodland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush and blackbird*

*Heavy and persistent predation of Collared Doves, Thrushes, Blackbirds and a range of other smaller Song Birds for which we provide habitat, nesting opportunities, and supplementary feeding.*

*Predation of nests for eggs and then chicks. Song birds and game birds*

*Red listed species here . Linnets + all manner of small passerines . Magpies eat chicks and eggs .*

*I control magpies by shooting and trapping to protect hedge and ground nesting birds and to limit damage to farm equipment and feed stuffs*

*Eating chicken and duck eggs from coop, also song birds and wild birds eggs, from hedgerows and around farm yard*

*I control magpies to minimise the Predation of grey partridge chicks.*

*I use Larsen traps whenever possible and also shoot any in my area of conservation*

*Control of these birds is only carried out during the risk period*

**Nest predation - we have (had) good numbers of Grey Partridge but every year our count goes down; the few birds we see are fighting a losing battle as every year their nests are predated - if Magpies don't find the eggs they take out the chicks. We use ladder and Larsen traps along with shooting to try to keep their numbers at a balanced level; the majority of the shooting is undertaken by volunteers over and these mostly local volunteers do this willingly as they understand the problems of uncontrolled Corvid numbers and their impact on the critically endangered Partridges and songbird numbers here**

*I shoot magpies to protect our smaller songbirds etc. They Eat eggs and are generally territorial*

*Pecking out eyes of new born lambs and sheep struggling in labor.*

*Killing song bird eggs and young*

*I control magpies to protect nesting birds*

*they steal my hens eggs*

Control by trapping and shooting Damage to song birds, duckling chicks, grey partridge chicks and eggs at nesting time.

I control magpies and crows to protect all nesting birds as well as ground nesting birds.

I shoot magpies by shooting to protect nesting hedgerow birds

I control magpies by shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush and blackbirds.

Magpies are control by larsen trap and shooting, this is to protect the small nesting birds on the land.

Magpies are a tremendous threat to smaller bird stock and game birds, they also take lambs eyes if they can. They breed prolifically and in places where they are uncontrolled there are significantly reduced numbers of song birds and they are lethal for ground nesting birds such as partridges and pheasants.

I need to control magpies to protect song birds from being predated especially during the nesting season when chicks and eggs are particularly vulnerable.

In around barns and sheep, pecking sheep and cattle.

Small bird nest predation

magpies kill many song birds and rob nests every year. I control using a larsen trap and also shooting.

Magpies predate songbirds, game birds and ground nesting birds during the nesting season.

Control them to protect hedgerow and ground nesting birds, as well as young lambs.

Predation of songbirds nests

**I control magpies by shooting. The largest grouping of magpies I have seen on the farm was a bunch of 17. We used to trap them and the increase in dickie bird population was an explosion - all tits, finches, thrushes, blackbirds, nuthatches and yellow hammers**

nest and egg/Chicken of hedgerow birds

**Magpie predate song birds and will peck at the eyes of new born lambs. They are clever birds and will work together either to work up a hedge to look for nests or to distract an ewe. They will take quite big prey. I have witnessed them taking blackbird and starling nestlings and it is a slow and cruel process.**

They strip out wild birds nests are very predatory

nesting birds and ground nesting birds

1. Can kill or injure Lambs and adult sheep, especially at lambing time.
2. Often eat eggs & chicks of all species of birds and waterfowl.

I control magpies on farm land to protect new born livestock as well as other bird species.

Magpies will destroy the nests and eat the young of any birds they can find

**in the gardens around the house we used to have three pairs of nesting thrushes which over the past four/five years have failed to raise any chicks as the magpies have predated the nests.**

Reducing numbers of garden type birds

lambs eyes out

magpies are a constant threat to all ground nesting and hedgerow birds

Shooting to reduce increasing populatin and therefore damage to songbird species.

raiding nests of garden migratory and other birds and ducklngs on my lake

I try to control magpies of my own volition because of the way they exclude other species from nest sites and food sources. This is a growing problem as their numbers are increasing steadily.

small creatures being killed, birds and eggs eaten.

They are continually hunting the hedgerows for nest and young chick's of our numerous hedgerow birds.

Eating animal feed Eating the chicken eggs Pecking lambs eye out Very likely to be damaging nests

I use Larsen trap to trap magpies mainly around the farm and feed troughs

They take songbird chicks from nests.

Massive damage to songbirds in the breeding season, they decimate the nests in my sheds, and are highly visible stealing chicks and eggs. I have a wide variety of songbirds on my property, and the damage done to the breeding sites is constant every spring.

Egg protection and song birds protection

young birds taken from nests also eggs this is in our garden as we look out kitchen window

taking both eggs and chicks from song bird nest's

Destroying song bird nest and chicks, ripping rubbish bags and spreading the said rubbish, way too many in the area, I shoot and trap them, but still too many

The raiding of nests, taking eggs or chicks from anywhere they find them, ground nesting or in trees.

Take sonbirds eggs and young. Also take gamebird eggs and chicks. This year saw magpies clear a brood of 9 mallard ducklings

Magpie numbers are exploding and every year, they take the eggs and chicks out of ground nesting and song birds nests. They and the rest of the crow family are the main reason for the catastrophic fall in the numbers of so many British birds. Wild Justice know this but they don't care, it has nothing to do with birds, they just hate people who enjoy the countryside and wish to manage it for the benefit of all. They are the biggest threat to British birds the UK has ever seen.

Same as crows.

eating young songbirds

*Killing hen chicks and destroying song birds nests*

*The killing of songbirds/ destruction of their eggs.*

*Predate on other species, again nests being robbed, chicks killed*

*I control by trap and shooting lapwings and grey partridge being the main but there quarry list is extensive in this area, due to the amount of ground nesting birds, curlews oyster catcher,*

*Pinching chicken eggs*

*Damage to and fouling of feedstuffs , damage to other birds , corvids are becoming dominant to the detriment of other species*

***Pinching eggs ,spoiling foodstuff and predated songbirds I want to control corvids , woodpigeon and grey squirrel with an air rifle. I am a conservationist and am trying to get redstart and flycatcher to become established in the area.***

*Taking wild birds significant damage to silage pits*

*The taking of song bird eggs and the killing of their chicks*

*They eat the eyes and stock holes in live sheep on our farm. They also steal hundreds of eggs from most other birds nests and baby songbirds in spring. They have no natural predators and numbers are dramatically increasing that's why I trap them, I have a license.*

*Predation on song birds.*

*I control magpies because they they kill the chicks of nesting birds, they killed all the swallow chicks last year*

*Steals hens eggs and young chicks on my smallholding*

*Taking of baby chicks and ducks Killing birds in flight Taking eggs out of nests*

*I control magpies for the protection of songbirds ,newborn livestock and prevention of disease being transmitted to livestock via faeces in feed that have been put out*

*They destroy birds nests,taking eggs & chicks. They also take my chicken eggs from the chicken shed.*

***I CONTROL MAGPIES BY SHOOTING ON FORREST AND FARMLAND TO PROTECT SMALL BIRDS WHICH ARE Disappearing very fast because Magpies are breeding too fast***

*Magpies take and waste animal feed and steal hen and duck eggs and are controlled by trapping.*

*Songbird population is being damaged along with a chicken farm I do the pest control on they are always breaking the eggs*

*They persistently take wild bird chicks.*

*Eating young swallows in barn*

*i use larson traps to control magpies to protect song bird nests. i do this when magpie numbers are too high. In some years the numbers are acceptable so no trapping is done.*

*Magpies kill lambs*

*Peck ewes that are lambing, also attack ewes that are in distress on their backs*

*Eating eggs and newly hatched birds*

*Disruption of nests of other birds, including grey partridge*

*I control magpies by shooting and trapping to protect songbird nests.*

*For many years i have Kestrels nesting on my land! Having observed the site closely each year,their efforts have been destroyed by either magpies or crows stealing the eggs or the young chicks.Around this area there has been a profound increase in covine population! The use of a Larsen trap has made a difference!*

*Magpies kill baby birds and wreck nests*

*Predation of other bird nests*

*I control the Magpies on my permission by shooting to protect the Ewes and Lambs when they are at their most vulnerable. We have a large number of nesting birds in our hedges which also need protecting.*

*Killing of nesting song birds, theft of eggs.*

*Harm to newborn and young lambs/calves, have witnessed magpies pecking out eyes!*

*I shoot magpies on farmland to protect nesting birds.*

*Pest control.*

***There has been a massive increase in magpies on my farm so much so that the smaller song birds, wagtails and robins have declined noticeably compared to previous years.***

*They take our duck eggs.*

*They are killing the young chicks from my ducks and hens they also peck the backend of our sheep in lambing time the also stell the chicken and duck eggs and they do the same to all the small birds we have here like bluetits wrens longtail tits chaffinch and some others*

*Attach new born lambs and sheep that are unable to stand such as at lambing time. Peck the eyes out of sheep and cattle while giving birth. Peck backs of sheep*

*Stealing chicken eggs,pecking through feed bags, having a go at cast ewes, predated on songbirds.*

***I look to control magpies on the local farm. They keep poultry and these are free range. This means that sometimes the birds will lay eggs in many places. The magpies attack these eggs and destroy the profit. Since controlling the magpies the wild birds have started nesting more in the hedgerows and there are a lot more ground nesting birds .***

*I control magpies because they take eggs and chicks of rare and common birds during breeding season.*

*killing and pecking of eyes and tongue of both eyes and lambs. Also they kill small birds in hedge rows.*

*Magpies raid songbird nests in our woodland and predate on nestling.i also shoot and trap members of the crow family for the same reasons*

Taking other birds eggs and chicks.

I control magpies by shooting. This helps prevent damage to songbird population.

I control magpies to protect hedge row birds and my poultry ,including well grown goslings!

Devasting the song bird population through nest predation. a bird supported by human behaviour in terms of discarded food!!

Attacking nests of other birds Huge population

They attack and rob nests of other bird species.

Destruction of breeding. Pheasant broods and huge destruction of all nesting birds in the area I control by trapping and shooting to protect the ground nesting pheasants and the. Farmland nests of hedgerow nesting birds such as black birds thrush turtle dove etc

A serious threat to song birds and ground nesting birds at Spring time, a similar problem with other corvid species.

I control magpies in my garden by trapping to conserve songbirds such as blackbirds song thrush, goldfinch, greenfinch, chaffinch blue and great tits and robins. I also trap them prevent egg damage in my quail pens they take birds eggs

Same as the crows plus they steal the eggs from birds nests

I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, blackbird, and sparrows.

They eat eggs from our nesting birds, also attack freshly born lambs.

They destroy songbirds and ground nesting chicks, eggs fledglings

I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect hedgerow nesting birds.

I control magpies to prevent damage to all song and gamebird nests and chicks during the breeding season by shooting and trapping.

They will take any soft tissue on sheep if stuck on back, stuck in fence, lambs being born Also **had a ram with a hole pecked into his back by 2 magpies. I am 100% sure it was magpies as they were constantly on his back and you could see them pecking into his back. We moved the rams to another field and they followed him and carried on. We tried putting tape on the ram and other deterrents but nothing worked until I was able to shoot them**

I control magpies by shooting them. They cause damage by eating the cattle feed and then defecating on it as well as damage to nesting song birds.

I shoot magpies to protect the Songbirds in my area. And it shows.

They take all birds eggs and also eat chicks in the nest and attack and eat fledglings

I try to control the ever increasing numbers of Magpies by shooting on farmland with a shotgun and in my own back garden with an air rifle in order to give our native song birds a chance of survival. Magpies will

*attack the smaller birds and raid all songbird nests for both eggs and young.*

*I control magpies to minimise predation on nestlings of all species on our shoot.*

*Predation of eggs of vulnerable species*

*Attack of our wild broods of ground nesting birds including lapwing (we host circa 10% of Wales' population) also wild pheasant stock and young lambs*

*When I had two indicator species where magpies were controlled, they thrived. Since retiring marked decline in indicator species.*

*Taking the eyes of sheep and lambs.*

*Predation of wide range of song and ground nesting eggs , chicks*

*Disruption of nesting birds & my chickens egg production*

*Use a Larsen trap & shooting*

*Reducing songbirds by taking their eggs & fledglings from the nest*

***I monitor curlew nest sites near home and in the 16 years have not had chicks fledged from the nearby nest. Last year the nest was protected by an electric fence from ground predators but within two days of hatching the chicks (4) were predated by magpies or crows. Both species are numerous in the area. Predation decimates curlews nesting success. Unless more predator control is carried out Curlew in the area will have gone within 10 years. I control magpies and crows to try protect curlew nests and chicks.***

*Raiding birds nests for eggs and chicks. Stealing animal feed. We use Larsen traps.*

*I control magpies by shooting on farmland to protect small nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush blackbirds and all small nesting birds*

*Breaking up songbird nests and killing smaller birds*

*I control magpie numbers to protect songbird nesting*

*Taking eggs from nests, stealing food from feeders. Control aids survival of other species notably song thrush and blackbird.*

***too many in the area of woods around the house, causing a huge drop in smaller bird species such as sparrows, long tail ties, yellow ties etc.***

*I control magpies by shooting to protect the nests of garden and hedgerow nesting birds like pied wagtails, blue tits, robins , blackbirds and song thrushes from predation.*

*I control magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and blackbird.*

*I have seen the damage done to nesting game birds and other ground nesting birds many times and I have proven on my own shooting that controlling corvids greatly improves nesting success.*

*controlling magpies by trapping and shooting to protect hedgerow and ground-nesting birds, which are in*



general decline - partly due to such predation.

Killing all the small and song birds and taking their eggs/ chicks

Raiding skylarks nest and grey partridge on an island

**Magpies have predated most if not all of the songbird nests on my property. I have for example plenty of adult Chaffinch coming to my feeders but hardly any juveniles. The same with Blackbird.**

I control magpies by shooting to help protect hedgerow nesting birds such as blackbirds, dunnock, and any other species once fledged

protection of hedgerow nesting birds

**I control Magpies as they decimate songbird populations. I watch them every spring / summer systematically hunt along hedgerows for nests, eggs and young.**

I control magpies to protect nests and eggs of ground and hedgerow nesting birds by shooting

**Raiding of song bird nests. I use a Larsen trap to reduce numbers to protect a range of hedgerow nesting birds as magpie numbers are at very high levels locally.**

## **Rooks**

**What damage is being done by rooks? Please be specific.**

I have in the past controlled rooks which cause serious and significant damage to crops. I do not otherwise control rooks.

Damage to freshly planted brassica plants, cauliflower, cabbages. The birds pulled the freshly planted plants out of the ground to look for food, resulting in total plant loss.

**Food producer planted 8.5 acres of cauliflower on a Thursday and by the Sunday they had stripped the whole field.**

**Farmer estimates the loss/cost to him at over £10,000. Bangers, kites and similar items are used but to little effect. The staff drive around to try and keep them off as well. Shooting has to be utilized to reinforce the other methods employed.**

I control rooks for the protection of crops, nesting wild birds and the destruction of animal feed. I control these birds by shooting and trapping.

Crop damage, attacks on live stock during lambing, I control with shooting over crops with decoy and shooting young at fledgling stage.

Killing of songbirds, killing of lambs and pecking of eyes of lambs.

damage to growing crops and reseeded fields

predation on songbird nests and chicks

Damage to young crops

*I used to control rooks for crop damage before you changed general licence .*

*Crop damage and spreading of disease. Wheat and especially maize grown for animal feed is eaten as soon as it sprouts. We suffered disease in Pheasant release pens near to the Rookery.*

*Pecking out lambs eyes and pecking out eyes of sheep in labor or in difficulty.  
Stealing and defecating on cattle food. damaging standing corn crops. the only way to control these problems is by shooting the birds. other, non lethal means only work for a short term. Birds quickly get used to them.  
But, once a field or farm building has been shot over, birds tend not to return.*

*Crop damage kill lambs rooks are as bad as carion crows during lambing Damage to crops*

***I am occasionally asked to control rook numbers to reduce damage to wheat, barley and peas. While they damage growing and standing crops like other birds, they are particularly adept at damaging freshly-drilled seeds, following and eating the seed lines behind the drill. They also learn very quickly to steal animal feed when farmers are feeding their stock in the fields.***

*Pulling up newly drilled corn and eating ripening corn*

***Unfortunately I'm unable to control rooks under new licence but I have seen numbers increase dramatically.*** *They also cause damage to crops livestock and other birds. I believe they should be put back on the Welsh license for control.*

*I control rooks for crop damage mainly, and in one place for hygiene reasons due to faeces ie there rookery is over a access path, where children walk,*

*Shooting of Rooks for crop protection*

*Massive problems with the rooks carrying gapes and microplasma that infects pheasant and partridge which is a massive financial problem for the game shooting industry. they also are a big problem during the lambing season*

*In the spring Egg and Chicks of song and ground nesting birds on an increasing scale and numbers are also showing signs of being unchecked thus this is a fast increasing problem*

*Pest control. If needed.*

*On farm livestock crops they need to be on the general licence to be shot*

*Drilled crops and those ready before harvest Each bird stuffed it's crop full several times a day*

*Rooks will destroy a newly planted field of wheat by pulling up the germinating seed as we have not been able to control Rooks this year, this has reduced our yield and income.  
Also they have caused extensive loss of our maize crop.*

*They are destroying crops including wheat barley and peas Damage to my tractor*

*I control Rooks by shooting in order to protect newly emerging crops. Rooks will walk up and down the rows of newly emerging crops and pull up the sprouting shoots to get at the seed below.*

*I control rooks because of the damage they do to newly sown and emergent crops such as wheat and maize.*

*Agricultural crops are damaged pheasant feeders being depleted; cattle feed being consumed and potentially*

*being infected*

*damage to new sown and standing cereals*

*New born lambs being attacked.*

*Rooks can be an agricultural pest especially in laid cereal crops*

*Peck lambs eyes out flatten the Wheat crops young birds out of the nests*

*Damage to animal feeds,i.e .damage to silage clamps,contaminating the feed inside.*

*Rooks will dig up crops along a row damaging the growth of the whole plant, very destructive*

## **Jays**

### **What damage is being done by jays? Please be specific.**

*I shoot jays on occasion as I have witnessed them predated on amber listed species, such as mistle thrush.*

*I control jays for the protection of wild birds. I only carry out this protection at nesting time and I carry out this control by shooting.*

*Predation of eggs from nests.*

*I control Jay by trapping and shooting on farmland to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and blackbird*

*Predation of hedges and woodland nests of both eggs and chicks.*

*Taking wild nesting birds young or eggs.*

*to protect nests eAT BIRDS EGGS*

*Predation on grey partridge chicks and any bird nest including eggs and chicks*

*Protect hedgerow and ground nesting birds*

*Jays also are a problem for song birds and rob nests. Control by shooting.*

*Jays predate woodland nesting birds including game birds. They are highly efficient predators at nesting time in a woodland environment.*

*Predation of song bird nests predators of song birds Often eat eggs & chicks of all species of birds and waterfowl.*

*they prey on the songbirds in the gardens*

*Damage to nests and young of smaller birds*

*Killing song birds*

*Predation of songbirds.*

*I shoot and trap Jays for the protection of songbirds*

*Destroying birds nests 7 taking eggs & chicks, from my conservation woodland area.*

*Pest control if needed.*

*I control jays by shooting in woodland to protect other woodland bird nests like the spotted flycatcher nests.*

*I control jays by shooting and trapping in woodland to protect Spotted Flycatcher nests.*

*Predation of birds nests and eggs*

*Same as for magpies*

*I catch jays in Larsen traps to protect songbirds nests & my chickens eggs & young*

*I do control jays by means of shooting them to protect all small birds*

*Destruction of other bird nests and smaller birds*

*stealing eggs, raiding feeders. Control helps other species such as spotted flycatchers, hedge sparrows etc.*

*I control jays by shooting to protect the nests of garden and hedgerow nesting birds like pied wagtails, blue tits, robins, blackbirds and song thrushes from predation.*

*I control jays to protect nests and eggs of other ground nesting and hedgerow birds*

## **Jackdaws**

### **What damage is being done by jackdaws? Please be specific.**

*I control jackdaws in my garden by shooting with an air rifle, and also use a larsen trap. Our garden is home to many birds, including song and mistle thrushes and house sparrows which feed and nest in our garden.*

***The most distressing sight I have seen is a jackdaw taking baby sparrows from their nests. The male parent sparrow was cheeping, watching from outside the nest, and the jackdaws carried the chicks to a windowsill and ate them. I shouted and threw stones near the birds but they continued regardless. In my town the jackdaw population is massive, and they tear open bin-bags every week, leaving litter strewn about the town. I think this shows that the population is too large, and out of balance with a sustainable food supply, which combined with the behaviour I have witnessed (above) will be causing a negative impact on vulnerable bird numbers in the area.***

*Damage to freshly planted brassica plants, cauliflower, cabbages. The birds pulled the freshly planted plants out of the ground to look for food, resulting in total plant loss.*

*Food producer planted 8.5 acres of cauliflower on a Thursday and by the Sunday they had stripped the whole field.*

*Farmer estimates the loss/cost to him at over £10,000. Bangers, kites and similar items are used but to little effect. The staff drive around to try and keep them off as well. Shooting has to be utilized to reinforce the other methods employed*

*I control jackdaws for the protection of wild birds, protection of farm crops, animal food and damage to farm*

buildings. These birds are controlled by trapping and shooting.

Crop damage, attacks on lambs, damage to silage. I shoot jackdaws as the damage begins, if it stops I stop shooting until the next season when the young begin attacking.

In larger numbers the danger of spreading disease.

They drive smaller birds from feeding sites and will take young birds

They favour chimneys and flue pipes as nesting sites with the potential danger of carbon monoxide build up or fires

Damage to buildings. Nesting activity creates damage to roofs and insulation.

Killing of songbirds, killing of lambs and pecking of eyes of lambs. Polluting water and feed sources on farm.

Increasing numbers and a threat to small wild birds - eating their eggs.

Contamination of animal feed & water supply

I control jackdaws to protect feed stuffs and livestock

Lambing

I control Jackdaws to protect nesting birds, lambs and ducklings

Control by shooting and trapping to prevent damage to songbirds eggs and chicks.

Control by shooting to protect barley and oats

Crop damage

Messing the grain stores

**Jackdaws are present in very large numbers in Mid Wales** and can cause substantial damage to ground nesting birds during the nesting season.

Nesting in chimneys, barns, and crop damage.

Predation of nests and fledglings, eating food meant for livestock, spreading disease

they push their way down chimneys and block the chimneys with their nests

1. Often eat eggs & chicks of all species of birds and waterfowl.

2.. Damage crops.

damage to lambs

**Jackdaws in my experience seem to follow and copy crows and rooks swelling their numbers and increasing the damage that they do.** They are particularly bad for stealing animal feed when farmers have to feed their animals in the field.

Crop protection, large numbers feed on our ripening corn. As well as feeding on eggs from our woodland nesting birds.

*Eating animal feed now*

*Crop and animal protection. To stop birds from doing dropping on animals in sheds and on crops before harvest to prevent disease transfer*

*eat and dropping on lamb creep feeder*

*eating young songbirds, bringing nest materials into sheds . Droppings on stock foodstuffs.*

*Crop damage , damage to buildings ( when nesting ) damage to crops and cattle feed*

***I am trying to get a bit of diversity of wildlife locally as I am a wildlife photographer. The jackdaws are absolutely fearless locally have seen them pushing stock doves and little owls out of nesting boxes as well as natural holes they can be as bad as the grey squirrel and also fouling animal feed***

*A nearby large roost of jackdaws raid my veg crop & fruit trees. Occasionally shoot 1 or 2 birds, these are then used as scarecrows.*

*Damage silage pits*

*Eating animal foods and spoiling animal foods.*

*They take eggs and young chicks I've tried shooting to scare them x no long term effect*

*I control Jackdaws by trapping and shooting for the protection of crops and songbirds*

*Damage to lambs and more so the songbird population*

*Stealing and wasting animal feed. We control them by trapping.*

*Crop damage is the main issue but they regularly kill chicks and take eggs from smaller garden birds*

*Ewes and Lambs are attacked when they are at their most vulnerable so the flocks are defended using rifle and shotgun.*

*Pest control. If needed.*

*defecation in foodstuffs and eating foodstuffs*

*Taking of other birds eggs and chicks.*

*Drilled crops and those ready before harvest Each bird stuffed it's crop full several times a day*

*I control jackdaws by trapping and shooting on farmland and woodland they are major stealers of eggs and chicks of hedgerow nesting birds like the turtle dove, blackbird and song thrush.*

*I control jackdaws by shooting. These cause damage on the farm by defecating on the cattle feed as well as eating said feed. They also cause damage while nesting in outbuildings*

*Predation of eggs and chicks of various protected species, damage to crops ,and consumption of cattle and sheep feed as well as contamination*

*I control jackdaws at the request of the Tennant farmers on the Estate. They foul animal feedstuffs, and damage freshly sown crops.*

*Jackdaws take the cattle feed from the milk cow's stalls.*

*Predation of birds nests and eggs Blocking chimneys*

*I control jackdaws to protect crops and live stock*

*I control Jackdaw to protect songbird nests and chicks*

*Peck out live stock eyes same as the rook the crops get a slamming with these birds*

*Building nest in house chimney, potentially spreading bird flu and song bird nest damage*

*Jackdaws cause damage to crops and also take eggs from ground nesting and hedgerow nesting birds*

## **Wood Pigeon**

### **What damage is being done by wood pigeons? Please be specific.**

*Woodpigeon can cause significant and serious damage to crops such as barley and wheat and I'm often called by farmers in north Wales to control their numbers as scaring tactics are only effective to some extent.*

*Crop protection*

*crop damage and shooting is the only deterrent*

*Damage to brassica plants , drilling plus cereal crops*

**TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO NEWLY SOWN CROPS**

*I control wood pigeons for the protection of crops and I carry out this protection by shooting. Some of the crops protected are wheat, barley, peas and oilseed rape.*

*They are eating our sown crops and also standing wheat and barley, I shoot them to try and reduce numbers during vulnerable crop periods.*

***Damage to emerging and ripening crops – We grow kales and many other greens , also soft fruit. We get flocks of up to approximately 100 wood pigeons which can decimate an entire seasons work in minutes. Shooting 1 of the flock will deter them for a while.***

*Crop damage, especially when young.*

*crop damage*

*Controlled by shooting and scare crows*

*damage to grain crops and reseed*

*Crop damage on almost all crops depending on crops age/growth.*

*I control woodpigeons by shooting to protect my crops, including wheat, oilseed rape and cover crops*

*Damage to young crops*

*I control wood pigeon for crop protection, i.e wheat ,maize , etc.*

*Crops*

*Eat of newly drilled glastir wild bird cover*

*to protect crops being eaten by woodpigeons*

*Damage to arable crops*

*eating crops - oilseed rape, flattening and eating wheat and barley crops.*

*To control damage by shooting to young crops: seeds, seedlings and sprouting crops ie wheat, barley, and oilseed rape, and to reduce crop losses on ripe, standing wheat and barley.*

*I shoot woodpigeon to protect crops, mainly cereals*

*I control woodpigeons by shooting to protect my crops of barley and oats*

*Crop damage, including cereals, kale, rape*

*Woodpigeon are huge consumers of foodcrops they damage seeding and young plants from grain through brassicas to peas .They are effective breeders and in flocks which they tend to feed they can do significant field damage.*

*wood pigeons are a problem on arable land, damage crops and can be controled by shooting.*

*I control woodpigeons by shooting to protect crops such as wheat and peas on local farms.*

*Standing crop, flatten and damage for harvesting.*

*damage to both newly sown and pre harvest grain*

*Crop damage*

*damage to crops*

*Eat crops*

*1. Eat standing crops.*

*2. Eat young crops that have just started to grow and thereby reduce crop available to harvest.*

*Damage to crops*

*The fields near where I live in North Wales when the new crops are growing are a magnet for pigeons who do more damage than can be explained here.*

*Reduce crop damage for farmers*

*I am asked to control wood pigeon numbers because of their damage to standing crops - wheat, barley and peas.*



*Crop protection, feeding on ripening corn*

*Crop damage ,Barley grain etc*

*Mainly crop damage*

*crop damage on cereals and rape*

*Eating crops*

*Crop damage to Rape as its growing and then in seed, Barley and wheat when its ripe and laid.*

*Wood pigeons severely damage crops meant to feed the British public. Their numbers have never been higher.*

***Shooting due to Crop damage, low grain production in this area subsequently birds concentrate on limited field numbers, only barley and wheat generally grown some amounts of maize, which is increasing***

*Crop damage.*

*Crops*

*Eating crops*

*Damage to cereal crops , damage to fresh drilled fields and standing crops, oilseed rape , peas, beans even stubble turnips*

*They are defaecating on farm machinery eating the crops and being a general nuisance locally,i only use an airgun as it does the less damage to breeding birds by scaring.*

*I control woodpigeon because of the crop damage they cause on oilseed rape,wheat and barley.*

*Shooting of woodpigeon for crop protection*

*Crop damage*

*Eating crops*

*Flattening of crops so the crop rots and can not be picked by combine*

*They decimate barley fields.*

*I have witnessed the damage these birds are doing to the corn crop every year. Shooting is the only way to stop them.*

*Shooting woodpigeons to stop damage to crops*

*Severe damage and loss of crops such as wheat, pea and rape. Also cause a lot of damage to farm equipment and machinery, defecating in feed etc.*

*I shoot woodpigeons to protect crops.*

*I control woodpigeon to protect my small market garden.*

*I control woodpigeons to protect my cereal crops, the damage a flock of pigeons does to freshly drilled wheat and barley is immense and very costly to redrill*

*To protect crops for local farmers who live near large arable farms and wood pigeon if left unchecked do untold damage to wheat, barley and rape fields*

*Damaging crops*

*Drilled crops and those ready before harvest Each bird stuffed its crop full several times a day*

*They damage crops and game crops.*

*Massive damage to oilseed rape*

*Eating crops.*

*Woodpigeons cause major damage to our crops of peas barley and wheat. Shooting is the only realistic answer.*

*They eat our crops, as the crop starts to grow they start heckling shoots.*

*I control the woodpigeon by shooting them. They cause damage to the fields by eating the seed that has been put down.*

*I control the numbers of Woodpigeons by shooting in order to assist my farmers in crop protection. Woodpigeons will decimate fields of Wheat, Barley, Peas, Oats, Beans and Oil Seed Rape if allowed to settle undisturbed for one or two days.*

*I control woodpigeons for protection of arable crops*

*I control woodpigeons to protect crops, wheat, oilseed rape and barley.*

*Control is done to protect our own wheat crops*

*Crop*

*They take cereal crops grown as both a cash crop and for cattle feed for milk production.*

***will flatten thin areas of cereal crops then work outwards can reduce yields of peas and oilseed rape significantly. bird scarers are an initial deterrent but soon become ineffective. shooting remains the only option to prevent extensive damage and reduce numbers.***

*Wholesale crop damage occurs throughout the year.*

*A mob of pigeons can devastate cereals & OSR crops in a very short space of time.*

*I control wood pigeon to protect crops after sowing as wood pigeon can cause acres and thousands of pounds of damage*

*Arable crop & Garden damage*

*All farm crops to control woodpigeons by Deecloys to Protect the crops wheat ,, peas ,, oilseed rape*

*crop damage*

*Damage to Vegetables etc*

*crop damage on a wide scale.*

*I control woodpigeons by shooting and trapping to protect crops including wheat, barley and oats*

*Crop damage to arable crops*

*They eat crops.*

*The damage varies from decimating newly down crops to damaging, and eating fully grown crops.*

*I control pigeons to protect crops including peas, rape, wheat, barley, beans and fruit such as cherries over 1000 acres of mostly arable land and woodland.*

## **Feral Pigeons**

### **What damage is being done by feral pigeons? Please be specific.**

*Feral pigeons can cause serious issues on farms where they take feed meant for stock as well as soil the inside of farm buildings. I'm often called on to control their numbers by farmers.*

*I control the feral pigeon for the protect of animal feed, farm buildings, farm equipment and crops.*

*Damage to stored feed and spoilage of livestock feedstuffs, contamination of surfaces and equipment. Resulting in wastage of feed, cost of clean up and risk of disease transmission to staff and livestock*

*Crop damage as Wood Pigeon. Also contaminating animal feed/water supply & bedding etc.*

*I shoot feral pigeons for livestock and farm building and equipment protection i.e faeces , nesting and diseases  
eating and defecating on animal foodstuffs*

*Damage to grain in barns*

- 1. Eat standing grain crops.*
- 2. Spoil food in store with droppings*

*I have witnessed the damage to crops from seed to ears of corn and wheat.*

*I am occasionally asked to cull feral pigeons because of the health risk from accumulation of faecal matter and their ability to find their way into buildings, lofts etc despite efforts to exclude them.*

*Not feral pigeons—woodpigeons at the request of neighbours, who sustain quite severe crop damage.*

*Droppings in sheds food storage and on animals and machinery*

*disease to my pigeons*

*Contamination via feces on farmers crops (in barns etc)*

*They spoil animal feed and also droppings on farm machinery.*

*Shooting of Feral Pigeon for crop protection and prevention of disease transmission to livestock*

*For health and safety.*

*Pest control.*

***The local farm has lots of livestock. The feral pigeons get into the barns and nest in rafters and defecate into the animal feed, water and onto the bedding. This cause contaminated water, food and can be damaging to the health of new born livestock and farm workers***

*Damage to oilseed rape defecating into feedstuff*

*defecating over everything in the storage sheds*

*some crop damage.droppings a major problem around buildings*

*Damage to crops*

*Foul feedlots, make a mess in buildings, damage crops*

*I control feral by means of shooting them to protect the crops wheat „ peas „ oilseed rape and the hygiene around the milking parlour where they nest and barns flowing the barns where the cows are*

*crop damage. controlled by shooting as with pigeons*

*I control feral pigeons by shooting to protect my valuable cherry crop.*

*They roost in agricultural sheds and defecate all over feed, straw and hay.*

### **Collard doves**

#### **What damage is being done by collared doves? Please be specific.**

*Collard doves need controlling for the protection of animal and feed, protection of farm buildings and farm equipment. They are also a problem around storage containers that are used for the storage of human food.*

*I used to control collared doves for disease control and nesting damage in farm buildings before changes to general license*

*damage to grain crops*

*I have in the past been asked to reduce collar dove numbers when their numbers have got particularly high in a specific locality because of they intrusions into storage and feed facilities*

*Sometimes a need for pest control on farmland.*

### **Canada Geese**

#### **What damage is being done by Canada Geese? Please be specific.**

Canada are aggressive invaders on the ponds dug by me to provide breeding habitat for wild duck, particularly mallard. Canadas have a severe impact on duck breeding success. Unfortunately the damage takes place in the "off season" so control has to take place elsewhere.

I control Canada geese for the protection of crops and human health. The geese cause a health problem by defecating on grass and hard surfaces.

We have a large lake here. If we do not reduce numbers of Canada geese, they increase very rapidly and can render many acres useless for grazing. They can help spread Avian Influenza which is a huge risk for our poultry flock.

We have been asked by a local airport to control them as they feed on the runways and are a danger to aircraft

Canada geese as water fowl are contaminating the ponds and water ways by there sheer number. They also have the potential to carry bird flu which is endemic in wildfowl

Canada Geese are an alien species which has a tendency to flock. A large flock will eat a huge quantity of grass. This deprives farm animals of sustenance causing farmers to buy in food to maintain production thus increasing the cost of food production.

I control Canada geese by shooting because skein of 100 and more birds foul the grass fields along the river and make it inedible to livestock and unfit for conservation

they cover the land with shit and chase away the wild duck

Destroying water habitat for insects bottom of water food chain ..... ripping up aquatic weed

Damage to crops

it is known that 3 geese will consume the same amount of grass as one cow and they desperately need the numbers reducing

Eat seed corn and peas These are not native species.

To protect public health and safety.

I control Canada geese because they eat a lot of grass which is needed for livestock. They also eat crops which are needed for livestock and humans.

Crop damage

Pooing on my land

**Canada (and Egyptian) geese reside on large lakes which are adjacent to a substantial dairy farm. These geese daily move off the lake in large numbers and feed on the grass which is cultivated for the milk cows and others being grown on for milk production. The largest number of geese I have seen at one time I estimate at around 500 and they**

**consume a vast amount of fresh grass off the farm. The land owner needs to have the number of these geese controlled otherwise it materially affects the quality of fresh grass available for his milk production. These geese are culled actively in the winter in an attempt to cap the numbers feeding in the spring and summer but culling really needs to continue all year round in order to have any chance of managing the growth in numbers.**

They are over-populating on our ponds edging out the grey lags and over-eating the vegetation, soiling the fields around the edges. So we shoot some of the goslings each year to keep their numbers bearable.

crop damage and other indigenous species displacement.

They displace native nesting birds off small ponds.

They defecate all over silage fields.

They eat a significant amount of fodder.

The amount of droppings that pollute local golf courses, and playing fields, causing public health problems. They are also responsible for crop damage.

### **Egyptian Geese**

#### **What damage is being done by Egyptian Geese? Please be specific.**

Health and safety.

They take fresh grass grown for milk production.

### **3 - The questions which were not addressed within the survey are answered here:-**

#### **Q10. Do you have any evidence that lethal control of fish-eating birds, in particular cormorant and goosander, leads to increases in wild fish populations?**

No.

There have been a number of studies in the UK and Europe investigating the impacts of FEB on wild fish. These have been based on assessing the numbers of birds, their diets at fixed points in time and the populations of fish available. However, demonstrating an increase in the numbers of wild fish as a result of lethal control is inherently difficult. We do know that fish are eaten and the numbers of FEB has increased, but does this predation have an effect at the population level and thus impacting recruitment, particularly of our depleted stocks of wild salmon and sea trout. Notably, a MAFF study on the Wye in the 1990's counted the numbers of birds, shot birds to investigate their diet and sampling the numbers of juvenile salmon. It concluded that by the end of the summer FEB will have eaten all juvenile salmon in the catchment. Demonstrating how difficult these assessments are. However, there are a number of evidence gaps that would inform this assessment, including the year round behaviour and diets of FEB and their diet in relation to prey availability.

GWCT sits on NRW's FEB Review group, and we strongly urge WAG to support the group with funds to inform this policy development. In the meantime, we support the precautionary principle of granting licences to control the numbers of FEB on rivers which is against a background of increasing bird numbers and stocks of salmon and sea trout that are classified as at risk by NRW.

#### **Q11. Do you have any evidence about the effectiveness of alternative non-lethal methods of addressing problems that wild birds may be causing, such as damaging crops, livestock or fisheries, posing a risk to public health or safety, or harming the conservation of other species?**

No

We are not aware of any studies demonstrating increased numbers of wild fish in rivers using non-lethal bird control methods. However, there are a number of actions that are well established methods to protect fish from FEB in stillwater fisheries. These tend to be on commercial fisheries which are stocked with farm reared trout or coarse fish and include the construction of artificial or natural reefs as cover. Under the general principle that more cover for fish, the more difficult it will be for FEB to predate upon them.

Q14. Have you (personally or as an organisation) in the past 5 years applied to NRW for consent or assent (under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) to carry out operations which entail killing or taking of wild birds in or near an SSSI?

Regarding the killing or taking birds of species listed on Schedule 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, on SSSIs Under section 28 of the Act, and the potential requirement for SSSI consent from NRW, we would like to highlight our research and position on the shooting of Eurasian woodcock and Common snipe.

It is estimated that the autumn/winter population of Eurasian woodcock is approximately 1.4 million individuals, compared to a resident population of approximately 55 thousand pairs. Our research indicates that, of those birds shot nationally, 2% are resident birds. It is perceived that habitat loss, fragmentation and degraded condition are the main drivers of decline in our resident woodcock population, and as such a ban on the shooting woodcock will not reverse declines in the long term. There is also potential for a ban to be counterproductive, by removing the incentive and motivation for

landowners to maintain suitable habitat for woodcock and other species. For more information see [Woodcock: Your Essential Brief](#).

Similarly, we do not think banning shooting of common snipe on SSSI land is necessary for the same reasons outlined above for Eurasian Woodcock. The Common snipe autumn/ winter population is estimated to be approximately 1.1 million individuals (Woodward 2020), compared to a resident population of approximately 67 thousand pairs (Woodward 2020). It is perceived that habitat loss is the main driver of decline in our resident snipe population, and as such a ban on shooting snipe will not reverse declines in the long term. There is also the potential for a ban to be counterproductive, by removing the incentive and motivation for landowners to maintain suitable habitat for snipe and other species.

**Further reading:**

2019 GWCT Scotland Response to Scottish Natural Heritage

[Scottish Natural Heritage Research Report No. 1136](#)

Literature review of the evidence base for inclusion of bird species listed on General Licences 1, 2 and 3 in Scotland

[NatureScot Wildlife Management: A Shared Approach - Concordat](#)



## 4 - GWCT General Licence Survey Results 2019.



### Introduction

In response to Defra's Wild Birds General Licence Survey in September 2019, the GWCT developed a simple online survey, based on the survey published by Defra, but tailored to the needs of our members and with the assurance of anonymity. It was open for seven weeks and received 2,951 responses.

The survey collected information on the species controlled by respondents, the reasons why this control was necessary, the alternatives that had been tried and the effectiveness of them. It also invited further comments to Defra if respondents chose to include additional information. The survey is attached as appendix A.

The survey provided free text boxes to allow respondents the freedom to describe their experiences. These were then analysed and assigned to three main categories describing the driving factor for undertaking control: conservation, agriculture or public health. The wealth of information provided using this technique gives an important insight into the perceptions of those who live and work in our countryside and who are actively involved in its management. A representative selection of these qualitative responses to illustrate the survey results is included in appendix B.

This document is submitted on behalf of those who completed the survey. It reports their views rather than those of the GWCT, summarises the results obtained and provides an insight into the knowledge and experiences of those who responded.

### Who we are

This submission has been produced by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), a research and education charity that has published over 100 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals on issues relating to predation and farmland and moorland birds over the past 50 years. On the basis of our scientific expertise and credibility, we regularly provide advice to such statutory bodies as Defra, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England. We also provide practical advice to farmers, landowners and other conservation organisations on how to manage their land with a view to improving biodiversity. Our Advisory team have, for many years, run industry-leading best practice predation control training courses. These courses are based on practical experience backed up by GWCT science.

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## Executive summary

- 2,951 people participated in the survey, many of these providing information on more than one species
- In total 6,366 entries were made for 10 individual species
- Ten species were included in the survey, with the majority of respondents controlling several of them.
- The main reasons for controlling these species were for conservation and agricultural purposes.
- Almost all participants report having witnessed the species they control causing the damage that they describe.
- The results highlighted that the respondents showed a high level of belief that the ability to manage these species is critical to the conservation of certain wild bird species, particularly ground-nesting birds and to agriculture, particularly the protection of livestock and crops.
- The survey revealed a wide range of experiences and concerns around many of the species covered

**Figure 1.** Respondents cited conservation, agriculture and public health as the reasons for species control being necessary.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Proportion of respondents</b>	<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Public health</b>
<b>Carrion crow</b>	46%	76%	53%	5%
<b>Magpie</b>	54%	97%	11%	2%
<b>Rook</b>	17%	33%	84%	20%
<b>Jay</b>	13%	96%	7%	2%
<b>Jackdaw</b>	14%	50%	56%	33%
<b>Woodpigeon</b>	52%	3%	99%	6%
<b>Feral Pigeon</b>	12%	9%	87%	60%
<b>Canada Goose</b>	9%	15%	76%	36%
<b>Egyptian Goose</b>	1%	55%	50%	18%
<b>Other species (desired)</b>	8%	60%	55%	24%

## Synthesis

The large number of responses and high level of engagement from participants in this survey reveals the importance of the General Licensing system for countryside managers across the UK.

For half of the species covered, conservation was the predominant reason for carrying out lethal control of bird species. The other half were controlled most often to protect agricultural interests. No species was predominantly controlled for public health reasons, although this was also an important driver for controlling several species.

Control of certain avian species is considered critical by respondents for conserving ground-nesting birds, songbirds, gamebirds and other species, for example owls. Many describe the devastating impact that predation by crows, magpies, jays and other can have on prey species. The revocation of General Licences in spring 2019 at a critical period for breeding birds, spring crop establishment and lambing was perceived by many participants as having detrimental impacts. Many practitioners carry out control of avian predators primarily for wild bird conservation and are passionate about the effect this has in protecting their local wildlife.

Farmers were one of the largest groups to complete the survey, detailing their need to protect both livestock and crops, as well as stored grain and feedstuffs, farm equipment, silage bales and many other reasons for which the General Licence is needed. Descriptions of lambs, ewes and calves being attacked by some of these controlled species as well as serious crop losses were common and emotive.

The effectiveness of non-lethal measures varied between type of control, the species respondents were looking to control, the type of damage which was occurring and local circumstances. This highlights that effectiveness of non-lethal measures is highly variable.

As well as these widespread typical situations, the results of this survey highlight the importance of the less common or well-known applications which were covered by previous General Licences. Responses include the description of jays or magpies working along a hedgerow and methodically preying on songbird nests, or collared doves inflicting costly damage to an orchard, and the flexibility of the General Licence to cover these situations was important to these individuals.

The insight this survey provides into the experience and understanding of the countryside that practitioners can bring is invaluable. While there is a strong scientific evidence base to support General Licences (see GWCT evidence submission May 2019) it is inevitable that evidence gaps exist.

These knowledge gaps can be filled, and policy guided by drawing on the enormous breadth of knowledge amassed by those on the ground over many years. This working knowledge is developed by observation, by being out in the woods and fields every day for many years.

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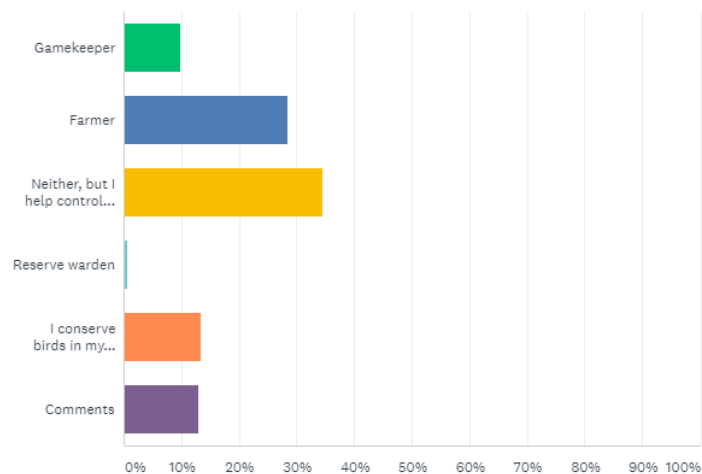
## Demographic of the survey participants

Almost three thousand respondents completed the survey. It was distributed to GWCT members, as well as those of the National Gamekeepers Organisation, the Countryside Alliance, Songbird Survival, the Moorland Association, Guns on Pegs, the British Deer Society and the Country Land and Business Association (CLA). One third were GWCT members and two thirds were not.

The respondents came from a range of backgrounds, with the largest group being those who are involved in species control for a farm or shoot (35%). The next largest group were farmers themselves (28%), followed by those who control predatory species to protect species in their own garden (13%). Gamekeepers made up 10% of participants. Ten percent of participants undertake control of avian species in an SSSI, 85% in an area that is not an SSSI, and 5% did not know.

### Which of these best describes you?

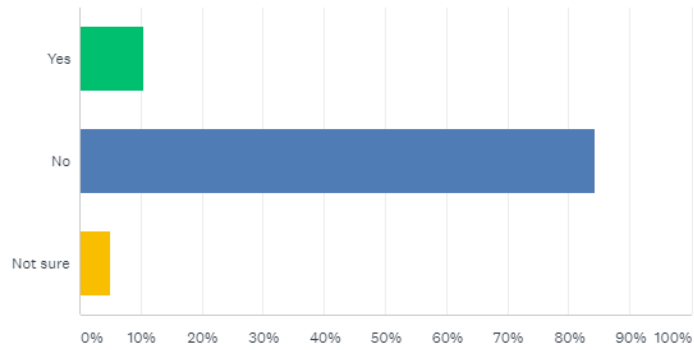
Answered: 1,687 Skipped: 1,264



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Gamekeeper	9.90%	167
Farmer	28.45%	480
Neither, but I help control birds on a farm or shoot	34.50%	582
Reserve warden	0.71%	12
I conserve birds in my garden (or land) by controlling others	13.46%	227
Comments	12.98%	219
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,687</b>

## Do you control birds within an SSSI or Special Protection Area (SPA)?

Answered: 1,687 Skipped: 1,264



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Yes	10.49% 177
▼ No	84.41% 1,424
▼ Not sure	5.10% 86
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,687</b>

# Species breakdown

## Carrion Crow

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Carrion crow	46%	76%	53%	5%

Forty six percent of those who filled in the survey (1,366 respondents) control carrion crows and described the damage they can cause.

The main reason for carrion crow control was for conservation purposes, with three quarters of respondents describing conservation-based reasons for control. Predation of wader and songbird nests were the most commonly cited concerns, among many other damaging impacts including predation on gamebirds. Many of these are highlighted in appendix B.

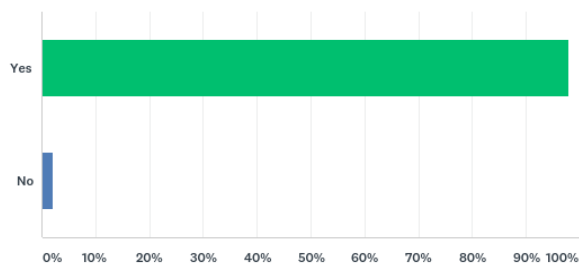
Agriculture is the motivation for half of those carrying out crow control, with the predominant reason being protection of vulnerable livestock, for example newborn lambs, as well as crop damage.

More than half of those who control carrion crows had attempted non-lethal methods, with a range of techniques being met with limited success. Various non-lethal techniques had been used in an attempt to control crows, the main ones being audio-visual deterrents or human disturbance. For 15% of respondents, this led to a positive outcome and solved the problem, but for the remainder the techniques were either ineffective, or was effective only for a short while.

Carrion crow control is considered by our respondents to be essential for the conservation of wild birds, with many participants observing increased numbers in 2019, and reporting reduced numbers of those species they try to protect with crow control. There is a perception that higher numbers of crows contribute to the falling numbers of songbirds, farmland birds, and ground-nesting species. Carrion crow control was also cited as critical to agriculture for the protection of livestock as well as crops. Farmers described in detail the suffering inflicted on lambs, and sometimes ewes, by groups of crows.

### Response Graphs

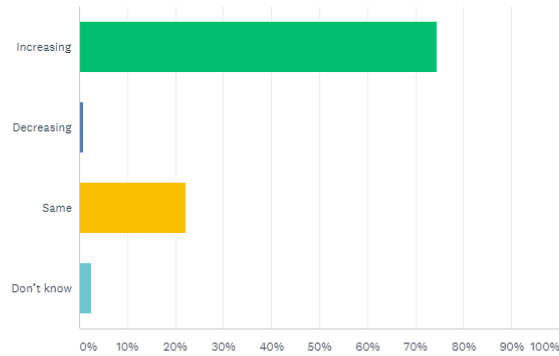
Q4 Have you witnessed this damage by carrion crows happening?



98% of respondents had witnessed the damage that they described occurring.

### Is your local population of carrion crows:

Answered: 1,366 Skipped: 1,585

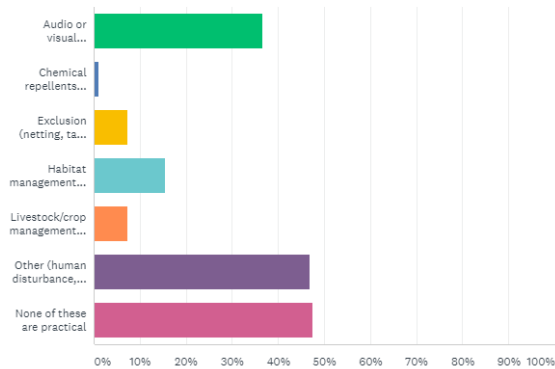


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	74.45%	1,017
Decreasing	0.88%	12
Same	22.25%	304
Don't know	2.42%	33
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,366</b>

Three quarters of respondents perceive that their local population of carrion crows has been increasing, with some observing substantial increases.

### How have you tried controlling carrion crows?

Answered: 1,366 Skipped: 1,585



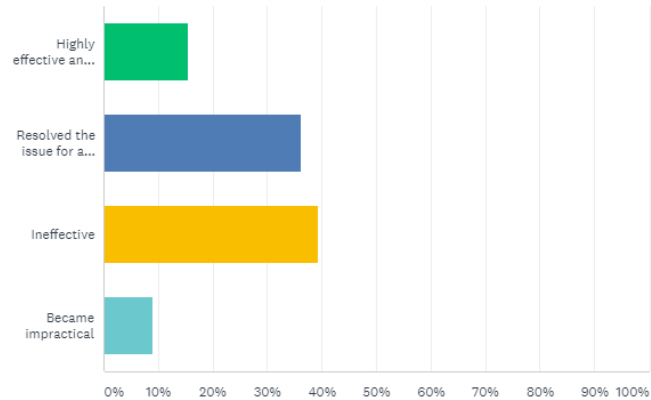
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	36.60%	500
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	1.10%	15
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	7.39%	101
Habitat management (game cover crops, brush piles)	15.52%	212
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	7.32%	100
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	46.78%	639
None of these are practical	47.51%	649
<b>Total Respondents: 1,366</b>		

More than half of respondents had used alternative methods of control.



## If you did try controlling carrion crows, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,198 Skipped: 1,753



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly effective and solved the issue	15.44%	185
Resolved the issue for a short while	36.23%	434
Ineffective	39.23%	470
Became impractical	9.10%	109
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,198</b>

Fifteen percent of those trying non-lethal methods found it solved the problem, the remaining 85% found it ineffective, impractical, or only effective for a short time.

## Magpie

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Magpie	54%	97%	11%	2%

More than half of the respondents control magpies and described the damage they can cause (1,583 responses). The overwhelming majority of those carrying out magpie control cite conservation reasons as their motivation. This included a range of effects, often reflecting those attributed to crows, being predominantly predation of songbird nests and chicks. Nest raiding, nest robbing and nest predation were very frequently described. Agricultural reasons cited were attacking newborn lambs and other vulnerable animals.

Almost all respondents who control magpies had witnessed this damage, three quarters perceive that their local population has been increasing and many had tried alternative methods of control, but 61% feel that none of the available non-lethal alternatives are practical. Of the remainder who have used non-lethal control, methods such as human disturbance or shooting to scare are the commonest, followed by audio-visual deterrents and habitat management.

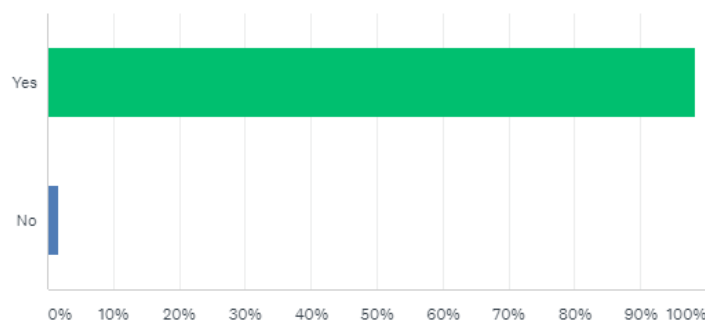
The success of such alternatives was varied, with similar proportions reporting that the method was effective and solved the problem (23%), was effective for a short time (36%), or was ineffective (33%). Eight percent found the methods became impractical.

Many of the respondents in this section refer to the protection of hedgerow birds, small birds, songbirds and ground nesting birds of which magpies are felt to be a major predator at the egg and chick stage. They are described as voracious, destructive and aggressive, causing tremendous damage, and their numbers are perceived to be increasing. There is considerable strength of feeling in the responses of practitioners who care for the wild birds that they feel their magpie control can help protect.

### Response Graphs

#### Have you witnessed this damage by magpies happening?

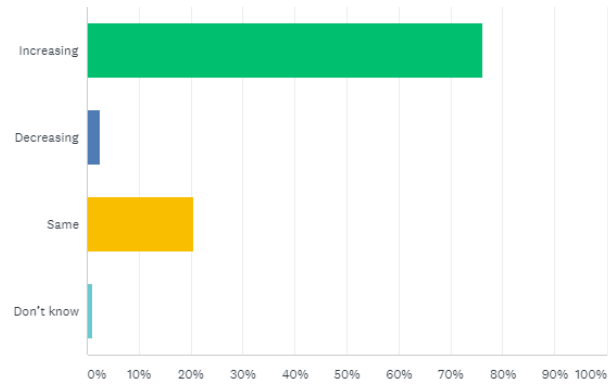
Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368



98% of respondents had witnessed the damage they described by magpies.

## Is your local population of magpies:

Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368

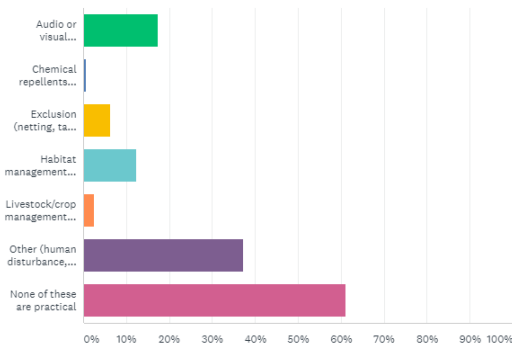


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	76.12%	1,205
Decreasing	2.46%	39
Same	20.40%	323
Don't know	1.01%	16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,583</b>

Three quarters of people feel their local population of magpies is increasing, 20% that it is stable and very few have seen decreases.

## How have you tried controlling magpies?

Answered: 1,583 Skipped: 1,368

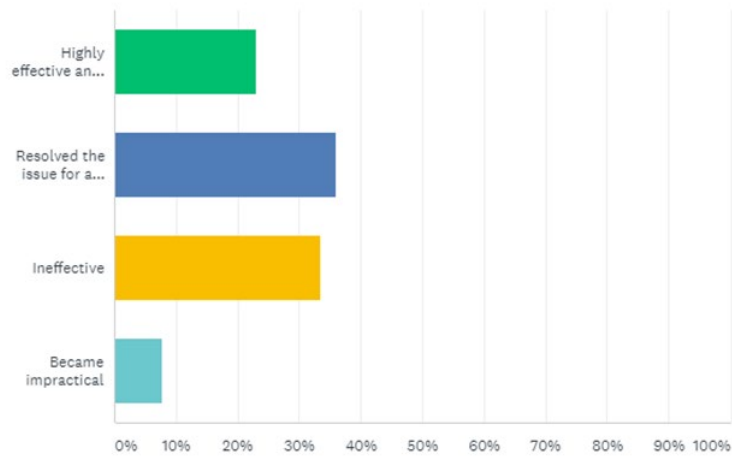


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	17.44%	276
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	0.63%	10
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	6.25%	99
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	12.26%	194
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	2.59%	41
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	37.27%	590
None of these are practical	61.15%	968
<b>Total Respondents: 1,583</b>		

More than half feel that alternative methods are impractical, but around 40% have tried non-lethal control.

## If you did try controlling magpies, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,360 Skipped: 1,591



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly effective and solved the issue	22.94%	312
Resolved the issue for a short while	35.96%	489
Ineffective	33.38%	454
Became impractical	7.72%	105
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,360</b>

## Rook

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Rooks	17%	33%	84%	20%

Seventeen percent of respondents control rooks (514 responses). Rooks are primarily controlled for agricultural reasons, with 84% of those carrying out control citing agricultural drivers. The most common reason specified is crop protection, with rooks causing damage to seeds and young plants, but also animal feed. Farmers have specified damage to wheat, barley, maize, oil seed rape, beans and peas amongst others. As with crows, respondents also report attacks to newborn lambs. Once again, almost all (98%) respondents report having witnessed this damage.

Conservation reasons for controlling rooks include that rooks damage headlands that are planted with wild bird seed mix and therefore farmland birds do not benefit as they should from this agri-environment measure. They are reported to raid nests for eggs and chicks as well as attacking broods of ground-nesting birds.

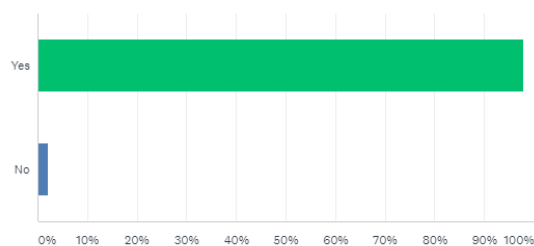
Seventy percent of those controlling rooks have tried non-lethal alternatives, with the most common methods being audio-visual disturbance (65%) and other techniques such as human disturbance and shooting to scare (57%). However, less than ten percent of these found that they could resolve the issue, with broadly similar proportions finding that it was effective only for a short while (44%) or was ineffective (40%).

*“Almost all deterrents have been tried including kites, scarecrows, lasers, bird call machines, gas guns, bangers, plastic owls, taste on seed and such, but the rook is intelligent and the local numbers large and increasing”*

### Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by rooks happening?

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

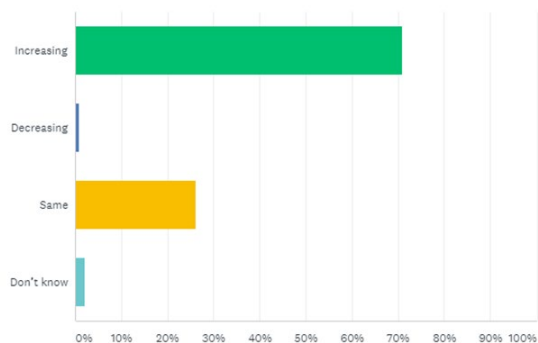


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.86%	503
No	2.14%	11
TOTAL		514

Almost all respondents have witnessed rooks causing damage.

### Is your local population of rooks:

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

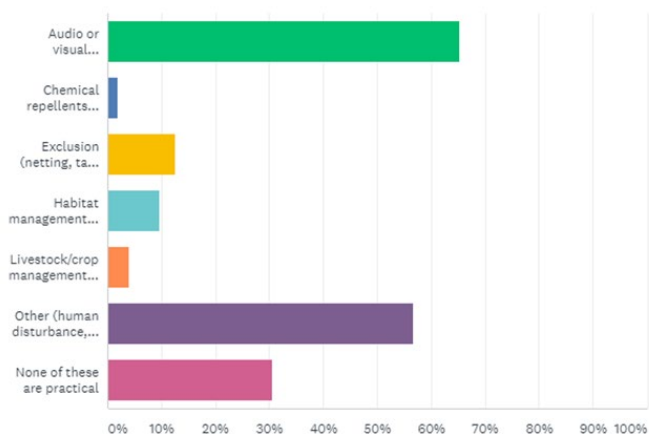


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	71.01%	365
Decreasing	0.78%	4
Same	26.07%	134
Don't know	2.14%	11
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>514</b>

Three quarters feel that their local population is increasing.

### How have you tried controlling rooks?

Answered: 514 Skipped: 2,437

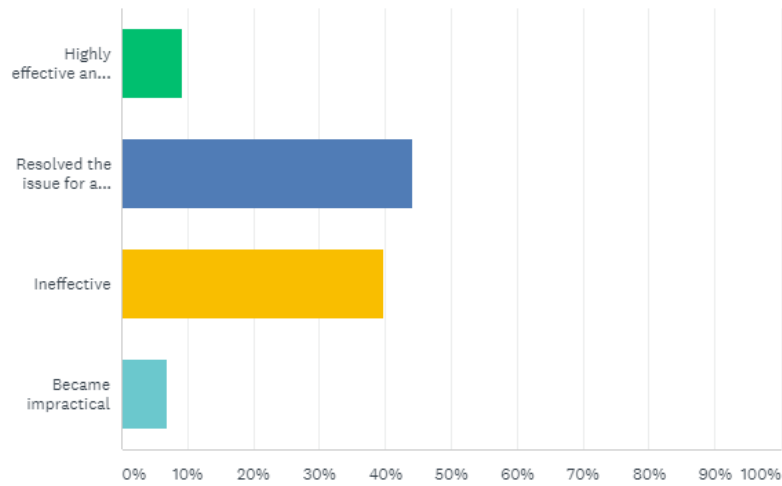


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	65.37%	336
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	1.95%	10
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	12.45%	64
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	9.73%	50
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	3.89%	20
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	56.61%	291
None of these are practical	30.54%	157
<b>Total Respondents: 514</b>		

Many respondents have tried alternative methods, mainly audio-visual or other disturbance.

## If you did try controlling rooks, how effective was it?

Answered: 480 Skipped: 2,471



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	9.17% 44
Resolved the issue for a short while	44.17% 212
Ineffective	39.79% 191
Became impractical	6.88% 33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>480</b>

Very few found that these alternatives solved the problem, with most finding it was effective for a limited time or did not work at all.

# Jay

## Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Jays	13%	96%	7%	2%

Thirteen percent of survey participants (368) control jays and described the damage they can cause. Ninety four percent of these had witnessed that damage. Almost all jay control is carried out for conservation reasons, with respondents specifying impacts on songbirds, hedgerow birds, ground nesting birds and woodland birds, with several participants mentioning spotted flycatchers. Jays are considered to cause damage predominantly by taking eggs but also chicks.

Around half of respondents feel their local jay populations is increasing (49%) and a similar number feel it is stable (47%). Of those who carry out lethal control, two thirds did not feel non-lethal alternatives were practical, with a third having tried them. The most common was other methods of disturbance such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. Around 14% found this solved the problem, but the majority found it was only effective for a short time (39%) or it was ineffective (37%).

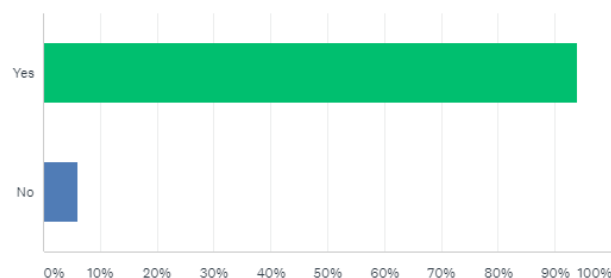
Respondents describe jays as effective and expert egg thieves, with reports of them working along hedgerows and destroying nests of many species. Woodland is particularly mentioned by some, who describe methodical predation which has a destructive effect on many nesting birds.

*We control jays via a combination of shooting and trapping to protect the little owl, kestrel, goldfinch, chaffinch, bullfinch coal tit, long tailed tit, nuthatch, tree creeper, wren, spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff, willow warbler, black cap, garden warbler, swallow to name but a few.*

## Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by jays happening?

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583



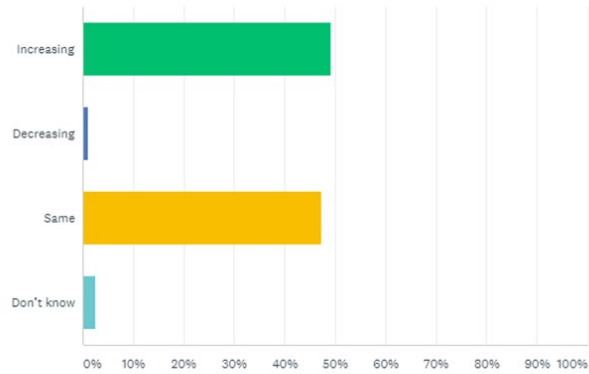
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	94.02%	346
No	5.98%	22
TOTAL		368

94% of respondents report witnessing jay damage.



### Is your local population of jays:

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583

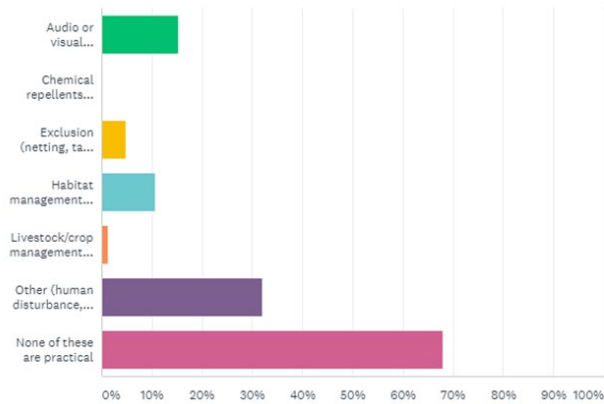


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Increasing	49.18% 181
Decreasing	1.09% 4
Same	47.28% 174
Don't know	2.45% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>368</b>

Around half of participants consider local jay populations to be increasing and half feel they are stable.

### How have you tried controlling jays?

Answered: 368 Skipped: 2,583

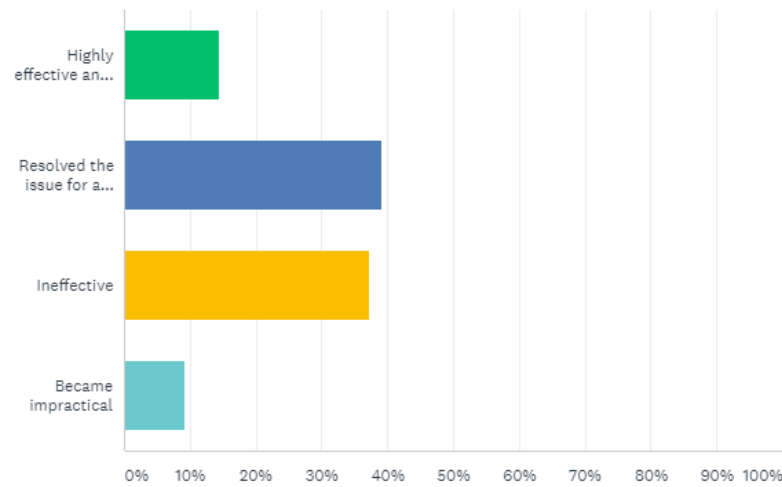


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	15.22% 56
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	0.27% 1
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	4.89% 18
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	10.60% 39
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	1.36% 5
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	32.07% 118
None of these are practical	67.93% 250
<b>Total Respondents: 368</b>	

Sixty eight percent did not think alternatives methods of jay control were practical.

## If you did try controlling jays, how effective was it?

Answered: 284 Skipped: 2,667



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	14.44% 41
Resolved the issue for a short while	39.08% 111
Ineffective	37.32% 106
Became impractical	9.15% 26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>284</b>

Of those who tried non-lethal methods, they solved the problem for 14% but the remaining 86% found it was ineffective, became ineffective, or became impractical.

## Jackdaw

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Jackdaw	14%	50%	56%	33%

Fourteen percent of those responding to the survey (423) control jackdaws and described the damage they can cause. There was a relatively even spread of reasons for jackdaw control, with agriculture and conservation being cited by approximately half of respondents and a third describing public health reasons for control.

Many farmers describe crop damage, with arable crops being affected, and specific mentions of barley, maize, oats, wheat, and oil seed rape as well as damage to harvested silage. Contamination of feed and water for livestock is often described, with some reports of direct livestock mortality as a result. One respondent reports the loss of a litter of eight piglets because jackdaws pecked the eyes out. Those reporting conservation reasons for livestock like other corvids describe egg and chick predation on songbirds. One respondent specified known effects on bullfinch, whitethroat, redpoll, dunnoek, blackbird, song thrush. A risk to public health is felt from contamination in and around buildings, chimney blocking causing a fire risk and damage to buildings also reported.

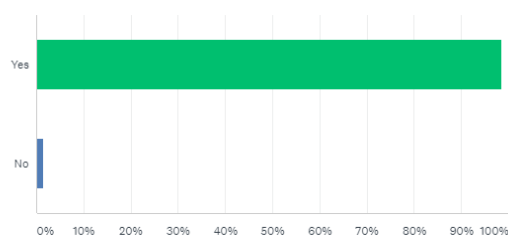
Again, almost all participants (99%) report witnessing this damage being caused by jackdaws. Eighty percent feel that their local jackdaw population is increasing, with almost all remaining thinking that it is stable.

The majority of those controlling jackdaws have tried alternative non-lethal methods, but 40% feel that it would be impractical. Of those that did use alternatives, many (46%) used audio-visual deterrents and a similar number (48%) tried other disturbance, such as human or shooting to scare. Twelve percent of these found it resolved the problem, but equal numbers (40% each) found that it was ineffective, or only effective for a short while. The range of damage caused by jackdaws is wider than for some other species covered by this survey, with many wild birds thought to suffer if numbers are high, as well as a range of agricultural and public health effects also reported.

### Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by jackdaws happening?

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

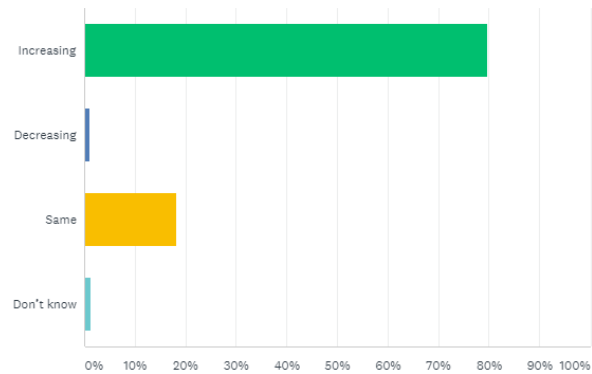


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	98.58%	417
No	1.42%	6
TOTAL		423

99% have witnessed damage by jackdaws

## Is your local population of jackdaws:

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

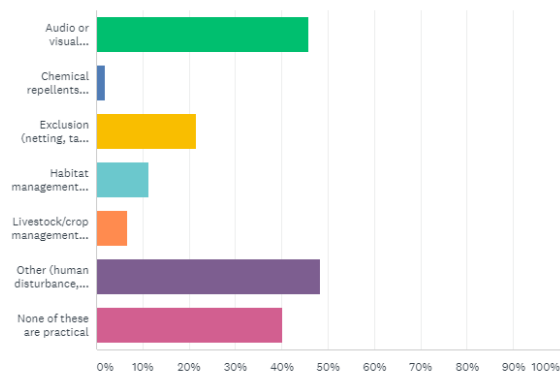


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Increasing	79.67% 337
Decreasing	0.95% 4
Same	18.20% 77
Don't know	1.18% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>423</b>

Eighty percent feel their local population is increasing.

## How have you tried controlling jackdaws?

Answered: 423 Skipped: 2,528

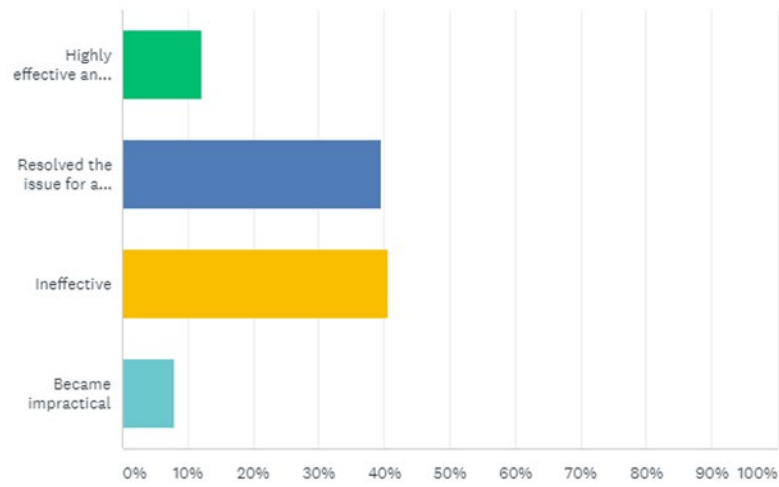


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	45.86% 194
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	1.89% 8
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	21.51% 91
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	11.35% 48
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	6.62% 28
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	48.23% 204
None of these are practical	40.19% 170
<b>Total Respondents: 423</b>	

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for jackdaw control.

## If you did try controlling jackdaws, how effective was it?

Answered: 382 Skipped: 2,569



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	12.04% 46
Resolved the issue for a short while	39.53% 151
Ineffective	40.58% 155
Became impractical	7.85% 30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>382</b>

However, alternatives solved the problem for only 12% of those who used them.

# Woodpigeon

## Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Woodpigeons	52%	3%	99%	6%

Half of those responding to the survey (1,534) control woodpigeons and described the damage they can cause. Almost all of these carried out woodpigeon control for agricultural reasons, with all but four of the 1535 respondents having witnessed the damage they describe occurring.

Farmers overwhelmingly describe crop damage, specifically wheat, barley, peas, beans and many mentions of oilseed rape. The extremely high numbers of woodpigeons are described as causing serious damage to crops, with alternative methods being tested but ineffective.

The conservation reasons reported for controlling woodpigeons are also mainly linked to their high numbers, with damage to wild bird seed mixes or food being taken from feeders reducing that available for wild birds.

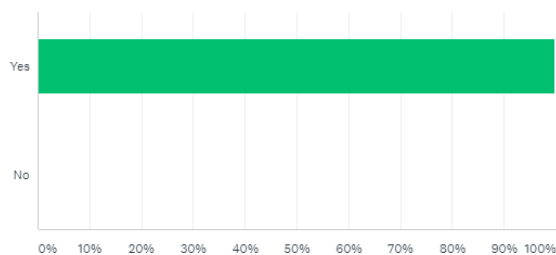
Almost all participants (over 99%) report witnessing this damage being caused by woodpigeons, and 70% feel their local population is increasing, with most of the other respondents feeling it is stable.

Seventy percent of those controlling woodpigeons have tried using audio-visual alternatives, and over half have tried other deterrents such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. However, less than ten percent of these found it resolved the problem. Approximately equal numbers (around 40% each) found that it was ineffective, or only effective for a short while.

## Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by woodpigeons happening?

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

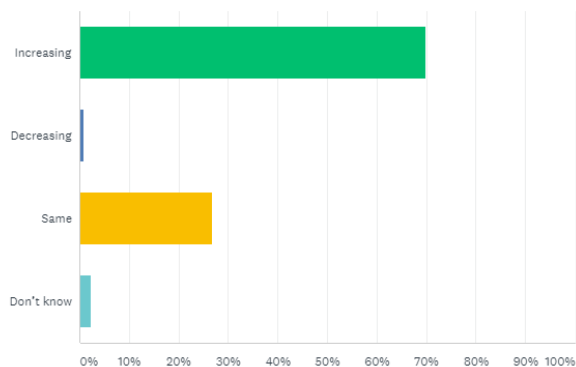


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	99.74%	1,530
No	0.26%	4
TOTAL		1,534

Over 99% have witnessed damage by woodpigeons

## Is your local population of woodpigeons:

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

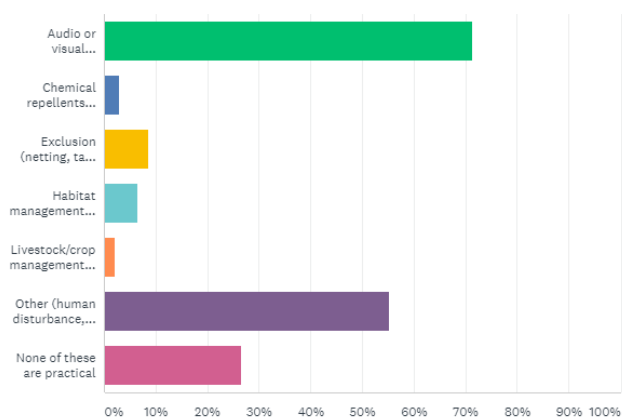


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Increasing	69.88% 1,072
Decreasing	0.91% 14
Same	26.86% 412
Don't know	2.35% 36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,534</b>

Seventy percent feel their local population is increasing.

## How have you tried controlling woodpigeons?

Answered: 1,534 Skipped: 1,417

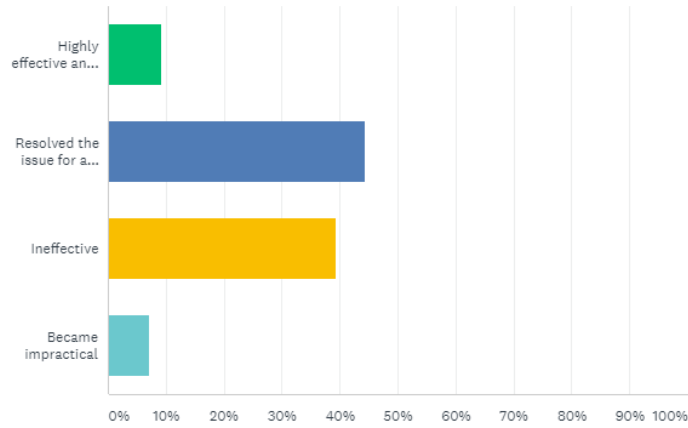


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	71.25% 1,093
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	2.93% 45
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	8.67% 133
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	6.58% 101
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	2.15% 33
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	55.15% 846
None of these are practical	26.60% 408
<b>Total Respondents: 1,534</b>	

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for woodpigeon control.

## If you did try controlling wood pigeons, how effective was it?

Answered: 1,448 Skipped: 1,503



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	9.25% 134
Resolved the issue for a short while	44.27% 641
Ineffective	39.36% 570
Became impractical	7.11% 103
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,448</b>

However, alternatives solved the problem for less than ten percent of those who used them.



## Feral pigeon

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Feral Pigeon	12%	9%	87%	60%

Twelve percent of those responding to the survey (352) control feral pigeons and described the damage they can cause. These are mainly controlled for agriculture and public health reasons.

Farmers describe crop damage, as well as pigeons eating cattle food and damaging silage bales. One describes well the range of damage caused by feral pigeons:

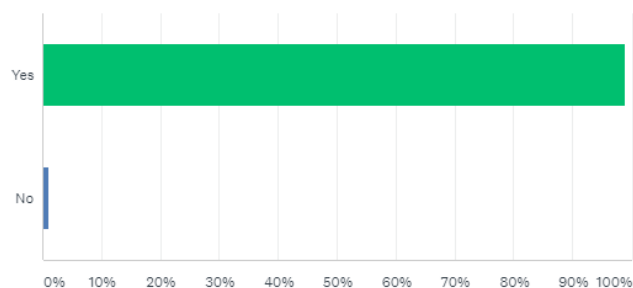
*Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxmon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. Feral pigeons are shot with shotgun and air rifle.*

Public health reasons for feral pigeon control are mainly based around contamination caused by defecation, of animal or human foodstuffs. Ninety nine percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and most (65%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with limited success. Fifteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (38%), was ineffective (37%), or became impractical (10%).

### Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by feral pigeons happening?

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

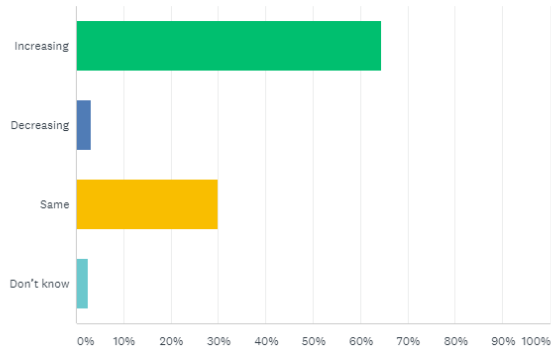


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	98.86% 348
No	1.14% 4
TOTAL	352

Ninety nine percent have witnessed damage by feral pigeons

### Is your local population of feral pigeons:

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

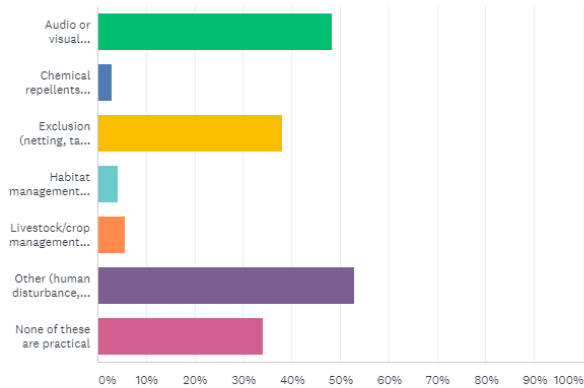


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Increasing	64.49% 227
Decreasing	3.13% 11
Same	29.83% 105
Don't know	2.56% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>352</b>

Two thirds feel their local population is increasing.

### How have you tried controlling feral pigeons?

Answered: 352 Skipped: 2,599

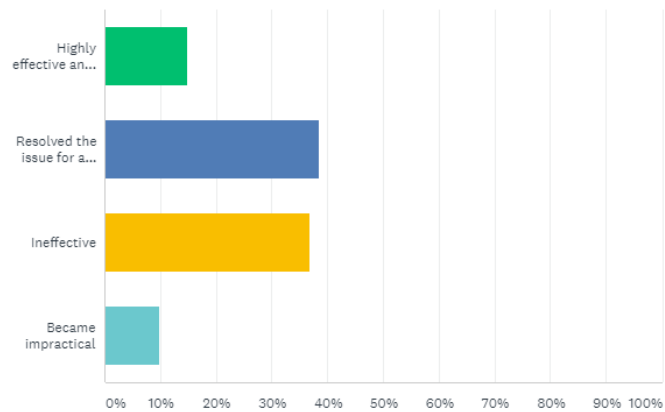


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	48.30% 170
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	2.84% 10
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	38.07% 134
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	4.26% 15
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	5.68% 20
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	52.84% 186
None of these are practical	34.09% 120
<b>Total Respondents: 352</b>	

Two thirds have tried non-lethal alternatives for feral pigeon control.

## If you did try controlling feral pigeons, how effective was it?

Answered: 328 Skipped: 2,623



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	14.94% 49
Resolved the issue for a short while	38.41% 126
Ineffective	36.89% 121
Became impractical	9.76% 32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>328</b>

Alternatives solved the problem for 15% of those who used them.

## Canada goose

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
Canada Geese	9%	15%	76%	36%

Nine percent of those responding to the survey (260) control Canada geese, and described the damage they can cause. These are mainly controlled for agriculture, but some is carried out for both public health and conservation reasons.

Those controlling for agriculture describe the loss of large areas of various crops very quickly, as they are grazed by large flocks of geese. Canada geese also overgraze pasture, both depleting the grass available for livestock, as well as contaminating the areas with their droppings.

*I control and shoot Canada Geese to prevent large scale crop damage and loss. Canada Geese are big birds and 100 of them can wipe a whole crop out in a week. Shooting them seems to have been the only effective way of control as scaring tactics have not worked and other preventions are impractical.*

Conservation reasons for Canada goose control include damaging the banks of rivers and lakes, driving native species such as lapwing away from suitable habitat or competing for nest sites. Aggression towards native species is cited as a reason by some.

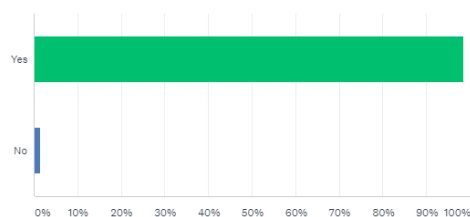
Public health concerns are once again related to defecation contaminating land, grazing and water courses, including with effects on local fisheries.

Ninety eight percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and many (58%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with limited success. Thirteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (35%), was ineffective (44%), or became impractical (7%).

### Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by Canada geese happening?

Answered: 260 Skipped: 2,691

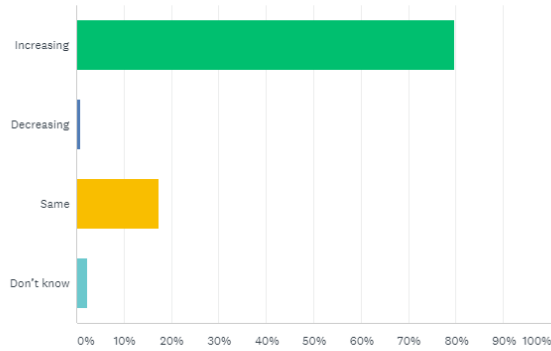


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	98.46%	256
No	1.54%	4
TOTAL		260

Almost all respondents have witnessed this damage by Canada geese.

### Is your local population of Canada geese:

Answered: 260 Skipped: 2,691

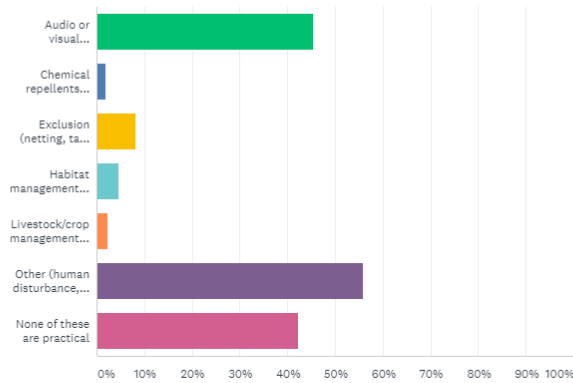


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	79.62%	207
Decreasing	0.77%	2
Same	17.31%	45
Don't know	2.31%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>260</b>

Most perceive their local population to be increasing.

### How have you tried controlling Canada geese?

Answered: 260 Skipped: 2,691

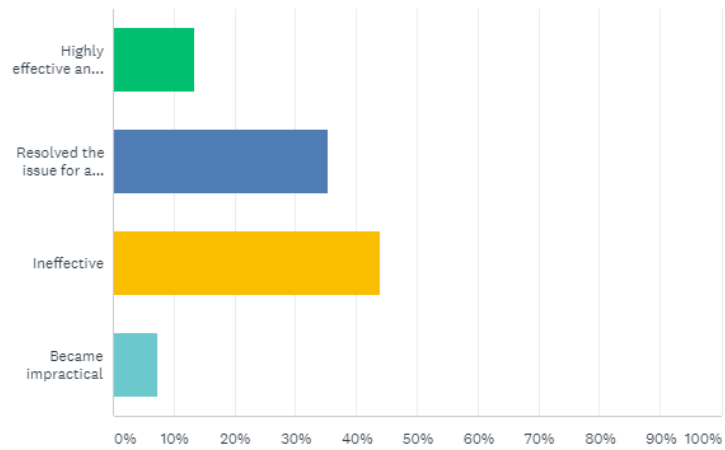


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	45.38%	118
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	1.92%	5
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	8.08%	21
Habitat management (game cover crops, brush piles)	4.62%	12
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	2.31%	6
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	55.77%	145
None of these are practical	42.31%	110
<b>Total Respondents: 260</b>		

Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for Canada goose control.

## If you did try controlling Canada geese, how effective was it?

Answered: 232 Skipped: 2,719



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	13.36% 31
Resolved the issue for a short while	35.34% 82
Ineffective	43.97% 102
Became impractical	7.33% 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>232</b>

Alternatives solved the problem for 13% of those who used them.

## Egyptian goose

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
<b>Egyptian Geese</b>	1%	55%	50%	18%

One percent of those responding to the survey (22) control Egyptian geese and described the damage they can cause. The responses are split evenly between conservation and agriculture, with some control carried out for public health reasons.

As with other geese, Egyptian geese are reported to cause damage to crops, including barley, wheat and oats, maize, oil seed rape and peas. Damage is also reported to grass silage and wild bird seed crops.

*They come on the pond which is on one of my permission farms and have killed all young ducks & water hens, as an invasive species they should not be here.*

Conservation reasons for Egyptian goose control include aggression towards native species, particularly waterfowl, and competing for nest sites, with native owl species mentioned. Destruction of riverbank habitat is reported. Public health concerns are once again related to defecation contaminating meadows and feedstuffs, as well as buildings.

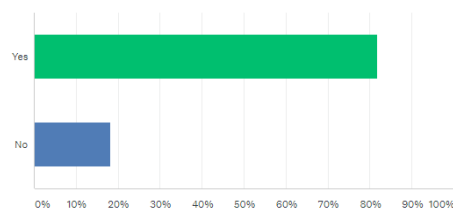
Eighty percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage, and many (73%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, mostly audio/visual or other forms deterrent such as human disturbance or shooting to scare. Fifteen percent found it solved the problem, with the rest finding it worked only temporarily (30%), or was ineffective (55%).

As the number of respondents is lower in this category, the proportions giving each response may be a less accurate reflection of the overall cohort of people controlling Egyptian geese in the country, but the experiences and observations of these individuals are equally as valid.

### Response Graphs

Have you witnessed this damage by Egyptian geese happening?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2,929

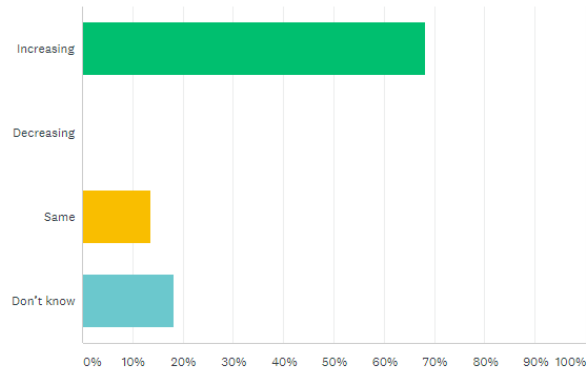


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	81.82% 18
No	18.18% 4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>

Over 80% of respondents have witnessed this damage by Egyptian geese.

## Is your local population of Egyptian geese:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2,929

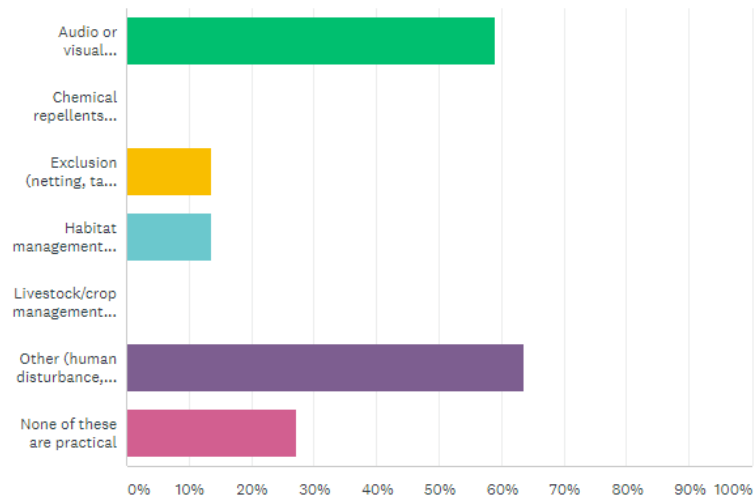


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increasing	68.18%	15
Decreasing	0.00%	0
Same	13.64%	3
Don't know	18.18%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>22</b>

Most perceive their local population to be increasing.

## How have you tried controlling Egyptian geese?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 2,929



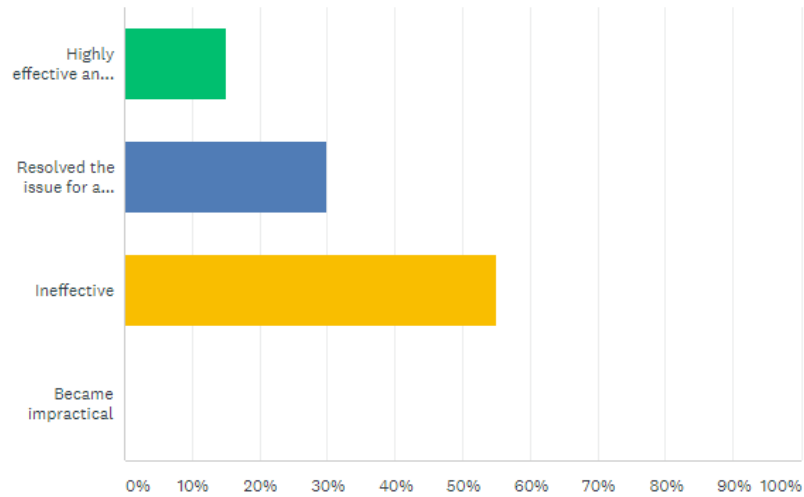
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)	59.09%	13
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)	0.00%	0
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)	13.64%	3
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)	13.64%	3
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)	0.00%	0
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)	63.64%	14
None of these are practical	27.27%	6
<b>Total Respondents: 22</b>		



Many have tried non-lethal alternatives for Egyptian goose control.

### If you did try controlling Egyptian geese, how effective was it?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2,931



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Highly effective and solved the issue	15.00% 3
Resolved the issue for a short while	30.00% 6
Ineffective	55.00% 11
Became impractical	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>

Alternatives solved the problem for 15% of those who used them.

## Other species

### Overview

Species	Proportion of respondents	Conservation	Agriculture	Public health
<b>Other species (desired)</b>	8%	60%	55%	24%

The survey also gathered information on other species, not currently included on the general licences, that people would like to be able to control, and the reasons for that. Two hundred and thirty-four people gave information in this part of the survey. The species put forward in this section include predominantly cormorants, gulls (greater and lesser black-backed gulls, and herring gulls), ravens and greylag geese. Respondents also described damage caused by several raptor species, as illustrated in the appendix. The reasons cited for wishing to control fall fairly equally into the categories for conservation (60%) and agricultural protection (55%), with a quarter citing public health (24%).

Some examples of these include the protection of ground-nesting birds including waders and gamebirds, as well as songbirds and barn owls, from birds of prey such as buzzards and kites. Cormorants were often stated to cause damage to both commercial and wild fisheries. The greater and lesser black-backed gulls are thought to impact on ground-nesting waders such as lapwing and curlew. Ravens are cited to attack newborn lambs and predate the nests of ground-nesting birds. Greylag geese are stated to cause damage to crops, and some respondents would like to control sparrow hawks to protect both game birds and songbirds.

Ninety-seven percent of respondents have witnessed these forms of damage from other species that cannot be lethally controlled. Around half (52%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives. As might be expected for species which cannot be lethally controlled, a wider range of deterrents have been used for these species than for those that can. These alternative approaches solved the problem for 11% of those who used them, or resolved it for a while for 16%. The remaining 73% found them ineffective or impractical.

Eighty respondents described the damage caused by collared doves, particularly since they were removed from the General Licence. The need to control collared doves is felt mainly for agriculture and public health reasons, but some for conservation. Farmers describe the loss of growing or stored grain to collared doves, as well as contamination by defecation. Damage is reported to crops such as oil seed rape, wheat, peas and brassicas. Public health reasons for collared dove control are mainly based around contamination caused by defecation. This is reported for both livestock and human food: grain, hay and other feed stuffs.

All respondents citing collared doves have witnessed the damage they can cause. Most (65%) have tried using non-lethal alternatives, with around 40% trying audio/visual deterrents, a similar number using exclusion, and around 60% using other methods such as shooting to scare or human disturbance. These were met with limited success but solved the problem for almost 20% of those who tried them. Eighty percent found it worked only temporarily (42%), was ineffective (28%), or became impractical (11%).

*We are generally fond of collared doves, but we do try to keep them in balance as like feral pigeons they are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we thus need to control the collared doves in and around our cubicle sheds.*

### Further information

We also allowed participants the freedom to make additional comments that they would like to direct to Defra. Many of the 731 responses in this section related to the serious damage done to crops and livestock by the birds currently on the General Licences (GL) and the significant financial loss this caused. These pointed to the need to be able to rely on local unpaid shooters to help and the risk that increased bureaucracy would deter these controllers. There was a need to be able to control pest species at short notice and year-round. The inefficacy of non-lethal methods and the risk that they just moved the problem elsewhere was a common theme.

The vast majority of responses related to the importance of the General Licences in the protection of declining species. Evidence indicated strong feeling on the part of most respondents that any changes to the existing system put threatened birds at greater risk of decline or extinction. Many respondents reported that the absence of the General Licences had led to the loss of declining species specifically songbirds and ground nesting species including lapwing, grey partridge and curlew. A common theme was the need for human intervention to maintain a prey/predator balance in the absence of apex predators and in the context of an inevitably managed landscape. It was stressed that this was not to eradicate predator species but relieve pressure on prey species during the breeding season. The increase in abundance of corvid species particularly crow, magpie and jackdaw were referred to, in spite of the General Licences, and the greater challenge of controlling them as a result. In addition, there were many references to the negative impact of increased abundance of protected species such as badgers, buzzards and ravens on species of conservation concern. The inefficacy of non-lethal control methods and the danger that they simply moved the problem elsewhere was a common theme.

Many respondents referred to the demoralising and demotivating impact of the legal challenge to the GLs both in terms of the implied criticism of land managers and upset caused by being prevented from mitigating damage to crops and farmland birds. There was a sense that those opposed to the GLs had a much bigger media platform than those who used them on a regular basis and a call for a more balanced reaction both by the media and Government and the need for more effort to make the public aware of the reasons for their use. They expressed concern that Government gave in to the pressure groups, ignoring scientific evidence and the insight of practitioners on the ground.

The potentially damaging economic impact of any changes to the system were flagged. Both in terms damage inflicted on crops and the fact that many people carry out pest control voluntarily or backed by private investment.

### Protected sites

Restrictions of General Licences on or near protected sites were highlighted as a particular concern, with respondents reporting that it could be counterproductive in conservation terms. Many describe the impact that avian predators can have on the species that are protected on their designated sites, and their concerns about their inability to control these.

*We have changed our SSSI from unfavourable to favourable in 11 years through working on the woodland and controlling corvids squirrels and foxes for the overall good of our non-predatory birds. If there are any controls added to the common-sense General Licences, I will have to rethink whether to carry on.*

Several pointed to the risk that land managers especially on protected sites would not be able to achieve their obligations and that public money would be spent on habitat improvement without achieving the intended goal. There was a concern that increased bureaucracy would drain Defra and police resources and put off volunteers from carrying out this difficult, time consuming and essential conservation work.

## Record keeping

The survey also explored respondent's views on the possible increased requirement for detailed record keeping in future General Licences. 1,687 respondents completed this section, of whom only 13% either already kept such records or felt that it would be easily achievable. Half of participants would comply with these requirements if it was absolutely required but feel that it is unnecessary. Responses from the remaining 37% indicated that there would either be a considerable impact on their practice, with predator control reduced, limited or stopped entirely; or that if they continued carrying out control to the current levels, they may be unable to comply with such requirements.

Overall, many respondents claimed that the previous system had worked very well, it was proportionate, and its rules overwhelmingly observed. A selection of these comments is included in appendix C.

## Appendix A: What we asked

### Your details:

Your name  
Email address  
County

### Please select a species:

Carrion Crow  
Magpie  
Rook  
Jay  
Jackdaw  
Woodpigeon  
Feral Pigeon  
Canada Goose  
Egyptian Goose  
Other predatory species not on this list (including birds of prey)

*The following questions were asked for each species selected in the question directly above:*

What damage is being done by **\*species name\***? Please be specific.

Have you witnessed this damage by **\*species name\*** happening?

Yes  
No

If you have not witnessed it, why do you feel this control is important?

Is your local population of **\*species name\***:

Increasing  
Decreasing  
Same  
Don't know

How do you know?

Observational  
Bird surveys (please provide details below)  
How have you tried controlling **\*species name\***?  
Audio or visual deterrents (scarecrows, gas cannons, lasers)  
Chemical repellents (taste deterrent sprayed on crop)  
Exclusion (netting, tape, polythene)  
Habitat management (game cover crops, brash piles)  
Livestock/crop management (lambing tunnels, sacrificial crop)  
Other (human disturbance, shooting to scare)  
None of these are practical

If you did try controlling **\*species name\***, how effective was it?

Highly effective and solved the issue  
Resolved the issue for a short while  
Ineffective  
Became impractical

How many **\*species name\*** do you kill on your farm, shoot or estate in an average year?

Are there any other bird species you control? ('Yes' returns you to the species list, 'No' takes you to the next part of the survey)

Yes  
No

*Everybody was asked the following questions:*

Approximately how many of the following nests do you have on your farm, shoot or estate?

Lapwing  
Curlew  
Stone Curlew  
Turtle Dove  
Grey Partridge  
Red Grouse

Do you have approximate nest counts of other species? If so, please list species and number of nests:

Based on your previous experience, what percentage of these nests would be lost if you could no longer control pest birds?

Lapwing  
Curlew  
Stone Curlew  
Turtle Dove  
Grey Partridge  
Red Grouse  
Others (please enter species and percentage)

If next year's licences required you to keep detailed records for inspection by the police (or licensing authority) which included: date, time, location, method and why each bird was killed – which of these would you most strongly feel?

Fine with me because I record this already  
I could easily keep these records  
I would do if it was compulsory, although I think it's unnecessary  
The police have better things to do, I wouldn't bother keeping records  
I would reduce or limit the amount of control I did in order to keep these records  
Too much bureaucracy, I would stop control

Which of these best describes you?

Gamekeeper  
Farmer  
Neither, but I help control birds on a farm or shoot  
Reserve warden  
I conserve birds in my garden (or land) by controlling others  
Other

How many days do you spend controlling birds by shooting a year?

How many traps do you use?

Larsen  
Larsen mate type  
Crow letterbox/multi-catch type  
Additional details

What is the approximate size of the shoot, farm, reserve or estate (in acres)?

Do you control birds within an SSSI or Special Protection Area (SPA)?

Yes

No

Not sure

Is there anything else you would like to tell us or Defra?

## Appendix B: Illustrative responses

### Carrion crow

#### Conservation

*As a pest control manager for a leading UK zoo, I organise crow control mainly by shooting to prevent predation of conservationally sensitive waterfowl species and their eggs.*

*Carrion crow predate on curlew eggs and chicks. Curlew numbers are declining due to loss of habitat, changing farm practices and increased predation.*

*Carrion crows are among the most damaging animals to the survival of ground nesting birds (curlew, lapwing and English partridge) on our farm. We historically have used Larsen traps with great success to limit the number of carrion crows on our farm.*

*Carrion crows are key predators of ground nesting birds on our farm/nature reserve. We have over 300 pairs of lapwing, 250 pairs of redshank, 100 pairs of skylark and 65 pairs of yellow wagtails and many others. Carrion crows have a significant negative impact in breeding success by predation of eggs and young chicks each Spring.*

*Carrion crows are particularly prominent on this estate and we have witnessed them attacking livestock and the nests of ground nesting birds, they are a cunning bird and difficult to shoot as they are very canny but also very persistent. We have seen them sitting on fences eyeing up and hassling lambs in large numbers at lambing time when the livestock is particularly vulnerable, we have also witnessed them taking eggs from lapwing, curlew, grey and red legged partridge nests and pheasant nests.*

*Carrion crows cause untold damage by devastating the nests of ground and hedge nesting birds. They are very effective at what they do and should be controlled to a reasonable level. In sheep farming areas they will also peck out the eyes of newly born lambs to eventually kill them and provide an easy meal. I control carrion crows through Larsen traps and ladder traps as well as shooting. It is important to realise how much damage these clever birds can do to the songbird population if left unchecked.*

*Carrion crows eat the eggs and chicks of many wild birds and I consider it is important to maintain biodiversity. Oyster catchers and curlew are two of the many birds whose numbers have significantly reduced.*

*Carrion crows regularly hunt the moor searching for eggs and chicks of game birds, waders and songbirds. I control them by trapping and shooting.*

*Carrion crows take eggs and chicks from ground nesting birds and also take chicks once they are foraging with their parents. As part of my HLS scheme which started in 2006, I targeted the grey partridge as a species I wanted to see in my farm as I had none. I planted appropriate seed mixes around the farm following advice from my FWAG advisor. After 4 seasons I saw my first grey partridge on my farm. Since then, I have been actively protecting them by controlling carrion crows. I now have at least 7 coveys, some of which produce 10+ chicks to adulthood.*

*Carrion crows take the eggs and chicks of curlew, plover, oyster catcher as well as other vulnerable and endangered ground nesting birds as well as game birds. I control carrion crows and other corvids for this reason by shooting and trapping.*

*Carrion crow control needed to protect ground nesting birds, damage to and pollution of farm produce/plantings and damage to livestock. As a Natural England volunteer, I control carrion crows to protect red listed ground nesting species, especially snipe on the levels and moors.*



*Crow numbers are controlled to lower the number of farmland bird nests predated. This will include several finch and bunting species, particularly goldfinch, greenfinch and yellowhammer: Songbirds such as blackbird, song thrush and skylark: Ground nesters including lapwing, pheasant and partridge (both species).*

*Crows predate young leverets and also raid nests of other bird species but around us especially oyster catchers.*

*Crows walk along my field margins and hedge side watch pheasants and partridges leaving their nests and then clean the nests out. This was worse this year as the ban made it impossible to control them. Hence our partridge and pheasant numbers are well down on previous years. All our birds are wild.*

## **Agriculture**

*Apart from decimating the songbird population by taking eggs and fledglings, they also rip open the polythene on the large round bales of haylage, before I have a chance to remove them from the field and even when I get them back to the farm they still attack them. They attack vulnerable newborn lambs and I have on occasions, when a ewe goes down with staggers or some other onset of illness, the crows peck out their eyes before the ewe can be revived.*

*Attacking newborn lambs pecking eyes out and tongues. We then have to dispatch the lambs putting them out of their misery. We are losing lambs and our profit as a result.*

*Attacks on sheep. Lambs eyes pecked out even before they are fully born; navels pecked at, so disembowelling and tongues pecked out. Full grown sheep that are on their backs having eyes pecked out and stomachs pecked open. Ground nesting birds' eggs and chicks taken including lapwing, curlew, oyster catcher, redshank, meadow pipit and skylark.*

*Carrion crows attack ewes and lambs at lambing time, pecking the eyes out of ewes and also pecking their rear. They will quickly kill young lambs. The only practical method of control is shooting all year round and frequently at nesting time. A Larsen trap can also be quite effective in the spring.*

*Carrion crows cause damage to our corn crops and will actually tread down and flatten areas to feed from the ears of corn. They also peck the eyes from sheep and lambs when the opportunity arises. I have also witnessed them gathering around calving cows looking for an opportunity. These are all understandable behaviours but as a farmer I need the ability to control this bird species.*

*Carrion crows have done horrific damage to farmers lambs in the fields. I've found a number of lambs with eyes pecked out and bleeding to a slow and painful death. I control them by shooting them on adjacent fields to the livestock to decrease the chances of lambs being attacked.*

*Crop damage and newborn lamb attacks. I control crows on farmland by shooting to protect crops, wheat oilseed rape and peas.*

*Crop damage to newly planted crops. Damage in livestock buildings by piercing bales, eating animal feeds and defecating in feeds.*

*Crop damage, egg and chick predation (various species), fouling and taking of animal feed at farmyard, direct damage to livestock (lambs).*

*Crows are flattening and eating whole patches of standing wheat in spite of deterring by noise and human presence. Also, I have needed to shoot crows raiding ground nesting game birds and attacking small chicks.*

*Crows around our fishery are stealing moorhen and coot eggs, taking newly hatched duckling and goslings as soon as they climb out of the water to rest.*

*Crows cause significant damage to my cereal crops including wheat, barley and oats so I control them by shooting.*

*Crows like pigeons can be a menace on crops, maize in particular after drilling. Their long thick beaks dig up the maize seed before it germinates.*

*Damage to curlew nests specifically, also grey partridge and many other ground nesting birds, eggs and fledglings. They also take the eyes, tongues and soft body parts of lambs up to a week old. I have seen a 'murder' of some 30 crows gang up on a ewe with twins, separate the weaker twin and set on it. By the time I crossed to the field involved, the lamb had lost both eyes, its tongue and had to be put down.*

*Damage to livestock by pecking newborn lambs/calves eyes and navels. Also had cow's vulvas attacked at calving. They destroy ground nesting bird nests by taking chicks and eggs. I control by shooting as this is the most effective.*

## **Magpie**

### **Conservation**

*I have seen them eating the eggs and chicks of quite rare native birds.*

*A local expansion in the magpie population is having a very adverse effect on the breeding success of smaller garden songbird species.*

*As a farmer and custodian of the land and biodiversity around me I control magpies and other corvids by Larsen trapping and shooting to protect the hedgerow nests of all songbirds including turtle dove, thrush, and blackbird.*

*Attacking songbird nests in my fields. There are numerous magpies and they have a devastating effect on the songbird population.*

*Attacks on hedgerow birds like great tits, dunnocks, gold finches, blackbirds, and wrens, who nest and fledge on our property by magpies have only controlled by shooting because traps are too dangerous to other species of birds that we also have.*

*Control by shooting/trapping to prevent them stripping hedgerows of songbirds and ground nesting game birds. A partridge successfully reared 12 chicks on rear garden boundary. Within a week this was down to 5 chicks as we watched crows and magpies attack and kill the chicks in the standing corn despite trying to scare them off.*

*I control these pests on farmland by trapping and shooting to protect nests of hedgerow nesting birds like song thrush, turtle dove and sparrows.*

*Damage to small farmland birds during spring has been increasing in line with magpie population growth particularly this year following the temporary ban on Larsen trap use. Many nests were robbed over the spring with many smashed eggs in our yard taken and dropped in mid-flight.*

*Destroying bird nests by taking eggs or fledglings of songbirds nesting along hedgerows and in scrub on the marsh. Thrush species, buntings, blackbird, finches. Magpies are trapped and shot.*

*I have controlled magpies by trapping and shooting on farmland and trapping in my garden to protect nests of hedgerow, ground and garden nesting birds. Over a number of years, I have observed a significant increase in these species where I have controlled magpies. During the period in the Spring of this year when I was unable to control them due to the revocation of General Licences and the*

*subsequent uncertainty I observed both a significant reduction in successfully reared broods of the species I had previously been able to protect and evidence of increased predation of eggs and young by an observed uncontrolled expanded population of magpies. I have been particularly concerned about the impact upon a colony of yellowhammers which I have encouraged in my garden since a pair first appeared years ago using magpie control as one of my preservation tools to increase the garden population. This Spring, without magpie control, I did not see one successfully reared brood but observed unrelenting predation of nests by expanding uncontrolled population of magpies. My recent observations indicate that I now have only two, possibly three, yellowhammers left in my garden and I fear that the colony may not survive, and my years of effort have been wasted - however I do have a hugely increased garden population of magpies!*

*I use lethal control on magpies by shooting and trapping as effective ways of conservation of endangered species of wildlife on the farmland. Such species I have witnessed be heavily impacted by magpies taking all the nesting young/eggs of songbirds, blackbirds, thrushes and robins. The magpie population has no natural predator and so the numbers are vastly increasing out of control. Wherever I drive I see at least three or four magpies at a time. On the farmland there are greater numbers. Lethal control is the only way of any hope to keep the numbers from spiralling even higher. Nesting birds don't stand any chance without human management of the magpie population.*

*Magpies steal eggs from our duck house. Ducks do not lay eggs above ground level so unlike hens who will lay in nest boxes out of direct sight of chicken house door, ducks lay on floor of their house and the magpies see the eggs and enter to steal them. Once they learn, they keep returning as they are territorial and understand their territory.*

*Magpie numbers are controlled by trapping and shooting to lower the number of farmland bird nests predated. This will include several finch and bunting species, particularly goldfinch, greenfinch and yellowhammer: Songbirds such as blackbird, song thrush and skylark: Ground nesters including lapwing, pheasant and partridge (both species).*

### **Agriculture**

*I have a small free-range commercial egg laying flock of chickens. magpie and carrion crow populations in our area predate our eggs on a daily basis, we try everything to prevent the problem but these birds are clever, I'm afraid that trapping and shooting them is the only way for our business to survive, they would otherwise eat every egg as it's laid... literally!!*

*Extensive damage to Christmas tree plantations, Nordman Fir. Territorial birds perch on delicate lead shoots in May and June, often breaking them. The tree has great difficulty recovering.*

*Taking eggs and killing chicks from domestic fowl also songbird predation - there are too many of them.*

*Magpies predate on newly born lambs on our estate also predate eggs from all waders (some which are red listed) and all other ground nesting birds. Also, songbirds and their nests are predated by magpies.*

*I want to control magpies as they are hugely destructive to songbirds and damage animal feed/crops. As an effective predator I've witnessed a pair clear a hedgerow of young songbird chicks. I don't want to eradicate them just ensure a balanced population.*

*Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxmon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. I control magpies by shooting with a shotgun and air rifle. I also control magpies by trapping with Larsen traps and ladder trap.*

*Birds on a free-range farm that may be unwell but will be okay after a little treatment or recovery are*

*being pecked out (slowly killed) by magpies. They mob like wolves, attack and then scatter, leaving an unwell but otherwise healthy bird to suffer and die. If there is a quick temperature change e.g. a freak cold snap for a day, then a huge number of birds can exhibit unwell-type behaviour. It is not unheard of to get a call from a friend who may have lost as many as 30+ birds in a week from magpies and other corvids. I shoot magpies and various other corvids to protect the livelihood of many farmers in the area.*

*This is going to be the biggest killer on farms by injuring newborn lambs that lead to death or have to be euthanized.*

## **Public Health**

*Whilst eating animal feed and Stewardship wild bird feed, magpies are probably our champion hunter out of songbird nests in our hedges. As they are incredibly wary and usually in groups, shooting is difficult, so we principally control them in spring by trapping. This spring we have not trapped any and we now see about a dozen around the farm buildings most days.*

## **Rooks**

### **Conservation**

*They have actively destroyed the sparrow, thrush and other songbird populations in the entire area.*

*They are active predators and this Spring, as an example, a wild duck hatched 12 ducklings and by nightfall all had been taken by rooks.*

*I control rooks to prevent them preying eggs & young chicks. We have many rare species on the estate including waders such as lapwing, plover, curlew, redshank, peewit, also songbirds & species such as nightjars. the rooks predate the young in the fields & on the moor.*

*Damage to ground-nesting, and hedgerow-nesting birds, including grey partridge.*

*I control rooks by shooting and trapping in woodland and wetland areas to protect lapwings, wild pheasants and grey partridges during their nesting seasons.*

*I control rooks during the breeding season to increase the breeding success of and thus promote the long-term viability of multiple vulnerable bird species including curlew, lapwing, oystercatcher, red grouse, black grouse, golden plover and others. Rooks migrate to open allotments and moorland from lowland areas during April to May looking to take advantage of any Crane Fly hatch but will also opportunistically predate ground-nesting birds' nest and chicks*

*Occupying barn owl nests and preventing them from nesting*

*I control rooks by shooting and trapping on farmland to protect ground nesting birds, as I'm running a grey partridge rehabilitation program.*

### **Agriculture**

*Destruction of crops. They pull up young maize plants and will eat any other planted seeds (wheat, barley, beans etc) which will get worse with different seed protective coatings being phased out. They spread disease over my rearing field which make reducing antibiotic use very difficult and they will come in on pheasant feeders in release pens eating expensive feed and creating disease hot spots again increasing the need for antibiotics.*

*On a dairy farm we have a flourishing rookery and welcome rooks to our grass fields where most of the year they pick over the cow pats and eat leather jackets and such. However, we need to be able to control and balance numbers. In spring they do significant damage to our freshly sown maize, cereal and*

wild bird food crops, and in winter have learnt to attack the face and top of the maize silage clamp and eat animal feeds and standing maize crops. We thus control them principally by shooting on these occasions. Almost all deterrents have been tried including kites, scarecrows, lasers, bird call machines, gas guns, bangers, plastic owls, taste on seed and such, but the rook is intelligent and the local numbers large and increasing.

Damage to crops by large flocks removing leaves digging up roots and fresh seeds. Also, very large flocks in the crew yard eating animal feed and fouling the water troughs. Pecking at sheep's afterbirth and sometimes attacking newborn lambs. Also witnessed lapwing nest being destroyed by dozens of rooks

The explosion of rook numbers has caused untold damage to freshly sown cereal crops and game covers in the spring. They completely ignore all forms of bird scarers, noises and gas guns. The only method of deterring them is to hang up dead rooks over the seedbeds and they keep clear.

Newborn lambs are very prone to having eyes and tongues pecked just after birth.

I control rooks to protect arable crops as the rooks can cause severe damaging by removing the planted seeds straight from the ground after drilling.

I control rooks by shooting and trapping to protect crops and stored animal feed to try and reduce contamination.

## **Public Health**

Damaging the grass sward looking for leather jackets and chafer grubs. When this occurs on grass gallops it endangers horses and riders by creating "false" ground. When racehorses are travelling at speed this sudden change in going or "slip" caused by loose grass can literally be fatal.

1000+ roost on farm over winter carry disease farm to farm.

Contamination of feed stuffs and damage to maize silage clamps.

Damage to crops during drilling and disease risks on pig farms

Damage to crops particularly at the establishment and harvest stage. These birds flock in numbers and contaminate livestock and crop stores.

## **Jay**

### **Conservation**

I constantly observe jays targeting the nests & young of songbirds & other birds to take their eggs kill & eat their young in hedgerows on land I own, and neighbour's land.

Control needed to protect nesting birds, damage to forestry. Rare woodland species such as flycatchers are particularly vulnerable to an overabundance of Jays which are difficult to spot and control. Effective control can only be done in winter when there is less cover for the Jays to take advantage of rather than at the time of nesting.

I control jays by trapping and shooting because we have a small population of willow warblers and the jays are one of the few species that will hunt and destroy their nests. Jays are plentiful but Willow Warblers are extremely rare so human intervention is required to restore the balance.

Damage to nests of all songbirds, such as song thrush, blackbird, tits, wren, and finches (Gold, Chaff, Bull). Due to the increase in jays there has been a noticeable decrease in smaller nesting Garden birds and I have seen the result of them destroying eggs and nests.

*Egg and young bird predation both game for shooting and other species mainly listed - partridge/lapwings/turtle dove.*

*I control jays to prevent predation of many small wood/farmland birds their nests eggs and young. Found they target mainly low or ground nesting birds (warblers etc). Seen pairs of jays constantly working woods hedges and scrub for nests or to flush young birds.*

*I control jays because they raid the nests of game and songbirds. I watch them dive into thick hedges and I hear the alarm calls of songbirds whilst the jay empties the nest. Jays are opportunist thieves and significantly reduce populations of song and game birds. We shoot and trap them.*

*I control jays to protect game birds, wildfowl and songbirds on an area of land that includes SSSI and HLS land due to the rich habitat and biodiversity in this area. This is essential conservation work that has to continue to support this diversity.*

*Jays take the eggs, nestlings, fledglings, parent birds and destroy the nests of red listed and migratory species. We control jays via a combination of shooting and trapping to protect the little owl, kestrel, goldfinch, chaffinch, bullfinch coal tit, long tailed tit, nuthatch, tree creeper, wren, spotted flycatcher, chiffchaff, willow warbler, black cap, garden warbler, swallow to name but a few.*

*We control jays on the estate to benefit the wild birds that we have here in residence, we have witnessed them stealing eggs and chicks from nests and we have on a recent survey counted 22 red-listed species here and 25 amber.*

## **Agriculture**

*Damage to songbirds, nests and chicks. They also damage standing wheat and barley crops by picking the grains from field margins.*

*Taking cattle feed and calf feed. They also raid the pied wagtails and swallows' nests.*

*Jays predate the nests of songbirds, swallows, martens and ground nesting birds, as well as destroying my crop of cherries. I control these by shooting.*

## **Jackdaw**

### **Conservation**

*Around nesting season, they look in every nook and cranny in our extensive area of mature willows. It's known that duck eggs on the pond also taken, and suspect black cap nests also disappeared. They also take eggs of game birds, skylark and yellowhammers, kill leveret hares in gangs, kill young game birds and songbirds.*

*Controlled by shooting to protect fresh drilled and emerging crops and any areas of laid combinable crops. Also, predation of eggs and chicks of ground nesting birds e.g. lapwing.*

*Damage to eggs and in particular chicks of threatened farmland bird species. Also crop damage at vulnerable times prior to harvest.*

*Destroy eggs and young of song and game birds. Take over owl nesting boxes. Jackdaws have taken over a box that I had built into a new farm building after it had been occupied by a Barn Owl, the first I had seen in 35 years here. They are very rare in this area.*

*Jackdaws appear in large mobs and will attack clutches of chicks in mass to make up for their smaller size overwhelming parental defences. They are also adept at reaching protected nests able to pass through*

*narrow obstructions to reach the chicks within. Jackdaws are able to operate in deep cover and on open ground. The birds we protect by controlling Jackdaws include Curlew, Lapwing, Oyster Catcher, Snipe, Dunlin, Ring Ouzel, Grey Wagtail, Song Thrush, Black Grouse, Red Grouse, Woodcock, Stone Chat, Meadow Pipit, Mistle Thrush, Red Grouse, Golden Plover, Red Shank, Wild Pheasant, Wild Grey Partridge, House Martin, Sand Martin, Swallow, Little Owl.*

*I control jackdaws because they damage crops and kill smaller birds. They have a detrimental effect on the swallow population as I have witnessed jackdaws pulling swallow chicks from their nests and dropping them.*

## **Agriculture**

*Bird control of the species listed is crucial for us. When we stopped controlling jackdaws due to the 'ban' our pig food costs went up by 110% in a week as did our poultry feed. The disease control had to be increased and our egg yield fell as eggs were being taken all of the time. Magpies do a lot of damage on our land as we are next to an urban area where they breed and are not controlled.*

*Defecating over feed for milking cows and breaking into silage clamps. Causing damage to seed drillings and also damage in livestock sheds and grain stores.*

*Contaminate animal feed by defecation which poisons the animals resulting in death.*

*Control by shooting to prevent damage to a friend's wheat and barley crops, and contamination of animal feed in buildings via droppings.*

*Control jackdaws by shooting to protect agricultural crops when newly sown, like wheat, barley, maize and game cover strips. To prevent damage to harvested crops such as silage.*

*Damage to agricultural produce and feed in store. Potential spread of disease to poultry and livestock.*

*Damage to arable and songbirds. I shoot a lot on the crops via decoying. damage is clearly evident on new drills or standing crops. I have observed 1,000 plus on one field.*

*Damage to drilled crops and feeding in grain stores. Eating feed from outdoor pigs' feeders and covering feed with droppings.*

*Damage to property, buildings and livestock. Some of our farm buildings are piled to the rafters with twigs from their nests and several chimneys get blocked every year. We had a sow farrow a few years ago and the jackdaws pecked the eyes out of the baby piglets (8 of them). They are filthy and spread disease amongst livestock as well as kill any little chicks they happen to find.*

## **Public health**

*Building of nests in chimneys, which causes blockages and smoke when fire is used.*

*Constantly nesting in the house chimneys. Debris brought in for nesting material, including food scraps are dropped down the roof and lodge in the gutters eventually causing blockages in the downpipes and thus overflowing gutters. Waste food has to be a health hazard as it goes mouldy or rots and smells, I have been requested by neighbours to shoot them but since the general licences were revoked, I have undertaken no control whatsoever.*

*To protect nesting songbirds. to stop them from entering farm buildings eating food and spreading disease, and to keep them out of my neighbour's chimneys.*

## **Woodpigeon**

### **Conservation**

*I control all carrion and pigeon by trapping and shooting so as to protect the few songbirds left on our territory but in particular to give the ground nesting birds a fair chance of survival.*

*Damage to wild bird cover areas.*

*Woodpigeons feed on our bird feeders and deter the pheasants and ducks from feeding at their regular times and strip cover crops and they need to be controlled to maintain a reasonable balance on our ground.*

## **Agriculture**

*As an arable farmer I control woodpigeons by shooting to protect my crops including wheat, barley, peas, beans and oilseed rape. Non-lethal deterrents simply are not effective, and these birds soon get used to them and as a result without the ability to shoot these birds farm incomes will be significantly reduced.*

*Crop damage to winter oilseed rape cropping is our key problem. They graze the crop during the autumn, winter and early spring and can reduce the leaf area to such a low level that the plants either die or it seriously reduces the eventual yield of the crop. Although we use a range of methods to scare the pigeons, inevitably we are forced to shoot them to try and reduce their impact on our crops.*

*Woodpigeon eat various crops throughout the year. They are in such vast numbers it is essential to control numbers in order to prevent this problem from getting worse. Namely, they eat oilseed rape over winter in huge flocks. They will also eat wheat grains in early summer and beans and peas to name but a few.*

*Woodpigeons are eating and decimating a large quantity of oil seed rape plants. There are thousands of them, and I need to be able to shoot them to protect my crop.*

*I shoot woodpigeon for local farmers to prevent arable crops being eaten and economically damaged. There have been occasions with several thousand birds feeding on the crops at one time. - horrendous economic damage being done and it will not stop until a) no crop is left or b) they are moved off by disturbance. However, shooting is the only method which reduces the damage done to the next field they move to as they quickly learn to ignore no lethal methods and return to a previous feeding place.*

*Damage to new seeds and young seedlings, with loss of 30 acres of spring barley in 2019.*

*Extensive crop damage in my area. I live in a very rural location with arable land opposite my house and have watched pigeons systematically destroy the barley, to the point where the farmer said it was hardly worth putting the combine on it.*

*Growing salad crops means we are vulnerable during daylight hours to pigeons eating and damaging crops and we predict they cost us circa £200k of damage. We have staff walking fields all day to deter pigeons from damaging crops. Use rope bangers people etc but it's very costly and we still have damages annually.*

*Woodpigeon have migrated to our garden where they are nesting they will attack and devour any vegetable crop in the garden and pick the buds off fruit trees in spring, decimating the crop. In the winter, flocks of pigeon, sometimes many hundred strong, persistently raid and feed on our neighbouring farmers beans and oilseed rape, and roost in our copse. I shoot them when possible.*

## **Public Health**

*Cause a health hazard due to excrement in wind damaged buildings.*

*Crop damage and broad human health concerns caused by their mess everywhere.*



*Nesting in creepers on side of house, fouling and health hazards from guano, and destroying vegetable garden and fruit tree crops.*

## **Feral Pigeon**

### **Conservation**

*I shoot Pigeons to preserve the fabric of a Grade I listed house where they nest in the gutters and valleys.*

*Occasionally flocks attack crops, like Pigeons do. Usually their presence around buildings creates nesting competition with birds we would rather have.*

### **Agriculture**

*Being relatively tame, they are not afraid of the human presence and encourage Wood Pigeons in as decoys in effect.*

*I control Feral Pigeons by shooting and trapping on farmland and farm buildings to prevent damage to crops, damage to foodstuff for livestock and to prevent a hazard to health.*

*Whilst not as numerous as Woodpigeons, Feral Pigeons are just as damaging to newly sown crops and ripening crops.*

*Eating whole crop triticale, whole crop oats, maize silage, dairy blend and cake for dairy cows. Eating maxxmon barley ration for beef animals. Eating calf starter ration, fouling in calf teat buckets. Fouling on livestock feed and fouling in water troughs. Pecking silage sheets causing spoilage and loss of feed. Pecking wrapped bales causing spoilage and loss. Fouling on tractors, machinery and gates causing a hazard to farm staff. Feral Pigeons are shot with shotgun and air rifle.*

*Feral pigeons are agricultural pests and cause damage to standing crops and around farmyards and grain storage; feeding and defecating on standing and stored crops. They not only damage standing crops but are a health hazard to the human food chain.*

*Feral pigeons take cattle food and increase disease burden within cattle buildings. They take cereal crops. They can and do pose a nuisance to neighbouring houses. Scare crows, gas cannons, human disturbance and shooting all work in a variety of situations on the farm. Within the cattle buildings, air rifle is used to kill feral pigeons. Since controlling the number of feral pigeons in the buildings the number of cases of mastitis has notably dropped. In fields where non-lethal methods of deterrent are failing, shotgun is used to kill birds. All non-lethal methods tried in and around the cattle buildings have proven to be completely ineffective.*

### **Public Health**

*Environmental health risk from droppings. Damage to buildings from droppings and nests. Eating livestock feed.*

*I work as a pest controller and the culling of feral pigeons is sometimes required in food premises and other areas for public health and hygiene purposes. Also, nest egg and chick removal is required during proofing work. The methods of control used are trapping and shooting.*

*I control feral pigeons in and around food production/ agricultural buildings. Ferals like to roost undercover near to a readily available food source such as stored grain. Feral pigeons allowed to remain and defecate on feedstuff that is fed to animals or poultry for the purpose of meat or egg production, present a direct risk to public health.*

*Crop damage as well as food hygiene issues. I shoot feral pigeons in work sheds on a couple of mushroom growing farms. They defecate in the food from the roof rafters causing the food hygiene*

*officers to insist that they are removed.*

*Damage to agricultural crops but tends to be light. Hygiene issues around the farm are of greater importance with faecal mess being an issue if numbers are not controlled.*

*Feral pigeons are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we need to control the feral pigeons in and around our cubicle sheds. This is not an occasional homing pigeon having a rest, but proper feral pigeons from our local town.*

*There are six or seven of these birds in the depot where I work messing everywhere. Their mess is a slip hazard and health hazard.*

*Feral pigeons can cause problems when roosting on buildings, entering food businesses or warehouses roof spaces etc. Proofing and exclusion is usually effective but sometimes nest removal and culling is required.*

## **Canada Goose**

### **Conservation**

*Aside from driving out other native species including Lapwing, the amount of grass consumed is astounding. Some pastures stripped to below levels suitable for grazing livestock to an extent where the geese themselves suffer from lack of feed.*

*Bank damage to the rivers and ponds, aggressive towards native wildfowl, crop damage at varying stages of growth. Shooting over decoys, flight line shooting and egg pricking can be effective.*

*Considerable damage to crops and banks of the river and lakes due to the high numbers of them trampling and defecating on areas which should have ground flora that benefit the wider range of wildlife.*

*We try to encourage different duck species to our man-made water reservoir and ponds, but the large amount of Canada geese seems to turn grass bank areas to mud in just a few days making it undesirable for other duck to graze from.*

*On my farm Canada geese sometimes drive other species from their nest sites on ponds and other water bodies and the only way to control the increase in the numbers of Canada geese is by selective culling.*

*I control Canada Geese to protect habitat for other birds and because The British Trust for Ornithology requested us to do so. This year we could not control them because of Chris Packham and the numbers have gone from 5000 to 10000.*

*I control Canada Geese on some small lakes I am responsible for. They are very aggressive to other native waterfowl competing for nesting sites and even killing young waterfowl. Also, they foul the shallow water and banks.*

### **Agriculture**

*I control and shoot Canada Geese to prevent large scale crop damage and loss. Canada Geese are big birds and 100 of them can wipe a whole crop out in a week. Shooting them seems to have been the only effective way of control as scaring tactics have not worked and other preventions are impractical.*

*Crop damage to my arable land, grazing large areas off over winter and foul from them is poisoning the soils with acidic manure so crops then do not grow the following year.*

*We have a large wildflower meadow and when it's cropped the cattle are let in to graze it to supplement their winter feeding. The Canada geese fly in from the fishing lakes and leave their droppings all over the meadow which hampers the cattle grazing. I shoot them as they come onto the meadow. They also leave their droppings on the public walks around the estate.*

*1. Hundreds if not thousands of geese grazing sheep pastures leaving little for the sheep and contaminating their pasture. 2. Hundreds of geese grazing where free-range poultry are. Giving rise to serious concerns over bird flu.*

*Grazing, paddling and defecating on a wheat field as it starts to grow. Over 100 Canada's feeding all day every day. Farmer erected scarecrows every 30 metres along the 800 metres long field which were useless. Tried firing over their heads in an attempt to scare them off but they either walked to the adjacent canal or flew 100 metres and started to feed again as though nothing had happened. These birds cause serious damage.*

### **Public Health**

*We have 400 plus geese on our farm. They eat a lot of grass but also foul the land and the lakes. They are a threat to human health.*

*Damage to crops such as grass for hay, ripe wheat. They leave droppings in public places around a lake on the estate which is a public health concern. Their droppings also affect the water quality of the lakes and surrounding streams.*

*I control Canada geese by shooting to prevent numbers building, to prevent contamination and spread of disease round fisheries farm reservoirs water supplies and ponds.*

*I control Canada geese by shooting because they consume human food crops and produce a high volume of faeces which is unsightly and unhygienic.*

### **Egyptian Goose**

#### **Conservation**

*Birds are very aggressive to other native waterfowl.*

*They come on the pond which is on one of my permission farms and have killed all young ducks & water hens as an invasive species. They should not be here.*

*Competition for nesting sites with native species of owl.*

*Eating cereal crops in winter and spring. Also nesting in hollow trees and preventing 3 owl species from using these nest sites. Birds are shot.*

*Eating crops and aggression during breeding affecting other native ducks.*

*Impacting the population of native geese.*

#### **Agriculture**

*Egyptian Geese are a recently introduced species; they cause damage to agricultural crops such as wheat, barley and oats and outcompete more native breeds of waterfowl.*

*I control Egyptian geese on farmland to prevent serious damage to crops such as wheat, oilseed rape, peas and maize.*

*I shoot Egyptian geese to protect livestock and fauna and to protect public health.*

*I control Egyptian geese by shooting to protect my crops including wild bird cover strips to feed songbirds in winter.*

*Messing on meadows and grass ley so that cattle won't eat the grass.*

*I control Egyptian geese to protect forage crops such as grass silage and whole crop barley.*

## **Public Health**

*Massive health risk and bank damage on the Norfolk Broads.*

## **Other species (desired)**

### **Collared Dove**

*Collared doves mess all over our hay and other feed stuffs, they nest and roost in the Dutch barns. A resident sparrow hawk used to thin them, but she disappeared two years ago.*

*These are having an effect on turtle doves. According to European bird directive there is a direct correlation between numbers as they vie for nest sites and food and more aggressive nature affects turtle dove populations, also human health risk.*

*Eating all the food from the game feeders and defecating all over them spreading disease to the game birds and wildlife.*

*Collared doves are a pest that attacks my commercial orchard when the fruit is about to be picked. The damage is serious and costly.*

*Damage to grain store and animal feed stuffs. They also excrement on farm machinery which can be costly as it strips the paintwork. They can build unwanted nests in the roofs of the cattle buildings. I use an airgun around the farm every few months to keep the numbers at a tolerated capacity.*

*Serious damage to sown & growing crops, fouling of stored crops e.g. cereal grains, oilseed rape & fouling of farm buildings.*

*Damage by eating grain in the stores and droppings on the grain storage heaps.*

*Damage to feedstuff and cereals in store and at harvest.*

*Fouling of cattle store food areas causing scours chronic diarrhoea.*

*We are generally fond of collared doves, but we do try to keep them in balance as, like feral pigeons, they are a source of avian Tb, particularly when defaecating over animal feed. As we are now in a bovine Tb area and as part of our dairy farm assurance, we thus need to control the collared doves in and around our cubicle sheds.*

### **Cormorant**

*Under licence we shoot cormorants to protect fish like salmon parr.*

*They are decimating inland fisheries where their numbers are allowed to grow. Once they have found a fishery, they keep returning often at first light so often witnessed and taking fish until stock are depleted or what fish are left are too big for them to kill and take. A lot of these they still attack, damage and often die. Shooting the odd one or two under license is not enough when there are dozens doing it!*

*Excessive predation on endangered native stocks of salmon parr and brown trout on inland rivers far from their natural feeding grounds.*

*Decimation of stock of smaller fish (up to 800g) in UK rivers and lakes. I run a coarse fishery (for 30 years) that is also a SSSI. The stock of roach has gone from being abundant to below a self-sustaining level over the past 15 years. I have a Natural England licence to shoot 3 cormorants per year! Currently I have 4 cormorants per day on the fishery!!*

*Huge damage to both wild and commercial fisheries. Massive uncontrolled breeding numbers. They should be added to the general licence for the protection of our waterways.*

### **Greater Black Backed Gull**

*They are significant predators of waders and other special species. They are opportunist hunters that will take any young chicks or eggs & occasionally adult birds.*

*Gull populations have significantly increased in recent years and are causing a negative impact on the populations of a number of ground nesting prey bird species including curlew, lapwing, grey partridge and oyster catchers - principally by predated the young and eggs of these species.*

### **Greylag Geese**

*Grass and barley destruction. Pond being polluted by large numbers of geese roosting making duck numbers fall.*

*I shoot geese to protect crops in my local area. One goose will eat as much per day as a sheep and with a few hundred on a crop each day it doesn't take them long to decimate my local farms. Although we are not decreasing the population, keeping it the same stops the population going and becoming unmanageable in my area.*

### **Lesser Black Backed Gull**

*The lesser black back gull can be devastating to ground nesting birds during breeding season. The lesser black back gull hunts low to the ground, in small packs by one or two birds leading the adult birds away from the nest/chicks and then the other gulls will swoop in and kill the helpless chicks or eat the eggs from an unprotected nest.*

*I would like to control lesser black backed gulls to protect the eggs and chicks for ground nesting birds, including red listed species such as lapwing and curlew*

*These large predators start patrolling the Farm from Late April through the Summer - take our declining Plover population and Curlews.*

*We control by shooting only on the moorland (within the SPA) to prevent predation of ground-nesting birds' eggs and chicks.*

### **Raven**

*Ravens kill newborn lambs by taking their eyes out or their tongues or by pecking through the backs of their skulls during the first 24hrs of life.*

*Without doubt, the predator that inflicts the worst damage and suffering to Sheep and Lambs. Increasing in numbers at dramatic rate. Without doubt should be on the general license.*

*I can't touch them, but they need some form of control. They have been attacking my young lambs but also have had 30 plus ravens on my farm through the spring and summer which have prevented Skylarks and other ground nesting birds from successfully breeding this year.*

*I have witnessed ravens attacking newborn lambs and pulling their eyes and tongues out whilst they are still alive. Also watched them predated ground nesting birds' nests and destroying their nests completely.*

*Taking eyes and tongues out of lambs. Taken eggs from ground nesting birds.*

### **Buzzards**

*They prey on all mammals from field voles to hares, all songbirds in the UK and ground nesting birds. Grey partridge are devastated by them.*

*They can drastically decrease the number of game birds especially grey partridge which is a red listed bird. Buzzards are often hunting ground for hours which can affect other birds and mammals like hares and limit their activity.*

*Explosion of buzzards over past five to six years. From rare to pairs every few hundred acres. They take young birds and any small birds/mammals alive or dead. Will catch and kill young pheasants and partridges.*

*Killing Curlew, Lapwing, Grey Partridge, Barn Owl, and young Pheasant, particularly chicks. Always flying over game crops and woods and scaring off all bird life.*

*Taking chicks of ground nest birds and disturbing nests to the extent that other chicks do not survive.*

*Predation of other birds and chicks. We have seen Buzzards attack and kill our barn owls. Also, pheasant and partridge poults and grouse.*

### **Red Kite**

*Not only are they becoming a danger to humans, but I believe that since their reintroduction the Hare population has diminished and also have seen them take a partridge.*

*The red kites kill and unsettle the free-range chickens.*

### **Sparrowhawk**

*Sparrow hawks are especially lethal to our wild grey partridge and grouse.*

*The Sparrowhawk will kill at least one grouse per day within a Grouse Moor. Factor in that the Sparrow Hawk occurs all over Europe with over one million breeding pairs. The British Isles is the only place in the world where the Red Grouse is naturally occurring. With the capacity to hold around 500,000 Red Grouse. Currently having to stand by and watch as this happens is a reason to question why the Sparrow Hawk is protected at the expense of the Red Grouse and countless other species.*

*I feed small birds (garden birds) including various finches, house and hedge sparrow, thrush blackbird etc... Fed regularly, unfortunately it encourages Sparrow Hawks. I have a breeding pair that for the last 4 years have reared a brood of young on our land and late after our small birds have fledged and are easy prey.*

*Many small birds are taken and especially the young ones as the Sparrow Hawk nests later than most garden birds, means that sparrow hawks kill many to rear their own chicks.*

*They have increased tremendously since the seventies. They do a lot of damage to our songbird*

*population and they need to be controlled like the corvids. I have seen a lot more of them this year in the woods than last year and the woods are a lot quieter this year. I shoot corvids to protect the songbird population.*

*A high percentage of breeding Grey Partridge and Turtle Doves are killed by Sparrowhawks annually on the farm I keeper.*

## Appendix C: further comments to Defra

### Comments on SSSI/Protected sites

*Without management then the carrion crows and magpies would seriously reduce the numbers and diversity of species of birds in the SSSI and therefore devalue the site.*

*We have changed our SSSI from unfavourable to favourable in 11 years through working on the woodland and controlling corvids squirrels and foxes for the overall good of our non-predatory birds. If there are any controls added to the common-sense General Licences, I will have to rethink whether to carry on.*

*The reason we no longer have nesting snipe and curlew in our SSSI is because of the population increase in badgers, crows, magpies and foxes and no-one controlling them. 30 years ago, when the land was used for farming the population of all the ground nesting birds was thriving because farmers were actively controlling predation. It is all about a balance of nature and the corvid has few enemies much like the badger and fox, so intervention is necessary to enable the vulnerable species to survive.*

*Much of my land is SSSI / SAC including rare chalk stream and water meadow habitat. I rent the farming to the local Wildlife trust for a peppercorn as my passion is to increase the biodiversity of this rare habitat. I am now in the ridiculous position of being excluded from controlling any predators under a general licence and have to watch an increase in predators at the expense of the species we are trying to encourage. You couldn't make up a more ridiculous system.*

*I control jays to protect game birds, wildfowl and songbirds on an area of land that includes SSSI and HLS land due to the rich habitat and biodiversity in this area. This is essential conservation work that has to continue to support this diversity.*

*As an Association senior voluntary warden over the last 30 years until last year I organised and led volunteer pest controllers from one shoot and two wildfowling associations without any problems or issues. Until the general licence farrago, we successfully carried out control over several Somerset SSSI and an NNR including for and on behalf of N.E. on their own land at no cost to the taxpayer. It has now been impossible to safely licence our continuing control and we have had to stand helplessly watching the species we've been protecting being decimated before our eyes. Our ongoing 30 project to control mink, fox and corvid predation to increase threatened ground nesting species, (mainly snipe to help meet the natura targets etc.) have been set right back due to the inability to thwart a few anti shooting idiots. Legislation on this matter must be strictly based on known scientific facts and to encourage engagement from those willing and able to volunteer their time and resources be as free from bureaucracy as before or large areas of the countryside will become devoid of key native species. A more legally robust Wildlife and Countryside species open general Licence type system should be reinstated a.s.a.p. It should also be as easy to reinstate control of a species that has reached a population where a sustainable natural harvest is safe (i.e. Brent Geese). With the exception of Pigeon and Dove species that are known to breed throughout the year the pest control should be suspended/closed during nesting season. Specific control licences should be easier and quicker to obtain. The creation of specific rules for 300m SSSI buffer areas are ridiculous especially here in Somerset where the SSSI's are often rivers/streams or ditches.*

### General Comments

*Removal of the General Licences this year was extremely frustrating. We watched crows and magpies mobbing nesting lapwing and saw them attacking hedgerow nests. We do not believe that any lapwing successfully fledged young here this year. The lapwing and yellowhammers are some of the target species within our Farmer Cluster and our group of farmers are making a big effort to try and reverse the decline of all our farmland birds. We are creating and improving various habitats to help wildlife. But*



*taking away our ability to control predators completely undermines our efforts. Wood pigeons are also thriving in this area with large numbers recorded on our winter surveys. Seeing them damage our arable crops and impact on our ability to make a living is very demoralising.*

*As I have been involved in conservation and pest control since the 1950s, I can't help but notice that wildlife in this country is out of balance. There is a huge preponderance of corvids, the ratios between these and the vulnerable species that they prey on are way out of kilter. If we are to establish a revival of our threatened species, we must make some critical decisions, do we want a balanced variation of species or do we want virtually nothing but predatory corvids?*

*Man has upset the balance of nature so there is no going back. We have to control pest species otherwise they will wipe most things out.*

*How demoralising it is listening to ill-informed people getting credence for inaccurate politically and socially motivated argument to the detriment of genuine conservation.*

*Let sense prevail. Our wonderful countryside and wildlife are best looked after by practical hands-on conservationists not celebrities with their own agendas who contribute nothing but words.*

*The control of pest birds by sporting shooters is the only economically viable way for farming and conservation to obtain the necessary benefit on the scale required as it is self-funding.*

*Without an easy licencing system for control of corvids we will lose the fragile populations of many rare species of birds across all habitat types in the UK. Defra must not cave in to so called protectionists but must listen to sound, practical, scientific research and the experience of those who work in the countryside and see at first-hand the damage caused by corvids.*

*My professional background is in the rural economy from a science-based view. I am 74 years old and I have observed the changes taking place in the countryside all my life. I recognise the serious imbalances caused by human activity and as a keen conservationist feel it is essential to be able to try to redress some of those imbalances. Many of the pest species benefit from modern farming practice while other species struggle against increasing predator numbers. Conservation should be balanced to suit all species.*

*The new GLs, I think, are largely unworkable as are the two Individual Licences that I received from NE, so much so that I do not feel totally comfortable using them in order to shoot what were formerly recognised as 'pest species'. If we are to continue with any pest control or shooting for the table I believe that the species controlled must be defined in law as 'takeable', with any necessary caveats. The burden of proof of necessity of culling should not fall on the individual shooter. There is plenty of scientific and other evidence that these 'pest species' cause harm in various ways and in my experience their numbers are certainly not falling. This must be the reasoning used to support legislation to this effect.*

*The need to control the birds I have listed is critical. Scare tactics such as flags, gas bangers will work in the short term for controlling crop damage, however the only protective measure for nesting birds is lethal control through shooting or more effectively the Larsen trap. On a part time shoot such as mine you simply cannot use scare tactics against the nest predators as they are completely ineffective due to the length of hedgerows/margins across the farm. Having a Larsen which is out on the farm removing the issues at the appropriate time of the year while I'm at work is invaluable and should not have further restrictions applied.*

*Despite the past long-term pressure from shooting and other control methods none of these birds are declining or at risk, their numbers continue to grow in many cases exponentially. Nonlethal methods of control are insufficient because they do not work, at best, it just moves the problem elsewhere. If lethal methods of control for example by licence and other prescriptive and over involved regulation, it will discourage shooters controlling these species and their populations numbers will explode. The knock on*

*effects financial, health and safety, disease and contamination, and the detriment to other species conservation by any unnecessary interference, will in my opinion be catastrophic.*

*Almost everyone with fishing interests would like to see cormorants and saw-billed ducks on open licence. Both buzzards and otters are becoming so prolific that control may become necessary if natural balance is to be preserved.*

*If General Licences are revoked or made too cumbersome the control of pest/predatory species will reduce even further. This would be catastrophic for already small, pressured population of wild farm birds. Any requirement for police inspection would be impractical especially in rural areas.*

*Need to be able to act quickly without bureaucracy. Jackdaws were a new problem for us, for example. Government need to trust responsible people, not impose bureaucracy that they cannot hope to police.*

*Country people, who care about the environment, have been doing a pretty good job of it without being piled with pointless paperwork that will take considerable time to complete, and even more time for the recipients, police or whoever, to assimilate. An utter waste of time, the General Licence has worked perfectly well until some ill-informed busybodies, with a political agenda, tried to interfere.*

*I think that the uphill struggle of trying to keep populations of generalist predators such as crows and magpies under control to help other species that are decreasing is difficult enough without more legislation complicating things.*

*I have seen first-hand just how much grain, peas, or other crops a pigeon consumes in one sitting from how much is held in their crop. Multiply that by the numbers in a typical flock and the fact that they eat twice a day and it becomes clear just how much human food is being lost every day. Without control, the flocks grow rapidly in size and cause ever more loss of food and income for the farmers.*

*As there was nothing wrong with the old licence and the way it was implemented, I hope Defra sees common sense and continues to help us look after the countryside.*

*Any decent countryman will only kill a species if it is having an adverse effect on a smaller or less adaptable one. I would always want to see the odd crow or magpie, they are a part of our world, but they are also intelligent and ruthless and can seriously undermine the population of other equally important species.*

*Absolutely essential that no further requirements are placed on the police. They can't cope as it is and have far more serious issues to address.*

*Stop pandering to these anti-everything environmentalist groups and back the science. Don't allow them to keep brainwashing people with their lies, threats and misinformation.*

*Dissuading pigeons by nonlethal means just pushes the problem onto the next available crop. Likewise, only being permitted to shoot pigeons posing serious damage to crops and therefore restricting shooting on such locations as flight lines and stubble, will not work. Over the last decade or so, pigeon numbers in our area, have increased considerably, to the extent that one can experience crops with between 1,000 and 1,500 feeding on them. This is despite relatively uncontrolled shooting, without which, numbers would be increased.*

*I have no wish to wipe out magpies, just reduce numbers and thus predation during the breeding season.*

*Increasing the bureaucracy around the control of clearly identified pest species, especially when the densities of the birds in question are increasing, is both counterproductive and unnecessary. It has been a viable and accepted form of control that, if made so onerous that 'hobbyist' shooters are deterred from*

*carrying it out, would have no cost-effective alternative to the farming community.*

*It is important that small field and garden owners aid the bird population and control the increasing crows, magpies and jays which prosper by scavenging horse food and bird tables and compost bins. Gardens can promote breeding birds and if many people control prey species it will make a real impact.*

*One of the biggest problems of where I live is the egg and chick predation of ground-nesting waders on the moors and farmed uplands. Not only by the corvid family but by many species of gulls that live around the reservoirs in this area. In springtime I find countless broken curlew, lapwing, grouse and pheasant eggs on the many footpaths. I have also noticed a steady decline year-on-year of curlews and lapwings in my area.*

*The crows are out of control in the Peak District and they are limiting the ability of red-listed species to thrive. To lose the ability to shoot these highly successful and opportunist birds will push these highly prized species away. We are so proud to have peregrines and curlew etc nesting nearby and do our best to look after them. Please do not be pressurised by people who put their dislike of shooting before practical conservation. We see the damage every day that crows and magpies cause and their numbers. We are not blood thirsty. We don't like having to kill these birds on the General Licence but recognise that it is necessary for the birds that we prize to thrive.*

*I cannot overstate the importance of being able to control these species of bird on the estate where I live. The hiatus this year did enormous damage and it was a poor breeding season in any event, particularly for lapwing. We have a very important breeding site for lapwing and curlew and if we lost these species as a consequence of stopping predator control it would be a national disgrace. People that would see this happen are either reckless as to the consequences, or simply do not understand the complex interrelationships between predator and prey species. Despite many years of control of these birds, their populations are increasing. There is simply no justification for changing a system that was not broken. The GWCT science proves the benefits to rare birds from predator control. Please do not ignore it.*

*I control pest birds on a dozen or so farms in the west Essex area as part of a voluntary crop protection group. We only control birds where there is a clear need. During the year one of our farms sustained such heavy damage to an oilseed rape crop that it was eventually abandoned at a cost of approximately £17,000. This was due mainly to such a large local population of woodpigeons, crows and jackdaws that it was virtually impossible to make a dent in them.*

## 5. Written evidence submission to the 2019 Defra consultation into General Licences



### Who we are

This submission has been produced by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), a research and education charity that has published over 100 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals on issues relating to predation control and farmland and moorland birds over the past 50 years. On the basis of our scientific expertise and credibility, we regularly provide advice to such statutory bodies as Defra, Scottish Natural Heritage, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England. We also provide practical advice to farmers, landowners and other conservation organisations on how to manage their land with a view to improving biodiversity. Our Advisory team have, for many years, run industry-leading best practice predation control training courses. These courses are based on practical experience backed up by GWCT science.

### Summary

1. The GWCT believes that the General Licence system was the most satisfactory solution to perennial problems that are commonplace but also dispersed, seasonally brief, and difficult to predict; and where local and temporal circumstances affect the success of both non-lethal or lethal control measures.
2. We understand there is a requirement for Defra, on behalf of the whole UK, to satisfy the European Commission that the proposed derogation is the only satisfactory solution to a problem and is performed in a considered manner that does not imperil target species. The regulatory mechanism through which that derogation is allowed and overseen is an internal matter for the UK, although the WCA requires that the licensing authority believes its policy (i.e. making lethal control an available option through a system of General Licences) to be the only satisfactory solution. The condition in the General Licences post-2005 that in each individual case practitioners themselves must be satisfied that non-lethal methods are unsatisfactory does not appear to be required by the primary legislation and historically did not arise in order to delegate responsibility to individual practitioners. The requirement of 'last resort', in our view, applies sensibly to the derogation as a whole; not to each and every case of its use, which would be impractical or impossible to ensure.
3. We highlight scientific evidence that predation control carried out under General Licences can lead to annual increases in breeding densities of a range of red-listed birds (e.g. grey partridges 35% increase per year, curlew 14% increase per year). We also highlight

- numerous case studies where farmland birds have responded positively to predation control.
4. We present new scientific evidence that corvid removal positively impacts songbird populations locally. This new evidence strongly suggests that the national figures will mask local patterns.
  5. The withdrawal of General Licences and subsequent delays in issuing new licences at a critical time of year for livestock, and for protection of spring-drilled crops and vulnerable nesting birds, has caused significant problems for farmers, livestock and wildlife.
  6. A member survey (450 responses) highlighted direct impacts on songbirds, waders, gamebirds and crop damage as a result of the withdrawal of General Licences on 25 April 2019.
  7. The member survey highlighted that on many farms, the success of government-funded agri-environment schemes has been compromised by the withdrawal of General Licences.
  8. New licence conditions render the licences more confusing, more restrictive and less effective.
  9. Some new licence conditions will likely be counter-productive for the conservation of nesting birds (e.g. the requirement to scare birds in areas where vulnerable birds are nesting).
  10. The GWCT looks forward to playing an active role in the planned review of General Licences later this year, but in the meantime calls for a simple interim General Licensing system to be installed immediately, to allow land managers to get back to undertaking effective control of certain bird species where they are causing problems.

## **I. Background**

Natural England revoked three General Licences (covering 16 largely commonly occurring bird species, including corvids and pigeons) on 25 April 2019 as a result of a legal challenge from Wild Justice (set up by wildlife campaigners Mark Avery, Chris Packham and Ruth Tingay in February 2019). Natural England conceded that the licences as then issued were unlawful, hence the revocation. The decision has caused huge concern with licence users (mainly farmers, conservationists and gamekeepers) who were no longer licensed to undertake lethal control measures for birds damaging crops or injuring and killing newborn lambs, or in protecting the nests and chicks of birds of conservation concern such as lapwing and curlew. There has been significant uncertainty and disruption, and a range of views has been expressed publicly about the effects of the action that Natural England has taken on businesses and wildlife.

On 4 May 2019, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England agreed that the legal powers relating to these General Licences would be exercised by the Secretary of State from that date. Defra has undertaken a short evidence-gathering process to gain a clear understanding of the implications of the licence revocation on the protection of wild birds, and the impacts on crops, livestock, wildlife, disease, human health and safety, and wider nature conservation efforts. The evidence gathered from this, along with the information that Defra and Natural England have already received since 25 April, will inform their future approach in order to get back to a satisfactory situation. Our evidence is based on a combination of 1) scientific research, 2) our understanding of the legal framework, 3) practical experience of operating under General Licences, and 4) experience of over 450 members who responded to the call for evidence.

## 2. Our understanding of the legal framework for issuing General Licences

GWCT is probably the non-government organisation that has had the longest involvement with General Licences in the UK. We have no legal expertise. Rather, this submission is based on our understanding of the nature and intention of General Licences as opposed to Class or Individual Licences, and our knowledge of the history of their development in the UK and our view of practicalities.

### EU Birds Directive (1979, 2009), Article 9

*1. Member States may derogate from the provisions of Articles 5 to 8 [which establish basic protection for all birds, restrict hunting seasons, etc], where there is no other satisfactory solution, for the following reasons: ...etc*

The Member State must send a report to the European Commission (EC) every year stating the nature of each derogation, how it has been implemented, and what 'controls' (i.e. checks, monitoring, data gathering) were carried out. Reporting is done online via the HaBiDeS portal with the aim of ensuring consistency of information across Member States. The UK has made annual submissions since at least 1996, the last occasion (report for 2017) being September 2018. A review by the EC in 2005 noted that "none of the UK derogations is in apparent conflict with the protection of the species". As Article 9 relates to the Member State level, we suppose the word 'solution' applies to the derogation not to the means of regulation within the Member State. If the Member State considers the management of a particular problem cannot be achieved satisfactorily without allowing the option of lethal control, it may derogate provided it can satisfy the EC on the provisions mentioned.

### WCA (amended 1995), Section 16

The provision for licenses to be granted existed in the WCA (Section 16(1)) from its enactment in 1981, permitting actions which would otherwise be an offence under WCA.

Section 16(1)(A) was added in 1995 to adopt the requirements of the Birds Directive.

*(1A) The appropriate authority—*

*(a) shall not grant a licence for any purpose mentioned in subsection (1) unless it is satisfied that, as regards that purpose, there is no other satisfactory solution; ...etc*

At the same time, the old 'pest birds' Schedule 2 was deleted from the WCA, so that control of these species could continue only if the UK chose to derogate. This would be achieved by issuing licences.

Again, we suppose the word 'solution' applies to the policy, not to the otherwise-proscribed method of control. Both before and after 1995, licences could be made as general or as specific as was considered appropriate. Thus, if the nature of the problem warrants it, the policy could be to issue a General Licence allowing the option of lethal control at the discretion of the practitioner.

### The first General Licence?

We believe the first General Licence in the UK was issued in 1991 by Defra's predecessor the Department of the Environment (DoE), allowing the use of Larsen traps with a decoy to catch corvid birds. The offence avoided in that case (WCA S.8(1)) was holding a bird in a cage too small for it to stretch its wings freely, which was apparently aimed at long-term housing for birds. GWCT presented a cost-benefit case to MAFF, DoE and the Nature Conservancy Council (forerunner of NE) that predation by corvid birds was a serious issue for native ground-nesting birds, and that there was no other satisfactory (effective and legal) solution, tempting some practitioners at that time to make illegal use of poisons; and that the Larsen trap provided a highly focussed and efficient control method that allowed the rapid removal of territorial corvids before dependent young became an issue. The purpose of S.8(1) was unaffected because it was not intended that birds would be held in the traps for long periods; this was supported by conditions in the licence, which also reminded licensees of their responsibilities under other legislation (notably the Animal Welfare Act).

### What does 'satisfactory' mean in the case of a General Licence?

Neither the EU Directive nor domestic UK legislation suggest how 'satisfactory' is to be determined, but presumably there must be some form of cost-benefit analysis. Wildlife problems are complex, and what works at one time and in one situation may not work in another. The justification for a General Licence is that making the option of lethal control available alongside non-lethal methods provides the only satisfactory approach to a widespread problem, provided measures are in place to monitor the target species and ensure that its conservation status is not impaired.

The point of a General Licence is that generalities can safely be made, when licensing on a more individual basis would be inappropriate. It is fundamental to establish whether lethal control can be an effective option, but it is not a necessary part of the case to show that it is invariably effective, or that non-lethal options are invariably ineffective. Non-lethal methods may be partially or inconsistently effective but in general unsatisfactory. In specific circumstances either lethal or non-lethal approaches may be inappropriate or ineffectual or damaging to some other interest. Making the full range of options available to all is thus a defensible approach. Similarly, it is not necessary to wait and see whether each individual of an opportunistic predatory species turns out to be predatory in the specific circumstances facing each practitioner.

A further argument might be that the target species is disproportionately abundant as a result of human land-uses, justifying the reduction of density on a local and temporary basis to allow a particular human activity or ecological process to succeed, while not damaging the conservation status of the target species at a national level. It would also be relevant to note that issuing individual licences on an annual basis for this widespread purpose would be disproportionately burdensome.

To summarise, one can argue that the issue of General Licences by the UK is the most satisfactory solution to perennial problems that are commonplace but also dispersed, seasonally brief, and difficult to predict; and where local and temporal circumstances affect the success of both non-lethal or lethal control measures.

#### **At what level is 'satisfactory' determined?**

The Birds Directive clearly relates to compliance at a Member State level: each Member State must legislate to deliver the Directive and is answerable to the EC for derogations. The WCA as amended in 1995 is the domestic vehicle that delivers the Directive in the UK, and it defines the licensing mechanisms by which the relevant authority can allow actions to take place which constitute a derogation. Because this authority is now devolved, licences are issued separately by each national countryside agency, but the UK remains answerable to the EC for all of them.

General Licences to allow continued lethal control of many bird species formerly on the old Schedule 2 were made in 1995. In 2005, Defra proposed to introduce a new clause into these licences requiring each practitioner to demonstrate that non-lethal options had been tried and were unviable. GWCT, BASC and NGO argued strongly against this, saying that the licensing authority (at that time Defra) held responsibility under the Directive for the derogation, not the individual. After consideration, Defra accepted this and toned down the proposed wording to say that the practitioner must satisfy his/herself that non-lethal methods 'are either ineffective or impracticable'. We felt – and still feel – that this was an unnecessary addition with no benefit.

In 2019, perhaps because they have no organisational memory of those early Licences, Natural England (the current licensing authority) apparently believed that responsibility had been off-loaded onto the individual practitioner. That was certainly not the case. We do not recall in what year NE was given responsibility for issuing and renewing General Licences, but they inherited a stable situation. In first issuing and defending the derogations annually to the EC, DoE and later Defra had clearly been satisfied that while non-lethal methods were widely available and often used, lethal methods were also required; and that regulation through General Licences - rather than Class or Individual Licences - was the only satisfactory approach to the situation. To inform this decision, Defra had commissioned a review of the methods from their own agency, Central Science Laboratory (Bishop et al 2003). There have been no significant advances in non-lethal methods that would change the options. Although data on the numbers of birds killed under General Licences are not collected centrally, the conservation status of target species is monitored by BTO through survey schemes that are supported by Government grants.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland the General Licences have been re-issued without significant change since 2005, with Defra and latterly NE renewing them and submitting details annually to the EC. Given that there have been no significant changes in recent years, the process has been largely a formality, requiring no in-depth review. In Scotland, a thorough review of licences to kill corvid birds was carried out in 2016. This resulted in minor changes to the General Licences in Scotland only.

In summary, we understand there is a requirement for Defra, on behalf of the whole UK, to satisfy the European Commission that the proposed derogation is the only satisfactory solution to a problem and is performed in a considered manner that does not imperil target species. The regulatory mechanism through which that derogation is allowed and overseen is an internal matter for the UK, although the WCA requires that the licensing authority believes its policy (i.e. making lethal control an available option through a system of General Licences) to be the only satisfactory solution. The condition in the General Licences post-2005 that in each individual case practitioners themselves must be satisfied that non-lethal methods are unsatisfactory does not appear to be required by the primary legislation and historically did not arise in order to delegate responsibility to individual practitioners. The requirement of 'last resort', in our view, applies sensibly to the derogation as a whole; not to each and every case of its use, which would be impractical or impossible to ensure.

## Reference

Bishop J., H. McKay, D. Parrott and J. Allan (2003) Review of international research literature regarding the effectiveness of auditory bird scaring techniques and potential alternatives. Report to Defra.

## 3. Predator control as a conservation tool

### 3.1 Introduction

A great many declining or endangered species of wildlife are in such a parlous condition because of the loss of their habitat. Either the amount of their habitat or its quality have reduced. Nearly all conservationists agree that the answer to these problems and so the road to species recovery will be achieved through improvements to habitat.

The GWCT takes no exception to this response. In fact, the Trust's work on the management of arable crop edges (conservation headlands, beetle banks, extended field margins, wild bird seed covers) pioneered the provision of suitable habitats for nesting, wintering and chick-rearing habitats for wildlife on farmland, and the selective use of pesticides on arable land to support wildlife.

There are very many examples of where the provision of habitat has halted the decline of a species and initiated recovery. For UK birds, we can cite bittern, curlew, corn crane and many more where this has happened. But there are species where the provision of habitat alone has not halted declines or brought about recovery. Examples include grey partridge, brown hare, water vole, black grouse, lapwing, curlew and possibly more.

The strongest evidence for these improvements following predator removal comes from large-scale, long-term, manipulative experiments whose findings have been published in peer-reviewed journals where predators are legally removed from an area and the responses of their prey monitored in comparison to areas of similar landscapes where predators remain. In the pantheon of experimental approaches, these randomised, replicated removal experiments are considered the best way to identify the importance of predation. The GWCT has conducted three, and results are reported here. Academic ornithologists and other UK-based wildlife charities agree and have gone into print confirming this. They also agree that the experimental approach is more robust than the correlations of various datasets e.g. the correlation between increasing corvid numbers and declining songbird numbers. Statistically significant correlations do not indicate cause and effect and can be caused by unmeasured factors. The absence of a significant correlation may indicate weak investigative methodologies. But manipulative experiments conducted by the Trust on Salisbury Plain and Otterburn, and the large-scale demonstrations at Royston, Loddington and elsewhere, provide this evidence.

The GWCT does not believe that predation caused the decline of these species, although it may have contributed. But we do believe that predation is playing a role in preventing recovery even in the



presence of sufficient quality habitat. We also believe that legal, seasonal predator control, as prescribed by current wildlife and welfare laws, including the General Licences, is an important 'tool' in the conservation recovery 'toolbox' and that, for some species like curlew, every measure in this 'toolbox' should be deployed immediately to avoid the direst of consequences.

We face an uncertain future. The recently published report *The State of Nature* made depressing reading, with documented problems and species declines very apparent. With the consequences of climate change and post-Brexit support uncertain, how should the conservation community, government, their statutory agencies and policymakers view predator control to halt species decline?

To the GWCT, predator control consists of three things:

1. Only species that the law allows can be taken.
2. Only legally approved methods can be used, so no poisons or traps not meeting international welfare standards.
3. In most cases, predators are only removed during the breeding season, say mid-March to mid-July.

So, crows and magpies are rarely killed in December. We recognise that crows are not predators of adult birds in the winter, so they do not need to be removed. Removing birds in the winter may disrupt territories that are simply replaced by the following spring.

Concentrating predator control during the breeding season seeks to reduce (not eliminate) losses of breeding birds and their eggs. We do not seek to eliminate predation – we can't – but we can reduce it to ensure more birds breed successfully to produce fledged young. At our demonstration farm at Loddington in Leicestershire, we implemented a programme of predator removal using the General Licence to remove corvids to protect gamebirds and songbirds. Here, with predator control, we experienced 40% nest loss of wild pheasants. Without predator control, we experienced 80% loss. The difference meant that a population of wild birds could be built up over five years. There were still predation events, but not at a level that previously prevented population increase.

Loddington was an 'island' of predator control surrounded by a 'sea' of foxes, crows and magpies. As the Loddington predators were removed, others moved in from outside the farm, across our farm boundary, but the disruption caused by the removal of our territorial predators early in the season and the inexperience of the incomers is thought to have provided a sufficient period of respite to allow their prey to breed more successfully.

An observation we make from our experiments and from the predator bag statistics that we collect in our National Gamebag Census scheme is that the annual take (or bag) of predators changes very little between years. This is often cited as a reason why predator control is not effective or a long-term, sustainable solution. We often hear that, "Surely predator control is not working if you have to kill the same numbers of predators each year?" The seasonal nature of predator removal provides the respite described above in which a window of opportunity to breed more successfully can be provided. Predators are removed but numbers fill back in after the breeding season. But during the breeding season, predator removal leads to more successful breeding of prey species.

Also, the current scale of removal can be balanced against the abundance of predators found across the country outside of areas where there is removal. There is, as yet, no detected impact of predator removal at a national scale. Most of our generalist predators, including the corvids and some birds of prey, are increasing in numbers or have stabilised after a period of increase. But we need to be vigilant.

The long-term impact of predator removal may become most apparent as the scale of removal increases, for example, where there are continuous blocks of land operating predator control as on the grouse moors of the North Pennines.

Many estates practising predator control collect bag data and submit it annually to the GWCT. Those that do not should be encouraged to do so, to demonstrate concern for predator control and good stewardship of the land they manage. This could provide local early indications of problems if predator removal is having a negative impact on species.

## 3.2 The Evidence

The evidence base is International and not just found in populations of ground-nesting birds in the UK. Predation issues are a major concern for ground-nesting wader birds across Europe.

Key Reference - Macdonald M.A. & Bolton M. (2008) Predation on wader nests in Europe. *Ibis* 150: 54-73

### 3.2.1 Removal experiments

#### GWCT Evidence

### 3.2.2 Salisbury Plain

The GWCT's Salisbury Plain Experiment was a large-scale trial that studied whether legal predation control in spring and summer could improve breeding success and population growth for wild grey partridge. Predation control was carried out on one study area, while a second similar area nearby acted as a comparison without predation control. After three years, predation control switched from the first area to the second. The predators targeted were fox, stoat, weasel, rat, carrion crow, magpie, jackdaw and rook. The birds were removed under the General Licence.

This experiment showed unambiguously that controlling predators allowed 75% greater production of young. Despite shooting, this improvement carried over into successive years, so that spring breeding numbers increased by 35% each year and were 2.6 times greater after three years of predation control. Autumn numbers, before shooting began, were 3.5 times greater after three years. Clearly, this set of common predators was having a substantial impact on the local partridge population and controlling them from March to September relieved much of the pressure.

Key reference - Tapper, S.C., Potts, G.R. & Brockless, M.H. (1996). The effect of an experimental reduction in predation pressure on the breeding success and population density of grey partridges *Perdix perdix*. *The Journal of Applied Ecology*, 33: 965.

### 3.2.3 The Upland Predation Experiment – The Otterburn Experiment

20 years later, the GWCT conducted a similar experiment on moorland in the north of England. The Upland Predation Experiment showed predation control led to benefits for breeding red grouse, but also curlew, lapwing, golden plover, black grouse, grey partridge and meadow pipit. With predation control, these wading birds were able to breed well enough for population growth, an important threshold that was not reached in the absence of predation control.

The effect on the curlew population was marked – in the absence of predation control, curlew numbers were dropping by 17% per year. When legal predation control was implemented, curlew numbers rose by 14% per year (after a lag period as the new chicks reached breeding age). We have calculated that the low breeding success seen in this experiment on moors where predators were not controlled could lead to a drop in lapwing and golden plover numbers of 81%, and curlew of 47%, over ten years. This prediction has not yet been tested, but studies have shown higher curlew density on kept moorland.

Key reference - Fletcher, K., Aebischer, N.J., Baines, D., Foster, R. & Hoodless, A.N. (2010). Changes in breeding success and abundance of ground-nesting moorland birds in relation to the experimental deployment of legal predator control. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 47: 263-272).

### 3.2.4 GWCT's Corvid Removal Study

There is new scientific evidence that corvid removal does positively impact songbird populations locally. The GWCT is concerned that this might be overlooked and wants to highlight three recent studies. Previous national scale studies suggest that local effects have no impact on national population trends, with weak links between magpies and songbird populations. However, the new evidence strongly suggests that the national figures will mask local patterns. The evidence summarized below indicates that the ability to apply targeted corvid control at short notice can be beneficial, where breeding hedgerow nesting and probably other songbirds are exposed to breeding corvids.

In their recent comprehensive review Roos *et al.* (2018) state (in the abstract) that they found little evidence that predation limits populations of passerines but that they do limit waders. This, however, is

not a full and balanced reflection of the results, and a key finding of the review, highly relevant to this call for evidence, is easily overlooked. Table 5, which refers specifically to experimental predator removal studies, shows songbirds increased in 40% of 20 studies following predator removal. For waders, it was similar, at 44% of 29 studies. The conclusion from this is that the science available prior to 2017 tells us that corvid removal can lead to an increase in songbird population size.

Since Roos et al. (2018) conducted their review (in 2016), the GWCT has published the results of a large field study over four years that looked specifically at the effect of corvid removal using, primarily, Larsen traps (Sage & Aebischer 2017). The study applied randomised corvid control treatments to one plot in each of 16 pairs of study plots and documented nest success in hedgerow nesting passerines, using fledged brood counts and occupancy modelling. Overall songbird productivity was increased in the removal plots by on average 10% over the four years and by, on average, 16% in the three study years when it didn't rain heavily throughout spring (suppressing both songbird and corvid productivity). While both crows and magpies were removed from study plots, the ecology of these two birds suggests that magpie control using Larsen traps was probably the main cause of the improved songbird breeding success documented in the study. Control reduced but did not eliminate magpies or crows from any of the 16 study sites.

The third strand of evidence relates to a PhD study supervised by Exeter University and the GWCT and successfully defended in 2018 (Capstick 2018). The PhD examined factors that might cause variation in the effect of corvid predation on songbirds in a UK agricultural landscape. Three chapters are of specific relevance to this consultation:

- Chapter Two (paper in review): This review of the literature found that 25% of all reported songbird nest predation was attributed to corvids. Some songbird species were more susceptible than others, depending on their nesting biology and breeding season. Corvid removal can lead to increases in the breeding success of species especially vulnerable to predation.
- Chapter Four (paper in press): The study found that artificial nests (mimicking hedgerow farmland songbird nests) were more vulnerable to predation by magpies, inside magpie territories and at the peak of the magpie's breeding season.
- Chapter Five (paper in prep.): Site choice and success of songbirds in an agricultural environment were examined and indicated that songbirds may be actively avoiding nesting near magpie nests and, as a consequence, could be choosing suboptimal sites.

#### Key References

Capstick, L. A. (2018). *Variation in the effect of corvid predation on songbird populations*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter.

Sage RB & Aebischer NJ (2017) Does best-practice crow *Corvus corone* and magpie *Pica pica* control on UK farmland improve nest success in hedgerow-nesting songbirds? A field experiment. *Wildlife Biology*. DOI: 10.2981/wlb.00375.

Roos S, Smart J, Gibbons, DW & Wilson JD (2018). A review of predation as a limiting factor for bird populations in mesopredator-rich landscapes: a case study of the UK. *Biological Reviews*. DOI: 10.1111/brv.12426.

### 3.3 Other manipulations

Of the replicated, randomised removal experiments represented by work on Salisbury Plain, Otterburn and the Corvid Study are at the top of a 'quality' research methodology scale. Large-scale manipulations over large areas and over time are the next quality down. The GWCT has conducted or overseen many such studies.

#### 3.3.1 Loddington

This is the GWCT's first demonstration farm, set up in 1993. It represents 330ha of unexceptional land on heavy clay in Leicestershire. Between 1993 and 2001 we began a programme of management for

wild game species and songbirds, which included habitat enhancement, winter feeding and legal, seasonal predator control using the General Licence to control corvids. In that time, we recovered songbird numbers to their 1960s levels. Also, in that time, a similar increase was not observed in national breeding bird data. Additionally, our wheat yields matched national and regional figures. The increase in bird numbers was not caused by a de-intensification of farming; in fact, the reverse was true.

However, songbird increase was not thought to be attributed to predator control alone. What role did habitat and feeding play in this increase? To answer this, we removed predator control between 2001 and 2006 whilst maintaining habitat improvements and feeding. Over this time, songbird numbers fell and continued to fall when the feeders were also removed between 2006 and 2010.

During this period, we collected data on nest survival. For selected species, but not all, survival rates increased during periods when predators were controlled compared to periods when they were not. e.g.:

	Keeper	Unkeepered	% change
Blackbird	25.7	8.9	+65
Songthrush	23.6	11.6	+50
Chaffinch	28.1	14.2	+50
Yellowhammer	32.3	16.9	+48

#### Key References:

White, P.J.C., Stoate, C., Szczur, J. & Norris, K. (2008). Investigating the effects of predator removal and habitat management on nest success and breeding population size of a farmland passerine: A case study. *Ibis*, 150: 178-190.

White, P.J.C., Stoate, C., Szczur, J. & Norris, K. (2014). Predator reduction with habitat management can improve songbird nest success. *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 78: 402-412.

Stoate, C., & Szczur, J. (2001). Could game management have a role in the conservation of farmland passerines? A case study from a Leicestershire Farm. *Bird Study*, 48: 292.

Stoate, C. & Szczur J. (2006). Potential influence of habitat and predation on local breeding success and population in Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*. A short report. *Bird Study*, 53: 000-000.

#### 3.3.2 Royston

Between 2002 and 2008 we ran another demonstration of best practice management for grey partridges on several farms across the chalk ridge between Baldock and Royston. The principles were the same as those applied on Salisbury Plain, but at Royston there was no switch of keepered and unkeepered plots. On the keepered area, grey partridge densities increased from 2.9 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> in spring to 18.4 pairs. On the adjacent unkeepered area spring densities increased from 1.3 to 4.2 pairs. Keepered and unkeepered plots were adjacent so there was no barrier between the management areas. Again, corvids were controlled under the General Licence.

Key Reference: Sotherton, N.W., Aebischer, N.J. & Ewald, J.A. (2014). Research into action: grey partridge conservation as a case study. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 51: 1-5.

#### 3.3.3 Arundel, Sussex

On private land in West Sussex, an estate owner has taken the management package devised by the GWCT to recover grey partridge numbers and implemented it on his farm. The package includes

predator control including corvid removal under the General Licence. The farm is one where the GWCT has been counting partridges since 1968 and has done so every year since then. At the start, grey partridge spring densities were high (up to 40 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>), but by 2003 numbers had fallen to three birds! At this point the tenancy ended, the land came back in hand and the management began.

Population recovery was spectacular, increasing to nearly 90 pairs across the farm (or from 6.3 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> in 2003 to 19.1 pairs in 2015). On other parts of the study area without this management, numbers varied between 0.8 and 2.4 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. Autumn densities at Arundel increased from 1.1 to 140.6 birds per km<sup>2</sup>. Songbird numbers have also increased, but this work has not been reported in the scientific journals. But it does represent what is happening on many private estates aided by the licensed control of corvids.

Key Reference: Aebischer, N.J., Ewald, J.A., & Kingdon, N.G. (2018). Working towards the recovery of a declining quarry species: the grey partridge in the UK. In: Baxter, GS, Finch, NA & Murray, PJ (eds) *Advances in Conservation Through Sustainable Use of Wildlife*: 55-62. Wildlife Science Unit, University of Queensland, Gatton, Australia.

### **3.4 Surveys comparing areas with and without predator control and subsequent monitoring**

#### **3.4.1 Lapwings in the Avon Valley, Hampshire**

GWCT work here involves finding lapwing nests and following their fate. Then we try to attribute losses to particular causes. Between 2008 and 2012, from a sample of 296 nests monitored, 158 failed (53%). Among these failures 129 (82%) were lost to predation. By placing temperature loggers in nests during incubation, we discovered that 41% of nests were lost during the hours of daylight. From this, we assume the nest was raided by day-active as opposed to nocturnal predators (fox, badger). Day-active predators include the corvids. We also calculate crow densities in the valley and have found a powerful negative correlation between daily survival rates of lapwing and carrion crow density. At crow densities of 0.1 per hectare, daily lapwing survival rates were 85-90%. At crow densities of 0.55 per ha, survival rates were 55%. This work is ongoing and not yet published.

### **3.5 Curlew breeding success in relation to grouse moor proximity: estimating abundance and breeding success using behavioural data**

#### Interim summary report

This summary paper outlines the potential fate of one of the UK's most threatened bird species if corvids are not legally controlled.

The breeding population of Eurasian curlew (hereafter 'curlew') is declining across almost all its range, with estimates suggesting a 20 to 30% decline in the last 15 years. For this reason, the IUCN classifies curlew as 'Globally Near Threatened' on its Red List of Threatened Species. The UK population represents about a quarter of the global breeding population, but here it is estimated that the breeding population halved in the last 25 years. Accordingly, it is considered the bird of greatest conservation concern, with high UK decline rates having a greater adverse impact on the global population than those of any other country.

Poor breeding success, often attributable to predation, typically by foxes, stoats, crows and gulls, is a mechanism for decline. In Europe over half of published studies quote less than the 0.5-0.6 fledglings per pair per year required to offset adult mortality and to maintain a stable population. Declines appear less in some upland parts of northern England and Scotland where driven grouse shooting is a major land use and both habitat, and generalist predators are managed. This link between grouse moor management and sustained numbers of breeding curlew was established by the GWCT's Upland Predation Experiment at Otterburn in northern England (2000-08) (see above). Here predator control led to a three-fold increase in the breeding success of curlew and other waders and annual increases in breeding numbers.

It is evident that managers of driven grouse moors have a pivotal role in conserving curlew in the UK and hence globally, but this link, whilst weakly acknowledged by the RSPB and statutory conservation

bodies, is also massively played down by them. To that end, in 2016 the GWCT started a three-year project to quantify curlew breeding success on or adjacent to a range of kept and non-kept moorland edges to determine whether results from the Otterburn experiment were representative of those from wider moorland in the UK.

Study sites were paired, with one site on the fringes of moorland managed for driven red grouse shooting, and thereby receiving active predator management, the other on equivalent habitat type without adjacent grouse shooting and keeping. 18 paired sites were selected across most upland regions in the UK, including North Wales (Berwyn), northern England (Bowland, Yorkshire Dales, North Pennines, North York Moors and Northumberland), the Scottish Borders (Lammemuir, Southern Uplands) and the Scottish Highlands (Perthshire, Strathspey and Morayshire). Pairs of sites were each surveyed in one breeding season during the three-year period (2016-18). Sites were sufficiently large (approx. 1.5-4.0 km<sup>2</sup>) to yield a breeding success estimate based on at least 10 pairs of curlews.

To produce estimates of the number of breeding pairs of curlew and their breeding success, each site was surveyed five times spread between mid-April and early July. Curlew were classed as having chicks if they alarm called vociferously and persistently. Conversely, adults lacking such behaviour and readily flying off when disturbed were classed as not having chicks. These parameters were also recorded for other waders, mainly golden plover and lapwing, but also redshank, snipe, oystercatcher, ringed plover and greenshank.

On unkept plots, curlew pairs were approximately half as numerous on kept plots. Expression of aggressive behaviour by adult breeding curlew and the time period in weeks over which this behaviour was exhibited suggest that the proportion of curlew pairs fledging one or more chicks was almost four times higher on grouse moor fringes (0.67) than away from grouse moor fringes (0.17). This difference was consistent between regions and years and, of the 18 paired sites, breeding success was higher amongst the kept sites at 17 of the pairs of sites and similar to the unkept site at only one of the pairs. At no pair of sites was breeding success higher where predators were not managed. Assuming curlew need to rear an average of 0.6 chicks per pair to offset adult mortality and maintain stable numbers, then this was achieved at a minimum of 14 of the 18 (78%) kept sites, but at none of the 18 unkept sites. These rates assume that only one chick was reared per pair, but curlew can successfully rear up to four chicks, and these provisional rates will be corrected upwards using estimates of brood size at fledging during final analyses.

By looking at curlew behaviour in relation to the timing of each of the five surveys at each site, the data suggest that greatest losses occur during incubation and that an index of carrion crow abundance was negatively associated with breeding success. This suggests that clutch predation by carrion crows could be the primary cause of poor breeding, especially at sites where corvids are not routinely controlled. Breeding success may also vary between habitat types, but provisional analyses suggest that whilst sites overall differed in habitat, those within each pair of sites did not. Hence, differences in curlew breeding success in relation to corvid abundance were consistent across habitats and regions of the UK. Final analyses will include patterns of abundance and breeding success of the other wader species. To date, these reflect those of curlew, with higher numbers and better breeding success on sites where predators are managed by gamekeepers.

These results closely support those from the ten-year experiment at Otterburn, suggesting that those findings are representative of what is happening across the wider UK uplands. It is now 11 years since the Otterburn study was completed. Since then, the Ministry of Defence's Training Area at Otterburn has received no systematic predator control. Re-surveys of ground-nesting birds began last spring and predictably showed not only markedly fewer curlew, golden plover and lapwing – all species that flourished on the kept plots during the experiment – but the local extinction of black grouse and grey partridge. Surveys are being completed this spring and results will be reported this autumn.

In conclusion, expanding predator management, particularly of corvids, currently done routinely on grouse moors, to peripheral unkept areas is a practical step that could quickly help stem the current rapid decline of curlew, other waders and ground-nesting birds in general in the uplands and marginal farmlands of the UK. This should be included as a funded component of agri-environment schemes where there are qualifying numbers of ground-nesting birds.

#### 4. Problems with the new General Licences and simplified Individual licences

New licences for the lethal control of corvids to conserve flora and fauna have yet to be published, so our comments are based on the content of GL26 and GL31, with the assumption that many of the conditions (which, in our view, are unworkable and impractical) imposed in these new licences would likely also be in the General Licences for the conservation of flora and fauna. It is also based on our experience of applying for and receiving individual licences (under the new system) for the control of corvids to conserve wild flora and fauna.

##### 4.1 New General Licences – GL26

Previous GLs were five pages long. GL26 is 11 pages long, and users of the licence must comply with supporting document GU01, 'Standard licence conditions for trapping wild birds using decoys under a Natural England Licence'. Presumably NE actually means document GL33. GU01 is the document 'Wildlife Management Advice Note: Legal measures to resolve conflict with wild birds'. This is obviously very confusing for the licence user. It is unclear if Larsen mate traps can be used. On the licence it states traps that can be used are Larsen traps and multi-catch crow traps, whilst GL33 states trap types 'commonly used' under licence are Larsen traps and multi-catch traps. Does this mean Larsen mate traps can be used? SNH includes clear definitions of the different types of traps that can be used on the Scottish General Licences.

##### 4.2 New conditions

Conditions within these licences include lethal control only being used as a last resort. Reasonable endeavours must have been made to resolve the problem/threat by non-lethal means, unless 'impractical, without effect or disproportionate'. These measures must also continue during licence use. It is not clear what definitions of 'reasonable', 'impractical' or 'disproportionate', will apply. This puts licence users in a precarious legal position. Continuing with non-lethal measures whilst lethal control is being undertaken could, in practice, be impossible. For example, how does a lone operator scare pigeons or crows whilst simultaneously undertaking lethal control?

The requirement to undertake or have tried non-lethal measures (e.g. scaring devices) whilst controlling crows to protect ground-nesting birds (a condition on the individual licences and based on the conditions of GL26 – which will probably be a blueprint for other GLs – a likely condition on the licences for the control of crows, magpies and other corvids to protect flora and fauna) as well as being impractical, could be counter-productive and lead to negative conservation outcomes. While non-lethal measures, e.g. scaring, have a role in preventing pigeon damage to crops, none of these methods are effective or appropriate where corvid control for the protection of ground-nesting birds is the objective. Scaring (audible or visual) is not effective when it is impossible to know the exact whereabouts of the nest you wish to protect: where should you set about scaring your crow from? There is a serious risk that you can scare the conserved bird as well, perhaps leading to nest desertion, or increased vulnerability to other predators. It is clear that where nests are dispersed, scaring has no place in reducing corvid predation for conservation reasons. Habitat improvement is clearly important, and one cannot expect any species to thrive in a substandard environment, but even with enhanced habitat aimed at supporting the entire life cycle of target birds, nest predation by corvids is often a serious issue. The review of the scientific evidence base for the value of predation control in the conservation of wild birds (section 3) demonstrates how lethal predation control (including control undertaken within the previous General Licensing system) can be very effective.

The new licence requires that the users of the licence, "*Must be able to show, if asked by an officer of Natural England or the Police: (i) what type of livestock any action under this licence is protecting; (ii) what lawful methods have been, and are being, taken to prevent predation of such livestock by carrion crow or why the lawful methods have they have not been taken; (iii) what measures have been and are being taken to minimise losses to that livestock from other predators and causes; and (iv) why the threat of predation from carrion crows is sufficiently serious to merit action under this licence.*" These

requirements are all new, onerous and arguably impossible requirements. They also put a significant burden of proof on the licence user, which is leading to serious concern and confusion amongst practitioners.

The new licences cannot be used to shoot crows in protected sites (i.e. SSSI, SPA, RAMSAR, etc), or within 300 metres of them. NE states that: 'People who have a consent underpinned by a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) to control certain wild bird species on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) can still continue to do so. If people are unsure if their consent is supported by an HRA, or they need to take action in a SSSI which is not covered by their existing consent, they should talk to their usual contact in the local Natural England office'. The difficulty here is that many landowners, farmers and gamekeepers do not know if NE has undertaken an HRA over the land on which they operate and will likely need to take action at short notice. This is leading to significant confusion amongst practitioners and consequently negatively impacting on vulnerable livestock, crops and wild birds.

GL26 states that the licence can be used only as a 'last resort to prevent serious damage'. There are definitions of what NE considers to be serious damage. With respect to released pheasants, the licence states that 'the loss of some released gamebirds to crow predation is normal 'business risk' and then states that if crow predation were to reduce or threaten to reduce the numbers of birds recovered to below 35% then that would constitute serious damage. It is impossible for a shoot manager to predict in summer, when immediate action is required to protect released pheasants, if end of season returns six months later would be lower than 35%. These conditions need significant re-working. Based on the conditions in GL26 and GL33, it would seem likely that in licences to control corvids to protect flora and fauna, there would be a requirement to define 'serious damage'. We have no idea how NE proposes to define 'serious damage' in the context of the conservation of wild birds. Also, using licences only as a 'last resort' could be too late for local populations of vulnerable nesting birds, and land managers should be able to undertake lethal control as part of a planned, annual conservation management strategy.

#### **4.3 Individual Licences – Application to control certain wild bird species (19-02)**

We have received many calls and enquiries from our members about the Individual Licensing system application process. Several applicants have not received licences two weeks after application, which is leading to direct negative conservation impacts on the ground. One of the problems with the application form (once individuals have been able to download it – the form was in a format that many applicants were not able to open) is that it contains a lot of information that is not relevant for that particular licence (i.e. it contains very similar text and conditions to the other individual licence categories designed for other situations and activities). This has led to significant confusion amongst applicants. For example, on 19-02, there is a requirement to have undertaken an array of non-lethal measures that, for the purposes of this particular licence, are not relevant or could even be counterproductive. On the application form there is a requirement to provide a grid reference of where the control will take place. Yet, on the licence itself, it states 'Area valid in: all counties of England (landward of the mean low water mark)'. What does NE mean?

There is requirement that authorised operators must be over 18 unless they have written authorisation from Natural England. Many professional trainee gamekeepers are under 18, and shooting problem crows will be one of the jobs they are likely to be tasked with. This is an unnecessary bureaucratic burden.

It is the GWCT's view that the issue of General Licences by the UK has been the most satisfactory solution to perennial problems over many years that are commonplace but also dispersed, seasonally brief, and difficult to predict; and where local and temporal circumstances affect the success of either non-lethal or lethal control measures.

## **5. Member responses**



- We received 450 responses (over 90,000 words received) in 5 days
- Key issues are impact on songbirds (mentioned by 51% - almost a third of whom had observed the damage caused) and crop protection (49% mentioned). Almost 20% of respondents had observed crop damage.
- 22% were concerned about the impact on livestock, with half of these having witnessed it first-hand. This was predominantly corvids attacking sheep and lambs.
- One in five responses mentions the impact on wading birds, especially red-listed birds such as lapwing (mentioned by 14%) and curlew (mentioned by 10%).
- 16% of respondents mentioned gamebird conservation

We were impressed with the effort made by so many respondents to articulate and share their thoughts and observations. We are particularly concerned about the comments made by those that feel disillusioned because it can take years to inspire and train those willing to undertake conservation on their land but only weeks for them to disengage.

The following remarks sent to us we felt were of particular note:

**The need for an injection of realism:**

- The issues of 'Predation' should no longer be 'brushed under the carpet'. The 'philosophical' objection by some conservation organisations to the killing of any birds is causing untold damage to songbird populations
- Research has proven that legal predator control is vital to helping endangered & rare species and this has been withdrawn at the worst possible time.
- Overall my biggest wish is that the Government takes its advice on wildlife conservation and management from those who have the knowledge experience and wisdom to do the right thing for nature.
- Prior to the revocation we found the general licence to be a perfectly workable document enabling us to target and control the relevant species in order to protect ground nesting birds and crops.
- On our estate we have wetlands, rivers, arable crops and a vast array of ground nesting birds some of which nest within SSSI's the general license covered control across the whole estate and worked perfectly well. Since the revocation it has been near impossible to carry out the necessary protection of the species that many in various stewardship schemes are paid to protect. There are no viable alternatives available to deal with predation in these vulnerable species and the general license was imperative.
- It seems the revocation of these licenses is the result of a handful of people campaigning from an emotional viewpoint rather than from scientific research.

**A sense that further conservation efforts are pointless:**

- Canada geese are also a problem at the moment. I have chased them off on several occasions this spring but they come back in the evening and now refuse to fly away. Normally the answer would be to shoot 1 or 2 in full view of the rest then they don't come back for a long time that has always worked in the past. The problem I have is that we have planted areas or nectar rich plants nearby for the benefit of endangered insects and the geese have grazed it off already. No point replanting as they will eat it again. What a waste of time and effort and no help for insects.
- This moor is managed for wildlife and conservation grazing. The control of Crows and Magpies etc is vital for the moor to have any reasonable success rearing ground nesting birds and song birds. Ten years hard and careful work has gone into this project. This decision can see all this work disappear in one season. Why have Natural England funded us to do this work then destroyed it overnight.

**Compromising government funded conservation:**

- The government pay grants to the farmers for these margins but it's too little benefit where control of corvids in the spring does not occur as small birds and our wonderful curlew and lapwings fail to rear their chicks to adulthood.
- Having fed song birds all winter with our supplementary feeding to Winter Bird Cover [AB9] under our CSS scheme I have now had to withdraw my 2 Larsen traps [magpies] & crow trap just as we are approaching the peak nesting/hatching of our numerous songbirds. This leaves these predators [magpies & crows] with a free run at killing off our hard work & wasting Government funds ploughed into Countryside Stewardship schemes similar to ours. In my case £16 000 per annum of DEFRA's money It makes little sense.
- Within our Mid Tier agreement with Natural England we have contracted to manage hedges plant wild bird cover and supplementary feed during the hungry gap. These actions will be a waste of taxpayers money unless we can control those species that predate the very birds we struggle to promote
- It leaves me speechless as to how and why public money is spent on protecting and improving habitats for such species yet Natural England take away the fundamental element in place to protect such species from predation.

#### **The loss of a vital conservation tool:**

- I am the owner/manager of a small nature reserve in East Sussex just 25 acres but a biodiversity hot-spot where over 50 bird species with proven breeding status were recorded during the last bird atlas survey. Breeding success has been dependent on effective control of corvids principally crows and magpies using Larsen traps. With over 60 years conservation experience I have found no other method as effective or practical. With the explosion in jackdaw numbers all my nest-boxes put up specifically for barn owls, kestrels tawny owls mandarin ducks and stock doves are routinely filled with jackdaws' nests. Only by shooting these birds can the other species breed -removing jackdaws' nests alone is futile as they are immediately rebuilt.
- We find ourselves in a position where we are unable to protect red listed BAP species from predation on our farm at the most critical time of year.

#### **Observed impact on wildlife:**

- Yesterday I watched as 3 crows robbed and destroyed a skylark's nest despite all I tried to do to put them off. I believe that this is the last one of the many Skylarks that nested on our village common adjacent to the River Parrett SSSI that have been wiped out due to lack of predator control.
- The one year we were unable to larsen trap and shoot those breeding successes showed a marked decline
- I have immediately lost the nests of 2 pairs of late nesting lapwings because I couldn't kill the carrion crows near the nest sites. The turtle doves are about to arrive and my inability to kill the crows and magpies near the nest sites wherever they turn out to be will be catastrophic as I usually have 3 to 5 pairs here and maintain thickets and high hedges to help them and carry out magpie and carrion crow control.

#### **Observed impact on livestock:**

- As a farmer I find it most infuriating that this was introduced during the hill lambing period crows are devastating at lambing time new born lambs are attacked before they can get to their feet. To see a lamb that has lost its eyes before its navel is dry is shocking.
- As for my poor lambs we have had the eyes pecked out of 16 I have tried using bangers but they soon learn it's not a threat. Please, Please help.
- crows / rooks / magpies and jackdaws congregating and eating / fouling stored animal feed on farms which would compromise the Farm Assured status thus endangering public health down the chain.

#### **The lack of practicality of the alternatives to lethal control:**

- The alternatives are simply not practical with relation to conservation efforts. How can we be expected to scare birds over 1000 acres when we cannot identify every nesting site? What would the effect of scaring be on nesting success with the associated disturbance?
- Our farm is entirely given over to wet grassland for breeding waders. I do not have the time to shoot gulls and corvids myself. Without the general licence I cannot get others to do this for me. We are already seeing an increase in corvids persecuting the waders - particularly Lapwing. We also have a growing colony of Canada Geese which are depriving the waders of breeding territory and will most likely trample nests. Non lethal methods are not satisfactory; we have tried rockets but all this seems to do is scare the waders we are trying to protect
- We have tried non lethal methods but for a variety of reasons they have not been effective 1) Visual deterrents have limited effect as birds in this area are used to humans 2) Crow bangers do not deter the birds but seriously upset our neighbours 3) Netting has been impractical around the buildings 4) We experience significant "transient encroachment" of corvids and feral pigeons from near by urban areas which require a swift and decisive response.
- To suggest there are non lethal ways of keeping predators away from nests is naive in the extreme as if anyone has the time to do their full time job and stand around multiple sites on their farm at the same time.
- The practicalities of using non lethal methods to deter pests and predators over the land we manage simply do not work and this is not said through lack of trying. The only alternative is lethal control of which we have proven success.
- There is no alternative to lethal control. Scaring lasts only very briefly.

#### **Concern about imminent damage:**

- There is a 15 acre woodland at the back of my house and the owner allows me to manage it – flora and fauna. Apart from grey squirrels I only cull carrion crows and magpies as I have witnessed them raiding songbird nests and believe it is vital that we give our birds every chance to breed successfully. Since the revocation I am now visited several times each day by carrion crow and magpies. Once the breeding season starts no songbird nest will be safe. Normally I would have culled them by now (about 4-6 each Spring) but they now walk around the grounds and my garden with impunity.
- In the last few years the number of rooks, magpies and crows has massively increased and buzzards are new to the area. Coupled with an explosion of badgers which we cannot control the local wildlife has been decimated. Ground nesting birds especially have been hit hard by all these predators. The balance of nature is being upset by too great a number of species at the top of the food chain. If control and management is not undertaken we will lose all our smaller birds and mammals. The hedgehog is almost wiped out because of the badger population.
- Magpies and corvids need to be trapped and controlled as all the good we have been doing over the years will be undone very quickly and populations of small farmland birds will start to decline again.
- It is a great frustration to know that I can no longer legally control the numbers of Magpies and to know that as a result we are unlikely to enjoy lots of small birds in our garden. To protect small bird populations I urge the relevant authorities to issue general licences to allow the control of predator species like Magpies ASAP.
- The ground that I Larsen Trap corvids and shoot corvids on has cuckoos, nightingales, skylarks, oyster catches (nesting on stony fields) reed warblers, wild ducks wagtails the list goes on. These are all very vulnerable to corvid predation and the control of these is absolutely essential.

#### **Observation of benefits:**

- Controlling crows and gulls in the past few years has allowed some lapwing and curlew chicks to fledge at last.
- I own a small farm and shoot in Oxfordshire. Most of the farm is in the CSS to encourage conservation of birds plants and insects. I am also a member of a group of Farmers big and small along the XXX Brook that work together to ensure conservation efforts along the valley is pooled to maximum benefit. Our Scheme is coordinated by the XXXX Wildlife Trust. The

purpose of the two schemes above is to preserve and restore the habitats for many of our farmland birds which are under severe pressure. I have been controlling the Carrion Crows and Magpies on the farm for 10 years now and it really makes a difference. In our big farmland bird count this year there were over 22 species of birds spotted in the 30 min period. If it becomes illegal for us to control the Carrion Crows and Magpies that spend nearly all their time at this time of year walking along to top of hedge rows pulling out the nest with eggs and young what is the point of putting all the other effort in.

- The benefits of the revoked licenses allow control of corvids that in our case lead to: 1. Our Black Grouse population to thrive 2. Lapwing to return to the farm and breed after an absence of 20+ years 3. Curlew to successfully breed and flourish - we have over 8 pairs and recently found a nest with 4 eggs The withdrawal of the license threatens the above species as corvids will take anything they can. We will never know the true damage caused.
- Since we have had a policy of controlling magpies and crows over many years we have seen an increase in the breeding success of songbirds.

#### **Observed crop damage:**

- The revoked general licenses meant that pigeons damaged pea crops and crows ate my free range hen and duck eggs causing significant financial damage.
- We cannot undertake crop protection as previously. Rape has been demolished. It has got gas guns in drums and flags but the damage is up to around 40% birds are eating and flying from the woods in their thousands.
- We have a 300 acre mixed farm. With nesting plover and English Partridge the crows are just waiting for the chicks to hatch. We have 60 acres of sown beans the rooks have pulled up half we use scarecrows but very time consuming as you have to move them twice a day. If we get any crop at all the Pigeons will be on to those.
- We have a pea crop just emerging and flowering oilseed rape still being attacked by pigeon flocks. We need to protect both crops and shooting is the most effective way. Although we have flags and gas guns out on the peas we are still seeing pigeons feeding on the emerging seedlings. If we can prevent seedling damage we'll get a crop if we can't we won't and that is money we can ill afford to lose. Same with the oilseed rape we have spent most of the money on this crop now we don't want to see it all go to waste by losing part of a crop now.

#### **Dissatisfaction with the decision to withdraw the general Licences**

- As a keeper with over 40 years full time experience dedicated to wildlife diversity and conservation, I find this latest decision re general licences to be madness verging on insanity
- Full consultation should have been conducted involving all bodies involved in agriculture and our countryside.
- I am so angry and bitter about this gross betrayal that next year which will mark the end of my current agreement will be my last. I see no point in having anything to do with Natural England anymore. The sudden loss of the general licence has had a profound impact on me as I now feel I do not have full ownership of my own farm and my ability to carry out my 29th year of stewardship obligations. I take these responsibilities very seriously.
- I feel very bitter that Natural England is paying me to carry out conservation measures but has now said it doesn't care about rare species after all.
- The vast majority of volunteers who use their own resources are extremely law abiding and know only too well that a breach of the W&CA will lead to the immediate and permanent loss of their firearms licence. Now the way this has been handled and uncertainty that led to some key people potentially breaking the law as they had not been informed or had good time to comply has led to key unpaid volunteers permanently 'walking away' never to return.

We have submitted a supporting document 'GWCT Annex I. Member responses to General Licence evidence review'