



Game & Wildlife
CONSERVATION TRUST
Scotland

Advisory Services

What we do



The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) conducts scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife and the effects of farming and other land management practices on the environment.

Through our research, the GWCT has demonstrated that good management of our natural environment can lead to tangible knock-on benefits for a wide range of wildlife. From declining wading birds, like the lapwing and curlew, that benefit from the management of our upland estates, to improved species diversity in our lowlands as a result of habitat creation for pheasant and partridge releases, game management can deliver a net gain for biodiversity.

The Advisory team plays an important role in disseminating this applied, practical research to managers of the countryside through training courses, events and face-to-face visits.

Having this direct link to applied research means that our expert advisors have been at the forefront of promoting best practice game and wildlife management as a force for nature conservation and environmental improvement on farmland, woodland, moorland and wetland for over 80 years.

Each of our advisors is specialist in their respective fields and is passionate about producing a countryside that is rich in game and wildlife.

Whatever your requirements and interests, we are here to support you!

For further information please contact 01738 551511 or scottishhq@gwct.org.uk



Our services

Our Advisory team offers bespoke advice on all aspects of game and wildlife management. From wildlife and habitat surveys, whether required for ecological impact assessments, grant applications, or as part of wider biodiversity appraisals, to best practice predator control and the sustainable management of gamebirds, we provide one-to-one advice to give you the confidence to make the right decisions for your farm or shoot.

Our services cover a variety of topics including:

- Biodiversity & Nature Conservation
- Upland Game Management
- Lowland Game Management
- Shoot Management
- Farm Management
- Predator Control Assessments
- Data Management & Reporting
- Courses & Training Days



Biodiversity & Nature Conservation

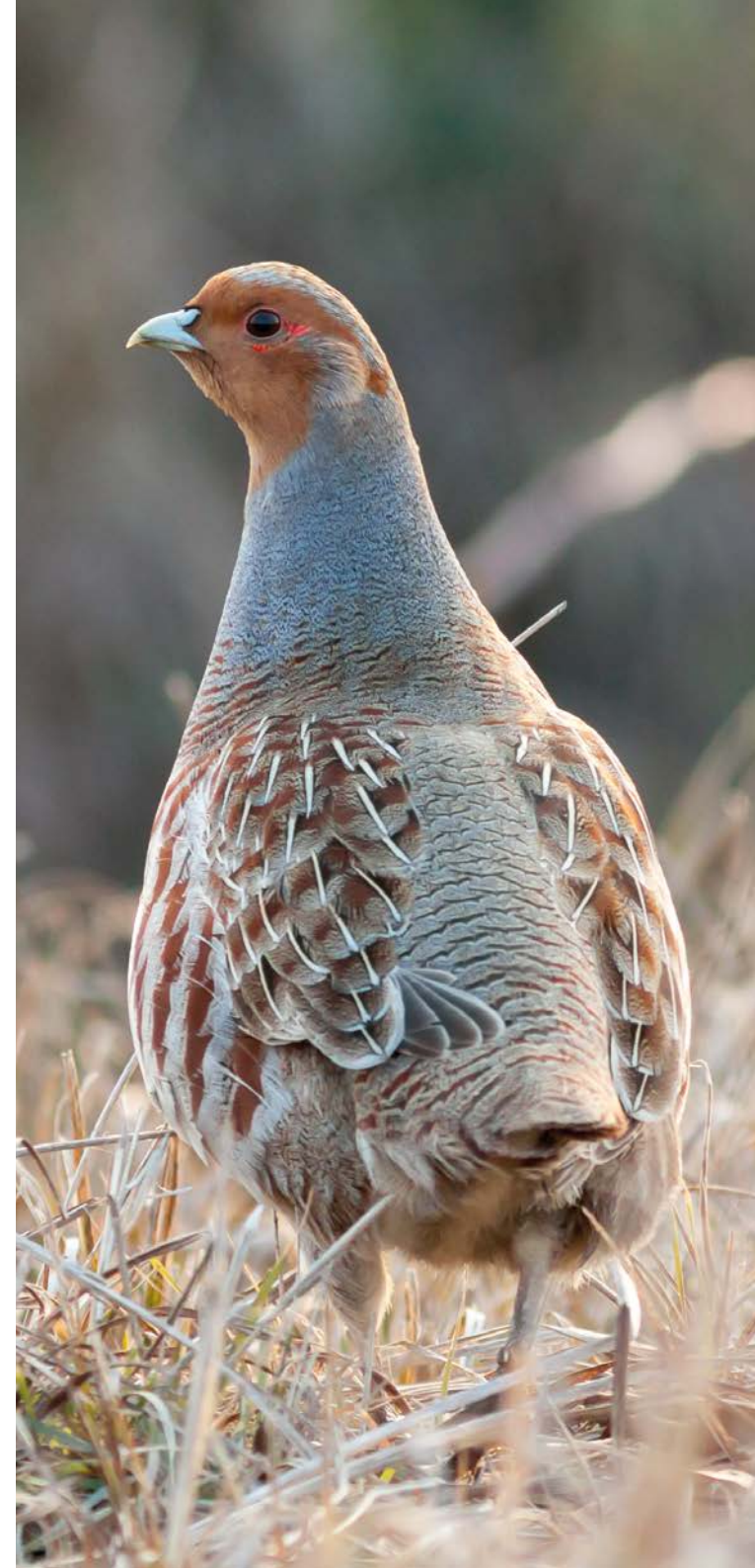
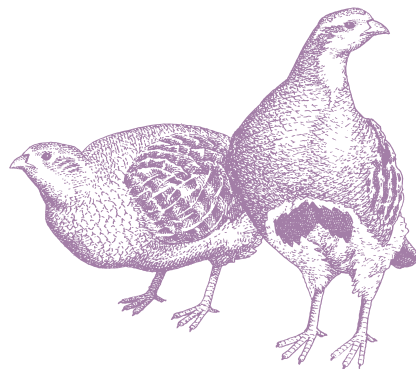
Our approach to land management is one that leaves our wildlife and habitats in a better state than before – our aim is to produce a thriving countryside rich in game and wildlife.

The GWCT's Biodiversity Assessment Service helps farms, estates and wildlife managers highlight where current management is benefitting biodiversity, identify where there is potential for negative impacts on wildlife, and promote practical solutions and remedial actions.

We take a holistic view on assessing biodiversity. Our assessments are tailored to the individual requirements of each estate, farm or shoot, providing a qualitative ecological appraisal of habitats and their condition whilst identifying areas of good

practice and making recommendations for future improvements.

As well as more broad ecological appraisals and habitat mapping, we are also experienced in carrying out in-depth surveys for a range of species, including birds, mammals and invertebrates, and offer training to land managers so they can contribute to practitioner-led conservation initiatives.



Upland Game Management




We help advise on a wide variety of upland issues for game and wildlife, from moorland restoration and muirburn planning, to population monitoring and disease management. Our experts provide all aspects of ecological monitoring necessary for land managers to make effective decisions on hill grazing and habitat management for red grouse and other upland species. Following an initial assessment visit, we will create a range of customised packages to address your objectives.



Seasonal Red Grouse Counts

We have been using pointing dogs to monitor red grouse population trends in Scotland for over 40 years, and our research in this area has provided us with a unique insight into the ecology of this species. We have experienced dog handlers in our Advisory team who undertake annual red grouse counts. Grouse counts in spring, repeated in July, give reliable estimates of pre- and post-breeding densities. We use this information for population and harvesting analysis to assist with and inform current moorland management practices, including disease management.





“ Working with GWCT to develop a comprehensive muirburn plan has given us the confidence that we are managing the moorland in a sympathetic way which will benefit a wide variety of species.”

– Headkeeper, Angus Glens

Grouse Health & Disease Monitoring

GWCT research has been integral to understanding disease management in red grouse. Through this research we have helped reduce the severity and frequency of cyclical grouse population crashes, resulting in greater stabilisation of grouse numbers, which in turn has increased the likelihood of shooting. We offer a complete grouse health and disease service covering both Louping-ill and strongylosis testing and monitoring. In addition, we can help you develop a comprehensive grouse health plan that covers the use of domestic livestock as tick mops.

Muirburn Advisory Service

The GWCT recognises the importance of muirburn as a land management and conservation tool. Our Muirburn Advisory Service is designed to support estates in developing and monitoring simple, user-friendly muirburn plans. We can provide specialist advice to help evaluate and manage risk of harm to the environment from muirburn activities and ensure that management complies with best practice and meets any statutory restrictions. Our services include training, planning, mapping and monitoring.



Lowland Game Management

Released gamebirds underpin most lowland game shooting in Britain. The process of releasing and related game management must work within the law, be transparent, and withstand scrutiny.

Compared with 20 years ago, the demands placed on lowland shoot managers are diverse. Providing testing, high-flying birds at low cost remains a core objective for many, but today the effective management of disease and maximising wild productivity from released birds are increasingly important.

Sustainable gamebird releasing is based on minimising negative effects and maximising positive ones so that the overall balance for habitats and biodiversity is neutral or positive.

Whether it is advice on the composition and placement of game crops, woodland management, the effect of parasites, or the detailed assessment of key habitats, using agri-environment schemes, lowland shoots can benefit from the GWCT's expertise and management techniques.

With the direct input of both our Research and Advisory teams, we can help shoots wishing to combine maximum wild production with the most sustainable and cost-effective releasing systems. With over 80 years of providing advice on lowland game management to thousands of shoots in the UK and abroad, we are uniquely positioned to provide a package of up-to-date, targeted advice.



Shoot Management

It's stunning how just a few small innovations by an experienced eye can make a huge difference to your shoot.

In addition to managing existing habitats and problem-solving declining returns or bird flight performance, our professional advisors can help with the design and strategic siting of new game coverts and game crops to create the essential structure for a new shoot, one that capitalises on topography and wind direction. We can help identify appropriate sites for pheasant or partridge release pens in relation to drives and how they should be constructed and managed; the right course of action can pave the way to good recovery rates whilst fully adhering to the Code of Good Shooting Practice. The creation of carefully designed flight

ponds can inject a measurable boost to farm biodiversity, and our advisors impart researched advice on woodcock and snipe habitats and management.

Whether a shoot relies on wild birds or on restocking, a suitable feeding regime must be carefully planned. The programme can significantly affect the condition of the birds for breeding, their welfare, and their presentation and performance on a shoot day. Our advisors can give the best advice, tailored to suit the method of keeping and the time available.

The GWCT continues to be involved with an annual analysis of shoot costs. This allows our advisors to compare a shoot's expenses with the national average and point the way to improvements. In



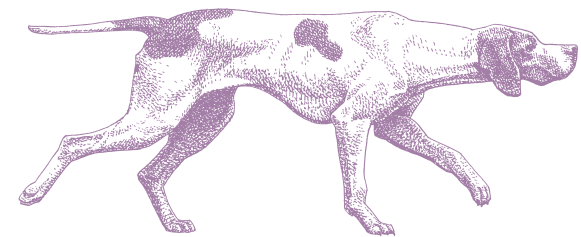


“ Only two years ago now, we were discussing declining returns on our small family shoot, when a friend suggested it may be worth getting in touch with the GWCT, to see if they could advise us on how things might be improved. On his first visit, Hugo guided us toward starting work on a small wood; already the positive impact is audible, visible, heart-warming and real. The GWCT advice has been inspiring and has made a real difference. The early signs are good – the sunlight clearings and the opportunity for shrub layer regeneration are having an impact. The biodiversity benefits are already rewarding and astonishing. The work continues!”

– Shoot Owner, Aberdeenshire



an increasingly expensive sport, shoot owners or managers need to make the most cost-effective use of their land. A few well thought out changes can soon pay for themselves both in terms of productivity and quality of the shoot, and by enhancing the capital value of the land. The cost of a visit is around 15-20 extra birds in the bag.



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Farm Management


Agriculture covers over 70% of Scotland's land use, with some of our most important habitats linked to farming. As such, we need to farm efficiently to look after nature.

Our advisors can help with farm design to improve your game and wildlife conservation, including declining species, and are experienced at delivering Farm Environmental Assessments such as those required for current Single Farm Payment Schemes, and increasingly for the outcomes-based schemes replacing them.

We can provide a one-to-one visit to your farm to advise you on any wildlife and conservation issues that are specific to you and your land. Our advisors have a wealth of experience, having surveyed

millions of hectares, and base their advice on the research produced by our team of researchers and scientists working on game and wildlife projects at our own demonstration farm sites in Aberdeenshire and Leicestershire.

Working together, farmers and land managers can deliver greater benefits for soil, water and wildlife at landscape scale. GWCT advisors can help establish Farmer Clusters with the focus on conserving key species for the benefit of the wider environment.



“ It is likely that future financial support for the land and wildlife management sector, whether in the form of public payments from Scottish Government or private investment, will be conditional on demonstrating the outcomes of good practice. In a climate where land and wildlife managers are facing increasing political pressure and scrutiny, the ability to demonstrate ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ will be an essential element of future-proofing within our rural sector.”

– Ross Macleod, Head of Policy Scotland





Predator Control Assessments

The GWCT recognises the importance of the implementation of targeted, legal and humane predation control programmes for the benefit of game and wildlife. However, with people now spending more recreational hours connecting with land managed for gamebirds and sporting activities than ever before, combined with increasing social media output, it has never been more important that targeted predator control is discreet, trusted and fully defensible.

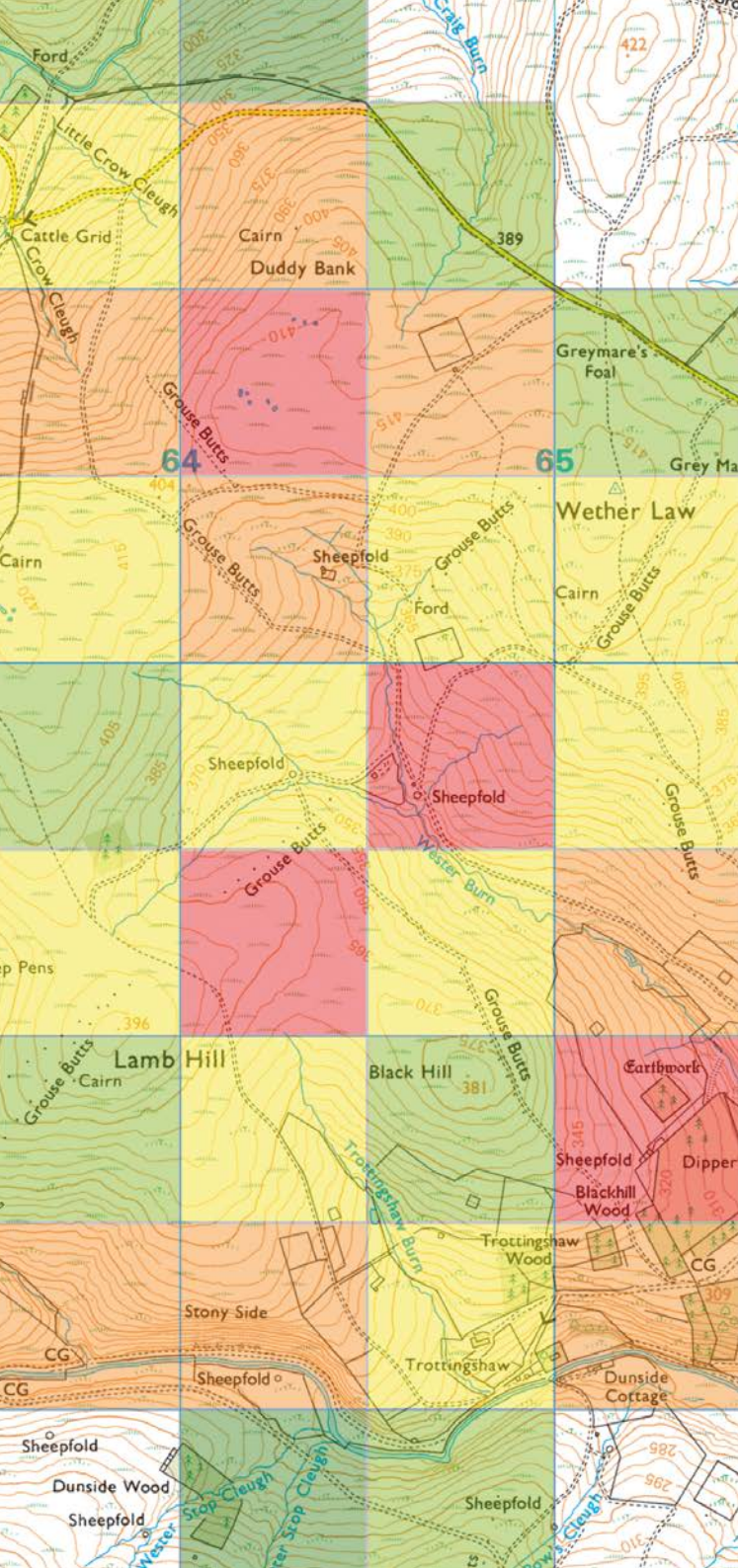
Our professional advisors provide tailored advice to estates on best practice predator control. An outside, well-trained eye can make the world of difference on how far the best practice bar can be raised.

During the spring and autumn, we undertake comprehensive reviews of spring trapping, snaring and corvid control techniques across Scotland to help identify any possible shortfalls in legal aspects as well as ensuring that trap operator actions are fully humane and conform to current animal welfare legislation. Adherence to recommendations, presented in inspection reports, help demonstrate that the farm or estate has undertaken all reasonable steps to ensure no wildlife crime is committed and can help provide a defence against any alleged illegal practice and a possible vicarious liability charge.

“Regular predator control inspections conducted by the GWCT have really raised the standard of trapping and snaring, not just on this estate, but across Scotland.”

– Headkeeper, Scottish Borders





Data Management & Reporting

Increasing concerns about the potential ecological consequences of how our countryside is managed mean that there is, now more than ever, pressure on land and wildlife managers to demonstrate evidence of sound management.

Through our Advisory service, we offer a bespoke advice, training and reporting package to help estates demonstrate evidence of best practice management. Using the Epicollect5 platform, we can provide your management team with an easy-to-use mobile app to collect and maintain records on all aspects of game and wildlife management. This is aimed at helping estates fulfil basic due diligence and evidence requirements, which will be required for future licence applications and accreditation.

Apart from ease of use, a helpful feature of the mobile app is the ability to capture your location and link this to information on wildlife and management activities without the need to log into a mobile data network. This has opened a world of opportunities for building projects and connecting them to Geographical Information Systems.

In Scotland, we are helping Advisory clients with a range of analysis and reports based on mapping. By doing so, we can provide rich insights on predator and habitat management, as well as the conservation of key species, such as wading birds, raptors, mountain hare and black grouse.



“ Using the Epicollect5 app provides us with a simple to use method to record our daily management activities and has allowed us to visualise our data in a way we were never able to do before. This is the future of game management.”

– Headkeeper, Scottish Borders

Courses & Training Days

Our advisors run a series of courses throughout the year on a wide range of topics, including game management, biodiversity and conservation. Successful candidates receive a GWCT certificate to help demonstrate due diligence and responsibility as required under the Wildlife & Nature Environment Act. Our most popular courses are listed below:

Snaring

Our latest Scottish Government-approved fox and rabbit snaring course provides candidates with the necessary certificate to obtain their unique ID number, which must by law be attached to all snares set in Scotland. Fundamental to the course is the

emphasis placed on welfare and the law, in addition to best practice and legal updates.

Corvid Control

Corvid control is a vital tool for countryside managers. When done well, it can be hugely beneficial to the conservation of our game and wildlife. This course has been developed to ensure those practising corvid control in Scotland can do so with the confidence that they are operating within the law whilst demonstrating due diligence and welfare considerations.





Mustelid Control

With the recent significant changes to tunnel trapping legislation throughout the UK, this course keeps trappers fully up to date with both legal and humane control issues. The session addresses the legal aspects of the various methods of stoat, weasel and rodent control employed by keepers and wildlife managers, as well as the equipment required and best practice advice.



Grouse Health & Disease

This training opportunity addresses the increasing need for grouse moors to assemble documented evidence to demonstrate best practice. The half-day course focuses on the latest management techniques for the control of strongyle worm burdens and tick in red grouse.

