

# Game & Wildlife Scottish Demonstration Farm

## Student Placements 2025/26

### Background

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust is an independent wildlife conservation research charity. Its 60+ scientists carry out research into game, associated species and habitats, from its HQ at Fordingbridge and from outstations throughout Great Britain. The Trust's main areas of interest encompass farmland, moorland, woodland and river management for game and other wildlife. The Trust took over the management of a hill-edge sheep farm in Aberdeenshire in 2015, which now runs as a demonstration project on how wildlife conservation and productive farming can go hand in hand.

### The Placements

At the Game & Wildlife Scottish Demonstration Farm (GWSDF) Auchnerran (484ha), we undertake agricultural and ecological research and annual monitoring of a wide array of wildlife on the farm, with a focus on breeding wader and farmland birds. The farm supports a wide diversity of habitats and wildlife, including badgers, red squirrels, pine marten, various raptors, curlew, oystercatcher and many lapwing. The research is usually applied in nature and based on a programme of data collection in the field. We have two openings.

We are always working on a variety of research and demonstration projects but focus primarily on the breeding success and population dynamics of waders, badger movements and wader predation, and monitoring soil health and invertebrate populations. On the adjacent moorland, we are gathering information on tick burdens on chicks and on ticks in the environment (and how to best measure this) and we look at how effective sheep are at performing their function as 'tick mop'.

We have a small, but very welcoming and dynamic team at the farm. Both placements would be based at GWSDF where we have an office (with broadband) and private accommodation (large house with two bedrooms). There will be a 4x4 available for use on the farm. We pay a stipend of £131 per week and accommodation and bills (excluding WiFi at the student accommodation) are covered.

We can accommodate placement students for up to a year, or shorter periods as necessary. The successful candidates will be involved mostly with field work but will also gain experience with desk-based (literature) research, data handling and data analysis. Overall, this is a fantastic opportunity to expand your experience in ecological experimental design, database construction and data analysis, field work techniques including wildlife surveys, and if desirable, software such as ArcGIS Pro. We would endeavour to match your interests to the project as far as possible. There will also be the opportunity to help out more generally on the farm and we are keen to facilitate student exchanges with the Scottish Lowland Research department (e.g., conducting hare and grey partridge counts), and between departments within The GWCT as a whole. We are also looking to expand our body of research into exciting new avenues.

We require confident and able students with a keen interest in ecology and in working outdoors for a placement in 2025/26. You must be happy to be based in a remote, rural location, and to work as part of a small, but enthusiastic team. Some data handling and analysis skills might be useful as would bird ID skills, but these are not essential as full training will be provided. Must be able to drive. The closing date for applications is January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, with interviews held between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2025.

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