

Turn your back on grouse

A popular campaign against greed and intensification on England's grouse shooting estates.





“The hen harrier is a UK flagship species and extinction of any species of wildlife in the UK, through criminal activity, is unacceptable in the 21st century.”

Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales

“It is time for this industry to prove to the rest of the country that they can leave archaic activities behind. They must show their activities are sustainable and don’t rely on the illegal killing of birds of prey to promote ever increasing grouse-bags.”

Martin Harper, RSPB Conservation Director

“Upland estates feel they can divorce themselves from the collective wishes of the electorate, the requirements of the law and a recognition that they have a responsibility to nurture some of the most iconic members of our natural heritage.”

John Armitage – Former RSPB conservationist



Contents

1	Introduction and summary	4
2	The Hen Harrier	7
3	Grouse shooting estates	9
4	Consequences of intensification	11
5	Initiatives aimed at improving the fate of the hen harrier	14
6	The view from the grouse shooting industry	17
7	The political situation	20
8	A public campaign	24
9	Who to avoid?	26
Appendix 1	Individuals and businesses connected to driven grouse shooting in the UK	Available as a separate document
Appendix 2	Information sources	29
Appendix 3	Academic papers	32
	Glossary	34



Cover image:

*Hen harrier
Circus cyaneus,
female in flight.*

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1. Introduction and summary

Last year the RSPB announced that the hen harrier, a bird of prey once common on Britain's uplands, had failed to raise a single chick across the whole of England. This story of near extinction runs counter to a general trend of good news stories around biodiversity in the UK. For example, another bird of prey – the red kite – has been successfully re-introduced across many of its former areas, and emissions regulations have seen fish and other species return to rivers once barren from years of pollution.

The decline of the hen harrier is also particularly curious because it has continued despite a raft of regulations, laws and initiatives designed to protect it. The hen harrier's misfortune, it would appear, is that its natural habitat is heather moorlands which are increasingly being managed by landowners as grouse shooting estates. This report confirms that illegal persecution by gamekeepers is a key element, but paints a more complex picture of intensification, greed and ignorance at the edges of some of our last remaining wild spaces.

With regulation proving ineffective, this report is calling for a popular campaign of ostracism against the grouse shooting industry until hen harriers have been allowed to return. We also argue that 'perverse' government subsidies of the industry – such as management grants and the gun licence subsidy recently highlighted in the press – should also be suspended.

This campaign is calling on people supporting its goals to consider avoiding visiting or supporting businesses linked to grouse-shooting estates, to register their protest. We have therefore begun to compile lists of businesses linked to grouse shooting (see Appendix I which is available as a separate document downloadable from the Ethical Consumer website).

1.1 How intensive management works

There are four key areas which campaigners have identified as being characteristic of an intensively managed grouse estate.

(a) Burning heather

The preference of managers of driven grouse moorland is to regularly burn heather in order to create a mosaic of the young, more nutritious heather which grouse like to feed on, and older, longer heather for them to nest in and hide in. This reduces the amount of taller plants preferred by the ground nesting hen harrier.

(b) Controlling 'pests'

In order to sustain grouse in artificially high numbers, their natural predators must be removed. Various birds and animals are 'controlled as vermin' to prevent them feeding on grouse eggs and chicks. Stoats, weasels, crows and foxes can be legally shot, poisoned or trapped, but birds of prey (raptors), another potentially significant group of predators, cannot be. Nevertheless, significant levels of illegal persecution are taking place.

(c) Use of drainage ditches

Though not directly affecting raptors, draining is undertaken to create more dry soil for heather which then enters the burning regime. Campaigners such as Ban the Burn at Walshaw Moor have focussed on trying to stop this practice which can apparently exacerbate flooding in nearby towns.

(d) Use of chemicals

High density of grouse have meant the some infections (such as Strongyle worm) have become rampant, and these have been treated by the use of 'medicated grit' (which has potential human health impacts).

The RSPB are keen to point out that this intensification and persecution affects other species such as peregrine, red kite, merlin, golden eagle, goshawk, short-eared owl and kestrel. This report also notes how intensive management also has negative impacts on climate change and water pollution (see 4.2 overleaf).



1.2 Why it is happening

In many cases of direct persecution it has been traditionally understood as an old-school game keeping 'vermin' control practice – handed down from generation to generation – failing to keep up with modern ideas on biodiversity. While this is one element, it doesn't explain the worsening situation now. There is, particularly around the most intensively managed estates, the idea that land is increasingly being used as an investment. Some campaigners point out that pushing the numbers up pushes up the capital value of a shooting estate which can give a better return than the stock market.

As an article in Grouse Moor News confirms (see 3.1 below): "Because the value of grouse moors is based on the number of birds they yield, injecting cash into intelligent management increases their value in the long term," says William Duckworth-Chad, of Savills."

1.3 Why the law is not working

Grouse shooting makes no secret of the fact that it is, by and large, a pastime for the very wealthy. Bankers, government ministers, landowners, heads of industry and royalty are all involved, and this report notes how estate owners have, and continue to hold, positions of influence within DEFRA, the NFU and Natural England (see Section 7). The failure of regulation is therefore commonly ascribed to the arrogance of people who feel they are somehow above the law. While this is likely to be an element, there is likely to be more to it than that, since the same people routinely obey other laws. Some of it is down to the difficulty of enforcing laws across thousands of acres of misty hillside. But much of it will be down to the mixed messages that the law is giving.

Campaigners that Ethical Consumer spoke to suggested that, for reasons not unconnected to the political clout of the shooting establishment, two types of subsidy: EU (for SSSIs) and Higher Level Stewardship (HLS – for agricultural development) could be going to shooting estates which break the law, because providing evidence that no persecution is taking place has not been a precondition of receiving these subsidies. In addition, there have been recent revelations about a split in the coalition over reducing the current annual 'subsidy' of £150 for every UK gun licence issued. The idea that these subsidies are going to fund "sports" which must be involved in illegal persecution has not yet really entered the debate. George Monbiot's comparison of the gun-licence subsidy with a new proposal to make people buy their own crutches to save the NHS money, is illuminating of the quite astonishing thinking inside the current administration.

1.4 Arguments in favour of intensive estate management

The Moorland Association claims criticism of grouse estates is wrong for two main reasons – jobs and other species. Although they do provide "jobs in rural areas which are relatively marginal for farming", with only around 150 grouse moors in England and an industry generating a relatively tiny £67 million annually, such jobs will be few – especially when compared to tourism locally.

It should be noted that most campaigners are not seeking to ban grouse shooting, they are simply arguing that it needs to reduce its focus on 'bag size' (numbers killed per shoot) at all costs.

The Moorland Association is also quick to point to other species that do well on intensively managed uplands (e.g. some waders) and that hen harriers breed successfully elsewhere ('500 pairs in Scotland'). By and large, the argument that an endangered species is doing well somewhere else and therefore its decline can be ignored in one area, is controversial in biodiversity management circles. Growth in populations of less-threatened species is also not an obviously strong argument. Nevertheless there may be some who choose not to support a campaign of ostracism because of these claims.

1.5 Why greed lies at the core of this conflict

Grouse moor owners commonly maintain that permitting hen harriers and other predators on their estates would mean the death of the shooting industry. And while there is evidence that it could significantly reduce 'bag size', this does not mean that all shooting would have to stop. Indeed, on both sides of the debate are people who can see a return to a less intensive, more leisurely, pastime.

A former shooting-estate employee is quoted in the Report as follows:

"Working on an average 200 [bird a day] day shoot...I never once heard anyone complain that they wished they had shot more birds....I believe times and attitudes have changed for the worse on Grouse moors, that greed has taken over, you only have to read Savills brochures, The Field or Shooting Times to see estates boasting that they recorded record bags"

The fact that a less intensive management system is possible but not chosen is likely to be caused by a number of factors.



Some of it will be ignorance, some of it will be fear of change, but it is most likely that greed lies at its core. When land becomes just another commercial investment it is possible to create higher returns by maximising your 'crop'. This is entirely consistent with the picture we are currently seeing with grouse estates. To choose it over other less profitable – but more sustainable – options just looks like greed.

1.6 A campaign of ostracism

People in Britain know about palm-oil plantations and threats to the orang-utan in Asia, and of cattle ranching and threats to the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. Yet the same intensification of the wilder areas at the edges of our 'civilisation', threatening our own iconic 'apex' species, is going on in our own upland moors. It is high time for a popular campaign to say: Enough – this is where we draw the line.

It would be ideal if biodiversity could be protected through effective government regulation, but around grouse moors there appear to be long-standing and intractable problems. Boycotts and ostracism are blunt instruments but exasperation at the disappearance of a once common species means they are increasingly being discussed in this area. They have, after all, proven effective in other areas where government regulation appears to be failing. But it is a choice of last resort – an act of desperation and frustration.

While some shooting estates are clearly more intensively managed than others, evidence in this area was often anecdotal. In any case, the absence of any successful hen harrier breeding attempts showed that the problem was endemic to all driven grouse shooting estates. As we explain later, "Although there is a lot of indignation around raptor conservationists 'tarring everyone with the same brush', landowners/estate managers who genuinely wished to bring about raptor-friendly grouse moors would need to be a lot more vocal in condemning the current re-emergence of historical malpractice."

There are some financial companies we have found with ownership connections to grouse estates. Prudential and M&G both have consumer-facing products. Property firms including Savills and Knight Franks are involved in selling grouse estates.

We are working on a focussed shortlist of targets for this campaign and more details appear in Appendix 1 (available as a separate document on our website www.ethicalconsumer.org/turnyourbackongrouse.aspx)

1.7 A call to action

We are proposing three calls to action.

1 Don't shoot grouse

If you know people who shoot grouse, or businesses whose staff enjoy grouse shooting, ask them to consider giving it up for three years....just until August 12th 2017 when the hen harriers are back.

2 Don't buy from businesses connected to grouse shooting

From tourist destinations connected to the industry, to shops and restaurants selling grouse, to big financial companies there are many potential targets to avoid. We are also urging supporters to write to/email the companies involved to let them know what they are doing and why. And encouraging them to share their knowledge of company connections with others via our TurnYourBackOnGrouse forum and other social media channels.

3 Help campaign for a suspension of all subsidies for grouse shooting estates

Subsidies for upland estates and for shooting (gun licences) that do not require clear evidence (the presence of endangered species which are successfully rearing young) that no illegal activity is taking place should be suspended until August 12th 2017.

The RSPB, Animal Aid and Ban the Burn are three organisations campaigning in this area (see Appendix 2).

Given that grouse shooting is a sport of a tiny minority, and that protection of endangered species generally and of birds particularly is a widespread concern, we are optimistic that a popular campaign will play an important role in contributing to the aggregate pressure for change.

Above all, we want to create a conversation about biodiversity, greed and intensification on some of England's few remaining wild spaces. Join in, and let us know what you think.

To comment on this report please contact:
enquiries@ethicalconsumer.org



2. The Hen Harrier

Having been almost wiped out by persecution in the 19th century, hen harriers in England recovered naturally in the 1960s following the Protection of Birds Act 1954, which outlawed the persecution of raptors. They established decent populations across the UK and Ireland but in recent decades numbers have been falling again rapidly. This is known to be mainly due to illegal persecution (poisoning, trapping, shooting and nest destruction) on grouse moors – the bird's preferred habitat – by gamekeepers wanting to minimise the number of grouse chicks lost as prey. Europe-wide, *Circus cyaneus* (hen harrier) has a large population and wide range, but declining numbers have led to its inclusion in:

- Appendix II of the Berne Convention
- Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) designated as 'vulnerable'
- UK Red List of birds of conservation concern (Category 3 species)
- Schedule 1 of the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act
- Section 41 of the UK Government list of Priority Species

The hen harrier is just one of the raptors facing persecution as a result of game shooting, but it has been hardest hit for a number of reasons. Upland heather moors – often managed for grouse shooting – are its heartland. Shooting estates have been allowed to dominate moorland areas with close-cut heather, a 'monoculture' which does not allow them to feed away from the heather. Since red grouse is one of the only species found in pure heather during the hen harrier breeding season (when they have to feed their growing chicks), red grouse chicks are taken, bringing hen harriers into conflict with moor managers seeking to maximise numbers of grouse for shooting later in the year. Unlike other birds of prey, hen harriers can tolerate other pairs nesting in the same area, and thus, if left alone, they can form colonies.

"Every year in County Durham hen harriers attempt to breed on the upland grouse moors but they are rarely successful. We believe this is due in large part to the misguided and illegal actions of a small number of gamekeepers and landowners who disturb birds at crucial breeding times."

Durham Police spokesperson¹

The hen harrier is the most heavily persecuted bird of prey in the UK relative to population size, and is many times more likely to 'disappear' whilst breeding on grouse moors than in other habitats. In 2010, there were 12 breeding pairs in England, which has sufficient habitat to support an estimated 323-340 pairs, according to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee report A Conservation Framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom.² In the last ten years, there have been only 11 recorded breeding attempts in North Yorkshire, three of them successful. Of the eight attempts that failed, seven were in circumstances which suggested human persecution the most likely cause of failure.³ Four nesting pairs raised chicks in 2011 in the Bowland Fells, where United Utilities had encouraged the management of its estate to support the birds. However, it was not possible to protect them away from their nesting areas. In 2012 there were two (failed) breeding attempts in England and a consistent downward trend of breeding success in Scotland, according to the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme. In 2013, the England's only two nesting pairs failed in their attempts to breed.

Hen harriers have been trying to re-establish on the North York Moors since the 1960s. There were a few successes in the 1990s but, according to local experts, there should be at least 12 pairs – or even 50 – in the Dales.

Not only do hen harrier eat grouse chicks, but if they fly across the moor when a shoot is on, the grouse do not behave as intended, a phenomenon known as 'dread'. A disrupted shoot can be extremely costly to the landowner/shooting agent and may result in lower tips being paid to the staff.

According to one campaigner we spoke to: "Hen harriers do take grouse chicks but 50 per cent of chicks die every year anyway- the number is statistically insignificant. The problem is, when one goes over they won't fly or they 'bomb burst', and the guys over from Italy for two days, who've paid their money, are not happy and don't leave tips for the gamekeeper and beaters."

Hen harrier numbers have dwindled over the last ten years in line with the gradual expansion of intensified management programmes on grouse moors. 2001 is thought to have been a watershed moment as, during the foot and mouth episode, public access closures allowed gamekeepers to roam unobserved across large tracks of land.



The hen harrier is also a beautiful bird, beloved of ornithologists for its distinctively elegant flight.

The hen harrier is still present in Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man. About 650 pairs breed in the UK, both on heather moorland and in young woodland with a heather floor. Research has shown that hen harrier travel vast distances, regularly flying from Scotland to the south of England, Ireland or even France for short periods, then heading back. These outlying populations create a pool of birds which under 'normal' circumstances would gradually repopulate the good moorland nesting sites England, but they are not being given the chance. Research suggests that there are 962-1285 breeding pairs of hen harrier 'missing' from Scotland and 322-339 pairs 'missing' from England.⁴

2.1 Academic research

APPENDIX 6 lists some of the published academic articles on hen harrier survival in the UK and related issues. Scientific journals have covered hen harrier populations and movements, possible reasons for decline, and possible strategies for mitigating the conflict with the shooting industry. One interviewee expressed frustration that it took six years of research for the Hen Harrier Recovery Project to finally

conclude in 2009, what had been obvious all along, that persecution was the main factor in hen harrier decline. It is fairly conclusive now that while bird behaviours and population fluctuations are influenced by multiple factors, illegal persecution is far and away the most significant.

Langholm Moor in Scotland was host to the Joint Raptor Study from 1992 to 1997. This concluded that long term declines in red grouse populations were "extremely unlikely" to be due to raptor predation and were instead attributable to habitat degradation/loss. However, it showed that raptor predation was the most likely explanation for the failure of grouse stocks to recover once the population had fallen to a low level, data seized on by the pro-driven grouse shooting lobby. From 1998, grouse shooting was abandoned on the estate, yet numbers of hen harrier did not respond to attempts to restore them to their mid-1990s peak. From 2007, another investigation, costing £3 million and lasting 10 years, has been looking at whether grouse and raptors can live side-by-side harmoniously. Different techniques have been tried including: predator control, livestock reductions and diversionary feeding. According to Redpath, one of the scientists, "You can have low densities of hen harriers and have plenty of driven grouse shooting."⁵

References

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- 2 <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/jncc441.pdf>
- 3 www.rspb.org.uk/news/336458-cuttingedge-science-used-to-reveal-bird-of-prey-persecution
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- 5 www.bbc.co.uk/nature/18198526



3. Grouse shooting estates

Grouse shooting has been going on for around 250 years on the England's heather moors.⁶ Like a lot of hunting and field sports, it tends to be the preserve of wealthy people, with a local following among those for who benefit through employment. There are two kinds of grouse shoot, 'walked-up' and 'driven'. In the former, the 'guns' (people shooting) and 'beaters' (paid to help make the shoot work) form a line and walk across the moor, halting and shooting when birds are flushed out. In driven grouse shooting, a far more expensive sport to take part in, the 'guns' are stationary in wooden or stone structures called 'butts', armed with two guns and a 'loader' (assistant) to help them to fire in quick succession. Beaters walk with flags, scaring the birds out of their hiding places, and 'flankers' direct them towards the butts so they can be picked off as they fly across.

"Most people have heard of the Glorious 12th – the day in August when the four month-long grouse shooting season starts on Britain's moorlands. But they know little else about a 'sport' that is staged and undertaken by some of the wealthiest and most influential individuals in the land – bankers, government ministers, landowners, heads of industry and royalty. A single day of driven grouse shooting is likely to cost a group of eight or nine 'guns' between £20,000 and £40,000."

Animal Aid⁷

England is said to have around 149 grouse moors. They range from the equivalent of small-scale family farms to mass industrialised agriculture, but, according to campaigners we spoke to, only around 10-12 of the smallest are used purely for walked-up grouse shooting. The rest are 'driven' moors, all of which are thought to be implicated in raptor persecution as a consequence of routine management practices, if not direct illegal killing. Even on estates where individual landowners are prepared to tolerate hen harriers, the species has little chance of making progress where these are surrounded by estates managed in the usual way.

This has been mentioned in relation to Broomhead Moor in the Peak District, prime harrier nesting territory whose proximity to more intensively managed estate means there is little chance of breeding success, regardless of the desires of the owner. Another example is the RSPB's Geltsdale reserve in Cumbria, where encroachment by gamekeepers and persecution on the margins prevents it from becoming a haven for raptors. Although there is a lot of indignation around raptor conservationists "tarring everyone with the same

brush", landowners/estate managers who genuinely wished to bring about raptor-friendly grouse moors would need to be a lot more vocal in condemning the current re-emergence of historical malpractice. The worst areas for raptor persecution in England correspond directly to the areas of grouse moors: Northern Pennines (Cumbria), the Yorkshire Dales, the North Yorkshire Moors, the Forest of Bowland, the Durham Uplands and Derbyshire's Dark Peak (see also Section 9 below).

The preference of managers of driven grouse moorland is to regularly burn to create a mosaic of the young, more nutritious heather which grouse like to feed on, and older, longer heather for them to nest in and hide in. This reduces the amount of taller plants preferred by the ground nesting hen harrier.

A local campaigner explains: "They can cut the heather very short, almost mowing it, or they can burn. Grouse needs young heather to eat and tall heather to hide in. hen harrier need old heather, 70cm. Setting fire to the heather if hen harrier is showing an interest in it is not illegal."

In order to sustain grouse in artificially high numbers, their natural predators must be removed. Various birds and animals are controlled as vermin to prevent them feeding on grouse eggs and chicks (which benefits other species too, such as some of the scarcer waders and ground nesting birds). Stoats, weasels, crows and foxes can be legally shot, poisoned or trapped, but raptors, another potentially significant group of predators, cannot be. This is a key element in the conflict – the law change 60 years ago did not alter the fact that birds of prey have historically been treated as vermin by farmers, who see them as competitors for their prized species. As an illustration, the Game Book of the Leadhills Estate in Scotland (which continues to be linked to raptor persecution incidents) was recently accessed by the group Raptor Persecution Scotland (RPS) and passed onto an academic for analysis. It contained 'vermin lists' covering a 50 year period. The RSPB had data for 91 illegally killed raptors in the whole of Scotland between 1980 and 1987, but the number of illegally killed raptors recorded on the Leadhills Estate over the same period was 383. In other words, the recorded figures published each year by the RSPB are the tip of a huge iceberg.

As discussed below, there is concern that increasing resources are being ploughed in to try to maximise the average 'bag' size (number of pairs (or 'brace')) of grouse killed during a shoot. Sportsmen/women will pay £170 to shoot a brace⁸ and on some estates 16,000 are shot in a season, so this is one way owners can make a return on their investment.⁹ According to experts we spoke to, there are additionally, at



least a few grouse moor managers who are renowned for their 'zero tolerance' approach to birds of prey...people who are presumably making money out of 'nudge-nudge, wink-wink' predator control.

One wildlife charity expert we spoke to suggested that there was more to it than simple profit in many cases.

Estates are managed year round for grouse industry but may only have 2-8 days of actual shooting. There's a lot of money involved, and people pay a huge amount to go shooting. More often than not some shoots break even but many run at a loss; it's less about the profit than about a love of shooting. It's a bit like golfing – a different way to wine and dine business partners. Some estates in the UK owned by Americans or Arab sheiks who fly in once a year. They arrive by helicopter with their business partners, have a couple of days shooting and then fly off again.

But even if the profit from shooting is not significant, there is also a strong belief among campaigners that land values can be significantly enhanced through intensive management of grouse estates. Owners often buy land as an investment so want to maximise their bag to maintain the capital value of the land. They pour their (and taxpayers) money in to create maximum grouse density. Andy Wightman (and others) have suggested that this can deliver a better return than the stock market.

3.1 Economics of grouse moor intensification

The economics of grouse moor ownership are behind the recent productivity drive, since 'bag size' determines the sale value of a moor, which are being bought as investments. Maximising the numbers of birds available for shooting through regular burning, use of medication to overcome the diseases which issues from the unnatural densities (strongyle worm and bulgey eye, caused by protozoan parasite *Cryptosporidium baileyi*), and of course an intense regime of vermin control, is important for ensuring a future return on investment. When one Scottish estate recently hit the market, buyers were registered from USA, South Africa, Italy, France, Hong Kong and Russia within 24 hours.

"Because the value of grouse moors is based on the number of birds they yield, injecting cash into intelligent management increases their value in the long term," says William [Duckworth-Chad, of Savills]. "The standard of grouse moors in England has improved dramatically over the past few years, with tick and disease being almost wiped out through a mixture of treating sheep and the use of medicated

grit. We've also seen English owners increase their labour force to keep vermin down and allow for more efficient management... Scotland hasn't had the levels of wealth necessary for investment, and has been poorer for grouse over the last 20 years as competition from forestry, sheep and deer has increased. But, lately, some owners have been halting the decline in grouse numbers, and are achieving a transformation. In parts of Scotland, notably in Perthshire, Inverness-shire and the Angus Glens, grouse numbers are now catching up with England."

*Grouse Moor News*¹⁰

The trend of leasing is also driving the grouse shooting community's determination not to have regulation interfere with their management practices.

"Many owners are investing in better management to increase their stock of birds and boost the moor's value in the long term. Letting a moor makes commercial sense in this context, as the lessee takes over responsibility for maintenance and improvement costs. All being well, the freeholder can regain possession of his moor in a much better state than when he leased it, having avoided any hefty financial outlay." A growing interest in longer-term leasing is perhaps a natural extension of the trend for some owners to let shooting days, often early in the season but also if there are enough grouse left after the owner has had his sport. "Days are being let at £150 plus VAT per brace, and up to £180 in some cases... That could amount to around £15,000 per day – a valuable source of income to the moor owner."

*Grouse Moor News*⁶

The agents in charge of a leased moor are often driving the management practices there. Aside from Geoff Eyre in the Peak District (who has also been advising Michael Cannon with respect to Wemmergill and High Abbotside in the Durham Uplands), there is another agency which has become synonymous with high performing estates in both England and Scotland: JM Osborne.

References

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4. Consequences of intensification

4.1 Raptor persecution and biodiversity impacts

Persecution of hen harriers on English grouse moors occurs on virtually all estates. "It... isn't just likely, but very probable that if you buy grouse shot on an English grouse moor, that it's from an estate where hen harrier have been illegally persecuted i.e. the adults killed or nests, eggs or young destroyed".¹¹ However, one expert we spoke to wondered if hen harrier should be the main focus of a campaign now that, given their low numbers in England, other raptor species are suffering the bulk of the persecution. For example, the peregrine falcon is also considered a grouse 'pest', and a recent study showed that its breeding success on grouse moors was half that in other habitats in northern England. Only a third of nests produced young on heather moors.¹²

"The few birds that did lay eggs or fledge young on grouse moors did just as well as those breeding off grouse moors, which suggests that a shortage of food supplies can be ruled out of the equation. The only logical explanation for these differences is that persecution is rife on many driven grouse moors."

Amar et al, 2012

The above study showed that regional extinction of peregrines in the Peak District was only prevented by more productive birds nesting in sites away from grouse moors coming in, an effect the author described as "pouring peregrines down the plughole."¹³ Merlin, Short-eared owl, the occasional kestrel, and in recent times the red Kite are also facing persecution on grouse moors. Goshawks are also targeted despite confining themselves to woodland fringes and taking little interest in grouse chicks. RSPB's 2006 Peak Malpractice report outlined concerns in relation to goshawks and peregrines on the north-east Peak. Since then the breeding success of both species has collapsed in the area, prompting an undercover RSPB investigation which led to the 2012 conviction of a gamekeeper working on National Trust land. We were told that 70 per cent of England's goshawk are in Northumberland and 30 per cent south of the South Peaks, with a handful in the North York Moors and Lake District. That leaves none in the middle, on what would be perfect territory for them.

In addition, there is good peer-review science linking grouse moor management with impacts on distribution, population size, and breeding success of golden eagle, peregrine, and red Kite – and others noting the links between grouse moors and illegal use of poisons.

Approximately 35 per cent of English moorlands are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) based on ornithological features. Additionally there are Special Conservation Areas (SAC) and the Bowland Fells, North Pennines, North York Moors and South Pennines are Special Protection Areas (SPA) for hen harriers, Merlin and peregrine.¹⁴ In some cases grouse-shooting estate owners may be receiving EU money to support and encourage the presence of these species. The problem seems to be that, while some areas are SSSI they are getting subsidies (HLS) designed to support agriculture and other human enterprise, rather than managing them primarily for nature. Because Natural England (NE), which awards the grants, does not police compliance, there is seemingly no accountability in the system in relation to these huge SPA.

Gamekeepers are also accused of breaking the law through 'acts of disturbance' – for example making sure their 'beats' go near the raptor nests, siting their traps along the edge of abandoned areas so that birds can't recolonise them and placing plastic grit trays (which they have to visit regularly) within 20ft of nests. In a similar way, they make sure there is no 'rank' heather or perching posts left for hen harriers, and get permission to put their huts and butts just where the nests are, or run tracks through them.

They don't just have to kill birds, they can just move them on. For example, if they see them getting ready to build a nest they can burn it – they can still burn up till 15th April when the ground nesting birds are already there.

Whilst evidence of persecution is irrefutable, it has, as we will see below, proven almost impossible to prove the link between incidents and particular individuals.

Studies have shown that the hen harrier is not a predictable bird – one radio-tracked female travelled five miles in the time her sibling ranged to Spain and back.¹⁵ However, in the absence of persecution, a steady recovery of hen harrier



numbers in the English uplands would be expected. Birds have been seen to return again and again to the best nesting moors, i.e. there are key initial sites of colonisation. Once these are full, it is likely that they would spread out and establish in other areas.

4.2 Environmental consequences of intensive management

Intensive management of driven grouse moors has been linked to other adverse effects in relation to:

- Climate change
- Water pollution
- Biodiversity

According to a recent RSPB research report, there is “poor understanding of both the current area of managed grouse moor (between 0.66 and 1.7 million ha) and current trends in the intensity of management. For example, published information on the extent to which ‘driven’ and ‘walked-up’ shooting is practised, and how management regimes vary in relation to these different practices, is lacking.”¹⁶ This is a somewhat surprising statement, as the presence of butts is a good indication of whether driven grouse shooting occurs, and new GIS data¹⁷ as well as aerial photographs provide reliable evidence of management practices. For example, in their peregrine study, Amar et al used Google Earth to map the characteristic ‘strip burning’ that is typical of moorland managed for intensive grouse shooting.

The RSPB’s 2012 report on moorland management mentioned that grouse moors are “rare or absent in many (but not all) of the UK’s most extensive areas of blanket peat”,¹⁸ but according to the Daily Telegraph the same year, “Almost a third of England’s total area of grouse moor, about 250,000 acres, is on blanket bog – a relatively damp type of

moorland with a peat layer at least 20in thick.”¹⁹ While the shooting industry body the Moorland Association praises the management of England’s grouse moors, others are concerned that inappropriate burning and drainage are damaging these internationally important peatland areas (and the RSPB have told us they now have an accurate measure of area of land burnt that occurs on deep peat). Aside from biodiversity issues, concerns focus on:

- Contribution to global warming
- Flooding of upland catchments
- Pollution of water sources

Custodians of SSSI blanket bogs are tasked with blocking up historical drainage trenches (called ‘grips’), but there is evidence that some are cutting new ones, causing the sphagnum moss to die and the peat to dry out. This is the issue at the centre of the Walshaw Moor case [Box 2.], where the appearance of new grips is thought to have exacerbated recent intense floods, affecting towns in the valley bottom. Draining is undertaken to create more dry soil for heather, which then enters the burning regime.²⁰

Many grouse moors coincide with upland catchments that are major sources of potable water, so their management has consequences for water quality in many reservoirs. Yorkshire, Northumbrian Water, United Utilities and Severn Trent Water all operate reservoirs in areas bounded by grouse moors and we have been told that some are getting “fed up” with the run-off from burned peat in their reservoirs, which is costing millions to filter out. Some of the water companies are also apparently nervous about the leaching of antihelminthic drugs into drinking water [Box 3.] from the medicated grit given to grouse, which is apparently being dispensed at increasingly short intervals across the moorlands.



Box 1 – The Walshaw Moor Affair

Walshaw Moor (WM) Estate lies in the South Pennines, on the uplands overlooking reservoirs and the towns of Hebden Bridge and Haworth. This dramatic and bleak moorland, said to have inspired Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, falls on SSSI and SCA land and is a Natura 2000 site, protected under EU directives. 70 per cent is blanket peat – an important carbon sink and vital for supporting a delicate ecological habitat. However, this area is intensively managed for grouse.

Owner Richard Bannister bought the land from Lord Savile in 2002 and acquired the adjoining 4,000-acre Lancashire Moor in 2005. Bannister made his wealth through his chain of Boundary Mill Stores, a discount factory outlet, and is currently Managing Director of Libra Textiles Limited (registered at Boundary Mills

Stores Head Office) and director of Walshaw Moor Estates.

NE took legal action in 2010 when it came to light that a series of consents had been breached at WM. Water courses had been bulldozed and diverted; new roads and tracks built without consent, damaging sensitive vegetation; and heather burned in excess of permissions. A Freedom of Information request showed that WM Estate was charged with 45 offences: 30 incidences of moor gripping, the construction of 5 tracks, the construction of 5 car parks, the creation of 2 ponds by peat extraction, the construction of earthworks (shooting butts) in 2 locations, and 1 incident of using vehicles likely to damage the site.²¹ Seen as a test case regarding the future frequency of burning rotations on blanket bog, there was much interest in the case from both conservation groups and

the shooting industry. However, in 2012, NE and WM Estates Ltd suddenly “reached an agreement” which culminated in a new 25 year 'partnership' underpinned by £2.5million of public funding in the first ten years of the agreement.²²

Believing that NE's (DEFRA-instigated) decision was flawed and would serve to perpetuate bad practice, the RSPB and Calderdale-based Ban the Burn group filed a complaint with the European Commission. They were required to prove that this was not just a one-off, local problem but part of a national pattern of mismanagement of protected habitats, and following the submission of strong evidence to this effect, the case is ongoing.²³ Ban the Burn argue that the damage to peat bog above the town contributed to the unprecedented flash floods which hit Hebden Bridge in 2011 and 2012.

Box 2 – Red grouse and human health

Grouse are shot with lead ammunition. Previous studies have shown that a proportion of red grouse sold for human consumption in supermarkets and game dealers have far higher lead levels than would be legal for human consumption if the meat were beef, pork, chicken etc.²⁴ Game meat has escaped proper regulation. The FSA recommend pregnant women and children, particularly but not exclusively, should pay attention to their lead intake. There is also an issue about the drugs Flubendazole and Fenbendazole (banned for human consumption) which are used in medicated grit given to grouse against Strongyle worm infection. It is possible that some estates are direct dosing the medication as well, which is illegal under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. We have been told that the effective farming of grouse goes on on high intensity moors, though gamekeepers would not admit it. There is currently no routine Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) testing of grouse prior to entry into food chain.

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5. Initiatives aimed (directly or indirectly) at improving the fate of the hen harrier




*Hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*, 4 week old chick in nest. Sutherland, Scotland. July.*


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There have been a series of conservation initiatives, protection measures and projects seeking a solution or a compromise to the conflict.

 **The EU Bird Directive** provides a legislative framework for ensuring the conservation of particular bird species, including monitoring, research and the designation of SPA. SPA and other sites of national importance (SSSI) are monitored in the UK by NE, on behalf of the Department for Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which allocates HLS subsidies to fund their management. Together with surveillance programmes covering the hen harrier and its habitats in the wider countryside, this enables government to report to the EU on the fulfilment of its obligations under the European Birds Directive “to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution”.

 **NE’s Hen Harrier Recovery Project** was an attempt to boost numbers of breeding harriers on all regions of Northern England’s uplands, while ensuring the small number of remaining nesting pairs were adequately protected. Between 2002 and 2008 it identified 127 hen harrier nesting attempts in: Kielder Forest (Northumberland), Ridsdale (Northumberland), Cheviots (Northumberland), Geltsdale RSPB reserve (Cumbria), Cumbria (unspecified), Northern Pennines (County Durham), Yorkshire Dales, Bowland Fells (75% of the total), Goyt Valley (Peak District), Upper Derwent Valley (Peak District), plus two in the Lowlands: Wiltshire and Cornwall. With no birds breeding successfully in 2013, the programme failed utterly to achieve its goals.

 **The Environment Council** ran a Hen Harrier Dialogue process, beginning in 2006. It was judged a resounding failure by raptor organisations, with Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF), the Hawk and Owl Trust and RSPB all leaving one by one as they tired of the lack of demonstrated commitment to a solution.

 DEFRA commissioned the **Joint Nature Conservation Committee’s 2011 Conservation Framework for Hen Harriers** in the United Kingdom, published in 2011. It is due for republication soon, incorporating new data.



DEFRA established the **Hen Harrier Sub-group** in 2013, tasked with establishing a comprehensive emergency recovery plan for hen harriers in England. RSPB is an active contributor to this group, alongside NE, GWCT and others.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the **Moorland Association and English Nature** (now NE) in June 2002 was aimed at them working together to 'secure the sustainable future of the remaining heather moorland in England'. This is how it was reported in the Independent in 2006:

Only two years ago, English Nature officials were privately worried there would be a stand-up fight with the shooting lobby over the state of the moors. But that emerging crisis was allayed last October when the agency agreed a compromise strategy with the influential and robustly-led Moorland Association, the moor owners' organisation. Simon Bostock, the association's chairman, speaks confidently of a "working partnership" with English Nature which will preserve "a viable working estate, as well as the livelihoods of those who live there, and the wildlife that thrives upon it." But so far, only 13 moors have been signed up to the new agreements by English Nature – it needs to involve up to 150 to meet its targets.²⁵

DEFRA had a target to make sure 95 per cent of England's SSSI were brought into acceptable condition by 2010 – many upland moors had been previously determined 'unfavourable' or 'unfavourable declining' as a result of a history of over-grazing, over-burning and drying out by repeated drainage. Failure to comply with the Public Service Agreement (PSA) with the Treasury would have incurred a large fine, but figures for January 2014 show 96.4 per cent as having met the PSA target.


The England Biodiversity Strategy is committed to preventing human induced extinctions by 2020 – which means that hen harrier is on their radar. The six UK wildlife crime priorities agreed for 2013- 2015 included raptor persecution (including poisoning, egg theft, chick theft and nest disturbance/destruction with a focus on six species including hen harriers).


An interim report by the **Law Commission**, following a consultation on potential changes to wildlife law in England and Wales, included the following in relation to raptor persecution: recognition of the seriousness of some wildlife crimes and recommendation that there be an option for them to be tried in the Crown Court, where higher penalties are available. no intention to make provision of vicarious liability (VL) for wildlife crimes, whereby employers would be legally responsible for acts committed by their employees (currently keepers carry the can, despite the orders coming from the landowners/agents, who usually pay off the fines and carry on as before). It is still too early to judge whether VL is having a deterrent effect in Scotland, though it does appear that confirmed incidents of poisoning have fallen since it was introduced by Holyrood in 2011.²⁶ no intention to populate Section 43 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, to ensure that poisons such as the banned pesticide aldicarb (which is highly lethal to birds) were not be available for widespread use. Currently, Section 43 is blank, and anyone caught with poisoned bait is charged with possession of a banned pesticide, rather than a wildlife offence. The equivalent of Section 43 in Scotland contains a list of prohibited chemicals.²⁷

The RSPB Skydancer project, is working in schools and communities across northern England to raise awareness of the hen harrier – that it is (or was) an important part of local wildlife and theirs to protect. They have been into gamekeeping colleges and got students to perform role plays as different stakeholders: gamekeepers, land owners, conservationists, bird watchers, local business owners, tourist board and get them to debate the issues for themselves. Workers feel this has a positive impact on perceptions – all that some students know is that there are "hooky beaks which cause problems".


Backwards step: In 2008 the **European Commission** severed the 'cross-compliance' link between Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments and Article 8 of the EU Birds Directive which bans "non-selective methods of capture or killing of birds". Under the old rules, an owner of a Scottish estate had his farming subsidy cut by £107,000 because of suspicions that pesticides discovered on his land were used against birds of prey.²⁸ Now the mere presence of banned pesticides on an estate would not be enough to invoke a penalty, though the discovery of a poisoned carcass might.





 **The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU)** is a statutory body linked to the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) UK. With hen harriers and other Schedule 1 species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, offences carry a sentence of up to £5000 and/or six months in jail. But wildlife law is routinely flouted. Operation Artemis (2004-2007) involved dedicated police officers visiting landowners and agents to ensure they knew their responsibilities and the penalties for ignoring them. Hen harrier numbers rose during the period it was in place and declined afterwards – a former Artemis officer we spoke to said it had sent a strong signal about the seriousness of wildlife crime. The Derbyshire Police Crime Commissioner, Alan Charles, announced in 2012 that he would make wildlife crime a priority in his Police and Crime Plan, and there is some confidence among raptor groups in his team's willingness to dig for evidence and prosecute raptor crime. However, interviewees also told us off the record that it can be very difficult to get local police to act quickly with chances to gain crucial evidence regularly being missed.


 **PAW** produces annual maps showing confirmed poisoning incidents across England & Wales, based on post-mortem and toxicological analysis provided by Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) within DEFRA.


5.1 Peak District initiatives

 **Peak Malpractice** was a 2006 RSPB report which detailed the problems for raptors in the Dark Peak and also mismanagement of the area's moors from a wider conservation perspective. The report was outspoken about the raptor persecution, but no estates or individuals were mentioned by name, for fear of litigation.

 A more recent RSPB research report, **The Costs and Benefits of Moorland Management** is much more vague, concluding many sections by saying that little is understood and more research is necessary.

 In 2013, following extensive consultation, the NT published its **Vision for the High Peak Moors**, setting out its ambitions "for the next 50 years and beyond".

 **Moors for the Future** was formed in 2003, financed by the Heritage Lottery grant. It has the following partners: Peak District National Park Authority, National Trust, NE, United Utilities, Severn Trent Water, Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, Derbyshire County Council and RSPB. They undertake conservation work across the Peak District and South Pennines moors.

 **Peak Nestwatch**, launched in 2000, was meant to be a collaboration between Severn Trent Water, National Trust, RSPB, Peak District National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, South Yorkshire, Derbyshire Police and the South Peak Raptor Study Group to "enable protected birds of prey to live and nest in the Dark Peak without human persecution or disturbance".²⁹ However it appeared that someone was leaking the information on nest locations to gamekeepers, as they regularly failed as soon as reported. This led to the volunteers becoming unprepared to report new finds, and the initiative foundered.

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6. The view from the grouse shooting industry

Magazines aimed at field sports participants either paint grouse shooting as the continuation of a romantic Victorian pursuit or celebrate the recent revolutions in the sport. There are still some more relaxed shoots (often 'friends and family only') but it is hard to assess the proportion of the total as the trade press writes almost exclusively about those which have boosted productivity using new technologies and techniques. Some gamekeepers, according to interviewees, are coming under extreme pressure from employers or their agents to deliver the maximum number of game birds each season, and stand to lose their jobs and tied cottages if they fail.

Shooting estates [at Raby, Co.Durham] now fall under two camps – first there are the traditional sporting estates run by Lord Barnard, the Earl of Strathmore and to a smaller scale the Morrill family. Business tycoons operate the others. The Strathmore family owned Wemmergill, which covers 17,000 acres, until 2006, when millionaire Michael Cannon bought it. There have been similar changes in Arkengarthdale and Bowes Moor. There has also been more investment and more gamekeepers. Lindsay estimates the numbers have doubled in his time. "... People have realised that if you put a little more into it, you will get more out of it," he says.

Teesdale Mercury, 2014³⁰

The Moorland Association estimates that driven grouse shooting generates £67 million annually,³¹ but interviewees wondered what proportion finds its way to the Treasury, and suspected it was quite small. There is also the fact that, according to conservationists, "Good Scottish reports reveal that walking, wildlife tourism and wild land are worth huge amounts of money to the rural economy".

In terms of raptor persecution, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) "acknowledges that there is an issue but are quiet about it publicly", while the Countryside Alliance "acts as though it is the voice of the shooting community" and denies the scale of the problem.

The Moorland Association's stance on raptors is as follows:

"14 out of the 15 species of raptors found in Britain are now stable or increasing and are at their highest levels since proper records began. Of these, nine species regularly hunt on grouse moors in England: Merlin, Kestrel, Common Buzzard, Goshawk, Sparrowhawk, hen harriers, Red Kite, Peregrine Falcon and Hobby. With no or limited shooting, the incentive to invest heavily in the management of the moor by private individuals will also be lost. RSPB research shows that on moorland managed for grouse, nationally declining wading birds are up to five times more abundant than on other moorland. Without shooting, gamekeepers would no longer be employed to carry out the work to the detriment of the unique assemblage of wildlife and the rare heather habitat. 75% of the world's remaining heather is found in Britain and beneath its protective blanket lies the greatest carbon store in the country."³²

In 2013, the Moorland Association blamed "the long, cold winter" for the hen harrier breeding failure and pointed out that there are 500 pairs of hen harriers in Scotland, a stronghold of grouse shooting, as well as the fact that "areas of Britain where there are no grouse shoots seem to be spectacularly devoid of hen harriers". Recent studies concluding that the chosen management style for grouse benefits curlew, golden plover and lapwing have been seized on by the Moorland Association and the shooting lobby generally to proclaim their credentials as conservationists and countryside custodians.

"The only two [hen harrier] nests in England in 2012 were on grouse moors, and they failed due to natural causes. They haven't nested in the rest of the English uplands (the non-grouse moor bits, including nature reserves)."

National Gamekeepers Organisation (NGO)³³



“Good gamekeepers manage the land for all species. Ban game shooting and a good chunk of the lowland cover would have to come under the plough to generate the same income, which would have serious habitat implications for all the other species.”

‘Pesmo’³⁴

“Official maps of bird of prey poisonings didn't show a single confirmed incident on an English grouse moor in 2011, the most recent year for which statistics are available.”

National Gamekeepers Association³⁵

“Generally birds of prey are at record levels in the UK and virtually none are endangered or even close to! Buzzards are at endemic [sic] proportions.”

‘Steve’²⁶

“A grouse moor is not a hen harrier reserve, so if hen harriers are eating so many grouse that the shoots aren't economically viable, then they need to be controlled. But gamekeepers shouldn't be permitted to kill every last hen harrier, there has to be a balance. In fact if people just wanted to shoot as many birds as possible they would go to a battery farm. Shooting is a recreational activity, and part of the attraction is that you see hen harriers. So the real interests of the estate, the customers, and the wildlife can all be met.”

‘Malcolm McLean’³³

“A lot of their statistics are from reported incidents but in the RSPB's latest bird crime survey there was not one confirmed incident in County Durham. Anybody can report anything but if you don't have the evidence, then it is not an incident. The police have not one confirmed case... Local press in a lot of areas are proclaiming theirs to be the worst area. They can't all be right... I got a note through the other day about a survey which pointed out we have nests of regionally and nationally important birds of prey. And yet, they're not supposed to be here, are they?”

Lindsay Waddell, Chair of the National Gamekeepers Organisation³⁷

An oral history interview with a retired Peak District gamekeeper includes the following passage in relation to birds of prey. Despite the oblique references it is quite revealing of the gamekeeper perspective:

“Don't get me wrong I think they are a fantastic bird and that but I'll tell you summat, when you're a keeper and you see them coming and taking what few grouse there is, it's very, very hard... only thing I can say is, if it weren't for gamekeepers managing moors as they do and that, there wouldn't be, wouldn't be a quarter of the wildlife that there is. You know, songbirds and things like that, it just wouldn't be there. You know so in that respect, I think it's a good thing. I don't think it's acknowledged as it should be for what gamekeepers do... the public...only hear one side of it as far as I'm concerned.”

John Littlewood³⁸

Another rare admission came in a response to an article on Raptor Persecution Scotland blog:

“No one is denying there are certain levels of raptor killing to protect game... Do you really think people would risk their jobs, families homes and shotgun and firearms certificates if they didn't feel it was totally necessary to protect their existence? If raptors made an insignificant difference they would be left alone!”

‘Grouseman’³⁹

It should be noted that the whole industry contains a range of opinions about intensification. There are individuals who enjoy grouse shooting but also value seeing birds of prey in their natural habitats, and who are alarmed by the growing emphasis on ever increasing grouse densities and the practices used to achieve them.

“In the past I have been involved with shooting on small medium sized shoots as a beater, I have no problem per se with this aspect of the sport. Working on an average 200 [bird a day] day shoot there were days early season with bags in excess of 200 yet at the end of the season bags dropped to as low as 80 birds, I never once heard anyone complain that they wished they had shot more birds...I believe times and attitudes have changed for the worse on Grouse



moors, that greed has taken over, you only have to read Savills brochures, The Field or Shooting Times to see estates boasting that they recorded record bags even after the lousy, wet springs and summers we have been having."

'Merlin'⁴⁰

"Please note I am not against grouse (or other forms of game) shooting just the mismanagement of a habitat in favour of one interest over all others! I am also very pro responsible game keeping, my son is a beater when the opportunities present themselves, but the persecution of protected species is a big no-no and if the "industry" does not sort this out themselves then they can expect others to try to re-establish the balance!!"

'Phil Davis'⁴¹

A return to more sensitive management of areas currently managed for driven grouse shooting would mean a return to the 'good old days' when money and bag size weren't everything. However, those who want to maintain business as usual also present significant justifications for the current system:

- Possibility of a return on investment for those willing to be custodians of the moors
- Significant private funds being poured into maintaining a unique British landscape
- Benefits of close heather management to avian wetland species such as lapwing, plover, curlew, ouzel, dunlin, redshank and snipe
- Provision of more jobs in rural areas which are extremely marginal for farming

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7. The Political situation

All campaigners interviewed for this report agreed that the UK needs an effective and enforceable legal framework for the protection of wildlife. This is generally confirmed in the published literature.

In 2011 DEFRA made a commitment to “prevent further human-induced extinctions of known threatened species” of English wildlife by 2020.⁴² However, most recent pronouncements on the environment betray a view that ‘nature’ is first and foremost a resource to be commodified. The previous environment minister, Richard Benyon, proposed allowing pheasant estate keepers to kill buzzards, seemingly unaware that they feed on carrion and are much less of a threat to live game.⁴³ Benyon, who has his own 8000-acre shooting estate, dismissed the proposed changes to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act and the introduction of ‘vicarious liability’ (see above) in England.

Since 2010, the Conservative Party has clearly exerted strong political influence over the countryside protection agencies. According to journalist George Monbiot, in 2009, following objections from the National Farmers Union (NFU), then NE chairman Poul Christensen apologised for and abandoned Vital Uplands, an NE report produced after wide consultation with stakeholders, “which had suggested uplands might be managed a little more sustainably, a few trees might be allowed to grow, there might be a little less burning and a little more wildlife.”⁴⁴ In explanation, he said that Government expected NE “to work effectively with farmers and grouse moor managers”. Apparently NE was told that DEFRA wanted them to toe the line in favour of landowners, including threatening the quango with dissolution if it did not drop its prosecution of (Benyon’s friend) Richard Bannister for damaging the Walshaw Moors SSSI, and grant him permission to continue blanket burning bog (Box 2, overleaf).

The former NFU uplands farming spokesperson and large landowner, Will Cockbain, was appointed by Benyon to the NE board in 2011.⁴⁵ NE’s new chairman, Andrew Sells, is a Tory donor with a background in accountancy, investment banking and house building, appointed by the new environment

secretary, Owen Paterson. Sell, who gave £111,000 to the Conservative party in 2010 and 2011, is treasurer of the Conservative think tank Policy Exchange – the body which, in Paterson’s words, “has put [biodiversity] offsetting on the political agenda”.⁴⁶ DEFRA also nominated nine new members of the National Parks Authorities in 2011, among them two business chief executives, a former county chair of the NFU and a former director of the Country Land and Business Association (CLA).²⁸ This, alongside the fact that there are more than a few keen grouse shooters among senior Tories, illustrates the difficulty at the current time of having and enforcing a regulatory regime which prioritises wildlife over the interests of landowners. According to Monbiot, the British Government lobbied against European proposals to cap the amount of farm subsidy a single estate can harvest, on the grounds that it “would impede consolidation” – in a country where 69 percent of the land was already in the hands of 0.6 per cent of the population in 2002, and where the number of landholdings continues to decrease while the size of holdings grow.²⁸

As a result of this bias, respondents assumed little will change under this government, but some were in favour of lobbying Lib Dem, Labour and other MPs pending the 2015 election, targeting individuals who might have sympathy for the hen harrier cause. MPs who have expressed concern include Labour members of the Environmental Audit Committee, Barry Gardener and Joan Walley. Campaigners repeatedly mentioned the tendency, regardless of declared intentions, for politicians of all stripes to capitulate in practice to the NFU/CLA/ Countryside Alliance/Moorland Association and the rest of the powerful landowning lobby.

NE, via DEFRA, operates the HLS (Higher Level Stewardship) scheme, and there is a concerted effort by Ban the Burn and the RSPB to get the European Court to acknowledge that they have been in dereliction of their duty to ensure that those in receipt of subsidies are abiding by habitat management conditions – more on this overleaf.



Box 3 – The National Trust in the Peak District

Campaigners we spoke to in the Peak District felt there is a need to put pressure, not just on the Government and DEFRA for tougher regulations, but on the National Trust (NT), NE and the Peak District National Park Authority (and assumed the same applied in other National Parks further north). Most of the Peak District is an SSSI, so NE is meant to act as its guardian, but we were told that they don't have the officers to check what is going on. The NT owns Kinder and large areas of Bleaklow and Ladybower, generally around the inner edge of the watershed. It took over the land with shooting rights (until 2015) on a bequest from the Duke of Devonshire.

The shooting tenants have rights to manage the heather and use any legal grouse moor management. This situation is very unusual for the NT– the High Peak is the only upland estate it owns with shooting rights attached. Obviously it has some influence and there is an agreement that gamekeepers will not shoot or harm Arctic hares (which have no legal protection whatsoever).

The shooting rights are leased to local businessman Geoffrey Eyre, who has a reputation for intensive management of shooting estates with the associated problems raised above. A gamekeeper on one of his estates, Glenn Brown, was convicted in 2012 for using an illegal crow trap to catch goshawks


The new NT management plan for the High Peak area includes long term goals geared towards a variety of different interests but lacks enough detail to satisfy campaigners. For example, although it talks about protecting nesting birds, it gives no sense of how this will be achieved. Nor has it apparently published anything about penalties or targets for particular species.


There was considerable frustration with the NT among interviewees, one of whom asked “Why doesn't the NT's constitution have a clause saying it can't have wildlife offences committed on its land?”

According to local wildlife campaigners Geoff Eyre, the moorland keeper for the NT for Upper Derwentdale and Howden owns agricultural supply company William Eyre & Sons near Bradwell, which was boycotted by Sheffield Wildlife Trust in 2013 due to his connections to raptor persecution. Using the seed he sells in his shop he is reseeding the tops with heather and creating some good habitats there, for waders and other species. But eventually, once established, they will be apparently be used for grouse shooting like the rest of the Dark Peak estates he manages on behalf of the NT.” Meanwhile there are no hen harrier, no goshawks, no buzzards to be seen there.”


7.1 Policy proposals from campaigners

7.12 Proposals from campaigners we interviewed

 **A ban on driven grouse shooting,** since it depends on illegality for its viability.

 **Licensing of driven grouse moors.** Shoots could be licensed and these licences forfeited if they fall short of the required standards. This is the aim of Mark Avery's banGS campaign idea: “following any proven offence of persecution i.e. illegal trapping, use of poisons, shooting or the interference with or destruction of nests, the licence would be revoked for a period of not less than two years and commercial shooting activity cease”.⁴⁷ He also suggests an accreditation scheme for gamekeepers: “If an individual has any proven involvement with raptor persecution, the licence would be withdrawn for a period of three years along with the right to hold a gun licence. Any repetition of an offence would result in the licences being withdrawn for life.”

Presumably this would apply with respect to all species enjoying protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1954.

 **Licensing from scratch.** A more radical approach involves suspending all grouse shooting in England and only granting licenses to estates which could point to successful breeding attempts of hen harrier on their moor (perhaps at some minimum density), verified by independent RSPB or similar organisation volunteers. Cons: How to decide on an acceptable density of raptors, given the uniqueness of each locality and the fact that hen harrier do not ‘play by the rules’? Where would the financial resources for the monitoring come from? How would you determine what was holding back the growth in population of the raptors? How would reluctant estates react if forced to toe the line?



Adjust habitat subsidy schemes:

ensure that a lower amount of HLS is paid to moors without hen harrier and a greater amount to ones where they are verified as breeding. The efforts currently being directed towards nest protection could be used to independently verify successful breeding. If landowners are receiving grants for ‘stewardship’, ensuring a healthy balanced population including hen harrier should be a pre-requisite. Make sure there is a financial benefit to having the hen harrier breeding on their moors.

Whether or not HLS was adjusted, there could be **annual compensation to driven grouse-moor owners for grouse chicks lost to hen harrier**, providing they leave the harriers alone. This could be costly given the numbers they claim to lose, but it is not clear whether the main financial penalty is the number of of grouse not available for shooting in the Autumn or the disruption caused when grouse notice a predator overhead and do not behave as required by the guns.

Banning of lead shot for grouse shooting and more control of the use of medicated grit.

A much stricter heather burning regimes: a cut off date in early March, not April; and an end to burning on deep peat, in drinking water catchments and on protected sites.

7.13 The RSPB’s Manifesto for Change

The RSPB Report Birdcrime 2011, challenged the Governments across the UK to change the behaviour of those responsible for committing crimes against wild birds by improving wildlife laws and reforming policing of wildlife crime. The RSPB’s Manifesto for Change contained 13 recommendations:⁴⁸

Recommendations

1	Introduce offence of vicarious liability.
2	Enact possession controls on pesticides used to poison wildlife
3	Increase penalties available to courts for wildlife offences.
4	Modernise regulation of game shooting [Licences]
5	Add “reckless” provisions to all “intentional” offences.
6	Secure the long-term future of the National Wildlife Crime Unit.
7	Task the NCA with tackling serious and organised wildlife crime.
8	Enable Natural England to protect wildlife and the places where it lives more effectively.
9	Prioritise enforcement in wildlife crime hotspots.
10	Use wildlife crime priority delivery groups to co-ordinate action.
11	Improve recording and reporting of wildlife crime.
12	Improve co-ordination between statutory agencies.
13	Establish a Wildlife Crime Unit in Scotland.

In its 2012 review of progress made against these recommendations it found that:

- None of the recommendations had been actioned by Government yet.
- No good progress has been made on any of the recommendations.
- Some Government action had been taken against recommendations 1,3,4,5,7 and 10.

7.2 Compromise positions

It has been suggested that some pro-raptor organisations’ emphasis on the illegality of raptor control makes it difficult for them to consider compromise stances. For example, a possible way forward might be to provide shooting estates with concessions to control hen harrier numbers – but this contradicts the view that safeguards on protected species should be absolute (i.e. the correct response to persistent crime is to toughen law enforcement, not to seek accommodation with the perpetrators or offer rewards for them not to break the law.)

On the other hand, neither have many, if any, grouse moor owners so far convinced anyone that they would be prepared to tolerate any number of hen harriers on their moors. The consensus of the academic research conducted on this issue seems to be that there are a few measures of control which would allow hen harrier numbers to rise without reducing grouse bags significantly. Landowners appear to be perpetually waiting for research to produce conclusive solutions before trying them. For many of them, the Langholm Moor experiment was evidence that hen harrier and grouse shooting can’t co-exist, but not all moors would necessarily show the same trends and it would be in moor managers’ interest to investigate, were they not genuinely quite sanguine about the status quo.



7.3 Compromise positions discussed by experts in our interviews

7.31 A commitment by shoot owners to end hen harrier persecution combined with an acceptance by relevant parties that forms of non lethal control would be tolerated once the population had reached an agreed level.

Once such method is translocation – if hen harrier were allowed to breed undisturbed and numbers increased sufficiently, a scheme has been discussed whereby a quota of surplus chicks would be translocated from grouse moors, reared artificially and then re-located back to their original sites in the Autumn. This would have potential to allow for hen harrier and driven grouse shooting to exist side-by-side. However, it would need to continue indefinitely – who would pay? Also, non-lethal measures such as translocation are currently illegal under the European Bird Directive, which would need to be altered. Some believe such a quota scheme to be the best way forward because at least there would be some harriers, but others see it as a non-starter because the industry has already shown itself to be incapable of tolerating any hen harriers on their estates.

7.32 Diversionsary feeding

– Supplying hen harriers with alternative prey to induce them to take fewer grouse during the breeding season when they are hunting intensively. It would potentially attract other predators to the site, however, which might cancel out the benefits in the long term. According to birder Matthew Bruce, “A well managed Grouse Shoot, with diversionsary feeding and legal predator control, could sustain both high grouse numbers and hen harrier”. It doesn’t solve the issue that Autumn grouse shoots can be disrupted by hen harrier fly-bys. It is also presumably fairly counter-intuitive to the traditional gamekeeper – birds of prey are the enemy and you don’t feed your enemy!

7.33 Habitat management options

– Dividing moorland territories so that hen harrier choose not to settle or feed on the areas used for shooting. This could be attempted by getting rid of the grass which supports the meadow pipits and voles. However, there are problems with this from a biodiversity perspective – an upland mosaic of heather and grass supports a much wider range of bird life than a contiguous heather sward. Heather burning is already used to prevent hen harrier from nesting, and it is one of the factors contributing to its eradication. If the birds aren’t there they can’t be killed, but this is no solution to the absence of hen harrier from the English landscape.

7.34 A proactive approach

If it is accepted that a ‘stick’ approach will make no difference to the big, rich shoots, concentrate on the smaller ones where grouse form a small part of the package, and work with those which are willing to co-operate, including by acting as whistleblowers on malpractice by their neighbours. They would have to be prepared to acknowledge that raptors would take some of their grouse. Willing estates could help achieve a large-scale tagging operation – fitting as many birds as possible with GPS tags, with full, open scrutiny used to determine when and where they were being lost, to boost evidence for convictions and help support breeding attempts. Tagging is expensive, but could be funded through sponsorship or a campaign fund. There is sadly no tradition among shoot owner and their associations of speaking out against fellow landowners, even if they criticise them privately.

The third route, neither conciliatory or legislative, is of course a public campaign.

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8. A public campaign

The experts we consulted were almost universally in favour of some kind of awareness campaign to raise public consciousness of the fact of and causes of ongoing bird of prey persecution. A valuable aim might be to introduce the public to birds of prey per se, as many are unfamiliar with Britain's native fauna and correspondingly have no sense of custodianship towards it.

In the words of a conservation campaigner we spoke to, "A public education campaign is overdue – the British public know more about penguins than peregrines."

There was a feeling among the interviewees that progress on the political front would be helped along by a popular campaign, as a groundswell of public opinion is often needed to push an issue up the parliamentary agenda. This is particularly true when any proposed change is likely to meet with strong opposition from extremely well resourced groups and individuals. The field-sports lobby has a well-developed infrastructure for dissemination and high-level advocacy.

The Ban the Burn campaign in West Yorkshire planned to draw national attention to the case against DEFRA/NE on the issue of the mismanagement of upland peat bogs, beginning with a demonstration at NE HQ earlier this Spring. This in turn was aimed at persuading the European Court to get the case heard before goes into recess in April prior to May's Euro elections. Regardless of the outcome of either, Ban the Burn want increasing pressure to be brought to bear on NE to change its policy regarding regular heather burning, which would also benefit hen harriers. The fate of all raptors is tied up with the landowners' ability to manage grouse moors intensively, so the campaign demands are entwined. The RSPB have also been heavily involved in this area, working on Walshaw and calling for an end to burning on deep peat.

In 2013, wildlife campaigner Mark Avery launched a boycott of Marks & Spencer after it announced it would start stocking grouse in two of its flagship London stores and refused to reveal which estates it was coming from. Ban the Burn organisers said they would take up the M&S or any other boycott approach aimed at raising awareness of the problems on grouse moors, including one highlighting raptor persecution and human health issues. Their main angle would be to expose how grants and public money under wildlife enhancement or HLS schemes are being used to to degrade the habitats they are paid to protect. That these subsidies are being used to aid and abet wildlife crime was equally pertinent, they said.

8.1 Turn your back on grouse

Boycotts or other grass-roots campaigns are often resorted to when normal regulatory routes to achieving change have failed. They are increasing being discussed in this area and there are a number of possible target areas.

8.11 Customers of grouse shooting

The idea would be to convince individuals that it is a socially/morally unacceptable activity. In the words of one blogger:

"Anyone who tells you he/she is off to shoot driven grouse and who yet cannot confirm breeding hen harriers on that moor should be shunned in the same way we would shun anyone today heading off for a spot of tiger or gorilla shooting."

'Hugh'⁴⁹

We have begun a list of people on the public record as participating in grouse shooting at Appendix 1.

8.12 Owners of grouse moors

One route would involve trying to discredit particular owners by flagging up malpractice. Another option might involve try to target businesses linked to grouse-moor owners.

8.13 Ancillary companies involved in the driven grouse industry?

Local companies such as pubs and hotels are key suppliers of hospitality services to the grouse-shooting industry.

Certain high end restaurants or well-known chefs might be persuaded to argue the case against serving wild red grouse, and others could be ostracised for continuing to do so.

8.13 Retailers of grouse meat

The M&S campaign fits in here. The company has admitted that it buys from Yorkshire Game, which sources grouse from "known estates across Northern England and the Scottish Borders".⁵⁰ According to one expert we spoke to, "there is only one grouse estate in the Yorkshire Dales where they don't persecute raptors, and it's not coming from that one".



M&S is in a good position to make demands for evidence of biodiversity from their suppliers. They could demand certification to show that their grouse were from bird-of-prey friendly estates i.e. estates managed in a way that is both sustainable and legal. They'd have the power to refuse to buy if a supplier was found to have committed wildlife crime.

A consumer campaign around pressuring supermarkets like M&S and restaurants about bird of prey-friendly meat may be easier for the general public to participate in. A campaign on grouse meat, focussing on restaurants, supermarkets, artisan butchers, potentially celebrity-led as with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's Fish Fight.

8.2 Campaign Aims

Consumer campaigns can operate on a number of levels. They can have a direct economic impact on targeted businesses, but they can also be a useful tool for getting people actively involved in a sustained campaign for a better regulatory framework to discourage intensification of upland estates.

We are proposing a campaign of ostracism of people and businesses involved in grouse shooting until the hen harrier returns to the uplands of England. We think this might take around three years. There are many problems connected to the increasingly intensive management of grouse-shooting estates, but the hen harrier is an indicator species whose return will be also bring evidence of more sustainable management generally.

We are proposing three calls to action:

1 Don't shoot grouse

If you know people who shoot grouse, or businesses whose staff enjoy grouse shooting, ask them to consider giving it up for three years....just until August 12th 2017 when the hen harriers are back.

2 Don't buy from businesses connected to grouse shooting

From pubs and hotels promoting themselves to the industry, to shops and restaurants selling grouse, there are a wide range of businesses to be potentially avoided. Don't forget to write/email the companies involved to let them know what you are doing and why. And share your knowledge of company connections with others via our TurnYourBackOnGrouse forum and other social media channels.

3 Help campaign for a suspension of all subsidies for grouse shooting estates

Subsidies for upland estates and for shooting (gun licences) that do not require clear evidence (the presence of endangered species) that no illegal activity is taking place should be suspended until August 12th 2017.

The RSPB, Animal Aid and Ban the Burn are three organisations campaigning in this area.

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50 <http://markavery.info/2013/08/22/ms-response/>



9. Who to avoid?

9.1 Identifying estates where intensive management is causing negative impacts

The press and blogosphere is alive with accusations of poor practice.

"The Dark Peak is one of the worst areas in the entire UK for the indiscriminate killing and disturbance of birds of prey."

Manchester Evening News 21/7/11

"In one area to the north of Bollilhope where the moors are effectively "farmed" for grouse, the RSPB has recorded a cluster of cases where rare birds of prey and owls – birds known collectively as "raptors" – have been illegally shot, poisoned or had their nests destroyed. A dozen cases of "raptor persecution" have been confirmed or suspected over the past decade – including poisoned buzzards, illegal pole traps set for hen harriers, owls killed in traps and a cache of poison found. Indeed, the RSPB has recorded 56 "confirmed and probable" cases of raptor persecution on the moors within a 50km radius of Barnard Castle in Teesdale since 1995, grouped heavily around grouse moors."

*Independent*⁵¹

"A goshawk's nest has been wrecked deliberately and the birds' eggs smashed, an attack which leaves only one active nest of the breed in the Derwent Valley which has had a small but stable population for 30 years and last year was home to six pairs."

*Guardian*⁵²

"Short-eared Owls are now so scarce in the Yorkshire Dales it is a red letter day when you see one. Peregrines have not successfully nested on grouse moors here for years. Hen harrier have tried to colonise these moors since 1969 and never had more than two successes in a year. A friend was told by a shoot manager that they killed 1 raptor per 100 acres per year."

*'Paul V. Irving*⁶⁰

"North Yorkshire is one of the worst areas for raptor persecution crimes in the UK."

*Raptor Persecution Scotland*⁵³

"Here in the Dales since 1993 we have had 26 known breeding attempts by harriers, all on grouse moors, of which 8 have reared young. Of the failures, 60 per cent of adults have mysteriously disappeared, yet naturally less than 1 per cent of breeding adults disappear. Incidentally because of a successful pair on a moor in 1993 the keeper was sacked for letting them get away. Half of all peregrine sites in the Dales are on grouse moors yet no grouse moor site has reared young for over ten years."

*'Paul V. Irving*⁵⁴

"The Duke of Westminster bought his Bowland estate from the Sefton family in 1980s when there were 12 pairs of resident hen harriers – in 3 years they had gone. English Nature allowed shooting tracks across huge areas of prime hen harrier habitat throughout that estate, including Tarnbrook and Marshaw – the final nail in the coffin for most hen harriers – destruction of former wilderness habitat which had been classified as SPA and SSSI. Also a spacious luncheon hut over-looking an establish ground nesting peregrine site at Tarnbrook: good-bye peregrine for ever."

*Stuart Longmain*⁵⁵

In 2008, Mr Cannon [owner of Wemmergill] was charged under the Wildlife and Countryside Act with allowing the 1000-yard access road and a car park to be built on land that was a designated SSSI without seeking the proper permission. There is also evidence of raptor persecution on the estate.

*Telegraph, 2008*⁵⁶



9.2 RSPB's Persecution incident data

The RSPB have data on the confirmed number of bird of prey and owl persecution incidents, per 10km grid square, between 1990-2012. Persecution is defined as illegal poisoning, shooting, trapping and nest destruction and an incident is defined as an offence/alleged offence that has occurred at a distinct place and time. The number of incidents given is fewer than the number of confirmed incidents recorded by the RSPB, as not all incidents could be allocated a grid reference.

Only incidents substantiated by evidence such as a post mortem, toxicological analysis or a reliable/corroborated eye-witness are given. For this report we looked initially at a limited sample – the grid squares for Northern England and the Midlands (to include the Peak District) – and discovered that, of the eight grid squares with 6 or more incidents, all but one were on or near to heather grouse moors:

Table 2

Confirmed Bird of Prey and Owl persecution incidents per 10km grid square (UK), RSPB data, 1990 to 2012 inclusive			
10km grid square	No. of incidents	Near grouse moor?	
NY55	6	✓	Eden valley, near RSPB Geltsdale. Nearest village, Alston (CA4 9SY)
NY65	17	✓	Eden valley. Nearest village, Croglin (CA4 9RT)
NY71	6	✓	Eden valley, North Penine Moors. Nearest village, Appleby (CA16)
NY94	6	✓	Near Middlehope, Burn river (DL13 1PH)
SD65	6	✓	Forest of Bowland. Nearest village, Clitheroe (BB7 3BH)
SE17	7	✓	North Yorkshire Dales. Nearest village, Ramsgill (HG3 5RT)
SJ90	6	×	Residential area in Wolverhampton (possibly exotic pet crime)
SK19	20	✓	NE of Kinder – the area or moorland behind the Snake Pass Inn on Snake Pass (S33 0AB)

Certainly NY65 and SK19 look unusually high..

The online 'Vermin Patrol' tally kept by the North West Hunt Saboteurs shows that there were only five convictions of grouse moor gamekeepers for offences against wild birds in England between 2004 and 2014 (but many more in Scotland)⁷.

The Walshaw Moor case (see box two above) also contained many prosecution incidents but was outside our sample area of the Peak District.



9.3 Other financial interests of shooting estate owners

Focussing in on the same geographical area, we attempted to establish who, among those owning or leasing grouse moors in the Peak District, were the owners, board members or directors of companies or company groups beyond the world of shooting. Some of this information is presented in APPENDIX 1. There were no individuals with obvious links to consumer brands – the majority are involved in property management, banking, farming and shooting/horse racing.

We did the same for other moors in England for which we had come across some ownership information – this was included in APPENDIX 1.

9.4 Who is shooting?

Fieldsports and similar magazines contained a few articles naming people involved, including a list of '100 Top Shots',⁵⁸ whose names we performed a number of searches on (those linked to grouse shooting). We have compiled a list of Individuals known to shoot grouse in the UK which also appears in Appendix 1.

The following extract confirms that overseas clients make up a growing proportion of the total:

"Last year, the number of sportsmen from overseas covered by visitors' permits, which allow the holder to possess a firearm or shotgun in the UK without holding a UK certificate, reached an all-time high of

10,415... "Despite what's happening in the world, our overseas business is holding up pretty well – the UK continues to prove very popular with both Americans and Europeans."... Gordon Robinson, from the Royal Berkshire Shooting School's sporting agency... said that one possible reason could be an increase in grouse numbers. He commented: "There are a lot more grouse around than there ever have been, and they're much more reliable. We used to get peaks and troughs, but they have levelled off which makes grouse shooting in the UK for foreign Guns much more attractive."

Shooting UK⁵⁹

Grouse shoots can operate in two different ways – invited guests and 'let days' when shooting syndicates hire the moor and its services, or shooting parties are put together through booking agents, increasingly operating online through sites requiring registration to gain access. The following probably applies more to 'invited days':

"Guns' are investment bankers, stockbrokers, landowners and members of the peerage. There is more than a sprinkling of royalty and those related to royalty. They are people who enjoy each other's company for the purpose of pecuniary as well as social advancement. Key members of governments past and present are also members of this magic circle."

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Appendix 2. Information sources

Academic Journals

Covering HH conversation

Animal Conservation
Biological Conservation
Biodiversity Conservation
British Birds
Journal of Animal Ecology
Journal of Applied Ecology
Nature
Oikos
Proceedings of the Royal Society
Wildlife Biology

Covering upland moor habitat management

Hydrological Processes
Journal of Applied Ecology
Journal of Environmental Management
PLoS ONE

Statutory organisations, partnerships and initiatives:

Moors for the Future

www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk

Peak District National Park Authority, National Trust, Natural England, United Utilities, Severn Trent Water, Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, Derbyshire County Council and RSPB. Working since 2003 to reverse 150 years of damage that left large areas of these uplands bare of vegetation.

Natural England

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/uplands/default.aspx

Quasi-NGO, responsible for the Hen Harrier recovery project. Responsible to DEFRA, oversees stewardship schemes.

National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU)

www.nwcu.police.uk/about

Now linked with the Met in London <http://content.met.police.uk/Site/wildlifecrime>

“The main role of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) is to assist in the prevention and detection of wildlife crime. We do this by obtaining and disseminating information from a wide range of organisations and by assisting police forces in wildlife crime investigation. We produce analysis which highlights local or national threats. We are also the conduit between police forces and PAW partners.”

National Trust

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The second largest landowner in the country with 3.8 million members and 630,000 acres, most of them in rural areas.

Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) – UK

www.defra.gov.uk/paw/about

Partnership linked to NWCU

Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime – Scotland (PAW Scotland)

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Wildlife-Habitats/paw-scotland

Part of wider PAW partnership. Holyrood-backed partnership looking to prosecute raptor persecutors

Birdlife International

www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=3407

Charity/international network. Gives background info on HH

International Union for Conservation of Nature

www.iucnredlist.org

Publishes Red List of threatened species, including HH.

Pro-raptor groups and organisations

Animal Aid

www.animalaid.org.uk

Membership-led company. Produced Calling the Shots which looked at grouse welfare as well as implications on the countryside by grouse shooting industry. Calling for an end to the public subsidies for supporting this industry. See www.animalaid.org.uk/images/pdf/booklets/callingtheshots.pdf and www.animalaid.org.uk/h/n/NEWS/news_shooting//2958

RSPB Investigations

www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/investigations/default.aspx

“The RSPB Investigations team assists the statutory agencies to investigate crimes against wild birds in the UK. Staff are based at the UK headquarters, Scottish headquarters and the Northern England Regional Office.”

Raptor Politics

<http://raptorpolitics.org.uk>

“The Raptor politics web site has been designed to publicise instances of illegal persecution of protected birds of prey by some gamekeepers on England’s moorland shooting estates”

Historical and statistical data from 2008 (<http://raptorpolitics.org.uk/historical-and-statistical-data/>)



Raptor Persecution Scotland

<http://raptorpersecutionscotland.wordpress.com>

NGO following criminal cases pertaining to raptor persecution – not just in Scotland

Campaigns

M&S boycott

www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/aug/23/marks-spencer-grouse-meat-illegal-source

Call for a boycott of M&S while grouse shooting is unlicensed, due to the persecution of raptors and extreme decline in HH.

“...have you noticed that the memberships of wildlife conservation organisations (such as the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts etc) are immense, and look very much like your customers, whereas you won't meet many practising grouse shooters in the streets?”
(Mark Avery)

BanGS – Mark Avery

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/46473>

Campaign to license grouse moors
“Given the continuing levels of illegal persecution of birds of prey the Government is called upon to introduce a system of operating licences for upland grouse shoots. Following any proven offence of persecution on the shoot concerned, i.e. illegal trapping, use of poisons, shooting or the interference with or destruction of nests, the licence would be revoked for a period of not less than two years and commercial shooting activity cease.”

RSPB – Skydancer Campaign

www.rspb.org.uk/skydancer

Lottery-funded campaign from RSPB

Fluffy 'hearts & minds' campaign been going since 2012 and funded until 2016. Outcomes of the campaign include a: “...focus on practical conservation and community engagement in communities in and around the Forest of Bowland, RSPB Geltsdale nature reserve and North Tynedale in Northumberland.”

“Through Skydancer, we will be asking local moorland owners, managers, gamekeepers and the shooting community at large, to step-up for hen harriers and become true examples of conservation through wise use. UU estate in Bowland is a great example of this – where hen harriers are doing well and driven shooting continues successfully”

Ban the Burn

www.energyroyd.org.uk/archives/category/ban-the-burn-news

Hebden Bridge based campaign against blanket bog burning (tangential to HH protection) campaign group

Sources sympathetic to grouse shooting

British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)

www.basc.org.uk

BASC has been known to acknowledge that there is an issue with raptor persecution.

Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

www.cla.org.uk

A membership organisation which believes in grouse shooting boosting the local/rural economy

Countryside Alliance

www.countryside-alliance.org

Membership-led company which claims to have around 100,000 members. “The Countryside Alliance is known for its work on fieldsports and has been the lead voice against the threats to hunting and shooting for many years.” Said to act “as though it is the voice of the shooting community”

Questioned whether 'Bowland Betty' was shot www.countryside-alliance.org/ca/campaigns-shooting/the-rspb-and-hen-harriers

Fieldsports magazine

Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)

www.gwct.org.uk

Questions the effectiveness of Langholm Moor study and has stated that managed moorland can help HH. Joint study with RSPB here: www.gwct.org.uk/policy/policy-reports/hen-harriers-and-the-joint-raptor-study. Also www.gwct.org.uk/game/research/species/red-grouse/hen-harriers-and-grouse

GWCT commissioned and published 'An Economic Study of Grouse Moors: an update', a report by the Fraser of Allander Institute of the University of Strathclyde, 2010. www.gwct.org.uk/game/research/species/red-grouse/an-economic-study-of-scottish-grouse-moors



Game Conservancy Trust

Grouse Moor News – published annually by Savills (L&P) Ltd. www.savills.co.uk/promotions/grouse-moor-news-2013.aspx

Guns on Pegs

Moorland Association

www.moorlandassociation.org

Moorland Association’s 200 members own and manage most of the grouse estates in England. Some of those most prominently and profitably involved in illegal killing of birds of prey are influential in the organisations funded by the shooting community. Believes that raptor numbers are on the rise and that they damage grouse shooting which they argue is an important contributor to local economies www.moorlandassociation.org/raptors.asp

Modern Gamekeeping

www.moderngamekeeping.com

“We are used to wild assertions from the raptor loonies, but that one really takes the biscuit. Can they seriously believe that keepers and landowners are burning vast areas of moorland to rid themselves of pesky raptors? That would be like burning down your house because you don’t like the living room wallpaper.” www.moderngamekeeping.com/features/smoking-them-out

National Gamekeepers Association

Shooting Times

www.shootingtimes.co.uk

“...grouse moor management can aid the recovery of the bird of prey by increasing its food supply and thus increasing its productivity. However, the study also showed that high densities of harriers hinder the successful management of productive grouse

moors” www.shootingtimes.co.uk/news/539929/Study_shows_predator_control_helps_hen_harrier_recovery.html#vADKCITPYLMw9f9P.99

Shooting Gazette

www.shootinggazette.co.uk

‘Driven Shooting’s Finest Journal’

Published ‘Britain’s 20 Best Shoots’ in 2009

Reports from NGOs & statutory agencies

Scottish Natural Heritage:

Diversionary feeding of hen harriers on grouse moors - a practical guide 2010.

Natural England:

The effects of managed burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water, 2013

Vital Uplands: A 2060 vision for England’s upland environment, 2009

A Future for the Hen Harrier in Northern England? 2008

National Character Area profile: North York Moors

National Character Area: Southern Pennines

National Character Area: Dark Peak

National Character Area: South West Peak

National Trust:

High Peak Moors Vision and Plan 2013-2038

RSPB:

The costs and benefits of grouse moor management to biodiversity and aspects of the wider environment: a review, 2012

The illegal killing of birds of prey in Scotland in 2012

Peak Malpractice, 2007

The state of the UK’s birds, 2013

Birdcrime, 2013

Legal Eagle, 2013

Hen Harriers and the Joint Raptor Study (joint statement with GWCT), 2002

National Park Authorities:

Dark Peak Landscape Strategy, 2009

Red Grouse and Birds of Prey, leaflet

North York Moors Sustainability Statement

Factsheet 16: Goyt Valley

Penny Anderson Associates Limited:

Bradfield Moorland Regeneration Scheme (Fitzwilliam Estates) Environmental Statement V1

Harrogate Borough Council:

Hen Harrier Species Action Plan, 2012

Hawk and Owl Trust:

Hen Harrier Winter Roost Survey, 2010

Animal Aid:

Calling the Shots: The power and privilege of the grouse shooting elite, 2013

Joint Nature Conservation Committee:

A Conservation Framework for Hen Harriers in the United Kingdom, 2011

Industry reports

An Economic Study of Grouse Moors, GWCT

Savills Grouse Moor News

Fair Game Shootign and Fishing Census 2013

Shooting Gazette – various articles

Fieldsports magazine – various articles

Shooting Times – various articles

Moorland Association website

Hear the voices of the moors – oral history

Whisper Who Dares, The Field 2013

Country Life magazine



APPENDIX 3. Academic papers

Linking nest histories, remotely sensed land use data and wildlife crime records to explore the impact of grouse moor management on peregrine falcon populations

Arjun Amar a,b,, Ian R. Court c, Martin Davison c, Steve Downing c, Trevor Grimshaw c, Terry Pickford c, David Rawc
Biological Conservation 145 (2012) 86–94

Modelling the impact of hen harrier management measures on a red grouse population in the UK

Leslie F. New, Stephen T. Buckland, Stephen Redpath and Jason Matthiopoulos
Oikos, 121: 1061–1072., July 2012

Journal of Applied Ecology 2011, 48, 1187–1194

Hen harrier management: insights from demographic models fitted to population data

Leslie F. New^{1,2*}, Stephen T. Buckland¹, Stephen Redpath³ and Jason Matthiopoulos

Hen harriers and red grouse: moving towards consensus?

Steve Redpath¹ and Simon Thirgood^{*,2}
Journal of Applied Ecology 2009, 46, 961–963

Journal of Applied Ecology 2009, 46, 955–960

Hen harriers and red grouse: economic aspects of red grouse shooting and the implications for moorland conservation
Nick Sotherton^{*1}, Stephen Tapper¹ and Adam Smith²

Journal of Applied Ecology 2009, 46, 950–954

Resolving the conflict between driven-grouse shooting and conservation of hen harriers

Patrick S. Thompson^{*1}, Arjun Amar², David G. Hocco^{m3}, Jeff Knott³ and Jeremy D. Wilson

Hunting habitat selection by hen harriers on moorland: Implications for conservation management

Beatriz Arroyo^{a,d,*}, Arjun Amar^b, Fiona Leckie^a, Graeme M. Buchanan^c, Jeremy D. Wilson^c, Stephen Redpath^a
Biological Conservation 142 (2009) 586–596

Animal Conservation 144 11 (2008) 144–152

Long-term increase in the fecundity of hen harriers in Wales is explained by reduced human interference and warmer weather

D. P. Whitfield, A. H. Fielding & S. Whitehead

Journal of Applied Ecology 2008, 45 , 1550–1554

Hen harriers and red grouse: science, politics and human–wildlife conflict
Simon Thirgood^{*} and Steve Redpath

Conflicts between humans over wildlife management: on the diversity of stakeholder attitudes and implications for conflict management

Keith Marshall Æ Rehema White Æ Anke Fischer
Biodivers Conserv (2007) 16:3129–3146

Journal of Applied Ecology 2004 41, 305–314 Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.

Habitat predicts losses of red grouse to individual hen harriers
Arjun Amar^{*†}, Beatriz Arroyo[‡], Stephen Redpath and Simon Thirgood[§]

Determining the cause of the hen harrier decline on the Orkney Islands: an experimental test of two hypotheses
Animal Conservation (2002) 5, 21–28 A. Amar^{1,2} and S. M. Redpath¹

Could translocation aid hen harrier conservation in the UK?

Mark Watson¹ and Simon Thirgood²
Animal Conservation (2001) 4, 37–43

Journal of Animal Ecology 2000, 69, 504±516

Raptor predation and population limitation in red grouse

Simon J. Thirgood, Stephen M. Redpath, Peter Rothery and Nicholas J. Aebischer

Habitat loss and raptor predation: disentangling long- and short-term causes of red grouse declines

Simon J. Thirgood^{1*}, Steve M. Redpath², Daniel T. Haydon³, Peter Rothery⁴, Ian Newton⁴ and Peter J. Hudson⁵ Proc. R. Soc. Lond. B 2000

Global dispersion of nesting Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*; implications for grouse moors in the U.K.

G. R. Potts 1 9 9 8

The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EE UK

Journal of Applied Ecology 1997, 34, 1081-1105

The effects of illegal killing and destruction of nests by humans on the population dynamics of the hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* in Scotland

B. Etheridge, ^{*} R.w. Summers^{*} and R.e. Green

CONSERVATION RESEARCH NEWS

Compiled by Mark Avery and Ian Bainbridge

Brit. Birds 90: 411-412, October 1997

330 NATURE|VOL 389 | 25 SEPTEMBER 1997

The hen harrier and the grouse
Robert M. May



The Impact of Hen Harriers on Red Grouse Breeding Success

S. M. Redpath

Journal of Applied Ecology, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Aug., 1991), pp. 659-671

Rotational vegetation burning effects on peatland stream ecosystems.

Ramchunder, S.J, Brown, L.E. & Holden, J. (2013)

Journal of Applied Ecology 50: 636-648

Fire decreases near-surface hydraulic conductivity and macropore flow in blanket peat. Hydrological Processes in press

Holden, J., Wearing, C., Palmer, S., Jackson, B., Johnson, K.L. & Brown, L.E.

River ecosystem response to prescribed vegetation burning on blanket peatland.

Brown, L.E., Johnston, K.L., Palmer, S., Aspray, L. & Holden, J. 2013.

PLoS One 8(11): e81023

The impacts of prescribed moorland burning on water colour and dissolved organic carbon: A critical synthesis.

Holden, J., Chapman, P.J., Palmer, S.M. & Grayson, R. 2012.

Journal of Environmental Management 101: 92-103



Glossary

AHVLA – Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

Agency in DEFRA set up to protect and improve the health and welfare of farmed animals in England, Scotland and Wales.

BASC – British Association for Shooting and Conservation

Formerly the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland. Representative body for shooting sports.

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

An agricultural policy of the EU implementing agricultural subsidies.

CLA – Country Land and Business Association

Represents owners of land and businesses in rural communities in the UK.

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

A UK ministerial department responsible for policy and regulations on environmental, food and rural issues.

EU – European Union

An economic and political union of 28 member states.

FERA – Food and Environment Research Agency

Part of DEFRA, set up to support and develop sustainable food chains in the UK.

GPS – Global Positioning System

Satellite-navigation system to map global locations and weather conditions.

GWCT – Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

A charity that seeks to research and promote game and wildlife management techniques.

HLS – Higher Level Stewardship

An agreement and grant for landowners

and/or farmers administered and granted by NE.

M&S – Marks & Spencer

High street shop. Came under fire for selling grouse meat.

NCA – National Crime Agency

Governmental agency set up to look into serious and organised crime in the UK.

NE – Natural England

A quango set up in 2006 to supercede English Nature, Countryside Agency and Rural Development Service. NE is responsible for protecting and improving England's natural environment.

NERC – Natural Environment and Rural Committees Act

UK government Act of 2006 about organisations concerned with the natural environment and rural communities.

NERF – Northern England Raptor Forum

Established in 2006, NERF is an umbrella group for raptor conservation groups and workers in the north of England.

NFU – National Farmers Union

An organisation set up to champion British farming. Offering representation and advice to farmers.

NGO – National Gamekeepers Organisation

An organisation set up to represent and promote gamekeeping in England and Wales.

NT – National Trust

Membership charity set up to protect places in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

NWCU – National Wildlife Crime Unit

A UK police intelligence unit set up to assist in the prevention and detection of wildlife crime.

PAW – Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime UK

A partnership organisation aiming to reduce and end wildlife crime.

PSA – Public Service Agreement

An agreement that details the aims and objectives of the UK government for a three year period.

RPS – Raptor Persecution Scotland

Highlighting the persecution of raptors in Scotland and the UK. Mostly outputs information through a blog: <http://raptorpersecutionscotland.wordpress.com>

SAC – Special Conservation Areas

An area given special protection under the EU's Habitat's Directive. Protecting the habitat's flora and fauna.

SPA – Special Protection Areas

An area of land, water or sea identified by the EU as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds.

SSSI – Site of Specific Scientific Interest

Designated, protected areas of land that are important in terms of biodiversity. There are over 4,100 in the UK.

VL – Vicarious Liability

For wildlife crimes whereby employers would be legally responsible for acts committed by their employees

VMD – Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Part of DEFRA, oversees safety, quality and efficiency of veterinary medicines and products.

WM – Walshaw Moor

A controversial grouse moor in Lancashire, the business that owns the estate is currently under scrutiny and a complaint has been made to the European Union by the RSPB.