

North of England Grouse Seminar

February 28th 2023

Cedar Court Hotel
Harrogate | HG1 5AH



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Game & Wildlife
CONSERVATION TRUST

Programme

9:15	Coffee and registration	
10:00	Welcome and introduction	The Marquess of Downshire
10:10	Moorland management and ground-nesting birds: Evidence from multiple studies of how predator control and heather burning as components of grouse moor management can influence the abundance and breeding success of a suite of ground-nesting birds.	Dr David Baines GWCT
10:40	Merlin Magic: Are merlin nesting habitats and their prey abundance on grouse moors in northern England limited by heather management practices?	Dr Philip Warren GWCT
11:20	Short break	
11:40	Langholm revisited – the retrospective application of adaptive management techniques to interpret changes in red grouse abundance: After a brief explanation of the principles of adaptive management, this talk explores how its techniques have been applied to the 28 years of published data from Langholm to help interpret the changes in red grouse abundance and identify the factors behind those changes.	Dr Nicholas Aebischer GWCT
12:10	The Hen Harrier in England: Working with land managers to ameliorate the conflict between hen harriers and red grouse.	Stephen Murphy Natural England
12:40	Discussion, questions and answers	
13:00	Lunch	
14:15	UK wildfire: predicting the danger and managing the risk: An overview of two major collaborative studies that are considering key aspects of wildfire mitigation and management	Prof. Nick Kettridge University of Birmingham
14:45	Heather management – burning issues and cutting-edge science: An update on some of our latest research into the effects of burning or cutting heather over blanket bog.	Dr Siân Whitehead GWCT
15:15	Research Updates: Short updates from the team on current and future projects including heather beetle monitoring & management, future directions for black grouse, flubendazole resistance detection amongst strongyle worms, and factors influencing pre-breeding condition in hen grouse.	GWCT Upland Team
15:45	Discussion, questions and answers	
16:00	Close of seminar	

Biographies

Chairman:

The Marquess of (Nick) Downshire is a trustee of GWCT, who sits on their finance committee and chairs the Upland Research Steering Committee. He runs an estate in Wensleydale which includes Jervaulx Moor. He is a chartered accountant with several non-executive roles ranging from an AIM-listed pharmaceutical business to acting as a trustee for various landed estates. He has just stepped down as chair of the CLA agriculture and land use committee and is interim chair of the Moorland Association.

Speakers:

Dr David Baines is the GWCT's Director of Upland Research, supervising staff at our Teesdale research base. He has worked for the Trust since 1989, starting his career in the Scottish Highlands on black grouse and capercaillie before returning to Teesdale in 1997 to work on parasite-induced population dynamics of red grouse, raptor-grouse conflict resolution and the impacts of predation on breeding waders.

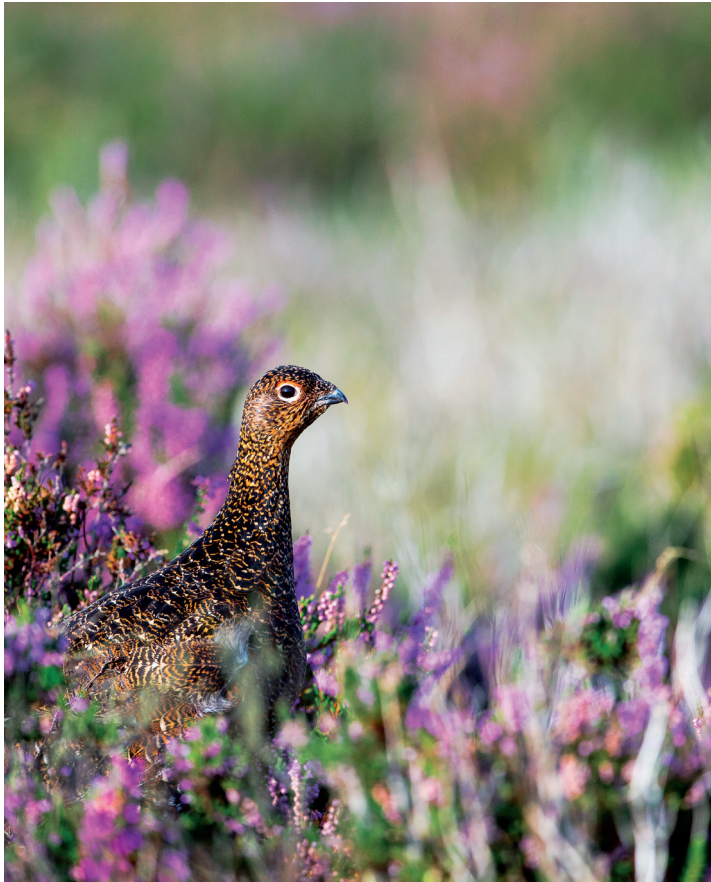
Dr Philip Warren is the Project Officer for the Merlin Magic Project and is based at the GWCT's office in Teesdale. Phil has been with the Trust for 24 years. Over this period, he has completed his PhD with the University of Durham investigating red grouse population dynamics at a landscape scale, and taken a lead role on the Trust's black grouse research and conservation delivery work in both England and Scotland.

Dr Nicholas Aebischer graduated in Mathematical Sciences in Lausanne, Switzerland, followed by a PhD and DSc in Mathematical Ecology at Durham University. He has been at GWCT for 36 years, the last 20 as Deputy Director of Research and in charge of the Biometrics Department, before going part-time in 2022. His talk reflects a keen interest in using animal population models and associated statistical methods to further the ecological understanding of changes in animal abundance.

Stephen Murphy is a Natural England ornithologist specialising in radio- and satellite-marking techniques. He graduated with honours as a mature student in 2000 and worked for GWCT researching habitat use of turtle doves and monitoring grey partridges in Lincolnshire and Norfolk. He has also studied a range of other species, from upland waders and golden eagles in The Hebrides to corn buntings on the Lancashire Plain. Since 2002 he has studied the hen harrier, mainly in the English uplands using firstly radio- and then satellite-marking to increase the knowledge of their life history. This has involved working closely with land managers to better understand their concerns and to trial applied ecological techniques to help the conservation status of the hen harrier whilst lessening their impact on red grouse.

Prof. Nick Kettridge is a lecturer at the University of Birmingham and Adjunct Professor at the University of Alberta (Canada). His research examines the resilience of ecosystems, and particularly peatland ecosystems, to both natural and anthropogenic disturbance - with a particular focus on wildfire. Most recently he is working as part of two NERC-funded research projects. The first aims to establish the scientific foundation for a tailored UK fire danger rating system for use in establishing the likelihood and impact of current and future wildfire regimes. The second considers the impacts of fuel management strategies on UK wildfire regimes, biodiversity, and carbon. His research brings together field scale monitoring, field and laboratory manipulations and computer simulations to address these complex questions and to help support management and restoration strategies.

Dr Siân Whitehead started her research career studying the foraging ecology of starlings in Oxfordshire and red-billed chough in Wales before spending almost 20 years in statutory agency research, advisory and policy. She joined the GWCT's uplands team as a Senior Scientist in 2017 and now leads the team's research on vegetation and hydrological responses to prescribed burning and cutting of heather.



Venue

Cedar Court Hotel | Park Parade | Harrogate | HG1 5AH



Organised by Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

We are a leading UK charity that uses science to promote conservation. Our wide-ranging research covers moorland, woodland, wetland, river and farm environments. Our aim is a thriving countryside rich in game and other wildlife. www.gwct.org.uk

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Upland Research Group, The Coach House
Eggleston Hall, Barnard Castle
Co. Durham, DL12 0AG
Tel 01833 651936 Email uplands@gwct.org.uk