

Hunters' contribution to the Conservation of Threatened Species

Examples from Europe where hunting positively influences the conservation of threatened species



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This report has been collated in cooperation with the FACE members. We extend our gratitude towards everyone that has helped to complete this report.

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Introduction: Hunting and Conservation in Europe

Hunting is a highly popular form of nature recreation, an activity enjoyed by 7 million people in Europe (FACE, 2010). It is one of the oldest forms of consumptive use of renewable natural resources and provides significant social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits in different regions of Europe (e.g. see European Commission, 2008; Kenward and Sharp, 2008; HUNT, 2015). European hunters are motivated by recreational, consumptive and social aspects, with regionally varying emphasis on these elements.

Sustainable hunting also represents a strong incentive to support the maintenance of habitats and species (e.g. see MacDonald and Johnson, 2000; Stoate, 2002; Oldfield *et al.*, 2003; Ewald *et al.*, 2006; Connor and Draycott, 2010; Rouxel, 2000; Fletcher *et al.*, 2010; Scallan, 2012; Díaz-Fernández *et al.*, 2013). In this regard, hunters frequently contribute to the conservation of game and other species through, for example, habitat provision and the control of mammalian/avian predators. Some of the most important wildlife sites in Europe have survived the pressures of development and destruction as a result of game management interests.

In order to provide an overview of hunters' contribution to conservation, the FACE [Biodiversity Manifesto Report](#) (2016) assessed 221 European case studies of various conservation projects undertaken by hunters.

In certain circumstances, the survival of threatened species can be positively influenced by the actions of hunters motivated by their interest in hunting and conservation. Hunters have the knowledge, the available time and the local networks to implement conservation management actions for species and their habitats. The hunting of these species can be seen as a powerful incentive to motivate conservation action.

This report contains different examples of how hunters contribute to the conservation of threatened species from the UK, Ireland, Flanders (Belgium), Germany and Italy. The report is organised according to countries and the different species involved.

Each section starts with the name of the species, sometimes followed by specific locations. Every species is listed according to its status on the IUCN red list and according to its article 12 reporting (EU) status. For some species, the relevant national listing is cited. There is a short summary of the project and (sometimes) a link to more information.

Ireland

Red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus hibernicus*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Vulnerable
Article 12	Threatened
National	Red listed (high conservation concern)



In Ireland, the Irish Red Grouse is example of a declining and threatened huntable species. The results of the most recent Irish Red Grouse survey indicate that the population in the Republic of Ireland is just over 4,200 birds (average 1.1 per 1km² surveyed). This suggests a 50% decline in range in the last 40 years (Cummins *et al.*, 2010). A Red Grouse Species Action Plan (2013) developed with a variety of stakeholders demonstrates that although the species is declining, some 60 conservation projects have been established by hunters to address local declines. Most of these have either voluntary hunting moratoriums in place or locally-controlled quota systems. In these projects, hunters put in place a range of management measures habitat management, predator control, disturbance control, provision of grit, improving public awareness and monitoring.

For more information, see the Irish Red grouse species action plan (2013):
https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/2013_RedGrouse_SAP.pdf

UK

Greenland white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*)

IUCN red list (Europe, <i>Anser Albifrons</i>):	Least concern
National	Red-listed



Although the *Anser Albifrons* is not threatened in Europe, the Greenland's subspecies have been red-listed in the UK. Hunting organisations have had a voluntary moratorium on the shooting of Greenland white-fronted geese (GWfG) at the main wintering ground in Wales (Dyfi estuary) since the 1970s. Two years ago this was extended to cover all of Wales to ensure no GWfG were shot by mistake when shooting the considerably more numerous European White-Fronted goose which can occur in some of the areas of Wales bordering England. The hunters who enacted the moratorium are very protective of the geese and are actively engaged with other conservation NGOs to monitor the population, track the birds and improve the wintering habitat for them. Hunters opposed calls to legally protect this race because there was no evidence the voluntary moratorium has not worked, and because once protected there is little chance of protection being removed if the population recovers in the future to a point where a sustainable surplus could be harvested. There's been some good work on this species this winter

More info: <https://basc.org.uk/blog/key-issues/media-key-issues/basc-hopes-new-funding-will-boost-numbers-greenland-white-fronted-geese/>

Grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Least concern
Article 12	Declining
National	Red-listed



Prior to widespread stocking with red-legged partridges and pheasants in the 1900s, the grey partridge used to be the main game species in the UK. Changing agriculture has led to significant declines, but it remains in strongholds in areas of traditional land management and effective predator control. This species is still shot, but there is well publicised advice on ensuring there is a sustainable surplus first, and on how to achieve it. As such, remaining populations are generally quite localised and generally restricted to areas where hunters voluntarily undertake the habitat management. Hunters are involved in research on Grey Partridge, ornithological work and creating awareness for proper land management and predator control.

More info: <http://www.gwct.org.uk/research/species/birds/grey-partridge/>

Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Least concern
Article 12	Secure
National	Red-listed



Shot in quite large numbers where hunters undertake habitat management specifically to benefit the species. Shot opportunistically/less frequently outside of these areas. There are increasing calls from hunters for voluntary restraint amongst hunters, and calls for statutory moratoriums from other conservation NGOs. This is still developing, but hunters being best placed to take action to protect the species, wanting to ensure that they won't "lose" this as a quarry species. Hunters are mainly involved in research and awareness creation among other hunters and land owners.

More info: <http://www.gwct.org.uk/policy/position-statements/shooting-woodcock/>

Flanders, Belgium

Grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Least concern
Article 12 (Europe)	Declining
National	Vulnerable



In the Flemish Grey Partridge project, motivated wildlife management units (WMUs) will work together with representatives from the local farmers, the landowners and of local landscape and environmental conservation platforms. Together they form 'partridge groups'. These partridge groups drafted an action plan for the partridge, to respond to local threats and to develop management solutions. Powerful local solutions can provide an added value for the partridge population. The main actions include increase of habitat quality, winter feeding, predator control, monitoring and sustainable harvest.

On the Flemish level, the projects has increased efforts to ameliorate the situation of the grey partridge and farmland biodiversity. Within the CAP and the environmental schemes of the Flemish Land Agency, there are some possibilities for wildlife friendly management. In the grey partridge project, they have initiated campaigns towards farmers to promote this wildlife friendly management. Workshops, information and advice for the partridge groups will increase the knowledge about good partridge management. The steering group of the project, which consists of representatives of the hunting sector, the agricultural sector, the landowners and the local landscape and environmental conservation platforms, meet regularly. Opportunities and problems are discussed, with the aim of developing real solutions for the grey partridge and farmland biodiversity.

The species can be hunted in Flanders, if a couple of conditions are met:

- Only in wildlife management units.
- Only if the hunters spring counts of the 3 previous years point out that at least 3 pairs of partridges are present per 100 ha open space in this wildlife management unit.
- The management plan of the wildlife management unit includes a partridge friendly management plan.

For more information: <http://northsearegion.eu/partridge/demonstration-sites/>

Germany

Lower Saxony, Göttingen

Grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Least concern
Article 12 (Europe)	Declining
National	critically endangered



Throughout Europe the number of partridge stocks has declined by 94% since 1980. In the district of Göttingen, there is a partridge population of 400 pairs, which is based on an annual census. The goal is to maintain a long-term surviving population. While the number of partridges in Lower Saxony has declined by half in recent years, the number of partridges in the district of Göttingen has been stabilized. With the agri-environmental measures "Blühstreifen" (biodiversity strips around agricultural land), which are managed for partridge, new habitats for the birds have arisen. A long-term telemetry study has accompanied this project. The project is carried out by the biological hunting association of Göttingen and is scientifically supervised by the University of Göttingen (Department of Nature Conservation Biology).

More information (in German): <http://www.rebhuhnschutzprojekt.de/index.html>

Italy

Lombardia, Basilicata, Lazio, Emilia-Romagna

The Italian Grey partridge (*Perdix Perdix Italic*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Extinct in the wild
Article 12 (Europe)	Extinct in the wild
National	Extinct in the wild



The aim of the project is to restore and conserve the Italian Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix italic*) by means of captive breeding and the re-establishment of viable populations inside suitable SPAs in Northern, Central, and Southern Italy. Hunters provide local knowledge and are the ideal carriers of the project in their hunting areas.

Hunters are involved in a number of objectives: disseminating knowledge on the project in different areas, implementing conservation actions within hunting districts near protected areas, creating awareness among stakeholders and the generic public regarding the need for conservation and management of the Italian Grey Partridge.

To achieve the conservation goals, hunters will be trained as technical staff to implement the conservation management actions. Hunters are needed to create and raise awareness towards stakeholders about the threats related to the loss of Italian Grey Partridge and the need for a sustainable use and management of the species in the future. In the areas around the reintroduction site, hunting activities will be managed.

Rock partridge (*Alectoris graeca*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Near Threatened (2016)
Article 12 (Europe)	Threatened
National	Vulnerable



In 2017, a National Management Plan for the species was drawn up by the Ministry of Environment and the ISPRA (Institute for Environmental Protection and Research), with the direct collaboration of technicians of Italian hunting and environmentalist associations.

The Plan also highlights some actions to monitor the demographic parameters of the populations, to investigate its sanitary and genetic *status*, to reintroduce the species in isolated mountain sites and to spread the need for sustainable hunting and management in central and southern Italy. In these regions, the hunting of the species is generally under suspension, in accordance with the precautionary principle.

On the other hand, in the Alpine Regions, thanks to the efforts of many hunters, the management of the Rock partridge – as for other two priority species, the Rock ptarmigan *Lagopus mutus* and the Black grouse *Tetrao tetrix* - is based, for a long time, on sustainable methods - as the attached works highlight.

http://www.regione.piemonte.it/agri/area_tecnico/scientifica/osserv_faun/dwd/convegni/copertina.pdf
http://www.regione.piemonte.it/agri/area_tecnico/scientifica/osserv_faun/dwd/convegni/parte8.pdf
http://www.regione.piemonte.it/agri/area_tecnico/scientifica/osserv_faun/dwd/convegni/poster.pdf

Eurasian Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*)

IUCN red list (Europe)	Least Concern (2016)
Article 12 (Europe)	Declining
National	Vulnerable



A National Management Plan is completed by ISPRA, prepared in cooperation with a working group including hunter's association ornithologists, region representatives and conservation organization ornithologists. The plan is waiting for approval by the Italian Government and the Region in 2017. The plan recognizes hunting as a part of the management, and monitoring by Federazione Italiana della Caccia is cited, as a part of the information set available on species.

The Plan views hunters as partner in conservation of species, both for studies (bag statistics, sex ratios, migration monitoring), and habitat improvement, particularly by local hunting departments, Ambiti Territoriali di Caccia, (ATC) that could use financial resources coming from hunting fees for payment to landowners that maintain or create suitable habitat for skylarks, in all annual cycle, breeding, migrating and wintering.

In Plan harvest limits are mandatory for Italian regions, that could span from ten birds/day/hunter and 50 birds/year/hunter, to 20 – 100 for regions that obtain results in increasing population in 3 year period, or that establish specialized hunters list, in meanwhile reducing limits for generalist hunters. The plan has a self-evaluation program, applied by a technical table with hunters' participation that every year analyses progresses in actions required.

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