



The RSPB's conservation principles for gamebird shooting and associated land management

The RSPB has developed seven conservation principles to inform its policy on gamebird shooting. These were adopted by the RSPB's Council following consultation with RSPB members, staff, volunteers and other stakeholders including those from the shooting and land management community. The purpose of these principles (shown below) is primarily to guide the RSPB's own thinking, but we believe they may also be of use to others who share our values and objectives.

The RSPB is a nature conservation organisation working to keep common species common; to recover threatened species; to promote public education about nature; and to maintain the essential services that nature provides people. These values are enshrined in both our Royal Charter and charitable objectives. We remain neutral on the existence of gamebird shooting but will always comment when conservation issues are at stake.

Others' primary motivation is the welfare of individual animals, and some are driven by the commercial and recreational potential of land management. The RSPB understands and respects these views, yet they differ from the RSPB's values and charitable objectives which guide the choices we make. That said, we believe that all gamebird shooting should be undertaken in accordance with high standards of animal welfare; should protect public safety; and take account of other wider societal expectations of best practice. These are the standards that we expect from all land management practices and from natural resource exploitation. Indeed, the RSPB reflects these standards in all our work, including through our Vertebrate Control Policy and the work of our Ethics Advisory Committee.

We know that some gamebird shooting already respects these principles and land well managed for shooting can have considerable wildlife benefits. We often have common ground with these interests, including working together in partnership projects to improve the conservation prospects of threatened species and habitats, and we want this engagement to continue. Yet, there has been a trend in recent years of land management intensification and higher shooting bag expectations in some aspects of gamebird shooting. This has resulted in severe negative environmental consequences. Our evidence reviews of the impact of driven grouse shooting and mass gamebird releases highlight this.

Reform is needed and we are determined to work with Governments, members of the shooting community, and other conservation organisations to bring this about across the UK.

The RSPB's conservation principles for gamebird shooting and associated land management

Principle 1: Regulation and enforcement

Gamebird shooting must be regulated, with effective enforcement measures put in place by statutory authorities to ensure that shooting operates within the law, and those not complying with the law must lose their permission to shoot

Principle 2: Shooting of target species

Gamebird shooting must be environmentally sustainable, and must not negatively affect the long-term population of any quarry (legally huntable) species targeted for shooting

Principle 3: Impact on non-target species

Management must not cause a national or regional population decline, nor threaten the conservation status of any native species to increase the shootable surplus of gamebirds, and it must be supported by transparent reporting to statutory authorities on the numbers of all species killed

Principle 4: Management of legal lethal control of species

Species in healthy national and regional conservation status, killed for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing the activity of gamebird shooting, must be managed according to systems and standards developed and endorsed by statutory authorities

Principle 5: Management of habitats

Land used for gamebird shooting must be managed in a manner that protects and enhances wildlife habitats and the ecosystem services that they support including carbon storage and sequestration

Principle 6: Management of environmental impacts

Gamebird shoots must account for all of the current and historical environmental impacts of their practices and avoid, minimise, restore, and compensate for negative impacts

Principle 7: Government and scientific standards

Government structures, guidance, decision making and reporting to control regulated gamebird shooting must be informed by the best available science and developed in accordance with public standards of inclusivity and transparency