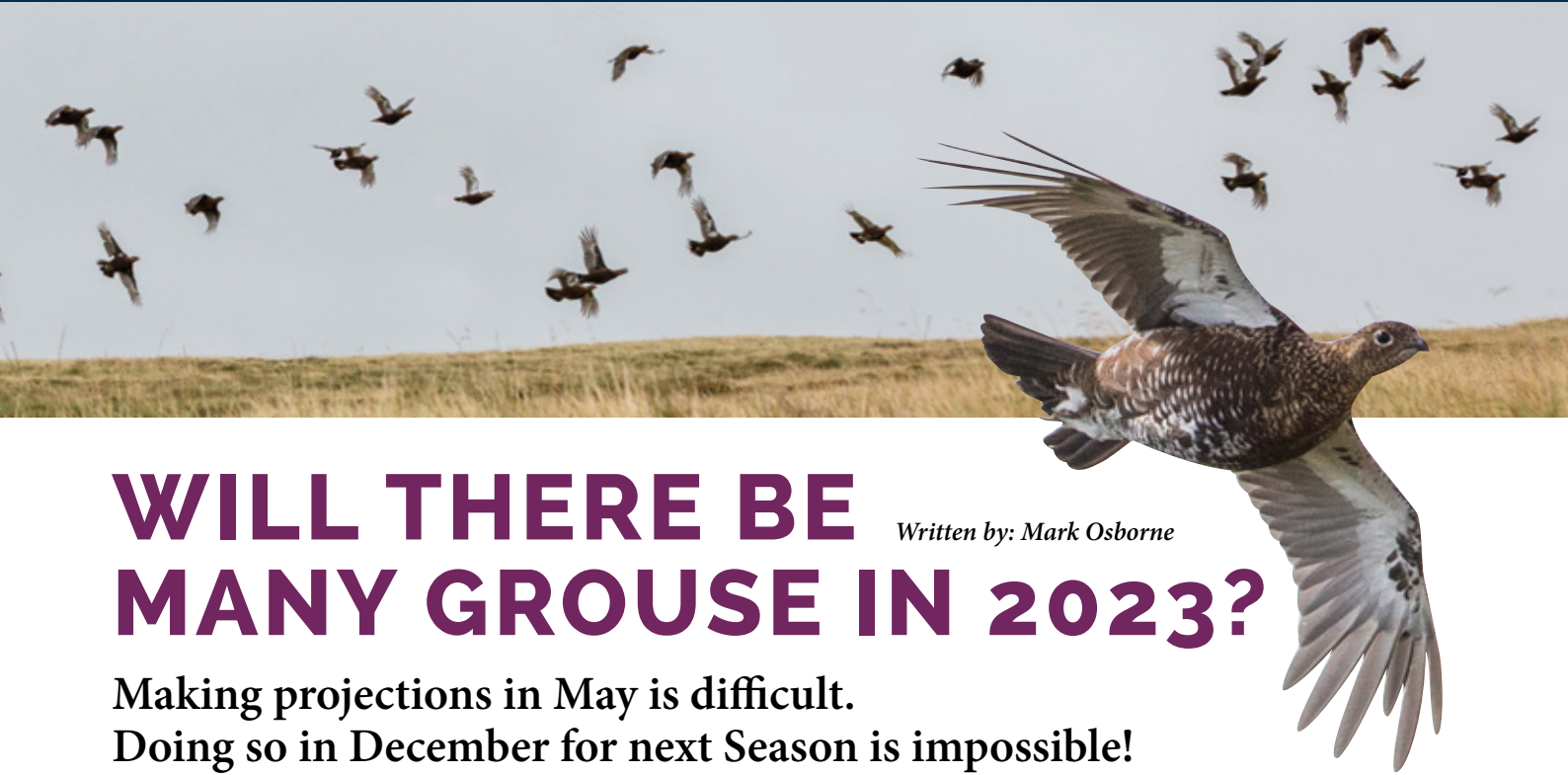


RURAL & SPORTING

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2022

Keeping you up to date with Rural and Sporting matters



WILL THERE BE MANY GROUSE IN 2023?

Written by: Mark Osborne

**Making projections in May is difficult.
Doing so in December for next Season is impossible!**

However, to have good quantities of Grouse for next Season, we need a number of fundamentals to be in place. The first of these is stock i.e. the number of Grouse left on the ground after last season. The 2022 Grouse season was different to what we originally thought it would be back in the summer. Then we were fairly confident after the hatch that we would have a reasonably good Grouse season over much of the North of England but also Scotland. As it turned out, many Moors and particularly those in Scotland, after a good initial hatch lost the chicks for no obvious reason, leading to very

**Stock levels are generally much better
than they were this time in 2021**

poor numbers of Grouse on the Moor when 12th August came around. There were bright spots, particularly in the North Pennines and in a very few areas of Scotland. However, whilst the Lammermuirs and the Moorfoot's were definitely the best of the Scottish Grouse Moors, Deeside, Donside and much else besides were fairly uniformly poor, with none of the expected recovery.

As a result, whilst stock levels are much generally better than they were this time in 2021, there is not an abundance of stock on many Scottish Moors and, sadly, the same on quite a few English ones. Those people who persisted in shooting this last season when the counts showed that they had low stocks will not have improved their chances of a much better 2023, however good the breeding season next spring/summer is. Where the Grouse were left or the hatches and subsequent survival rate were good (which was definitely the case in parts of the North Pennines and also on some of the North Yorkshire Moors and Cheviot Hills), there are grounds for optimism for next season. It is far too early to tell how that season will turn out, but with a reasonably good stock and given the fact that the heather has had a really good growing year despite the lack of rain, we can probably be reasonably confident at this time of the year, that the foundations for good to even very good quantities of Grouse for next season could on some Moors already be in place.

The rest is very much a waiting game with fingers crossed!

JM Osborne
Rural · Professional · Sporting

jmosborne.co.uk

WILLIAM POWELL
The Ultimate **Sporting Agency**

williampowellssporting.co.uk

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO AVIAN FLU

Avian Flu is not new. It has been around in the UK, albeit not in large quantities since September 2006 when a dead mute swan washed up on a Scottish shore. However, October 2021 was to be the beginning of a much larger outbreak which, at the time was described by The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control as “the largest observed in Europe so far”. The game changer for shooting has however been the very significant increase in outbreaks across Europe including the following three regions of France; Pays de la Loire, Maine-et-Loire and Vendee. This is where the main centre for French Game Farms are, and these farms have been major suppliers to UK Game Farmers and Shoots; indeed 75% of partridges released in the UK and 25% of pheasants emanate from this region of France. Of even more concern is the fact that large numbers of migratory waterfowl throughout Northern Europe have become infected with the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 strain of Avian Flu. Many of these birds have not died immediately after being infected, but have been able to carry the disease on to the UK and elsewhere.

A single wild bird dropping could contain thousands of infective doses

DEFRA imposed a housing order for all captive birds from 7th November. We do not believe the official statistics of bird flu cases is at all accurate, but believe that there are far more across the country than have so far been reported. This is not surprising when the head of Alpha’s National Emergency epidemiology group facility explained that a single wild bird

dropping could contain thousands of infective doses. A dose can be carried on any vector including rodents, clothing, bedding, feed and equipment.

People have been asking us whether we think that Avian Flu is going to die out and if so, how quickly. The best advice that we have been able to obtain is that Avian Flu is going to be with us for quite some time to come, but we believe it’s effect should lessen in time. We would, however, be deluding ourselves in thinking that it is not capable of then re-emerging on some scale. In the UK we are most vulnerable in the autumn when migratory birds visit. This has caused a mass of outbreaks both along the coast but also inland. Some sea bird populations have been dramatically affected and the same has occurred where the disease has got into large numbers of pheasants, particularly in the West Country and East Anglia. Pheasants seem to be more prone to the disease, or at least die more quickly than partridges, but at the time of going to print, no-one has any idea as to whether there are any birds which are not susceptible to this disease. What we do know is that very few birds currently have any build-up of resistance. The question has been asked as to whether this strain of Avian Flu can infect and then go on to kill Red Grouse. The best advice that we have obtained is that it could. Crossover from released pheasants and partridges on the edge of a Moor, particularly via drinking places, would seem to be an obvious transmission point. Fortunately, at this time of the year water availability is not a major issue. The most effective means of transmission is through bird faeces and therefore where birds congregate together in numbers, poses the greatest risk; this therefore could develop next Spring and Summer on Moors.

Where does this take us in the future?

Firstly, if you have Avian Flu in your Game birds, then immediate culling is the way forward. There is no medicine available and a delay in culling merely increases the risk of transmission. Culled birds should be disposed of correctly i.e. incinerated. If you think that your birds are looking ill, then although it is not absolutely certain the disease they have is Avian Flu, it is currently the most likely and the above steps should be followed.

Our advice for the 2023 season is that Shoots should now be talking to their normal Game Suppliers about what they are thinking of doing for next year, where they are going to be getting their eggs from, and what they think their availability of birds to sell is going to be. We do not believe that Avian Flu is going to be eradicated in France or indeed anywhere else very soon. We are advising Shoots to not only split their orders i.e. if they are buying any quantity of birds then to at least buy from two different Game Farms, but also to consider in the longer term whether they should be rearing themselves. Whilst the current restrictions (imposed on 7th November), means that all poultry including Game has to be kept inside, these restrictions will be lifted at some stage, and we think that for pheasants in particular, it will definitely be worthwhile Shoots considering rearing their own birds. This was the norm until 25/30 years ago, with a pheasant laying pen behind every Keeper’s house. Whilst this brings with it both some additional cost and also some risk, we suggest that Shoots seriously relook at this option.

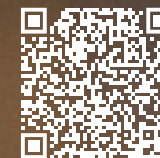
In the meantime, and for the rest of this season, Shoots should be very careful with their biosecurity measures (and our advice on these and what to do can be found on our website (www.jmosborne.co.uk) and particularly hosts should ensure that they reduce the risk of Avian Flu being transmitted by Guns, Beaters, Pickers up (including dogs) coming onto their

Shoots. We have perhaps been less focussed on this in recent years (since Foot & Mouth) but we now need to make this a priority going forward.

In short, Avian Flu is a major problem for Game Shoots, but we think that it is to some degree or another, likely to be with us for some time to come, and we need to better prepare ourselves for it and how we can live with it. We have no doubt (and it is already occurring) that our opponents will be using this as a stick to beat us with over the release of Game Birds. Whilst this has initial “attraction”, the fact that the spread of

A dose can be carried on any vector including rodents, clothing, bedding, feed and equipment.

the disease has to date largely been from wildfowl and sea birds, should undermine this argument; however logic seldom applies! Whilst Avian Flu is both really nasty and can be emotionally and financially very destructive, it is something that we can in the main adjust to, and should not be a game changer; shooting has overcome bigger problems before and no doubt will do so again.



KEEP UP TO DATE
ON BIRD FLU BY
VISITING OUR
NEWS PAGES

This newsletter has been put together by JM Osborne Rural & Sporting and William Powell Sporting, with the aim to focus on current Rural and Sporting matters. If you would like to discuss any of the topics featured in this publication or find out more about the services provided by either company, please contact us on any of the following details.

JM Osborne

Rural · Professional · Sporting

Tel: 01295 277197

Email: info@jmosborne.co.uk

Visit: jmosborne.co.uk

WILLIAM POWELL

The Ultimate **Sporting Agency**

Tel: 01295 661033

Email: info@williampowellssporting.co.uk

Visit: williampowellssporting.co.uk





OCTOBER SPANISH PARTRIDGES

Written by: Oliver Severn

William Powell Sporting has enjoyed a fantastic early season both here in the UK and also overseas. In the run-up to this season, we have been most fortunate to assist our clients with building some of the most incredible overseas “bucket list” adventures. Much of this interest has arisen as a result of the ongoing pressures we are sadly facing here in the UK.

One trip we continually see at the top of client’s “bucket lists” is shooting Spanish Partridges and for very good reason as there is a huge amount going for Spanish sport, not least the weather and hospitality!

Teams traveling to Spain to shoot partridges is no new venture and Guns have been traveling to the Iberian Peninsula in pursuit of fine sport for many decades. William Powell Sporting has been fortunate to assist many teams over the years and as a result, we have formed exceptional working relationships with a large range of Estates enabling us to offer a wide variety of shooting. It is as a result of this that we are able to build some of the most tailored and impressive trips each season.

Just recently we received an enquiry seeking further information on a possible trip to Spain and the possibility of doing so at very short notice. After a succinct call, we gained a detailed understanding of exactly what the client required and their expectations from a trip to Spain. Following this, we were well positioned to initiate and register the interest with several suitable providers securing various options for consideration with one of our partner Estates. The trip was quickly confirmed, and the finer details were put in place.

We have seen a huge spike in demand for shooting overseas

Only a short time later that I found myself on the way to Heathrow to board a plane bound for the welcoming climate of Spain. On arrival at Madrid airport, I was met by the immaculately turned-out Jose, one of the Estate’s charming chauffeurs. We loaded into the E-Class and set off on the short drive to the Lodge which is stunningly positioned amongst some of Spain’s finest olive groves. It was here that we welcomed the team of Guns and their non shooting guests that evening as the sun started to set.



On arrival, guests were shown to their stunning en-suite rooms where they could relax and unwind before everyone congregated in the main lodge for evening drinks. The Lodge’s team of butlers attentively assisted with all and any drink requirements providing everything from exceptional Spanish Rioja to refreshing Gin and Tonics. The drinks and conversation were well complemented with endless platters of the most impressive Jamón ibérico and accompanying cheeses. Once guests were ready for dinner, a plethora of food appeared from the kitchen, many being well-recognised Spanish dishes, but some more niche traditional options were also available for guests. After a fantastic dinner, all retreated to their rooms with great anticipation for the main event the following day.

The morning arrived after a good rest, with guests enjoying a beautifully presented light continental breakfast before preparations were made for the day with those requiring gun hire being matched with their perfect pair from the range of available Estate guns after the safety speech was given and the format of the day explained to those shooting and loaded into the Estate four-wheel drive vehicles and winded our way through the stunning olive groves and scrubby valleys on our way to the first drive



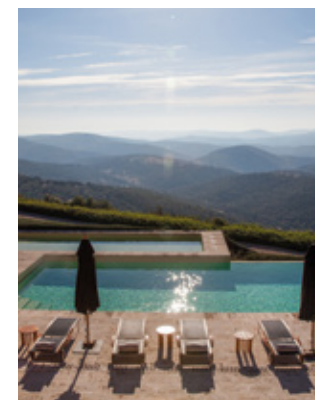
Those guests not shooting were offered a variety of activities for the day, and an itinerary was quickly drawn up including a visit to the beautifully historic city of Toledo and specifically the incredible Santa Iglesia Cathedral, all of which is within easy reach of this particular Estate.

Arriving at the first drive, we were welcomed by the always impressive sight of the Loaders, Secretarios and Pickers making their way down the track with a mass of equipment for each drive, including the synonymous “lollipops” which play an important role in both safety and performance by helping shade Guns from the sun. The first drive, “Albina” showed a fantastic quality of shooting down the full line of Guns offering a variety of birds for all abilities. The drive was a great success and a fantastic start to the shooting for all Guns.

The drive was a great success, a fantastic start to the shooting for all Guns!

Following the first drive, the team re-grouped enthusiastically at a table positioned under an olive tree, laden with refreshing drinks. There was much discussion over the exciting drive, as for many, it was their first ever in Spain. With breakfast a “distant memory”(!) food again appeared from all angles and the team relaxed in the comfortable chairs while the beaters and shoot day team prepared for the second drive.

The second drive was driven in a more traditional Spanish style with flurries of partridges appearing with little notice and passing the Guns at impressive speed making for challenging shooting. Hearing the drive unfold was as exciting as ever, and as the shooting increased, so did the enthusiasm of the beating team. The hollers and whistles of the locals move closer as the drive progresses until the point at which all the game has been shown and the drive naturally came to an end with hot barrels all around.



It was all smiles as the Guns made their way from their individual stands to discuss the excitement of the drive; it was evident that the team enjoyed shooting this fantastic style of shooting less common in the UK.

At circa 1300hrs it was now time for lunch and as intended, the non-shooting guests arrived perfectly on time at the lunch location which consisted of a beautifully laid table strategically positioned in the shade of two stunning trees.

Following an exceptional morning, both the food and conversation was ample with the non-shooting guests who enjoyed exploring the Toledo culture and were no doubt surprised by the impressiveness of the extensive Cathedral.

Following lunch, the final two drives were shot and again showed the full line a beautiful variety of birds presenting some challenging shooting made increasingly difficult by the strong wind which had significantly picked up and resulted in a shot ratio of 6.1 shots per partridge.

After the fourth and last drive, the guests regrouped for a final time and reminisced over the fantastically sporting day we had all been fortunate enough to enjoy.

On returning to the lodge, the traditional display of game was laid out in front of the Estate house. This was a most impressive sight and one that everyone thoroughly enjoyed in the most respectful way possible.

Due to the clients’ onward travel requirements, a quick debrief from the Estate was given over a final drink before guests loaded into the three vehicles to head to their final destinations.

As ever, the team had an exceptionally enjoyable time shooting in Spain and showed a strong interest in returning for a possible day next season.

Recently, we have seen a huge spike in demand for shooting overseas, most noticeably from teams looking to shoot in Spain both this season and next, which is undoubtedly caused by the huge challenges that we are currently facing in the UK in relation to price increases and the undeniable problem that is bird flu.

As a result, we therefore, expect availability in Spain to become more limited than in previous seasons and would urge anyone interested in Spain, as either a single gun or full team, not to hesitate in contacting one of the William Powell Sporting team by either emailing us on sporting@williampowellsporting.co.uk or calling us on 01295 661033.



SCAN OR CLICK
HERE TO FIND
OUT MORE

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR HOUSES TO RENT?

Written by: Mark Osborne

Sadly, there are only a few of us around who can remember what the let housing market was like prior to Mrs Thatcher and the 1980 Housing Act. I can tell you that it was horrendous! Before this act and due to the incompetence of the Labour Government believing that all residential Landlords were Rackmans and Tenants were much better off with no availability to rent, as well as the weakness of successive Conservative Governments, it was almost impossible (other than in respect of Council Houses), for any prospective Tenant to find a house to rent. Mrs Thatcher recognising this met with complete opposition from the Labour Party (and I seem to remember the Liberals as well), but somehow the 1980 Housing Act was passed. This allowed, providing the Landlords stuck rigidly to the prescribed format, houses, flats, etc., to be let; willing Landlords could let to willing Tenants homes for them to rent. What could be wrong with that? As a result, for the last 42 years, an awful lot of people have benefited both as Landlords and as Tenants from this flexibility.

Fast forward to recent times and Boris' Government decided that this was unfair on Tenants and wanted to emulate Scotland where Nicola Sturgeon has already made the house letting market virtually impossible (and as a result it has almost dried up in respect of new lets). The Architect for this bizarre suggestion from a Conservative (at least in theory) Government is believed to be Michael Gove from his first term as Secretary of State of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, when he published his White Paper, 'A fairer private rented sector' in June 2022. He is now in his second term as Secretary of State, after the confusion of Truss' short sojourn as PM. In Gove's White Paper, he sets out his plan to "fundamentally reform the Private Rented Sector", by abolishing Section 21 'no fault' evictions, reform grounds for possession, make it illegal for Landlords to ban who they want to live in their property (including pets), only allow increases in rent once per year, end the use of rent review clauses, and improve the tenants' ability to challenge excessive rent increases through the First Tier Tribunal.

If that is what a Conservative Government comes up with, heaven help us!

We do not yet know what Rishi Sunak proposes in respect of this particular subject, but it would be an absolute disaster for both Landlords and Tenants if this as proposed actually occurred. It shows that however bright (some) Politicians are (and Gove is meant to be one of the brighter ones), they have little or no understanding of the marketplace, what drives investors/owners on and what really works. There might well be room for some limited improvements to the Act, but wholesale reform a la Scotland? If so, this will end up with more Airbnb's, less houses to let (who benefits then?), and many of the middle classes' pensions becoming a whole lot worse than before.

We have lived through some extraordinary times recently, which have given none of us much confidence in our political masters. If the Conservatives do as Mr Gove seems to be suggesting, then I suspect many people owning houses to let, will be seeking a new political home at the next election.



Living with Avian Influenza

Another challenging season has approached the game shooting sector with the presence of avian influenza (AI). Following on from a year of COVID-19, this outbreak has prevented many shoots from going ahead for the second year in a row. This has not only affected game shooting through a lack of gamebirds released, but also isolated cases of AI within released pheasants has prevented some driven days from going ahead. In addition to the social and economic cost to shoots, we know that those which follow GWCT Guidelines for Sustainable Releasing contribute a vital biodiversity net gain in the countryside and so a reduction in game management will inevitably have a negative effect on wildlife. This knock-on effect also damages local rural economies by reducing the number of shooting parties attending pubs, service stations, village shops and hotels.

On a positive note, the collaboration of the shooting organisations under the banner of "Aim to Sustain" has combined the knowledge across the organisations to produce advice on AI for shoots that are still operating is hugely welcome. It is more important than ever that the game shooting community follows the advice on biosecurity and makes every effort to reduce the spread of AI.

The A2S guidance can be found at: gwct.org.uk/advisory/avian-influenza-q-a



New guide to managing woodland for game

If you are not shooting this season, it is a perfect time to undertake habitat management in the woods. This year, GWCT published a new updated edition of its popular "Green Guide" titled, Woodlands for Pheasants and Wildlife, which contains invaluable information on managing woods to hold gamebirds, help drives to run smoothly and benefit a whole host of wildlife in the process.

One key management technique which is desperately needed in many woodlands I visit is ride management. Many rides are far too narrow, which reduces wildlife, makes standing Gun lines difficult and hinders deer stalking. To manage your woodlands, you need to make a plan of what, where and when to fell. Empty pheasant release pens are the perfect place to start. Felling larger trees allows light to penetrate the woodland floor, encourages understorey growth and increases the variety of habitat. Increasing the ground and middle-storey cover will give poults access to roosting areas at a young age along with escape cover to hide from predators.

To purchase 'Woodland for Pheasants and Wildlife' and learn more about managing your woodlands, visit: gwctshop.org.uk.





RIPARIAN PREDATORS

WRITTEN BY: SANDY MCINTOSH, GHILLIE AT KINKELL, RIVER EARN

How Salmon are faring in our rivers is a very topical subject currently, but just what are their on-shore predators?



SAWBILL DUCKS

Mergansers and Goosanders are to be found in considerable numbers throughout the River Earn system. They feed extensively and exclusively on the fry and juveniles of salmon, sea-trout, brown trout and grayling. Once they were very rare but since their increasing numbers have been given protection by Government bodies they have multiplied enormously. As a concession, permission is granted to cull a ridiculously small number of these predators, but this has only a negligible benefit in controlling their expansion.

They are highly successful predators. They frequently produce clutches of up to a dozen juveniles, and because the female parent is a very vigilant and protective guardian, these clutches frequently achieve adulthood with negligible losses. Mrs Mallard on the other hand often produces eight or nine chicks, of which frequently, only two or three achieve adulthood.

On examination of a number of dead adult birds I have found in recent years, their stomachs are found to contain the maximum of juvenile salmonoids, “just like a John West sardine tin”.

CORMORANTS

Cormorants are sea-birds which have adopted a freshwater environment as a preferred option to starving in the estuaries of our rivers. They possess a voracious appetite and will take juvenile salmonoids and adult grilse, sea-trout, finnock, brown trout and grayling up to 3lbs in weight. They hunt by swimming underwater to intercept their prey and can do this at great speed. Large numbers of these birds appear as autumn commences and they are present throughout the winter and into the Spring before they return to their marine environment.

However, nowadays, some colonies of these birds are now resident in fresh water throughout the year and Loch Earn hosts a number of such colonies. Typically, it is permissible to shoot only a very small number of these birds under a licence. However, once again, this has very little impact on their populations and the subsequent damage they do to depleting fish stocks.

Cormorants are particularly destructive during a period of cold frosty weather in winter when ponds and fisheries, where they find fishing particularly rewarding, are frozen over and as a result it is impractical for them to fish there. They then revert to raid sections of the river which are unlikely to have frozen. In the bitter cold winter of 2010-11, their activities in the Earn resulted in the loss of all piscine juveniles.

OTTERS

Otters take salmon, sea-trout, brown trout, and grayling and indeed any other edible creature which comes their way. They are a particular nuisance when migratory fish are spawning, exhibiting a preference for the hen fish when they are full of roe.

Such fish are a small minority of the available stock and a most precious minority at that.

In past times, otters would feed on eels as their staple diet; however, with the near disappearance of eels from freshwater otters are more catholic in their tastes nowadays. Otters do cause problems, but their numbers are few. Moreover, they are allies against mink which are a more lethal threat to fish stocks. An otter will pursue a mink, kill it and eat it if he can.

BEAVERS

Although beavers do not predate on our fish stocks directly, their presence and activities cause considerable problems for fishing (as well as agricultural) interests. The felling of perfectly healthy trees, which protect the integrity of the banks and have been planted for that purpose, but which also supply shade and a source of insects which nourish piscine juveniles, is very regrettable. Beavers form their ‘lodges’ by excavating through ancient man-made flood bankings which results in the constant loss of arable ground and the re-alignment of the river courses. Some of our pools have already been altered for the worse by their activities and their felling activities requires plenty of activity, tidying up their destructive trends with a chainsaw.

Beavers are now present in number on the Machany Burn, a prime spawning burn, now de-graded. Where they have created dams across the burn in areas where salmon formerly spawned on gravelly areas, such locations are no longer fit for spawning.

We utterly reject that the activities of beavers in this area mitigates flooding in any way, instead judge that their presence is negative and destructive to both other wildlife and the river environment generally. They might look cuddly, but they are incredibly harmful to the river environment.

MINK

Mink are a serious threat to fish stocks in the Earn and have been since about 1960 when some well-intentioned but idiotic animal-rights saboteurs “liberated” the inhabitants of a commercial mink farm at Dalchonzie on the Upper Earn. It would be impossible to calculate the damage and mortality caused by the descendants of these liberated mink over the intervening sixty years. They are a threat to all Fur, Fin and Feather.

However, as previously mentioned, they are pursued by the otter as well as many shooting and sporting interests in this area, who are anxious to cull them. They are shot and trapped extensively, and as a result, they are thankfully few in number.

DOLPHINS

Dolphins restrict their activities to the estuaries of rivers. However, there are now substantial pods of dolphins residing throughout the year on every large east coast river estuary in Scotland. Depending on their size, a dolphin requires between 5-15 kilos of food per day to fund its energy requirements. This does not include the fish that they damage by playing with them, tossing them around like a rugby ball for the amusement of the Chris Packhams of this world. 5-15 kilos, 365 days a year, 20-30 dolphins per estuary, you can do the maths!

I have had to apologise to anglers who have come to fish our pool, for the presence of seals within them.

SEALS

To the surprise of many, seals do not respect their preference to feast on salmon flesh to the estuarial areas of the Tay and Earn but will follow the runs of migratory salmon up river (as far as Kinkell Bridge) in order to prey on them.

In former times, should a seal be found in freshwater one might shoot it with impunity. It was also acceptable that the operators of commercial salmon netting stations might dispose of seals if they were deemed to be interfering with the netsman’s ability to operate.

Nowadays, seals swim up the sixteen miles from salt water to gorge themselves on spawning salmon performing on the gravel at Kinkell Bridge. They will also ambush fish at any stage of this journey, and I have had to apologise to anglers who have come to fish our pool, for the presence of seals within them, attacking fish through the months of September and October. Clearly, this causes major problems and with seal numbers increasing, the damage they do is likely to increase as well.

OSPREYS

Ospreys usually return from their annual sojourn in Africa towards the end of March. There are some nine osprey nests in the vicinity of Kinkell. Although they will take fish up to a good size (grilse and sea-trout to 3-4lbs), they usually confine their activities to visiting stocked ponds and small fisheries where the fishing is easier, much to the annoyance of their operators.

They are significant predators but stunning with it.

THE MARINE LAMPREY

Thankfully, these creatures are very rare. They are a primitive cartilaginous being of prehistoric appearance, approximately a metre long and as thick as a man’s arm. They possess seven gill slits on either flank and instead of a mouth, a sucker with inward pointing, rasping, teeth. For a better description, I suggest that you might read Henry Williamson’s description in “Salar the Salmon”.

They are unpopular with fishermen as, when they migrate, mimicking the journey of the salmon to the same area of the river when salmon spawn themselves, typically in June or July, they hitch a ride on the side or belly of a salmon until they arrive at their destination. In the meantime, they suck the blood and goodness from their host before dropping off.

They are regarded as an indicator of a clear and pure river and do not tolerate a poor environment. In the past they were gaffed out as enemies of salmon. This was achieved as they are extremely vulnerable in the period just prior to spawning when they crate their spawning bed. I have witnessed them only on a few occasions over the last 22 years here on the Earn.

AMERICAN SIGNAL CRAYFISH

These creatures were inadvertently and carefully released into the River Earn near a trout hatchery some fifteen years ago. Those who were responsible for this carelessness should have been shot! This creature is alien to the UK, much bigger and more destructive than the native crayfish. It burrows into soft riverbanks, honeycombs and collapses them, but even more unfortunately, it feeds on fertilised salmon eggs, burrowing into the ground containing the eggs and feasting on them. There is no evidence to date that they have migrated as far downstream as Kinkell and that is pleasing. It is possible that the rocky nature of the riverbed immediately above Kinkell and continuing downstream to the Tippeny pool has proved an impossible barrier to these invaders. Let’s hope so.



Who's who?

We have many different members of staff, all specialising in their own fields.

Over the next few issues we will introduce you to several key figures within JM Osborne Rural & Sporting and William Powell Sporting teams.

In this issue, we introduce you to four members of the team who you are most likely to have initial contact with, all of whom play key roles in both JM Osborne Rural & Sporting and William Powell Sporting.



Mark Osborne FRICS, FAAV, MBAE

Mark Osborne is founder and Managing Director of JM Osborne Rural & Sporting and has been a qualified Chartered Surveyor and Land Agent for over 40 years.

Mark specialises in complex Rural Professional and Sporting related work, often providing expert witness advice to clients throughout the country. Mark is a Fellow of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, a Fellow of the Central Association of Agricultural Valuers and a Member of the British Academy of Expert Witnesses.



Will Southall BA (Hons), MSc

Will's involvement in both the JM Osborne Rural and Sporting and William Powell Sporting businesses provides him with a unique knowledge of rural land management systems on Sporting and non-Sporting Estates allowing him to provide bespoke advice to a wide range of clients who require advice and assistance in the management of their property.



Will Robinson BSc (Hons), MSc

Will specialises in holistic Rural and Sporting Property Management for private clients as well as BPS, HLS and other grant scheme work.

His expertise in fully integrated Estate management systems allows him to offer clients bespoke advice in the management of their Estates and properties.



Oliver Severn BSc (Hons)

Ollie is primarily involved with the running and development of our sporting agency, William Powell Sporting. Ollie prides himself on building and maintaining long term relationships with shoots and clients across the country, as well as providing clients with some of the most sought-after sporting experiences around the globe, regularly taking teams abroad to locations such as Argentina, South Africa and Spain.

EASING THE BURDEN OF LICENSE ACQUISITION

Written by: Michael Brown

Species and habitat licensing are fast becoming one of the most crucial aspects of Sporting Estate Management, which will be exacerbated in Scotland as Grouse Moor Licensing looms. At JM Osborne Rural and Sporting we are very familiar with licensing processes in both England and Scotland and can help clients successfully apply for a variety of Licences.

Individual Licences to control predatory species such as Ravens and Gulls require a great deal of evidence to be granted, meaning that data collection must begin long before the submission of any application. Evidence is recorded via a variety of methods, from written diarised predation records to photographic and video evidence. We have an understanding of the requirements of both NatureScot and Natural England when completing a Licence application and so can help our clients to streamline the data collection process and record only the key data whilst advising what further steps may be required.

Following data collection, we review evidence with clients and will submit an application on their behalf should we agree it appropriate. With the application successfully submitted, we work with the relevant licensing body until a decision is reached. Should the licence be granted, it is important the Licence holder (be this an Estate, farm or individual) complete the relevant notifications that may be required under the conditions of the Licence, before authorising "Agents" such as Gamekeepers to work under the Licence, ensuring they do not breach the conditions. The final stage of the process is to then complete the necessary return paperwork before the deadline, which we can complete too.

In addition to species licensing, we have previously worked on a number of Applications to Burn on Deep Peat following the recent restrictions on this in England. With members of the team having helped write the prescriptions with DEFRA and completed training in the application process, we are able to work with Estates to design comprehensive management plans and applications for clients following on-site consultation.

It is our view that we must fully engage with the licensing framework in both Scotland and England and lead the way in helping to shape the future of the Licences, which are so relevant to the operation of rural Estates and their businesses.

If you would like to discuss the possibility of an application for an individual species or habitat Licence, please do not hesitate to contact **Michael Brown** in the JM Osborne Rural & Sporting team on **01295 277197**.

Species and habitat licensing are fast becoming one of the most crucial aspects of Sporting Estate Management.



THE GREAT CARTRIDGE DEBATE!

Perhaps the confusion (or indeed chaos) surrounding game cartridges at the current time is only mirrored by the extraordinary events of our Government in recent months. Sadly, we do not think that the cartridge market is necessarily going to get much better in terms of choice and availability of cartridges going forwards.

The intention of our main shooting and land-owning organisations back in 2020 was to phase out lead shot cartridges within five years. This was always going to be optimistic. To be fair to those bodies and whilst their communication to the Game Shooting world was initially awful, they were under considerable pressure from Government to “do something” to get rid of lead shot in Game, a food product. What has now interceded and in a very dramatic way, are two events: the war in Ukraine and the worldwide supply chain problems. Game cartridges use some of the materials, particularly powder as used by the Military. The fact that most of the powders suitable for propelling steel shot cartridges come from the United States as well as the preparations the United States has been making both in respect of the Ukraine war and possible trouble in Taiwan, means that there are currently real supply problems for cartridge components. This means that no cartridge manufacturer has been able in say the last 18 months to make the cartridges that they have wanted to. If you add into this equation, that one of the main sources of the “steel” cartridge heads was Maripole in the Ukraine (remember the siege?) and then add to this the very significant worldwide shortage of plastic cartridge cases, the perfect storm has arrived. No-one ever thought that Avian Flu and its ramifications would be of benefit, but in this very limited way, the fact that the larger Game Dealers having originally said that they would only take in game shot with non-toxic cartridges after 1st July 2022, now means that this policy has had to be dramatically reversed, because of a real shortage of dead game, how so ever it was shot. As a result, lead cartridges

have sold pretty well this season, while non-toxic loads have been slow to leave the shelves with only a limited number of shoots currently insisting on their use. That said, a good number of Guns have been trialling different steel and non-toxic loads, to see what suits them best as a replacement for lead when a ban in some form does come in.

Where does this take us going forward?

We do not believe that there is going to be the availability of steel cartridges in particular, to realistically replace lead cartridges for game shooting until probably 2025. This is also likely to be the case with Bismuth for use in older English guns. In other words, and whilst we will see more non-toxic cartridges being used for the 2023 and 2024 Game seasons, lead cartridges will still be available and used, and if they weren't, we would be in dire trouble sourcing enough game cartridges! It is interesting to note that at the current time, the price of steel shot is higher than that of lead; realistically we are all going to have to accept that the days of cheap cartridges have gone, and we do not think they will return.

Our advice to our customers is to continue to use lead cartridges where they are able (largely as dictated by the Game Dealers who collect from that particular Shoot) and we suspect that you will probably be able to do so for the next year or may be two. We would not advise anyone to buy large quantities of lead shot cartridges, because the situation could change quite quickly, for instance if and when the Ukraine war ends, and the worldwide supply chain problems become resolved. We do however think that most Game Shots should be seriously thinking about trying out some non-toxic cartridges, definitely for next season, given that they will probably have to use at least some non-toxic cartridges for the 2024 season and almost certainly beyond. However, whether there will be sufficient non-toxic cartridges available for the game market by then is anyone's guess. Interesting times indeed!

A good number of Guns have been trialling different steel and non-toxic loads



Have you read...

**STEEL SHOT & THE
ALTERNATIVES TO LEAD**

READ OR DOWNLOAD OUR FULL DOCUMENT

