

BLACK GROUSE (*Tetrao tetrix*) SPECIES STATEMENT

1. Introduction

1.1 Black grouse require a mosaic of habitats including heather, trees, damp grassland and meadows with wet flushes. They are dependant on the suitable management of the moorland /woodland edge in Scotland and Wales and the moorland/ farmland fringe in Northern England. Black grouse also utilize young conifer plantations and clear felled areas with well-developed field and shrub layers that include rushes, cotton-grass, heather and bilberry. Mature plantations with widely spaced trees also support suitable ground vegetation and can be important for the species.

2. Current status

2.1 National

The UK black grouse population is in serious decline and declined in range by 28% between 1968-72 and 1988-91 and in number by 75%. The most recent population estimate (1996) is 6501 lekking males compared with an estimate of 25,000 in 1990. The black grouse is a 'red list' species of high conservation concern and a priority for the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The species is protected under the Game Acts, Annex II/2 of the EC Habitats Directive, and Appendix III of the Berne Convention.

2.2 Local

The North Pennines represents the stronghold for this species in England. The Otterburn Training Area (OTA) holds a significant part of the England population and by far the largest numbers in the National Park. The OTA is one of a series of sites included in the North Pennines Black Grouse Recovery Project involving RSPB, Game Conservancy Trust, MOD, English Nature and Northumbrian Water, which commenced in 1996. As part of the project population numbers are monitored using spring lek counts. The English population was estimated at 800 males in 1998 and a repeat survey in 2002 estimated the population at 850 males. The core population is found in the North Pennines with an increasingly isolated population in the Northumberland National Park. This population was estimated at 105 males in 2002 with 72 of these found on the OTA.

OTA Black Grouse Population estimated from Spring Lek Counts (includes females).

Year	Population Estimate
1998	82
1999	86
2000	102
2001	No count due to Foot and Mouth
2002	130

The map attached shows the distribution of leks in Northumberland (this includes areas both within and outside the National Park). Outside the OTA the population levels in the rest of the National Park are low and declining with scattered leks of only one or two birds in the Cheviots.

3. Current factors causing decline

Factors causing the decline of the black grouse in the National Park are common to the UK as a whole - see UK Plan on www.ukbap.org.uk/bird.htm

4. Current action

See UK Plan – many of the actions set out in the UK Plan are also being implemented in the National Park. Local Actions linked to these are set out below. More information can also be found on the UK black grouse website: <http://www.blackgrouse.info>

- 4.1 Management measures to regenerate woodland and reduce grazing are being implemented within the National Park throughout the North Cheviots and the OTA. The level of predator control is more variable depending on the level of keeping on individual estates.
- 4.2 Forest management at Threestoneburn, Harwood, Stewardshiels and Wooler Common has been implemented with the aim of enhancing habitat for Black Grouse. Minor amendments have been made to Forest Design Plans (FDP) at Redesdale where leks have been found following felling and black grouse has been considered in the FDPs for Kidland, Harwood and Threestoneburn and in the Long Term Forest Plans (LTFP) for Kidlandlee and Whiteburn woods and College Valley Estate.
- 4.3 Challenge funding for new native woodland creation and normal WGS funding from the Forestry Commission has resulted in a significant expansion in the area of native woodland in the National Park. Black grouse has been a major consideration in selecting woodland types and in designing these woodlands. Fences have been marked in a number of places to avoid loss of black grouse through collisions.
- 4.4 Collaborative recovery projects have been developed and implemented by a range of organizations in the North Pennines, the North Cheviots and Cross Border.

5. Action plan objectives and targets

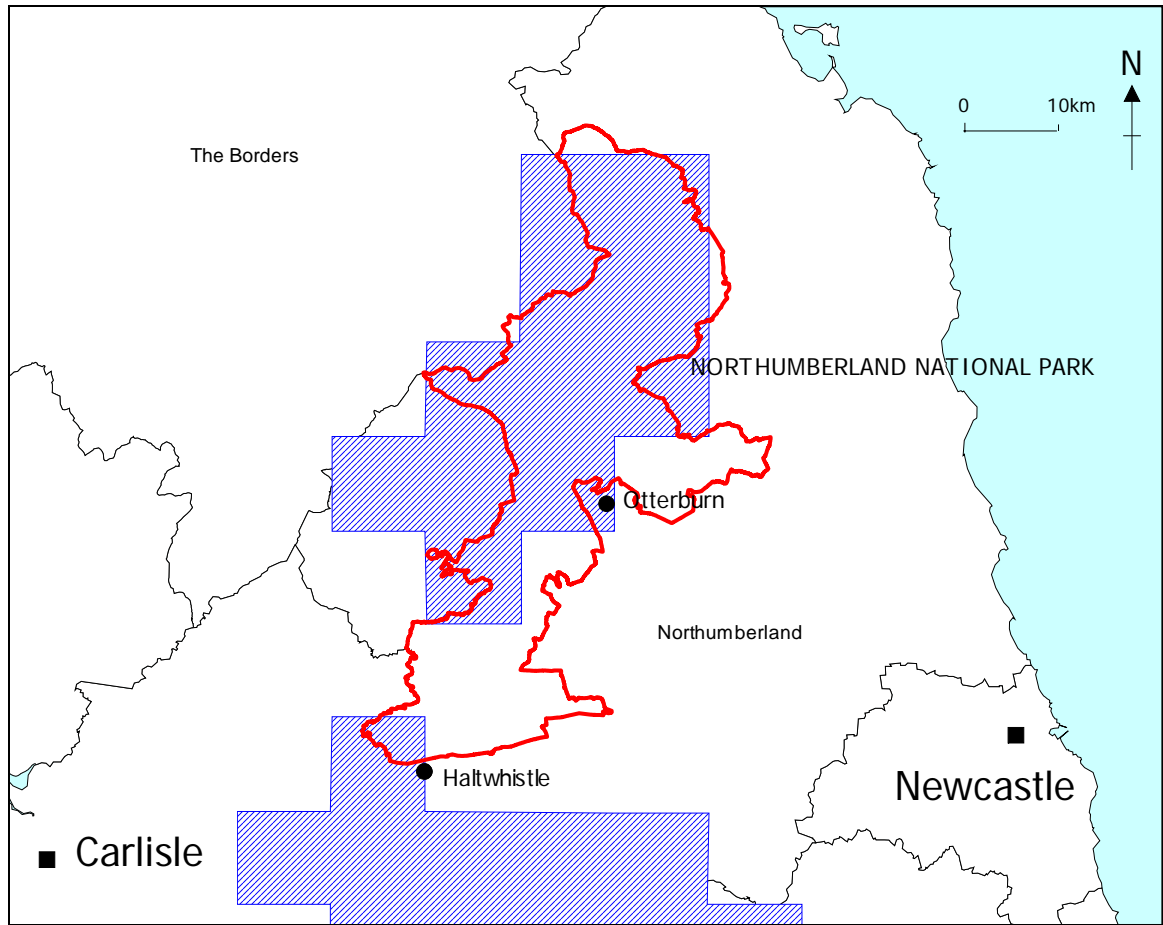
See UK plan, objectives and targets in the National Park are common with those set nationally.

It is the aim in the NNP to stabilize numbers at 1996 levels and then link the OTA populations with those in the North Pennines and isolated Cheviot birds.

6. Proposed action with lead agencies

See English Black Grouse BAP work programme which includes highlighted actions for NNP.

Distribution of displaying male black grouse in Northumberland in 2002 (presence within 10km²).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Countryside Stewardship special project for black grouse, including provision for rotational grazing, alternative winter feeding, restoration of land damaged by drainage and reseeded. • Identify factors preventing farmers entering agri-environment schemes for black grouse 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>EN,GCT,DEFRA, RSPB YDNP NNP</p> <p>GCT (PW) DEFRA</p>	<p>Achieved</p>
<p>5.1.3 Seek policies which ensure protection of key black grouse habitats, and identify and target positive opportunities for expanding such habitats (e.g. through Forest Design Plans).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Parks Identify key sites within Yorkshire Dales, Northumberland and encourage park authorities to draw up plans for site protection and habitat management. • Major landowners Seek enhancement of habitats within large private estates, including those owned by Ministry of Defence, RSPB and statutory conservation agencies • Forests and woodlands Within key black grouse management zones (as identified by GCT-held GIS) ensure that:- i) Forest Design Plans and forest management practice take into account black grouse needs (Includes size, location, timing, continuity and 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Yorkshire Dales (TT) Northumberland (ER) GCT (PW)</p> <p>GCT (PW) EN (JB) RSPB (KB)</p> <p>FC</p>	<p>Achieved (see note 2)</p> <p>Ongoing. 5yr management plans put in place for all MOD holdings.</p> <p>To be agreed</p>

5.13 (cont)	<p>management of permanent and temporary open space, diversification of forest edges, predator control, zoning of recreation use, liaison with neighbours)</p> <p>ii) Deforestation proposals for UKBAP benefits take into account needs of black grouse (includes stage removal to maintain woodland shelter, improvement of retained areas by respacing and thinning, replacement in suitable areas with black grouse woodland to the agreed specification, planning to minimise operational disturbance and monitoring of black grouse responses)</p> <p>iii) Opportunities for creating black grouse woodland to the agreed specification are promoted and taken in appropriate areas, especially remnant gill woodland (includes minimal use of temporary deer fencing and marking of all fences where necessary)</p> <p>iv) Key black grouse management zones will be included within FC's internal GIS to ensure that advice on all planting, tree felling and forest management proposals is sought and do not compromise black grouse conservation.</p> <p>v) All the above is eligible for FC grant, advice and support with special measures within key black grouse management zones.</p>			<p>To be agreed</p> <p>To be agreed</p> <p>To be agreed</p> <p>To be agreed</p>
5.1.4 Encourage and support habitat management for black grouse in woodland and open land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that information on known distribution and management prescriptions and availability of expertise in black grouse management are 	1	GCT (PW)	Ongoing

in public and private ownership, including relevant species and habitat action plans, native woodland management plans and forest design plans (the latter to be extended to the private sector as long-term forest plans).	available to FC/FE staff, private forestry advisers and to agricultural advisers (DEFRA/FWAG) [See 5.5.1]			
5.1.5 Develop the Woodland Grant Scheme to encourage the favourable management of black grouse habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare policy statement on fences and wires • Advocate removal or marking of deer and stock fences consistent with work underway by the Capercaillie BAP SG. (see also 5.5.5) • Identify changes to WGS based on current experience, especially during WGS reviews • Ensure that grants available are promoted to all forestry managers 	1	GCT (PW)	Completed (see note 4).
		1	EN, FC,GCT, RSPB FC, DEFRA	Ongoing
		2	FC,EN GCT (PW)	Ongoing
		2	FC	Ongoing
Site Safeguard and management				
5.2.1 Consider notifying areas with high densities of breeding black grouse and with important lek sites and feeding areas as SSSIs, and negotiate positive Management agreements to secure favourable site management where necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify proportion of population within SSSIs and population strongholds which are not designated. • Identify number of management agreements in place. • Increase SSSI designations and management agreements, so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at least 50% of the population in each country is 	1	GCT (PW)	Completed
		1	EN(JB)	Ongoing
		1	EN (JB)	To be revised

	<p>within SSSIs.</p> <p>- management agreements cover at least 75% of designated sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review conservation objectives to ensure they take account of the needs of black grouse. 	1	EN (JB) GCT (PW)	Completed. Paper produced
5.2.2 Safeguard important black grouse habitat from inappropriate development, through the planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that new and replanted forestry within black grouse range meets the species needs, using experience of partner organisations in planning. Ensure that specific distribution information is available to Local Authorities and biological record centres and encourage LBAPs to ensure that local population is not threatened by development. 	1 2	FC, GCT, RSPB GCT (PW) Local Authorities DBAP (KB)	Ongoing Completed
5.2.3 Where possible, ensure favourable management of moorland and native woodland for the benefit of the black grouse.	see 5.4.2			
Species Management and protection				
5.3.1 Promote and support the wise use of black grouse populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine current levels of shooting and likely impact on population. Produce advice on assessing sustainable harvesting and wise use of black grouse if conditions allow. Disseminate widely. 	3 3	GCT (DB) GCT (DB) to produce GCT, NGO, MA to distribute	Ongoing Completed

<p>5.3.2 Ensure the protection of important or isolated lek sites from human disturbance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update <i>Birdwatchers Code of Conduct</i> and promote through birding media, nature reserves etc. • Identify potential sites for managed viewing of black grouse and develop in conjunction with landowners and birding media. 	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>RSPB(JH)to revise. BAP partners to promote.</p> <p>RSPB (JH), MA(JM) NGO (LW)</p>	<p>Completed (See Note 6)</p>
<p>Advisory</p>				
<p>5.4.1 Review guidance on management for the black grouse in Britain, and develop the UK Forestry Standard and associated guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce and promote advisory handbook. • Produce and disseminate widely summary leaflet of habitat measures/prescriptions • Ensure that black grouse prescriptions are incorporated into future editions of Muirburn Code and similar publications 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>GCT (DB) to produce. Partners to promote</p> <p>RSPB (JH) to produce. Partners to promote.</p> <p>EN (JB)</p>	<p>Publish in Winter 2002/03.</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>5.4.2 Advise landowners and managers of the presence and importance of the black grouse, and specific management for its conservation, and update that advice in the light of new policies and research findings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain targeted recovery projects in Northern England • Ensure that research and practical experience is used to update best-practice advice, muirburn codes, deer fencing guidance etc 	<p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>EN, GCT, RSPB, NW, MoD</p> <p>GCT(DB/PW) RSPB (JH)</p>	<p>Achieved until 2006</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>5.4.3 As far as possible, ensure that all agri-environment and forestry advisers are advised of locations of this species,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training needs and ensure that Recovery Project officers organise at least two training days for advisers each year. 	<p>1</p>	<p>GCT (PW)</p>	<p>Ongoing (See Note 5)</p>

management requirements and potential threats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate advisory material and newsletters through organisational channels. 	1	All BAP partners	Ongoing
Research and Monitoring				
5.5.1 Ensure the continuation of a collaborative population monitoring programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather existing regional trend data in consistent format. 	1	GCT(DB) DBAP (KB) NNP (ER) YDNP (TT)	Achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every four years total summary of leks 	1	GCT (DB/PW)	2006
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide contact point for accessing information. 	1	GCT(PW)	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinate UK black grouse survey, planned under SCARRABS. 	3	EN,GCT,RSPB	2005/2006
5.5.2 and 5.5.3 (Research)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise research needs for black grouse Causes of poor breeding success The roles of habitat management and trapping in reducing predation rates The spatial requirements of successful breeding in relation to grazing management Factors associated with dispersal rates and distances including genetics studies Translocation: its use as a conservation tool in range expansion 	1 1 1 1 1 1	GCT (DB)	Ongoing
5.5.4 Monitor the effectiveness of measures introduced to increase or restore black grouse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and analyse effectiveness of habitat changes under agri-environment schemes work in North Pennines 	1	GCT (PW/DB)	Completed

populations,including agri-environment prescriptions and forest management by FE.				
Communications and Publicity				
5.6.1 As appropriate, use the black grouse to illustrate the issue of sustainable agricultural, sporting and forestry management in the uplands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise the profile of black grouse and conservation efforts among general public and specialist audiences (e.g. agricultural/ forestry colleges) 	1	All BAP partners	Ongoing
5.6.2 Promote literature and other information sources detailing management measures to enhance black grouse populations, as further information from research work becomes available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce annual newsletter for widespread promotion to landowners, LBAPs etc • Produce annual BAP newsletter (in autumn) and promote to landowners/ managers, with regional points of contact outside recovery project areas. • Place articles in magazines such as those of National Sheep Association, National Farmers Union, Forestry Commission etc. 	1	GCT (PW)	Annually.
5.6.2 Continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage partner organisations and advisory agencies to carry information at appropriate farming/county shows etc. • Ensure that black grouse information is produced for partners' and JNCC websites. 	1	RSPB (JH) / GCT (DB) to produce	Annually from 2001
		1	GCT, RSPB, FC, NFU, TGA	Ongoing
		1	All BAP partners	Ongoing
		2	All BAP Partners	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider (with caper BAP SG) developing a dedicated joint website. 	3	GCT (DB) to discuss with caper SG	
Links with other Plans				
5.7.1 Establish and maintain links with appropriate UK Habitat and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local BAPs Identify regional contact points for LBAPs to obtain local information on black grouse. 	1	DBAP (KB) GCT (PW)	Completed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BAP Habitat Plans - Ensure that key black grouse requirements are incorporated into implementation of appropriate upland plans. 	1	GCT (DB) RSPB (JH) EN (JB)	Ongoing

Notes

1. Relevant papers 'in press' and submitted:

Baines D., Blake K. & Calladine J. (2001) Reversing the decline: a review of black grouse conservation projects in the United Kingdom. *Cahiers d'Ethologie*

Baines D., Warren P. & Calladine J. (2002) Spatial and temporal differences in the abundance of black grouse and other moorland birds in relation to reductions in sheep grazing. *Aspects of Applied Biology* 67.

Calladine J., Baines D. & Warren P. (2002) Effects of reduced grazing on population density and breeding success of black grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in northern England. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 39 volume 5.

Calladine J., Baines D. & Warren P. (2001) Restoration of moorland habitat in northern England: a conservation initiative for black grouse. *Cahiers d'Ethologie*

Warren P. & Baines D. (2002) Dispersal, survival and causes of mortality in black grouse *Tetrao tetrix* in northern England. *Wildlife Biology* 8 pp91-97.

2. For Yorkshire Dales National Park:

Court, I., Garrett, G., Shepherd, A., Swain, J. & Thom, T.J. (2001) The mapping of core black grouse zones in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the area within these zones covered by agri-environment schemes. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Grassington.

For all northern England:

Data held by North Pennines Black Grouse Recovery Project, dissemination strategy still being developed (see minutes of 3rd group meeting). In the meantime, contact Philip Warren.

3. Trial upland arable plots at RSPB Geltsdale and MODs Otterburn Training Area to promote the value of upland arable for inclusion within the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. CS special project for cutting/ grazing trials in 2003.
4. Leaflets on guidelines for 'Woodland planting for black grouse in upland northern England' and 'Fence collisions and marking' published in October 2002 and available free of charge from Phil Warren.
5. Two black grouse training days held in September 2002.
6. Leaflet on Black Grouse and Capercaillie ' A bidwatchers' code of conduct' published spring 2003, available from RSPB.

