

GWCT launches free online Shoot Biodiversity Assessment tool to help shoots better understand their environmental impact

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A new free online tool, launched this week by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), could help shoots of all sizes better understand their impact on biodiversity and make improvements to boost wildlife and habitats.

The GWCT's biodiversity advisors already work with shoots across the country on 'shoot biodiversity assessments' but, says Dr Roger Draycott, GWCT Director of Advisory and Education:

"We wanted to help shoots to evaluate their contribution to biodiversity by creating a simple online tool, free and accessible to all, to encourage sector-wide change.

"Any shoot can use the tool to better understand the effect they are having on the land they shoot over and consider new ways in which they could make a positive contribution to biodiversity by tweaking some of their management."

The online assessment tool will ask a series of qualitative and quantitative questions around different aspects of game management, such as release densities, areas of release pen, area of woodland and different types of game cover, and questions about predation and pest control, and feeding regime. The resulting output will indicate the contribution to biodiversity conservation in different areas of game management on the user's individual shoot.

The assessment is designed around parameters based on GWCT research, including sustainable releasing guidelines and grey partridge sustainable harvest guidelines, and a shoot's contribution to the conservation of farmland birds and wild pollinators will be measured by benchmarking against the Countryside Stewardship Farmland Wildlife and Wild Pollinator package 'ask'.

Participating shoots will receive a 'traffic light' report highlighting the shoot's contribution to biodiversity conservation in different areas. A shoot which is 'green' in all categories is delivering on all fronts. Other shoots may be 'red' in some areas but amber or green in others. Shoots which receive amber or red indicators in some categories will be signposted to measures they can take to improve, such as training courses, further information or a visit by a GWCT advisor.

"Our aim is to get all shoots, small and large, to better understand how their management measures affect the wildlife on their land," continued Roger. "Where the assessment tool identifies negative impacts, we can advise and support shoot managers in making improvements, and help them recognise opportunities where the shoot could benefit species or habitat conservation by tweaking some management."

The tool was developed in collaboration with Perdix Wildlife Supplies. Dr Dave Butler, Director of Perdix commented: "Shoots have the potential to provide considerable benefits to wildlife within our landscapes. Now, with the help of this innovative assessment tool, users will be able to quickly and easily assess the environmental performance of their shoot and, where necessary, make changes to current practices to further increase biodiversity gain. We are pleased to add the GWCT Shoot Biodiversity Assessment tool to our PerdixPro platform where we are continually increasing the availability of digital tools for land and wildlife managers."

The online Shoot Biodiversity Assessment tool is available <https://gwct.perdixpro.com/>

Ends

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – providing research-led conservation for a thriving countryside. The GWCT is an independent wildlife conservation charity which has carried out scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife since the 1930s. We advise farmers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats. We employ 22 post-doctoral scientists and 50 other research staff with expertise in areas such as birds, insects, mammals, farming, fish and statistics. We undertake our own research as well as projects funded by contract and grant-aid from Government and private bodies.

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