“The game management community can do more to highlight the benefits of the sport for biodiversity,” believes new game and wildlife advisor

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“We must use scientific evidence to convey to the general public the increased benefit to flora and fauna that occurs when managing land for game well,” believes Alex Keeble, newly appointed Game and Wildlife Advisor at the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT). In his new role Alex, as a former gamekeeper, is well-placed to provide advice on game management, conservation and identifying biodiversity gain, based on the research produced by the GWCT’s team of 70 scientists.

“My aim is to use my previous experience as a full-time gamekeeper to positively engage with gamekeepers, land managers and farmers to promote the Code of Good Shooting Practice,” said Alex. “My role will include keeping estate staff up to date with regular training and updates on changes in legislation, along with offering advice on how improvements can be made to the shoot to benefit both game and wildlife.

“I believe having a wealth of first-hand experience will instil confidence that the advice I give has been proven to work in a modern gamekeeping environment,” continued Alex, “and I encourage discussions where all parties can voice their opinions and ideas.”

For shooting to have a strong future, Alex believes that wider engagement is also essential: “As a gamekeeper I have always tried to engage with the public and explain what I am doing and how it is benefitting wildlife. I think the game management community can do more to highlight the benefits of the sport and its positive by-products for bio-diversity.”

Having been introduced to shooting and fishing as a child in rural Suffolk, Alex gained experience through summer jobs and at just 17 was approached by a local farmer who asked him to take on the gamekeeping duties on his 900-acre pheasant shoot, all while still at school studying A levels.

Alex went on to a degree in Conservation and Environment at Writtle University College, which he believes gave him an ideal grounding for a career in game management, a role he regards as being “a custodian of biodiversity.” Student placements with the GWCT in gamebird ecology sowed the seeds of a long-term ambition to work for the Trust. Ten years as a full-time professional gamekeeper and deer-manager on estates in the Cotswolds and Chilterns followed. Alex joined the GWCT in March 2021.

Dr Roger Draycott, head of GWCT Advisory and Education, said: “We are delighted that land managers using our Advisory service will be able to benefit from Alex’s extensive on-the-ground experience,” said Dr Roger Draycott. “Alex has worked with us since he was a student and his commitment to research-based best practice game and wildlife management will make him a great advocate for the sector.”

Alex is keen to play a part in bringing the research that underpins the GWCT’s approach to a wider audience: gamekeepers and guns, and the general public. As Game and Wildlife Advisor for the GWCT in Central England he will carry out site visits, shoot surveys, attend game fairs and run training, as well as offering tailored advice to farmers, gamekeepers and land managers.

More information about the GWCT’s Advisory service can be found at gwct.org.uk/advisory

Notes to editors

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. The Trust is also responsible for several Government Biodiversity Action Plan species and is lead partner for grey partridge and joint lead partner for brown hare and black grouse.

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