

## “We need them now more than ever” – Rachel Carrie backs latest conservation campaign

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Environmental consultant, author and campaigner Rachel Carrie has given her support to the latest initiative from leading conservation charity, the Game & Wildlife Trust (GWCT).

Launched last week, the Trust's 500 Club is calling for 500 passionate conservationists, farmers, countryfolk or keen members of the public to join thousands of others in supporting their work as members.

Addressing those keen on the countryside, Ms Carrie said: *“Like many of you, for much longer than I have been passionate about shooting I have been passionate about wildlife and conservation. It was the time I spent outdoors as a child in nature learning about the rich tapestry of biodiversity that exists in the British countryside that eventually led me to join the shooting community. Shooting and wildlife conservation go hand in hand and it is impossible to care about one without caring deeply about the other - a reality unfortunately that the wider public become increasingly disconnected from with each generation, a message which becomes increasingly difficult to convey.”*

Rachel is not afraid to engage in debate about the countryside, having faced criticism from militant vegans and vegetarians who reported her game cookery photos to Instagram as being ‘sensitive’ and ‘graphic’. One of Britain's leading female game shots, last year Rachel decided to showcase just how wonderful sustainable game can be, with her best-selling cookbook, *Game & Gatherings*. After years of getting the message out there that eating game is good for the environment, for health and for the countryside, this resonated with people like never before.

Despite that success, the divide between those in favour of a managed landscape and those against it has come to the fore in recent years, with campaigning and legal challenges on the rise, most noticeably in claims against the use of general licences, led by TV presenter Chris Packham and his Wild Justice pressure group. This has caused concern to Rachel, who states *“The GWCT not only help us to monitor the species and habitats that we care so deeply for to secure them for future generations to enjoy they ensure that our investment and caretaking is evidenced with sound independent science, science that can relied upon whenever our community is unfairly challenged by those who misunderstand and therefore oppose shooting. This past month alone anti shooting activists Wild Justice have launched three new legal challenges against the shooting community, past challenges of this kind have always relied upon the GWCT to stand in our corner and lend their armoury of wildlife and habitat studies.”*

When challenged by dissenting voices, Yorkshire-based Rachel is always keen to turn to fact. As an active GWCT member for several years, she understands the need for robust science to inform decisions. *“Without the sound scientific research and evidence that the GWCT researchers provide our words are empty”,* she notes. *“As I have personally always found it is far deadlier to fight public misconception and emotion with science”.*

*“The truth is we need the GWCT now more than ever as much as they need us. They are undoubtedly the most critical of organisations and one I feel we simply couldn't survive without. We would be foolish to give up one of our biggest assets.”*

The GWCT has been encouraged with the initial response to their campaign. Those wishing to follow Rachel's lead can do so at [www.gwct.org.uk/500club](http://www.gwct.org.uk/500club).

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