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Sustainable shooting of wildfowl quarry species in the UK



How does EU action affect the UK?

- AEWA, The Birds Directive & Annex II
- EU Commission review
- UK-relevant context





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How does UK?

- AEWA, The E
- EU Commiss
- UK-relevant

Shooting of four duck species banned in Ireland



Felix Petit

September 13, 2023



Ireland's shooting organisations say that the ban was brought in with little engagement, while others complain that it does not go far enough, reports Felix Petit



Northern pintail is one of the species that has been removed from the quarry list

Four **duck species** – the greater scaup, common pochard, common goldeneye and northern pintail – have been removed from the list of legal quarry for the forthcoming shooting season in the Republic of Ireland.



Quarry species

A collage of 20 different bird species, primarily waterfowl and game birds, arranged around a central title 'Quarry species'. The birds include various species of geese, ducks, snipe, coots, and pheasants. The images are set against a background of autumn leaves and water. The central title is in a large, bold, black font on a white background.

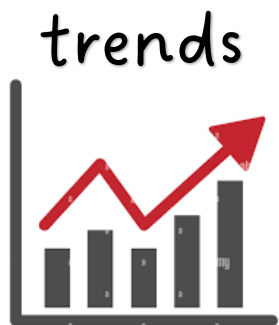




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Evidence









 AEWA



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Schedule II species

Is the species in a secure status?
(non-breeding/wintering population listed as 'Least Concern' or 'Not assessed' in UK IUCN Assessment)



Is the species migratory?
(fully migratory or has migratory and resident populations)

Is adult survival critical or important to population dynamics?
(this relates to non-breeding, mature individuals)



Does hunting play a critical or important role in survival?

Is the species 10-year wintering population trend greater than -25% ?



BASC 

Good

**Consideration
required**

Action needed

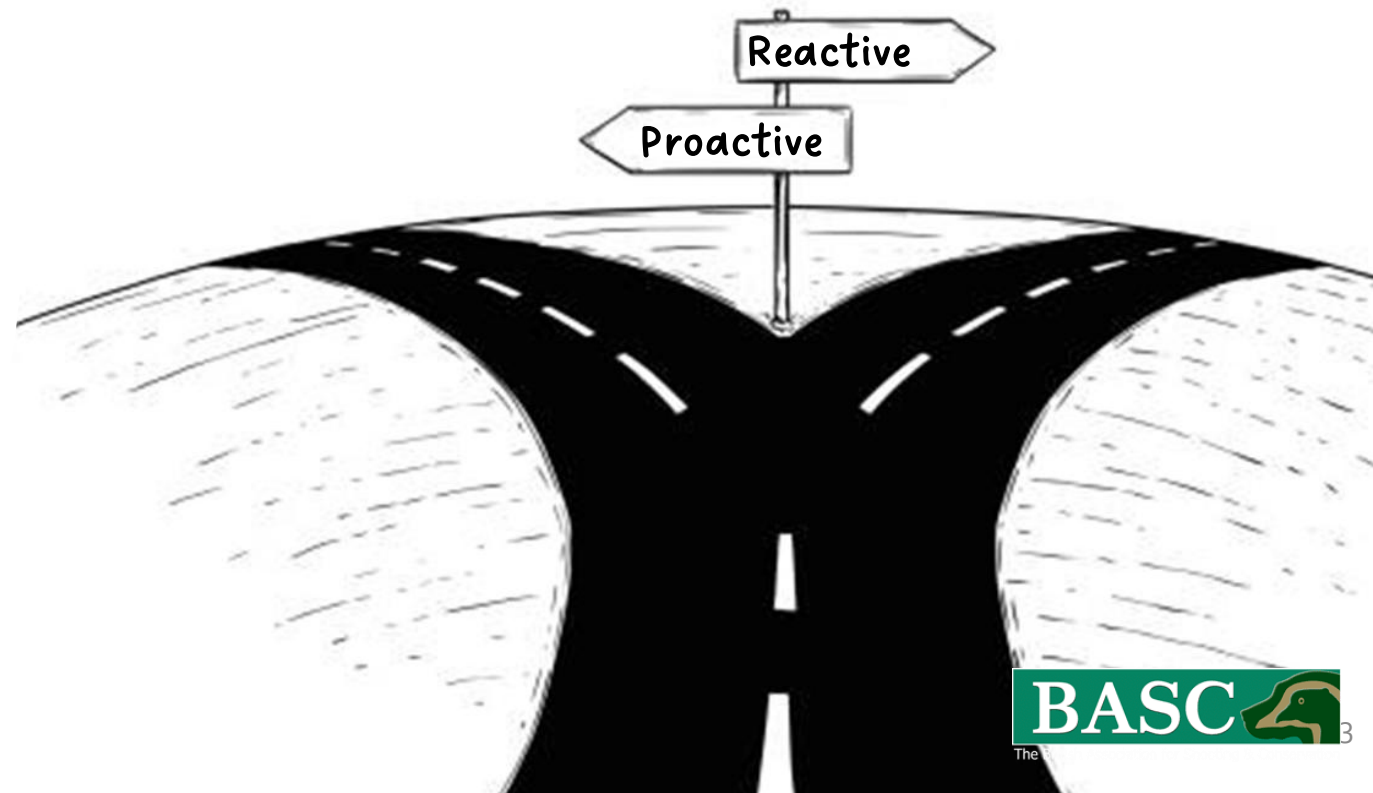
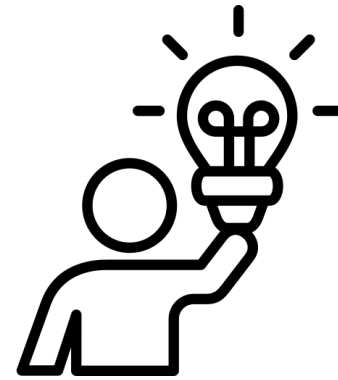
Common name	Recommendation	Justification
Coot, common	2b	The drivers of population decline and the role of hunting within this are unclear. The 10-year population decline is <-25%
Duck, tufted	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Gadwall	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Goldeneye	3a	Migrant population dynamics are not driven by adult survival but 10-year population trend is >-25%
Goose, Canada	3b	Species is displaying an increasing 10-year population trend (<-25%)
Goose, Greylag	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Goose, pink-footed	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Goose, European white-fronted	3b	Migrant population dynamics are not driven by adult survival and 10-year population trend is <-25%
Mallard	3b	Migrant population dynamics are not driven by adult survival and 10-year population trend is <-25%
Moorhen	2a	The drivers of population decline and the role of hunting within this species are unclear. The 10-year population decline is >-25%
Pintail, Northern	1b	Migrant population dynamics are driven by adult survival and hunting may be playing a role. The 10-year population trend is <-25%.
Plover, European golden	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Pochard, Common	1b	The drivers of population decline and the role of hunting within this species are unclear. The 10-year population decline is severe and >-25%
Scaup, greater	2a	The drivers of population decline and the role of hunting within this species are unclear. The 10-year population decline is severe and >-25%
Shoveler, Northern	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Snipe, common	3a	Migrant population dynamics are not driven by adult survival but 10-year population trend is >-25%
Teal, common/Eurasian	3b	Wintering population is of 'Least Concern'
Wigeon, Eurasian	3b	Migrant population dynamics are driven by adult survival but not by hunting. The 10-year population trend is <-25%
Woodcock, Eurasian	2a	The drivers of population decline are unclear but shooting is not considered a major driver. The 10-year population trend is unclear due to ineffective monitoring methods.

BASC policy

- i. Working group
- ii. Wildfowling Liaison Committee
- iii. BASC Council



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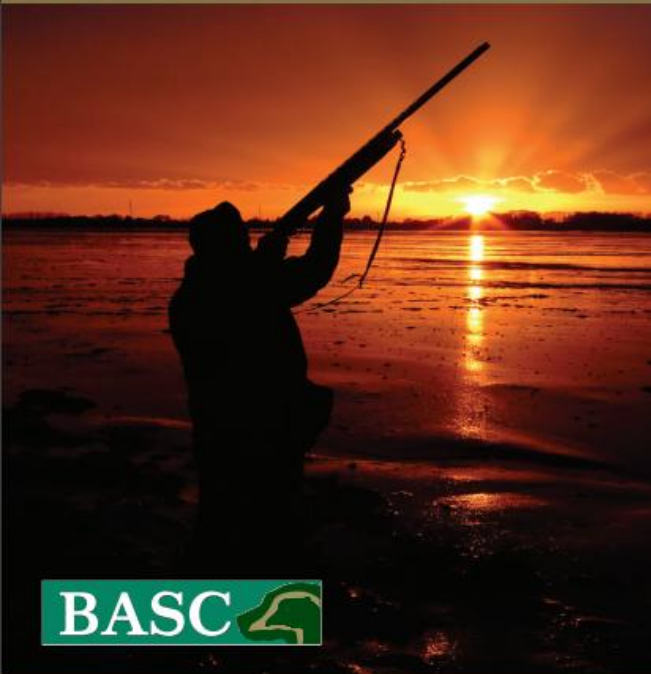




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A BASC PUBLICATION - PRODUCED IN 2023



BASC 

**SUSTAINABLE
SHOOTING**
A CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR WILDFOWL QUARRY SPECIES

This code applies to England, Wales, Scotland
and Northern Ireland.



Included
following
regulator
discussions

Common name	Recommendation	Justification
Coot, common	2b	The drivers of population decline and the role of hunting within this are unclear. The 10-year population decline is <-25%
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Schedule II review: the state of play

General Election – July 2024



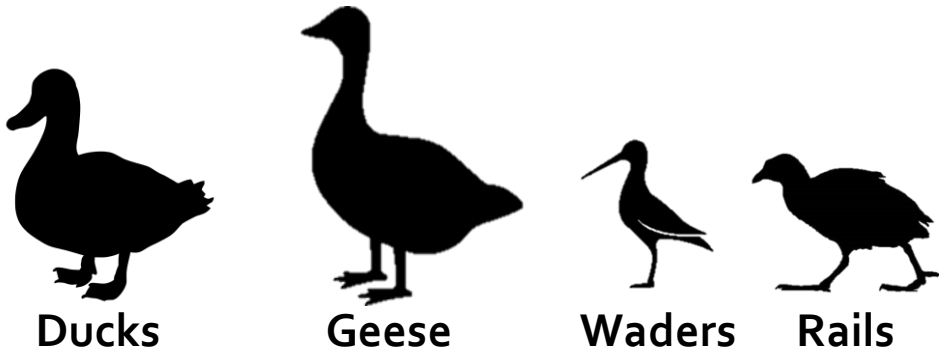
No sign-off by minister

It would appear environment is now lower on Government agenda

- BASC had a commitment to deliver sustainable shooting
- Code was updated and relaunched in 2024

Sustainable shooting principles

The Code applies to...



The Code does not apply to...

- Reared and released mallard
- Large-bore historic firearms

And it does not override any site-based requirements

1. INTRODUCTION

To ensure the long-term future of shooting, it is essential that the shooting of wildfowl is sustainable.

Within this context, sustainable shooting respects quarry species and seeks to conserve and improve the environment. It avoids excessive consumption, complies with the law, improves the health and well-being of participants, and provides food and economic benefits to the wider community.

This code relates to the quarry species listed below, particularly those where the available evidence demonstrates the need for action.

DUCKS	GEESE	WADERS	RAILS
Gadwall	Canada goose	Common snipe**	Coot***
Goldeneye**	Greylag goose	Golden plover	Moorhen***
Mallard*	Pink-footed goose	Jack snipe ¹	
Pintail**	European white-fronted goose **2	Woodcock**	
Pochard**			
Scaup***			
Shoveler			
Teal			
Tufted duck			
Wigeon			

The 'broad sustainability principles' apply to all species, with the following variations.

- * This code does not apply to reared and released mallard, and the shooting thereof.
- ** Bespoke actions are required for these species; see species-specific recommendations.
- ¹ 1 Northern Ireland only.
- ² 2 England & Wales only.
- ³ 3 England, Wales, & Scotland only.
- f) This code does not apply to the use of large bore historic firearms used to maintain historic, cultural and traditional aspects of wildfowling.
- g) This code does not override any site-based requirements; all shooters need to abide by landowner, club, or consent restrictions.

It is important that those who shoot recognise that unsustainable shooting can affect population size, age composition, sex ratio, behaviour, and distribution of natural populations. Understanding the potential impacts of shooting is a prerequisite to managing quarry species in a sustainable manner.

The code provides advice at two levels:

- Advice that **must** be followed in order to deliver sustainable shooting – unless otherwise stated the term 'must' only applies to meeting the standards set by this code of practice and does not refer to a legal obligation.
- Advice that **should** be followed in order to achieve best practice, any deviation from which would need justification.

This code of practice therefore captures the following aspects of sustainable shooting:

- Broad sustainability principles** that can be applied to the shooting of all quarry species listed within this code and should be followed by all participants.
- Individual quarry species recommendations** regarding the taking of species where the evidence review highlights potential conservation impacts. The 'shooting restrictions' recommendations must be followed but will vary subject to available data and will be updated periodically.
- Practical recommendations** whereby shooters can contribute to the conservation of individual quarry species through behaviour changes, data collection and facilitating practical conservation.

The individual species and practical recommendations are reviewed every three to five years to allow for new population trends, conservation statuses, and scientific evidence to be considered and communicated for maximum value.

THE FOLLOWING GOLDEN RULES APPLY

- To ensure shooting is sustainable, those who shoot must adhere to the species-specific shooting recommendations.
 - Pochard** - no take – targeted conservation effort required.
 - Pintail** - take a maximum of two birds per day – targeted conservation effort required.
 - Woodcock** - delay shooting until late November where resident woodcock are present.
 - Scaup** - show restraint, site-based considerations required.
 - Goldeneye** - delay shooting until October where resident goldeneye are present.
 - European white-fronted goose** – take a maximum of two birds per person, per day.
 - Common snipe** - delay shooting until 1 September where resident snipe are present.
- Eat what you shoot. It is your responsibility to ensure all shot quarry is put to good use.
- Where not already required by law, consent, or lease, shooters should collect bag data and submit information for all wildfowl species to a national monitoring scheme.
- Shooters should contribute to habitat creation, management, and restoration initiatives.
- Shooters should assist with citizen science initiatives including bird counts, ring recovery reporting, wing surveys, disease monitoring, etc.



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Shooting

- Eat what you shoot
- 10 duck per day
- 6 grey geese per day
- Take what you need not what you can



Evidence and Research

- Bird Counts – WeBS
- Bag Data
- Ringing
- Disease – monitoring and reporting

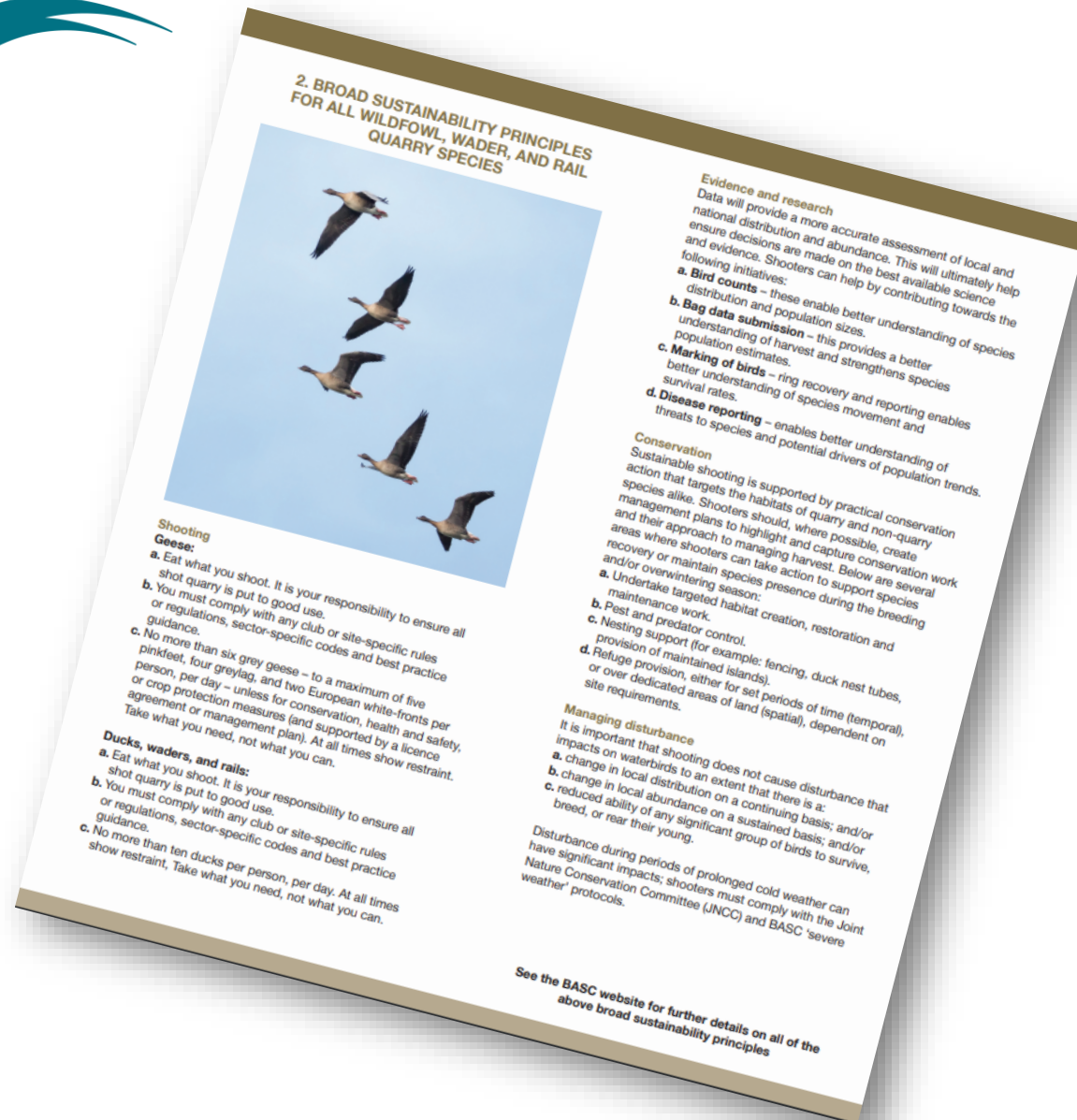


Conservation

- Creation and restoration
- Pest and predator control
- Nesting support
- Refuge

Managing Disturbance

- Severe weather protocols





EURASIAN WOODCOCK
Scolopax rusticola

Recommendation: delay shooting until late November where resident woodcock are present.

Species trend

The UK hosts a breeding population of woodcock which remains resident all year round, as well as hosting a large migrant over-wintering population. The breeding population has shown substantial declines in its range and size over the last 20 plus years. The migrant wintering population has, in contrast, increased over the last 25 years; this is reflected in the European IUCN listing of 'least concern'.

Changes in climate, predation and habitat availability in the UK are likely driving the decline in the resident UK population and a number of conservation recommendations have been made by the GWCT to reduce negative impacts on the declining UK breeding population. Taking these into consideration, BASC has provided the following recommendations.

Research required

- Breeding and wintering surveys to better understand local and national distribution and abundance.
- Submission of bag data to better inform harvest estimates (data can be submitted to the GWCT National Gamebag Census or BASC Green Shoots Bagged It).
- Hunters should support the BASC wing survey to enable better understanding of adult:juvenile and male:female harvest ratios.

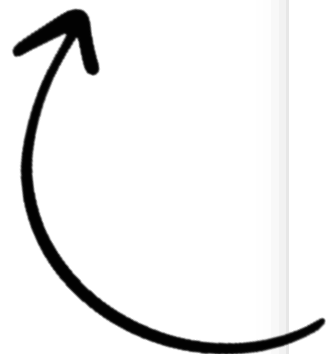
Shooting restrictions

- Should avoid shooting woodcock in areas where resident woodcock are present until the major fall of migrant woodcock in late November.
- Show restraint, even when resident birds are absent. Shoot what you need, not what you can.
- Shoot flightlines with caution.
- Curb shooting in severe weather.

Habitat management

- Targeted habitat creation and management for both breeding and wintering populations is required.
 - Create or widen woodland rides to provide breaks in the tree canopy. Ideally, rides should be at least 8m wide.
 - Mow rides and clearings to produce accessible grassy feeding and breeding display sites.
 - Create and reinstate clearings and young woodland using a little-but-often policy. Over time this creates a mosaic of woodland types and ages.
 - Periodically remove marginal vegetation along sections of ditch or pond edges where these features occur within or close to woodlands.
 - Create wet features that retain ground moisture into late summer.
- Pest and predator control.
- Refuge provision, either for set periods of time (temporal) or over dedicated areas of land (spatial), dependent on site requirements.

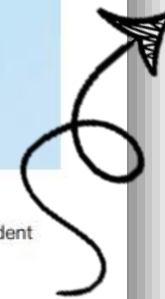
Evidence



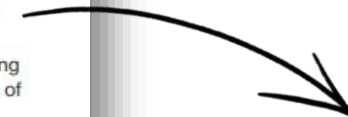
Research action



Harvest recommendation



Practical action

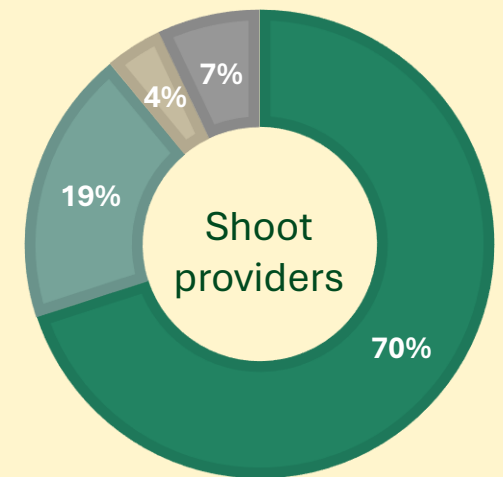
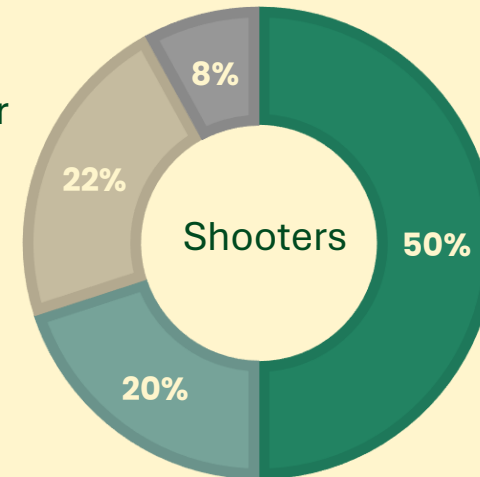


Self-regulation & the Sustainable Shooting Code

over 90% of shooters and shoot providers now follow Best Practice guidance relating to woodcock harvest



- Abstain from shooting altogether
- Shoot after 1st Dec
- No woodcock present
- Shoot all season



McNicol *et al.* 2024



Recommendation: take a maximum of two birds per day – targeted conservation effort required.

Species trend

The northern pintail population shows a ten-year wintering population decline in the UK of greater than 25 per cent between 2008-2018.

This decline is reflected on the European continent within breeding populations in European Russia, Finland and Sweden, and is anticipated to continue. However, due to their large range and relatively high abundance, pintail are not yet considered 'vulnerable' to extinction at a global level but are listed as 'vulnerable' on the European IUCN Red List.

Population trends appear to be driven by pressures at breeding grounds and poor breeding success, as opposed to over-harvesting of adult birds.

Due to already low bag numbers in the UK and the limited impact of wintering adult mortality on population demographics, a full moratorium on the species will have limited effect. A moratorium could have a negative impact by disincentivising conservation effort, so continued but controlled harvest is recommended.

The UK supports a very small number of breeding individuals; therefore, conservation focus should be on breeding populations abroad and over-wintering pintail populations in the UK. Pintail pair up during the winter and undertake the return migration as a pair, known as a 'winter pair bond'.

Improved understanding of optimal wintering habitat requirements within and outside wetland reserves in the UK,

particularly on neighbouring agricultural land, is vital. Based on the species trends and information, BASC has provided the following recommendations.

Research required

- International flyway-level collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- Wintering surveys to better understand local and national distribution and abundance.
- Submission of bag data to better inform harvest estimates (data can be submitted to the GWCT National Gamebag Census or BASC Green Shoots Bagged It).
- Shooters should support the BASC wing survey to enable better understanding of adult:juvenile and male:female harvest ratios.

Shooting restrictions

- Two pintail per person, per day, bag limit recommended.
- Should target males where possible.
- No sale of shot pintail.

Habitat management

- Pintail prefer habitats with low vegetation and shallow water; they will also frequent large inland lakes, ponds, marshes, and coastal lagoons.
- In order to provide an abundant supply of high-energy and nutritional foods for pintail, wetland water depths should be less than 45cm but preferably less than 15cm for an abundant food source.
- Weed management can improve habitat for pintail when benefiting native plant species.

Evidence

Research action

Harvest recommendation

Practical action

Self-regulation & the Sustainable Shooting Code

Ahead of
the 24/25
wildfowling
season

50%



of wildfowling
clubs surveyed
had adopted the
new Sustainable
Shooting Code of
Practice for
Wildfowl Quarry
Species



96%

of wildfowling clubs
surveyed already had
rules or requirements
that demonstrated
self-regulation



40% have no-shoot zones



At least **63%** had bag limits



At least **48%** had
mandatory bag reporting

Collaboration needed to influence at scale!

Within UK

**BASC members
Sister Organisations
Governments & regulators**

- Demonstrate the sustainability of harvest with evidence
- International (flyway) collaboration is essential
- Funding research initiatives
- Data sharing



Internationally **Waterfowlers Network FACE**



- Challenging conversations
- Waterfowlers' Network agreement on sustainability principles

➔ *Significant progress that
highlights the power of collaboration*

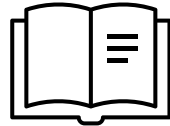
It's time to deliver!

- Self-regulation



Communication

- Habitat improvements



- Regular reviews and monitoring



Changing attitudes over time





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Network

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Thank you

