

# Eurosite workshop: Sustainable Wildlife Management

*Integrating hunting practices with nature conservation planning*

Ashford, Kent, United Kingdom, 28 - 30 October 2014

## Workshop Programme



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[www.eurosite.org](http://www.eurosite.org)

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### Introduction:

Eurosite, along with hosts Natural England and in collaboration with the Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace and Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services, is holding a workshop about the integration of hunting practices with sustainable nature conservation management planning. The workshop will provide a platform for site managers, hunters and hunting organisations, policy makers and other key stakeholders such as farmers and landowners, to come together to share knowledge, experiences and best practice case studies.

This three-day workshop will include a full day site visit to Elmley National Nature Reserve on the Isle of Sheppey. Elmley NNR is a 1202 hectare grazing marsh, divided by ditches and shallow pools. The area is first and foremost a farm owned and managed by a local farming family. However, the reserve is also a Natural England 'Approved Body' reserve and is managed in close collaboration with Natural England. The reserve is home to a wide range of wildlife, including birds of prey, hares, water voles, seals, grass snakes and marsh frogs, as well as grasses and wildflowers seldom seen elsewhere in the UK. Elmley NNR is also a Special Protected Area for Birds (SPA), and is therefore part of the Natura 2000 network. Elmley is a particularly important site for breeding wader populations and is part of a 10 year Higher Level Stewardship management agreement that includes a number of key management principles, including reducing the impact of predators. Since active conservation management began at the site, the breeding success of the wader populations has increased dramatically. Elmley NNR will therefore provide workshop participants with the opportunity to witness first-hand the positive impact of predator control on nature conservation outcomes.

The workshop will also contribute to the preparation of an Advice Paper, which will gather together key recommendations, practical steps and case studies for the integration of hunting practices in the management of Natura 2000 sites and other natural areas, as well as supporting the further development of European Commission policies in this area.

The European Union has already given considerable time and study to the role of hunting in nature conservation through projects such as the Sustainable Hunting Initiative, which was launched in 2001 and is still the basis for several ongoing LIFE projects. The workshop will be an opportunity to promote this and other EU initiatives and publications and these will form a background for discussions at the workshop. The Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE) created a Biodiversity Manifesto, which was approved in 2012, at a meeting of European Hunting Federations in Athens. The 34 action points of the manifesto address a host of EU biodiversity priority areas and promote cooperation with other sectors and stakeholders, such as farmers, land owners, conservation NGOs and public authorities. This will also form an important background to discussions during the workshop.

There is clearly a strong need for hunters and hunting organisations to exchange knowledge and experience with site managers. Whether the concern is about controlling large carnivore populations in hunting areas, shooting wildfowl or other game for sport, pest control or species management, hunting is a topic that many site managers are likely to encounter at some point. Co-operation between hunting organisations and site managers also has the potential to benefit both parties, as hunting can contribute to conservation efforts, whilst effective nature conservation can help to increase the availability of 'game' species. By organising this workshop, Eurosite hopes to bring together nature site managers, hunters and hunting organisations, and other stakeholders in order to realise these mutual benefits and discuss future strategies for sustainable conservation management.

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**This workshop is being organised in collaboration with the Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace, Greece and Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services.**

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## **Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process:**

The purpose of the Biogeographical Process is to help Member States to manage Natura 2000 as a coherent ecological network, whilst exchanging experience and best practice, addressing objectives and priorities and enhancing cooperation and synergies. Consensus building through the participation of diverse stakeholders is a key tool in the essential dialogue required for the effective management of Natura 2000 sites.

In this framework, this workshop has been organised as a thematic networking event, primarily related to the Atlantic biogeographical region, but also benefitting from ideas coming from Boreal and Mediterranean biogeographical regions. The three partners (Natural England (Atlantic), Metsähallitus (Boreal) and the Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace (Mediterranean)) and Eurosite agreed that hunting is a traditional and important land use in many Natura 2000 sites: as such, there is value in exploring the role that hunting can play as a tool for Natura 2000 management, as well as to compare practices, approaches and attitudes to hunting based on experience. This workshop will harness the participation of strategic stakeholders, increase opportunities to network (through the Interactive Knowledge Market and discussion sessions on the third day) and generate recommendations for practical Natura 2000 management (via the final report to be produced).

Jaume Tormo, Network Project Manager for Eurosite, will also deliver a presentation during the Interactive Knowledge Market, which will provide participants with a brief overview of the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process.

## **Natura 2000 Communication Platform:**

Launched in 2013, the Platform is still in the early stages of development, but it is set to become a vital source of information for Natura 2000 practitioners throughout Europe. The Natura 2000 Platform is a web-based resources that facilitates and underpins the face-to-face networking of the Process and provides information about upcoming events, as well as reports and documents from previous events. The platform contains a forum, through which stakeholders and experts can ask questions and make contact with others involved in Natura 2000 management, as well as contribute news about their projects and other Natura 2000 related activities.

Visit the Natura 2000 Communication Platform:

[ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform/index_en.htm)

And subscribe to the newsletter:

[europa.us9.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=ac8d4b8c6b271053f5f53f05a&id=40aaee6943](http://europa.us9.list-manage1.com/subscribe?u=ac8d4b8c6b271053f5f53f05a&id=40aaee6943)

For more information contact: [natura2000platform@ecnc.org](mailto:natura2000platform@ecnc.org)

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## **Monday 27 October 2014**

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### **19:00 Arrival participants**

Optional informal dinner for participants who have already arrived (at own expense)

## **Tuesday 28 October 2014**

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### **9:00 - 10:00 Registration**

### **10:00 - 10:30 Welcome & introduction to the workshop from Natural England**

**10:30 - 12:45 Presentations 1 - 4** (20 minutes each and time for questions) of successful examples of intergration of hunting practices and nature management planning

#### **Presentation 1**

##### **The FACE Biodiversity Manifesto: the contribution of European hunters to nature conservation**

Dan Burgar Kuželički, Wildlife Policy Officer, Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation (FACE), Belgium

Developed in 2010, the FACE Biodiversity Manifesto lists the European hunters' engagement for nature conservation. It presents 34 action points gathered under eight themes in line with (inter)national conservation objectives and contributing to six of the targets of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. With Policy makers, the public and hunters as its target audiences, the main objectives of the Manifesto are:

- To demonstrate the role and contribution of hunting to biodiversity;
- To promote the coordination and enhancement of this contribution in line with (inter)national conservation priorities.

In order to ensure that hunting continues to be sustainable and possible, experiences, examples and figures need to be shared so that:

- Hunters are recognised as partners for the conservation and management actions conducted on the ground;
- Hunters can conduct their activities feeding into the national and European requirements.

Therefore, the Biodiversity Manifesto also acts as a framework for hunters' communications on conservation issues. To reach these objectives, an efficient quantification, evaluation and reporting system of hunters' actions is currently being developed by FACE.

#### **Presentation 2**

##### **The European perspective on wildlife management and biodiversity conservation**

Delphine Dupeaux, Policy Officer-European Affairs, European Landowners' Organization, Belgium

The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) covers more than 60 national associations from the European Union 28 member-states. Our members are land managers such as farmers, foresters, hunters and fishermen, all having as their common objective to participate in the conservation of biodiversity and a sustainable wildlife management.

Biodiversity is what allows family farming businesses to exist. Our crops do not grow without pollinators,

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our tourist businesses do not work without wildlife, and we all depend on clean water and fertile soil for our living. Keeping the land in good condition is a task our members take care of for future generations of Europeans to enjoy. Private ownership means that we assume not only the rights, but also the responsibilities for our land. The trust and responsibility that ownership brings is at the heart of the ELO.

With the continuous development of environmental legislation and the challenges presented by the reformed Common Agricultural Policy, debates on wildlife and biodiversity in the EU became a focal point for our organisation. In this context, the ELO is working on the political aspect of wildlife management mainly through the “Biodiversity, Countryside and Sustainable Hunting Intergroup”, which is considered to be the oldest in the Parliament, but also through various lobbying activities.

On the practical side, 10 years ago the ELO initiated, along with other stakeholders, a project on wildlife management at EU level, to find a proper way of communicating on hunting and fishing practices. Today the Wildlife Estates Label has become an EU wide project with more than 150 estates and representing 1 million hectares. This project is based on a voluntary approach allowing land managers to showcase their contribution for biodiversity. The Wildlife Estates Label aims to improve the recognition of best practices in land management. It represents a tool for sustainable land use and wildlife management operating according to agreed principles for environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable land management. Please visit [www.wildlife-estates.eu](http://www.wildlife-estates.eu) for more information.

11:30 - 11:45 **15 minute coffee break**

### **Presentation 3**

#### **Hunting and Ecosystem Services in Greece**

Konstantinos Papaspyropoulos, Forester - Environmentalist, Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace, Greece

There is a growing interest in the supply of ecosystem services worldwide. The degradation of the agricultural environment has reduced the availability of ecosystem services. However, several stakeholders are interested in their conservation and pay to stabilise their supply. Hunters are one such stakeholder. They are affected by the provisional and cultural services of ecosystems and they affect the regulating and habitat ecosystem services by working for nature management. In the present research we focus on the work of Greek hunting organisations for the conservation of ecosystem services. The presentation covers a broad range of case studies and sheds light on the broader understanding of hunting activities.

### **Presentation 4**

#### **Game management in protected areas in Finland**

Madeleine Nyman, Game and Fisheries Advisor, Metsähallitus, Finland

In the EU, the Birds and Habitats Directives aim to protect the European flora and fauna, partly through the establishment of Natura 2000 areas. Hunting is not prohibited in Natura 2000 areas, but can be restricted when necessary to protect the fauna in the established areas with reference to the conservation objectives. About 9% (3 million hectares) of Finland’s land area is protected. Most of this area is also a part of the Natura 2000 network. The majority is located on state-owned areas, covering almost 17,000 km<sup>2</sup>. According to the Nature Conservation Act (1096/1996) in Finland, there are three

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kinds of nature conservation areas: National parks, strict nature reserves and other protected nature reserves. The aim of the protected areas is to maintain the ecosystem of the areas in as pristine a state as possible, with as little human interaction as possible. Recreation, tuition, research and sustainable use in terms of berry and mushroom picking are permitted. Hunting is prohibited in the two first classes by and large, except for the national parks in northern Finland, where hunting is permitted for local inhabitants. In the third class, the possibility to hunt varies according to the area specific regulations. In areas where hunting is prohibited, derogations and exemptions are possible for invasive species such as raccoon dogs and minks, and for animals causing damage to forests or livestock or that are a danger to humans. Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus) administers and manages all protected areas in state owned land and water areas. This presentation will focus on how hunting is included in the planning process of the management of conservation areas, on different forms of co-operation between site managers and hunters in these areas, and on the international cooperation on alien invasive species with neighbouring countries.

12:45 - 14:00 **Lunch break and networking**

14:00 - 16:15 **Presentations 5 - 8** (20 minutes each and time for questions) of successful examples of intergration of hunting practices and nature management planning

### **Presentation 5**

Sinclair Coghill, Wildlife Management Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage, United Kingdom

In Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage has responsibility for securing the favourable condition of Natura 2000 sites and for keeping under review all aspects of wild deer and their management. We work closely with private sporting interests to move towards ecologically sustainable deer management as outlined in the Scottish Government's strategy for wild deer. This involves recognising both the private and public benefits that can be delivered or leveraged from private investment in deer management. Deer are present and are actively managed on many of Scotland's Natura 2000 sites. Since 2004, the Scottish Government and its associated bodies have had a strong focus on the collaborative management of wild deer where they are affecting the favourable conservation status of European Sites.

This approach has been premised on securing voluntary agreement with land owners and managers to reduce deer numbers where they are impacting on the favourable condition status of designated sites. Whilst regulatory powers provide a backstop, the voluntary approach has been shown in several large upland areas to be able to deliver the required reduction in deer pressure whilst enabling private enterprises to continue with sustainable deer management as part of a sporting business. Consideration of private objectives is incorporated in the two Acts of Parliament that shape our work in this area.

We show how a short term voluntary agreement has been used to reduce red deer populations by a third across 95,000Ha, enabling the improvement of three Natura 2000 sites without adversely affecting private objectives. In another example, we show how red deer numbers have been reduced by 50% across 25,000Ha on the basis of voluntary agreement across a number of land ownerships. Both examples demonstrate how private contributions in terms of on the ground management and delivery, supported with oversight, direction and some direct assistance from public bodies, can benefit sites

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whilst not penalising land owners and managers, engendering a greater sense of ownership of the issue and leveraging public benefit from private investment. We also discuss some of the challenges of this approach for Government, the land management community and the wider public.

## **Presentation 6**

### **Science into practice: the restoration of wild grey partridges on a shooting estate in Sussex, England**

Julie Ewald, Head of GIS, The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, United Kingdom (also representing the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation)

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) research on wild game conservation has focused on the “three-legged stool” approach. In order for wild game to succeed, three key management elements are required: provision of nesting cover (leg one), provision of insects for chicks (leg two) and finally protection from predation, particularly at nesting time (leg three). The effectiveness of this approach has been tested in various GWCT projects over the years from the Salisbury Plain experiment, the Cereal and Gamebirds Programme and the Royston Demonstration project. I will briefly describe some of the findings of this past research but will focus on its practical application to restoring grey partridges on a shooting estate in Sussex, England.

The estate is part of a wider area that the GWCT has been monitoring since 1968 within what is now the South Downs National Park. In line with the national trend, grey partridge pair density across the estate declined from a high of 14 pairs per 100 ha in the 1970s to one pair per 100 ha in 2003, when it was on the verge of extinction. From 2003, with a view to restoring a wild grey partridge shoot, the landowner began habitat management (in part financed through England’s Higher Level Stewardship Agri-environment Scheme) and predator control for grey partridge conservation. The results have been impressive: there are now 19 pairs of grey partridge per 100 ha on the managed area and sustainable grey partridge shooting was reinstated in 2009. Additionally, numbers of red-listed farmland bird species have increased and rare arable flora has returned to the cereal headlands. It is a prime example of science-backed species recovery where the incentive for action is the shooting interest.

15:00 - 15:15 **15 minute coffee break**

## **Presentation 7**

### **The role of science in guiding hunting practices: woodcock shooting as an example**

Andrew Hoodless, Head of Wetland Research, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, United Kingdom

Managing the hunting of migratory species sustainably is far more problematic than doing so for resident species, for a number of reasons. Not only is quantifying the harvest rate and any population impact more difficult, but even when a sustainable harvest level is known, ensuring it is met requires co-operation over large spatial scales crossing country borders. However, in the absence of a co-ordinated harvest management plan, better knowledge of the ecology and movements of quarry species, gained through targeted research programmes, can help site managers make better, more informed decisions at a local scale.

The European population of the Eurasian woodcock is estimated at 14-16 million birds, c.96% of which

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breeds in Scandinavia, Finland, the Baltic States and Russia. In winter, the population is concentrated primarily in Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy and Greece. The woodcock is a prized quarry species in all of these countries in winter and is also hunted in most central European countries during autumn migration, as well as in Russia, Belarus and Romania when roding. To better inform management and hunting policies across Europe, reliable information is currently needed on the status of woodcock in all the countries in which it breeds and on migrations (routes, stop-overs and timings).

The GWCT has pioneered work in Britain leading to a better understanding of the status and trend of resident breeding woodcock and of the origins, migration routes and site fidelity of migrants wintering here. Although there remain gaps in our knowledge to be addressed, this research is starting to provide the basis for guidelines on sustainable woodcock shooting and a model for data gathering which could be applied elsewhere.

## **Presentation 8**

### **Natural England's approach to assessing wildfowling notices on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and European sites - past, present and future**

Sue Beale, Senior Specialist - Protected Sites England, Natural England, United Kingdom

A high proportion of wildfowling activity in England takes place on Sites of Special Scientific Interest, many of which are also classified as either a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and/or a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). These sites, which form part of the Natura 2000 network of Europe-wide sites designated and protected for their nature conservation interest, are subject to the provisions of the Habitats Directive. Natural England is the competent authority in England for consenting wildfowling on European sites and therefore, it was important that we had a consistent approach to consenting wildfowling across the country which met the necessary legal duties but also recognised the wildfowling activity as a legitimate use of a wildlife resource when undertaken sustainably. This presentation will show how the approach was devised, the extensive consultations that were undertaken with the British Association of Shooting & Conservation, and how the work has progressed in recent years, with an overview of all aspects of the process and how it works in practice.

16:15 - 16:30 **15 minute coffee break**

16:30 - 18:00 **Interactive Information Market** - opportunity to present and discuss each other's projects and share communication materials (posters, books, leaflets).

Including a brief introduction to the **Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process** by Jaume Tormo, Network Project Manager, Eurosite

19:00 - 21:00 **Dinner at Ashford International Hotel**

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**Wednesday 29 October 2014**

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09:00 - **Field trip to Elmley National Nature Reserve**

17:00

Elmley NNR is a 1202 hectare grazing marsh, divided by ditches and shallow pools. The area is managed by a local farming family, but is also a Natural England 'Approved Body' and is managed in close collaboration with Natural England. The reserve is home to a wide range of wildlife, including birds of prey, hares, watervoles, seals, grass snakes and marsh frogs, as well as grasses and wildflowers seldom seen elsewhere in the UK. Elmley NNR is also a Special Protected Area for Birds (SPA), and is therefore part of the Natura 2000 network. The field trip will provide participants with the opportunity to witness first-hand the positive impact of predator control on nature conservation management planning.

18:00 - 19:00 **EuroCocktail at Ashford International Hotel**

Bring along a small sample of local produce - something to eat or drink, which typifies your part of Europe - to share with the other participants.

19:00 - 21:00 **Dinner at Ashford International Hotel**

**Thursday 30 October 2014**

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09:00 - 09:15 **Welcome & introduction to the day's programme**

09:15 - 11:00 **Hunters working in conservation** Presentation(s) followed by discussions in groups

**Presentation 9**

Philip Merrick, Elmley National Nature Reserve

**Presentation 10**

**Law enforcement and the role of hunting organisations**

Kyriakos Skordas, Office Director, Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace, Greece

Hunting Associations in Greece have created a Gamewarden Body for illegal hunting control and wildlife protection. This initiative carries out preventative control of poaching and influences wildlife protection.

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11:00 - 11:30 **30 minute coffee break**

11:30 - 12:45 **Hunting as a tool for management** Presentation(s) followed by discussions in groups

## **Presentation 11**

### **Contribution of hunting organisations in improving wildlife habitats**

Kyriakos Skordas, Office Director, Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace, Greece

Wildlife habitat improvement, applied in durable and steady ways, influences the wildlife species, and can also activate stakeholders for the sustainable development of sites for nature. Hunting organisations in Greece undertake actions like these, financially supported only by the Greek hunters. The implementations of habitat improvement actions have shown good results in many case studies, fulfilling the needs of several wildlife species (not only game species).

## **Presentation 12**

### **Practical removal of small alien predator from Finnish Archipelago**

Mikko Toivola, Executive Manager of Wildlife Management, Finnish Wildlife Agency, Finland

Long term research projects in the Archipelago Sea of Finland have shown that the presence of mink has a detrimental effect on the native fauna in the archipelago area. During recent years raccoon dogs have also become more common in the same areas. In order to control these harmful alien predators a practical approach was developed for the removal of the mink. This method is based on a hunting dog, which is used to locate the mink and a leaf blower that is used to blow the mink out of its hiding place. A voluntary hunter is responsible for shooting the mink. Mink can be removed during the ice free period but they should be targeted especially during the spring after the ice has melted and before the birds starts to breed. Raccoon dogs can also be removed at the same time. Operational work has mainly been carried out by voluntary hunters. Different Archipelago areas have their own properties (like late ice melt and shallow shores) that diminish the effective operative removal period. It should also be remembered that an effective pest control in the Archipelago creates many requirements for the hunters. You must have a trained dog and you have to be experienced in boat handling and navigation and be accurate when using your shotgun. You should also have patience as the funding is low and license bureaucracy takes time.

12:45 - 13:00 **Planned follow-up to compile an Advice Paper and concluding remarks**

Jaume Tormo, Network Project Manager, Eurosite & Teresa Dent, Chief Executive, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

13:00 - 14:00 **Lunch and goodbyes**

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For more information and updates, please visit the Eurosite website:  
[www.eurosite.org/en-UK/content/wildlife-management](http://www.eurosite.org/en-UK/content/wildlife-management)

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