

G&WCT's letter to The Guardian: Pine Martens and Capercaillie



Dear Sir

As usual George Monbiot is persuasive and provocative and he obviously cares deeply about the world around him. But it is a shame that he needs to demonise those that are trying to help not hinder wildlife recovery (comment 30th Jan).

No one knows how significant pine marten are in driving the overall population decline of capercaillie, although previous studies at the RSPB's Abernethy Forest have shown that pine marten are significant nest predators. Given there are just 1,300 capercaillie left in the UK and falling, and pine marten are not now threatened but increasing in range and abundance, perhaps we ought to know more about their relationship? Translocating martens away from important capercaillie areas, to locally reduce their numbers, could improve our understanding.

We firmly believe heads in ideological sand will not prevent another extinction of the capercaillie in Scotland. Instead we have proposed to other interested parties the approach which saved the water vole from the mink; sound scientific evidence backing sensitive and proper wildlife management. Together with partner organisations we are considering what potential projects might help the vulnerable capercaillie within the context of a healthy marten population.

Wildlife recovery doesn't have to be a slow arduous affair. By taking a consensual, productive, pragmatic approach underpinned by properly conducted research it is possible to secure the future of our most vulnerable wildlife species.

Dr Adam Smith
Director Scotland
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

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