

CONSERVING SCOTTISH MACHAIR PROJECT LIFE+

UIST GREYLAG GOOSE MANAGEMENT SCHEME:

SCARING STRATEGY 2010

Aim

To move the Uist Greylag goose population from cropped areas on the machair to protect crops till after harvested.

Methodology

Scarers will be employed for c.10 weeks (commencing July 16th) and will be co-ordinated by the Project team and scheme Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator will be employed on a longer 'flexi-contract'

Scarers will be assigned an area, which will be their main responsibility to patrol and protect. However there will be flexibility to move scarers from one area to another (including teaming up) in a co-ordinated manner responding to where geese are. This approach will increase scheme efficiency and allow decisions to be made on a daily basis in line with goose movements and crop growth/harvest.

The project team are acutely aware at how fast goose damage can occur and are aware of the reactive and proactive needs of the scheme.

The project team will direct resources to focus on the protection of seed corn although some limited lethal and non-lethal scaring will be deployed before arable silage is cut. By this time geese will be landing and attempting to walk into standing crops if it remains unprotected. Small areas can be buffered with electric fencing, for instance, to increase protection.

The open season for Greylag goose shooting begins on September 1st and ends on January 31st. Shooting rights are held by local Estates. Out with this period special licences are required for lethal scaring and are issued by SGRPID. These will be attained for scarers by the project team. Liaison with Ian Muncaster (SGRPID) is essential prior to applying for licences to avoid any duplication.

Having identified seed crop, the project team in association with scarers, will be responsible for encouraging the use of and deploying scaring equipment to protect seed crop. Effective use of non-lethal equipment has been shown to work in some localities. A mixture of methods will be deployed at all times, in accordance with Scottish Government legislation and European Commission instruction – the emphasis is on crop protection.

Scarers should, where possible, be resident in or near the area they are protecting. As such, they will have local site knowledge and travel will be minimised. It will also ideally allow for scarers to respond quickly to complaints of damage (or potential

damage), allow flexibility in the times scaring takes place and reduce travel times and costs.

Scaring will involve a combination of non-lethal and lethal scaring.. Non-lethal methods such as rockets, bangers and kites will be used, especially early in the season. These will be used randomly to avoid birds becoming conditioned to their usage.

Project staff, and others without shotgun licences, will be able to deploy these non-lethal methods.

'Skyrockets' and 'Black Panther Bangers' will be trialled in 2010. These have worked on Argyll islands in previous seasons. The effectiveness and usage will be monitored.

In line with BASC guidance shot birds will be collected. A right wing from each carcass will be removed and later collected by project staff to allow monitoring and classification of shot birds to be undertaken.

Scarers will maintain a full record of all shot.

The shooting of ducks and geese in Scotland on a Sunday is prohibited. However non-lethal scaring may take place.

The use of decoys to attract birds into machair cropped areas in the 'closed' season is not permitted.

Maps of cropped areas will be held by co-ordinator(s). Seed crops will be highlighted where known and will be prioritised once identified. This will act as guidance, and will be used alongside local knowledge to direct scaring.

Scarers will be proactive and reactive and will fully liaise with appointed project co-ordinator

The shooting of game at night (between one hour after sunset and one hour before sunrise) is not permitted.

Hours available for each area for scaring staff is still being assessed. (TBC)

Full liaison will take place throughout with Estates, and other relevant bodies (MOD, Airport, Police) as directed by project staff.

A full goose count will take place in late August following standard methodology. A further count will take place in February 2011.

A phone line will be established on Benbecula at the project office. The number will be heavily advertised and promoted in all media and to all main crofters, grazing clerks etc. Crofters and others will be encouraged to report goose encroachment to

this number as soon as it is evident to allow swift deployment of scaring staff.
Extensive awareness raising about what scarers are doing and where will take place before and during the season.

Proposed scaring hours for each area will be supplied when strategy methods and scarers contracts are agreed.

Methods will be appraised and reviewed in November 2010 and adaptations made to work in 2011.

**CONSERVING SCOTTISH MACHAIR PROJECT LIFE+ TEAM
JUNE 2010**



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