Recovering grey partridges: A genuine intersection of sustainable farming, wildlife conservation and management

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33rd IUGB Congress - 14th Perdix Congress
22-25 August 2017 Montpellier - France
Status of Grey partridge in Hungary

- Status EU: Unfavourable – declining
- Status HU: Critical – declining >98% since 1964
- 2017 estimate: 12357 individuals
- Rapidly growing number of local extinctions
- Remaining populations below recovery threshold (2 pairs/km² on at least 4km²)
- Once most emblematic gamebird of Hungarian farmland is facing extinction
- Successful demonstration of recovery – currently only at the LAJTA Project, all other projects failed for various reasons

Grey Partridge dynamics in Hungary 1960 - 2013

Hungarian Game Management Database

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Pheasant dynamics in Hungary 1960-2013

- estimate
- harvest
- release
estimate, harvest, release
MODEL OF SMALL GAME MANAGEMENT

BALANCING THE „THREE LEGGED STOOL“ OF POTTS

PROTECTION FROM PREDATORS

FOOD SUPPLY

HABITAT
• The LAJTA Project (3065 hectares) started in 1992
• Actions to conserve grey partridges focused on habitat development and predator control - due to changes in the legislation, some of the originally applied methods were altered during the project period
Increase in scope and activity of the management package applied at the LAJTA Project

- 2014 - employment of a new gamekeeper on 2545 hectares
- Intensified predation management based on legal restraining and killing trapping methods
- network of hopper feeders and drinkers established
- „in field” game cover strips were on 370ha core area
- 42 chicks of four bantam reared broods fostered to four barren pairs in 2014 and 2015
- a family group (two adults and 11 juveniles) released in 2015
- No partridges released since 2016
Promoting landscape scale collective approach to recreate farmland habitats
Supplementary feeding and providing water
Supplementary feeding and providing water
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Supplementary feeding and providing water
Legal control of overabundant generalist predator species

Corvids

• **Hooded crow** (*Corvus cornix* Linnaeus, 1758)
• **Eurasian magpie** (*Pica pica* Linnaeus, 1758)

Mammalian predators (species listed in Annex I of AIHTS highlighted in red)

• **Red fox** (*Vulpes vulpes* Linnaeus, 1758)
• **Golden jackal** (*Canis aureus* Linnaeus, 1758)
• **Badger** (*Meles meles* Linnaeus, 1758)
• **Stone marten** (*Martes foina* Erxleben, 1777)
• **Polecat** (*Mustela putorius* Linnaeus, 1758)
• **Weasel** (*Mustela nivalis* Linnaeus, 1766)
• **Brown rat** (*Rattus norvegicus* Berkenhout, 1769)
• **Raccoon** (*Procyon lotor* Linnaeus, 1758)*
• **Raccoon dog** (*Nyctereutes procyonoides* Gray, 1834)*

* only occasionally (invasive alien species not yet common)
Relevant legal framework for trapping mammals in Europe and the EU

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Introduction of new traps and trapping methods
Testing of restraining traps to International Humane Trapping Standards

- Conventional field testing, following trap testing procedures and protocol of Canadian competent authorities

Partners
- Forestry and Wildlife Management Commission of the Hungarian Scientific Academy
- University of Sopron Institute of Wildlife Management and Vertebrate Zoology
- Hungarian Trappers’ Association
- Central Agricultural Office Veterinary Diagnostic Institute
- Hortobágy National Park
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Initial boost in Grey patridge pairs as a result of predator removal at the LAJTA Project, Hungary (2014-2015)
Five fold increase by 2017 - 59 pairs counted
Other species benefiting
Other species benefiting
High abundance of raptors

Censuses of birds of prey by Kovács, et al. (2015) indicate no change in the large nesting population of marsh harriers (*Circus aeruginosus*), and common buzzards (*Buteo buteo*), while the sighting frequency of overwintering hen harriers (*Cricus cyaneus*) and rough-legged buzzards (*Buteo lagopus*) is four to eight times higher than the national average calculated by Szép, et al. (2012).
Thank you for your kind attention!