

Black Grouse (*Tetrao tetrix*)

Areas and status: Found on moorland, rough grazings, young conifer plantations and suitable native woodlands in the uplands of Northern England, Scotland and Wales.

Woodland type: Young Conifer plantations and suitable native woodlands

Preferred habitat niches:

- Throughout the year, black grouse will use a range of habitats for nesting, feeding, lekking, chick rearing, cover and shelter.
- Habitat management should be focused within an area of up to 700ha around lek (displaying) sites.
- Use heather moorland and in-bye habitats on hill farms, often lekking on pasture at the moorland edge.
- Ground nester so requires either long heather or areas of tall vegetation for nesting and cover.
- Pre-thicket conifer plantations can be suitable, providing good ground cover for nesting, feeding and chick rearing. As plantations mature and the canopy closes they become less suitable.
- Semi-natural woodland and scrub on moorland fringes provide alternative habitats. Planting birch, rowan, hawthorn and larch provide food for adults.
- Boggy / marshy ground provides feeding areas for adults and chicks. Females benefit from protein-rich cotton grass in the spring and chicks from invertebrate-rich habitats in summer.



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Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

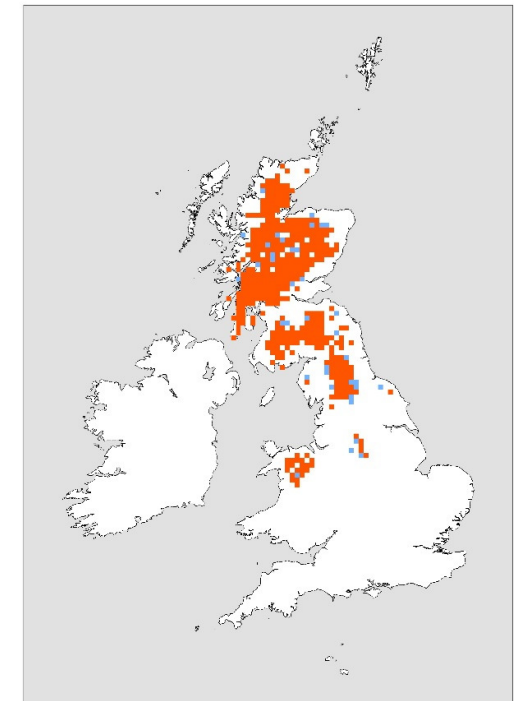
- Black grouse favour a patchwork of farmland adjacent to moor and forest, and they need this on a landscape scale to sustain their population. Increases in the amount of block forestry and the intensity of farmland management have reduced and fragmented the amount of suitable habitat.
- Changes in forestry management. When woodlands mature, they become less suitable as the canopy shades the ground vegetation. Many of the commercial plantations are planted at high density which reduces their attractiveness over time to black grouse.
- Draining of land resulting in a loss of damp areas which provide insect-rich habitats.
- Over grazing by deer or other livestock suppresses the field layer, thereby reducing the number of invertebrates.
- Establishment of deer fences which is a significant cause of adult mortality as it poses a collision risk.
- Increased mortality due to predation. Predators include foxes and crows.

Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Restructure conifer plantations to increase the structural diversity	Black Grouse will use blocks up to 10-15 years old. Restructuring helps extend the value of the plantation for Black Grouse. Uneven thinning of the forest edge next to moorland is also advised as it maximises the area of edge.
Plant some areas of woodland at a lower density (ideally 400-800 stems per hectare)	This will maximise the value of both conifer and native woodlands increasing the quantity of suitable nesting and feeding habitat.
Plant Larch or Broad-leaved tree species	Species such as larch, birch, alder, willow, rowan and hawthorn help increase the diversity of the woodland, providing buds and berries for adult black grouse and shelter during hard weather.
Block drains/ditches	Increases water table increasing the area of habitat that is rich in invertebrates.
Manage livestock and deer numbers	To avoid damage to the ground layer and woodlands.
Remove or mark deer fences	Redundant fences can be removed or converted to stock height. High standard marking should be used which includes wooden droppers and plastic netting.

Various advice sheets which include advice on tree planting for black grouse

Northern England <https://www.gwct.org.uk/advisory/guides/creating-woodlands-for-black-grouse/>

Black Grouse Advisory Sheet http://ww2.rspb.org.uk/images/black_grouse_leaflet_tcm9-214926.pdf



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