

Game news

Public supports predator control

THE NGO WAS RECENTLY INVOLVED IN commissioning and publicising vital independent research showing that the public supports the control of predators to protect threatened species.

The survey, carried out by the London polling company, ORB, for the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, the Countryside Alliance and the Moorland Association, found that:

- Eight out of 10 think that people should intervene to help declining bird species rather than 'just leave it to nature'.
- Six out of 10 people think that raptors should be controlled if they are damaging wildlife and livelihoods, despite eight out of 10 being unaware that there are more raptors than at any time since records began.
- Two thirds of respondents said they

support the work of the RSPB, and eight out of 10 believe it should carry out predator control on its nature reserves.

■ Eight out of 10 also believe that gamekeepers have a positive impact on the countryside.

NGO Chairman, Lindsay Waddell, said: "These are extraordinarily important results. For years everyone from the Government to the RSPB has run scared of being open and honest about the need to control some species for the benefit of others.

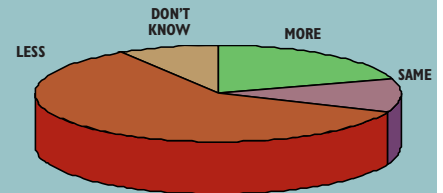
"This research shows that many of the assumptions about public opinion that have driven policy and spending on wildlife management are, quite simply, wrong.

"I am particularly pleased with the public acceptance of gamekeeping. People now clearly understand that it is

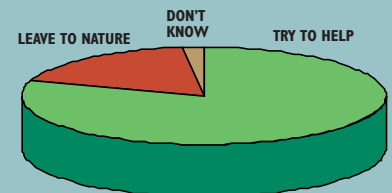
An NGO-funded poll has shown that six out of 10 people think that raptors should be controlled if they are damaging wildlife and livelihoods.

SAMPLE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

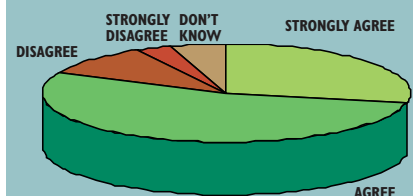
Do you think there are more or less birds of prey, such as buzzards and sparrowhawks, in the UK today than at any time since records began?



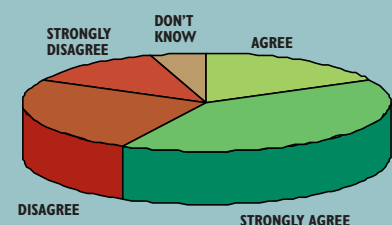
In your opinion, if a type of British bird is in decline (that is the number of birds of this type in the wild is falling) should we try to help or just leave it to nature?



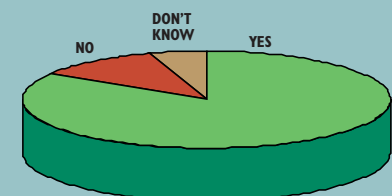
The work of gamekeepers has a positive impact on wildlife in the countryside.



If a type of bird in decline is being killed by birds of prey, professionals should be allowed to intervene.



Do you think that the RSPB should control some birds and mammals on its nature reserves to protect other wildlife?



DAVID MASON



necessary to keep a balance. The NGO can take a lot of the credit for the change in attitudes seen over the last 10 years.”

The survey, of 1,004 nationally-representative adults in the UK, was conducted by telephone in March 2009. The NGO, Countryside Alliance and Moorland Association contributed equally to the cost of the poll and organised joint publicity for the results, which were widely reported.

Charles Nodder, the NGO’s political adviser – who was involved alongside NGO PR consultant, Alasdair Mitchell,

in the project, said: “The science in support of predator control has become clearer with every passing year. Now we also know that people would accept changes in the law if they were necessary to conserve wildlife.

“It is now time for politicians to engage in a more honest debate about what would be best for Britain’s wildlife. The NGO will be pressing for a rational and practical approach.”

Interestingly, this is not the first time that recent polls have shown public support for necessary wildlife manage-

ment. An independent survey conducted for the NFU in 2007 found 74% would support culling badgers if it was necessary for controlling TB, and earlier this year, the European Squirrel Initiative published research showing that 68% of people think grey squirrels should be culled to assist reds.

The full survey results are available at www.nationalgamekeepers.org.uk. See also Alasdair Mitchell’s ‘Opinion’ on page 41, where he argues that attitudes everywhere are changing and that we could be over the worst.