

Research in practice

Conservation is not a quick fix according to Roy Burrows, but we should be proud of our work and recognise that if we can make a difference, others might follow

Roy Burrows manages the 1,500-acre Summerstone Estate, including 500 acres of grouse moor, in Nidderdale, North Yorkshire. When he took on the role four years ago, it had been grazed intensively, the woodland largely unmanaged and there was little wildlife on the ground. Roy and the estate's owners, Steve and Karen Halsall, shared a vision for transforming this lovely corner of the Dales into a wildlife haven including planting 65,000 trees, sowing wildflowers, reseeding hay meadows and restoring heather moorland. As a result, the estate has breeding curlew, lapwing, redshank and pied flycatcher.

About Roy



What motivates you?

To be involved with an exciting project and the chance to work with so many different aspects of estate management. It's also the people I work with, particularly Steve and Karen, and my family. My wife Dawn works in the estate office and on the land and my two daughters regularly help out.

How important is a long-term view of conservation?

Given the pressures the environment is under I think it's extremely important. If we can make a tiny difference, others might follow.

As part of our Working Conservationist series your work has gained a broader audience and other campaigns you have been involved in have hit the headlines. What would you say to other conservationists wary of approaching the media?

Don't be frightened to show off the positive work you do and be proud of it.

What's the best advice you've received?

Enjoy your work.

Burrows in a minute

Favourite food? Grouse (cooked by my wife Dawn).

Last book you read? *Game of Thrones* by George R R Martin.

How do you relax? Skiing.

Favourite place? Summerstone Estate.

Most inspirational person? I have three: my father for his passion for the countryside; Sir Anthony Milbank for his conservation and shooting approach; and Steve Halsall for his vision and pride in Summerstone and his incredible work ethic.

Favourite bird? Lapwing.



What other groups are you working with and do you think collaboration is important?

I am a member of the Nidderdale Moorland Group, which promotes the positive conservation work done by grouse moor managers in Upper Nidderdale. I also work

closely with Nidderdale AONB and have organised events with the local birdwatching clubs. It's very important to build bridges and form partnerships with other organisations.

How do you feel future conservation policy can support private landowners to provide the most for Britain's countryside?

The Government must listen to the people on the ground who are carrying out the work. Rather than imposing legislation that will restrict our work for wildlife, it should help build on the many successes.

How would you answer those who say management for driven grouse damages the environment?

I would invite them to come and see the reality on the ground. We have restored our moor using a range of techniques including heather burning, cutting and blocking old drains. As a result, we are actually increasing peat and with it the moor's capacity to store carbon and prevent flooding. The work has benefited insect life and rare wild birds including curlew and golden plover.

How important is grouse shooting to the local community in Nidderdale?

Shooting and farming have a major social and financial impact within the dale. They not only provide employment but also have a huge positive impact on community and well-being.

Why should people support the GWCT?

We need people doing the science.

What advice would you give to someone looking to increase biodiversity on their land?

Keep trying and don't give up, it's definitely not a quick fix. 🙌

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