

# Cornish Grey Partridge Project

## What happens next?

Starting in 2016, we are going to try a grey partridge re-introduction project in Cornwall and so the Cornish Grey Partridge Project (CGPP) is being launched at the Royal Cornwall Show.

A Cornish peninsula has been chosen for this work. The work will centre around Tregirls, Padstow, part of the Prideaux-Brune Estate. All the correct prescriptions for habitat will be in place and the foxes and crows will be removed in time for birds to be released in 2016 and their first breeding season in 2017. We will build on the habitat work already in place at Tregirls, thanks to the hard work of Charlie Watson Smyth and his family, as well as input from Natural England and the RSPB. We are also grateful to David Butler of Perdix Wildlife Supplies for providing the grey partridge broods. The CGPP is the brainchild of the Cornish Committee of the GWCT so we thank them and all the supporters and funders of this project.

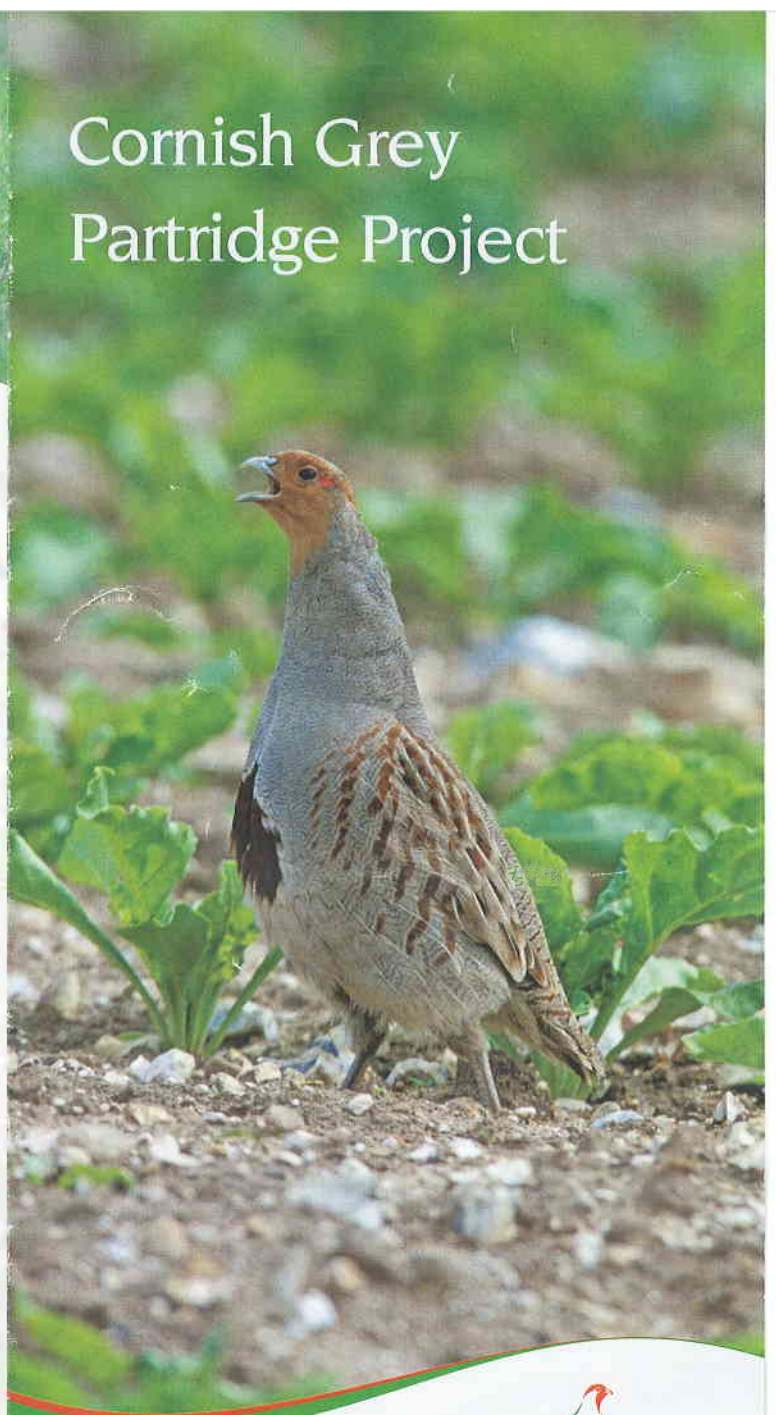
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## Return to Cornwall

Once part of Cornwall's farming scene, we would be hard pressed to find wild grey partridges in the county today. Luckily, because of the work of the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, we now know what has caused the decline.



The intensification of farming has reduced the numbers of insects available in our fields. From hatching until about 20 days of age, grey partridge chicks feed on insects. Without them, they starve to death. Ground-nesting grey partridges are vulnerable, both to predators that take birds' eggs (crows, magpies) and those likely to take the sitting hen (foxes, stoats and possibly badgers). When predators (those that can be legally taken) are removed and insect-rich brood rearing habitats are provided, grey partridges thrive once more.

So if you still have grey partridges on your farm, we can recommend a set of management options to get the population increasing again. This has been proven time and time again. But what do you do if, like in Cornwall, your last population of wild grey partridges have gone?

Again, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's research comes to the rescue. Using the latest techniques and good quality reared birds for release, we have shown that populations can be restored to areas where birds were once found. The Cornish Committee of the GWCT felt this research could be put into practice in the county and the Cornish Grey Partridge Project was formed.

## Background

Our native partridge species is the grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*). It has been with us since the ice sheets retreated northwards after the last ice age, and has colonised farmland as early man cleared the land and began farming.

The grey partridge is the most typical farmland bird in the UK, living throughout the year in our open fields, only to come close to field edges to nest in the spring. Even their chicks forage throughout our fields. Chicks and adults feed on insects, weeds, weed seeds and spilt grain. Historically, grey partridge have done well during times of farming prosperity, but badly during agricultural depression and slump. But more recently, over the last 50 years, grey partridge numbers have crashed from millions of birds to just over 65,000 breeding pairs. Not only have numbers decreased nationally but their range has also reduced.



The GWCT has shown that grey partridge populations can be restored to areas where birds were once found.

