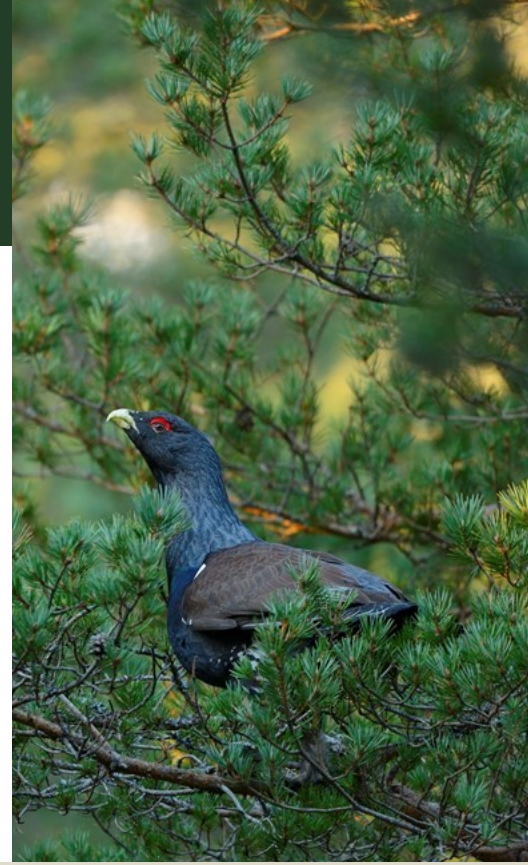


Guidance for Responsible Capercaillie Watching

Capercaillie numbers are at a critically low ebb and they are increasingly restricted to a small number of forests where they rely on our responsible behaviour to minimise disturbance.

They're given special legal protection by being listed on Schedule 1 of the **Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981**. This makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take capercaillie
- damage, destroy, or otherwise interfere with the nest of a capercaillie while it is in use or being built
- obstruct or prevent a capercaillie from using its nest
- take or destroy the eggs of a capercaillie
- disturb a capercaillie while it is nest building or is at (or near) a nest with eggs or young; or disturb the dependent young of a capercaillie i.e. a capercaillie brood
- disturb a capercaillie while it is lekking
- knowingly cause or permit any of the offences described above.



This document provides guidance on how to avoid disturbing capercaillie, i.e. how to undertake responsible capercaillie watching, but cannot cover every situation in detail. This does not constitute legal advice, and, if you are uncertain, please seek your own legal advice.

- **Capercaillie can be easier to see, and are far less vulnerable to disturbance, in the autumn and winter (October to February) as there are more birds once juveniles have fledged. This is the best time for responsible capercaillie viewing.**
- **By quietly walking along well-defined tracks and paths you may encounter capercaillie that have been attracted to grit. Do not seek out capercaillie away from paths. If birds are encountered, remain still and observe them quietly, letting them move off by themselves.**
- **Sometimes capercaillie show atypical behaviour, losing their fear of people, vehicles or dogs and displaying in prominent places. Whilst these birds may seem an easy and low-risk viewing opportunity they can attract a huge amount of attention from bird-watchers and photographers. This causes unnecessary stress to a bird that's already fighting for survival. If encountered, the responsible course of action is to withdraw immediately and not share the bird's location.**
- **Capercaillie leks, areas of a forest where the birds gather, display and mate, should not be visited between March and May as this can disturb this crucial breeding activity. During this period, do not seek out capercaillie away from paths.**
- **Capercaillie are loyal to the same lek sites year after year. If you know the location of a lek the best thing you can do to help capercaillie conservation is to NOT share any information about its location.**
- **Nesting females (hens) or hens with broods may be present between May and August. A disturbed hen could abandon her nest altogether and family parties can become separated, exposing them to increased risk of predation, chilling in poor weather or colliding with fences. Again, during this period, do not seek out capercaillie away from paths.**
- **Capercaillie are less disturbed by people in vehicles than by people on foot. One of the best ways to see capercaillie is to slowly drive along tracks through suitable habitat, remaining inside the vehicle at all times. Under the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) there is no right to motorised access, so you will need the landowner's permission to do this.**
- **If you're aware of people acting irresponsibly and causing disturbance to capercaillie then the right thing to do is to inform the local land manager or ranger service, or to report the incident to a Wildlife Crime Officer by calling Police Scotland on 101.**