

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday 12 March 2022 17:49
To: Housing WildBirdDeclarations
Subject: Consultation in relation to the control of wild bird species under the Wild Bird Declarations

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Submission on behalf of Cavan Regional Game Council to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage via e-mail: WildBirdDeclarations@housing.gov.ie

I write in relation to the requested consultation in relation to the control of wild bird species under the Wild Bird Declarations.

Cavan Regional Game Council is the County representative body to which gun clubs and game associations are affiliated to in County Cavan. Cavan Regional Game Council has approximately 2000 members in 40 parish based gun/game clubs who are actively involved pest and predator control for Farmers and often as part of game rearing and release (pheasant/partridge and duck). We have been active in restocking and conservation projects for the past 61 years and therefore have practical knowledge and expertise in relation to same.

Background:

The control of avian pest species is essential for public and animal health, agriculture and conservation. Species such as Wood Pigeon, Feral Pigeon, Crow, Jackdaw and Rook can cause significant damage to growing crops through consumption but also in many cases through trampling which can mean that large areas of crops not harvestable. In addition their droppings carry bacteria and viruses such as salmonella and E. coli which are a threat to human health and also the welfare of farm animals that consume feed stuffs infected with their faeces. In this context the ability to control pigeons and crows during the months when crops are most susceptible to damage is absolutely essential in terms of the viability of crop production but also in terms of animal welfare through disease prevention. It is the reason that the derogations allow for the control of a number of named species.

Submission:

Our members who control Pigeons/Corvids for farmers can attest to personal experiences of laid crops stripped of the seed in summer months and cabbage plants picked to a stalk literally in a day. One farmer had cauliflowers rejected due to damaged heads by a large retail chain costing him thousands of Euro. The use of bird scarers often cited as sufficient are not sufficient as in most cases the pigeons start ignoring them after a time and can often be seen landing in around them. The only effective method of controlling pigeon and crows is by shooting them as requested by the Farmer prior to them doing damage or in the area where the damage is occurring.

Species such as Hooded Crow and Magpie are also significant predators of the eggs and young of game birds and ground nesting birds which include (Grouse/Curlew/Plover/lark/sniipe etc. The majority of these species do not enjoy favourable conservation status and are in decline and while habitat loss is a clear causal factor there is very high levels of predation by Grey crow, Magpie and Gulls on both game bird and song bird populations. I have personally witnessed magpies hunt hedges along my property taking turns drawing out the song birds and attacking nests. Gun Clubs in Cavan are frequently requested to capture and dispatch or shoot large flocks of grey crows and magpies by farmers in the breeding season when the lambs/calves

and mothers are weak and vulnerable to attack pecking the eyes from lambs attacking sheep and cattle as they graze in fields.

It is our view that the number of corvid species are out of control and we would express a view that that the control period should be allowed at any time of the year to reduce the numbers for the purpose of protecting game birds, song birds and where they are a vector for transmission of disease around farms and release pens.

The notion that a Farmer/ Gun Club should apply for a Section 42 to control Pigeons/corvids damaging crops or attacking animals is farcical. Damage is often done in minutes or hours, the turn around time to apply for and obtain a S 42 is far too slow and the success rate of applicants is even lower. The NPWS would be swamped by the number of applications or else out of frustration individuals would control the species regardless.

