

**This letter is sent by email only:**

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Mr A Gilruth  
Chief Executive  
The Moorland Association  
Box No 75  
Leyburn  
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29 September 2026

Dear Andrew,

**Re: RSPB reserve bird monitoring data and Defra Call for Evidence**

Thank you for your letter of 18 September 2026.

It is unclear to us what science question you are seeking to answer with your collation of data. The lack of supporting information to explain either the rationale for the selection of species presented in your tables or the methods used to derive 'matched reserve +unit comparison' and comparison across years limits our ability to respond to your queries.

Furthermore, we are unsure what relevance this has to the Defra Call for Evidence that you reference, the purpose of which we understand to be to explore the available evidence regarding impacts (both detrimental and beneficial) of a range of activities associated with the gamebird industry. Comparisons of species abundance on different land uses appears somewhat tangential to the Call.

For clarity, the data provided on the NBN Atlas is a year-specific count for each RSPB reserve. However, because underlying survey methods may differ between sites, because data for sensitive species may be withheld or provided at reduced resolution, and because surveyed land areas may change over time, these heavily summarised data are not appropriate for formal trend analysis. The relevant caveats are summarised on the NBN Atlas web site:

<https://registry.nbnatlas.org/public/show/dr478>

Yours sincerely,

Beccy Speight  
RSPB Chief Executive

cc: Jeremy Wilson, Director of Science, RSPB  
Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Defra  
Stephen Darling, Defra Gamebirds Team  
Professor James Pearce-Higgins, Director of Science, British Trust for Ornithology  
Dr Andrew Hoodless, Director of Research, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

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