

Andrew Gilruth

From: Andrew Gilruth
Sent: 14 October 2026 17:05
To: 'editorial.complaints@ourmedia.co.uk'
Cc: 'wildlifemagazine@ourmedia.co.uk'
Subject: Formal complaint under Clause 1 (Accuracy): '10 ecosystem killers'

Dear Editorial Complaints Team,

Please treat this as a formal complaint under [Our Media's Editorial Complaints Policy](#), concerning accuracy under Clause 1 of the Editors' Code of Practice.

I am writing on behalf of the Moorland Association about the inclusion of red grouse in your article, ["10 ecosystem killers: Destructive, brutal animals that destroy entire habitats"](#).

We recognise that the headline may be intended to be humorous or provocative. Our complaint concerns the factual impression conveyed by the red grouse entry, particularly its unqualified claims about biodiversity, carbon storage, erosion and flooding. A light-hearted format does not resolve those concerns.

Your entry begins by acknowledging that the red grouse is neither an invader nor especially destructive in its own right. Why, then, is this native bird included under a headline describing animals that destroy entire habitats? Your own explanation undermines its inclusion.

The entry then presents sweeping claims about Scotland's heather moorlands being low in biodiversity, poor at storing carbon and prone to erosion and flooding, without distinguishing between habitat types, their condition or different management practices.

[NatureScot's published guidance](#) recognises the high conservation value of heather moorland and the contribution of heath and peatland habitats to biodiversity, carbon storage and natural flood management. It also explains how inappropriate management can damage these functions. Those distinctions are essential to an accurate account.

Carbon storage is a particularly important example. The amount of carbon held in peat and whether a damaged site is currently releasing carbon are different questions. Your wording obscures that distinction.

NatureScot also publishes a [Peatland ACTION case study from Hope's Estate](#), demonstrating how restoration can support grouse management while improving habitat and reducing erosion, with an expected reduction in carbon losses. This illustrates why your assertion that these landscapes are managed to serve the interests of a single species requires qualification.

The Scottish Government's independent [Werritty Review \(2019\)](#), in its [assessment of muirburn](#), also found evidence that burning conducted in accordance with the Muirburn Code can increase plant, bird and invertebrate biodiversity compared with unburnt moorland, particularly on dry heath. It recognised detrimental effects in some circumstances and described the evidence on net carbon losses under regular muirburn as inconclusive. These findings underline why habitat type and management practice matter, and why your categorical claims require qualification.

These sources do not establish that every grouse moor is well managed. They do demonstrate why your generalisations require evidence and qualification.

Illegal killing of wildlife should be reported and condemned. It does not remove the need for accuracy in the article's separate claims about habitats, biodiversity and carbon.

The issue is whether evidence concerning particular management practices or degraded sites justifies the categorical description of Scotland's heather-clad hillsides given here. Please identify the evidence and comparators supporting each claim, and explain the basis for applying those conclusions so broadly.

Please also explain the basis for including red grouse under a headline describing animals that destroy entire habitats, given your acknowledgement that the bird is not especially destructive in its own right.

For the reasons set out above, we ask you to remove red grouse from this list, revise the accompanying account to reflect the distinctions identified, and publish an appropriate correction addressing the misleading headline and unqualified habitat claims.

Readers of a wildlife magazine should be able to expect an evidence-led explanation of a native bird and its habitat. This entry does not meet that standard.

Please acknowledge receipt. I would welcome your response, and confirmation of the corrections you propose to make, within the timescale set out in your Editorial Complaints Policy.

Best wishes,

Andrew Gilruth

Chief Executive

The Moorland Association
Tower Court, Clifton Moor
York YO30 4XL

Direct Tel. 01904 922717

Mob. 07900 200786



 The Moorland Association	Moorland Association members are responsible for over a million acres of the moorlands of England and Wales www.moorlandassociation.org
---	---

This communication from the Moorland Association contains information which is confidential and may also be privileged. It is for the exclusive use of the addressee. If you are not the addressee please note that any distribution, copying or use of this communication or the information in it is prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please telephone me immediately to arrange for its return. For more information about how we protect your personal data see our [Privacy Policy](#) on our website.