



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**The Rt Hon George Eustice MP**  
Secretary of State for Environment,  
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6 September 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Power to vary the close season for Woodcock**

I write further to your letter dated 24 August 2022 in relation to the close season for woodcock.

Thank you for the information set out in your letter. As demonstrated by our target to halt species decline by 2030, this government is committed to taking strong action for nature. We have also consulted on our intention to set a target to reduce the risk of species extinction. This would help drive action to improve the status of Red Listed birds such as woodcock. I am concerned about any species of bird which appears to be suffering a population decline in the UK. As you will be aware, my department's Nature Recovery Green Paper published earlier this year invited views on our proposals to modernise wildlife legislation and support more effective protection and recovery of England's wildlife.

I am considering taking this thinking a step further and will engage with key stakeholders and the Devolved Administrations to review the protection we afford to wild birds and in particular establish whether the list of species of birds in Schedule 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 should be revised - to ensure that shooting certain species for recreational purposes is sustainable and does not undermine their recovery. This might, as with your proposal concerning woodcock, include amending the close seasons for native species.

While my department is still in the process of gathering evidence to confirm the level of benefit that our native woodcock may derive from extending its close season, I trust this response will demonstrate the Government's commitment to help protect declining species.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Eustice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and 'E'.

**RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP**