

# The 2013 Purdey Game and Conservation Awards

## Winners Announced

### **Estate with a million new trees and 23 miles of new hedgerow wins GOLD at Conservation Awards**

A major Wiltshire shooting estate and farming enterprise, a Lincolnshire wild pheasant shoot and a shooting estate in the heart of the North Kent Downs have been named as the three winners of the prestigious Purdey Awards for Game and Conservation at a ceremony held in London last night.

**The Gold Award was presented to estate owner Count Konrad Goess-Saurau**, in recognition of his transformational conservation work at Temple Shoot at Rockley, near Marlborough, and for building up a first rate shoot. Since buying the farm in 1985 the Count's long-term vision and investment has transformed the landscape of what was formerly a 2000-acre prairie style arable farm with few habitat benefits for birds and wildlife. Over a period of almost 30 years the Count has planted 23 miles of new hedgerows, over a million trees, and in the past 5 years has constructed 9 new dew ponds to help support a healthy population of roe deer.

Temple Farm's grey partridge restoration project was discontinued because of the proximity of big neighbouring red leg partridge shoots, but Count Goess and his estate manager Chris Musgrave instead focused on achieving the maximum habitat benefits for other farmland bird species. Planting game cover, over-wintering stubbles, and the implementation of determined vermin control has paid off. To quote Temple Farm's head keeper Phil Holborrow *"The RSPB nearly wet themselves when they counted 115 lapwings in addition to stone curlews, yellowhammers, turtle doves, tree sparrows and skylark"*. This led to Temple Farm being chosen as the launch site of Natural England's South-West Farmland and Nature Improvement in 2012. Temple Farm also featured on BBC One's Big Wildlife Revival series in September this year.

The Count was presented with the coveted Purdey Awards Shield and a cheque for £5,000, by Sir Barney White-Spunner, Executive Chairman of the Countryside Alliance.

Commenting on Temple Farm's success, Awards Organiser Richard Purdey said: *"This is a most impressive entry by any standard. Count Goess wins our Gold Award not only for the leading role it has played with 41 other farms involved in this Nature Improvement area, but also for actively*

*encouraging visits from local schools and the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester to see, first hand, how this exemplary estate manages its farming, conservation and shoot.”*

**The Silver Award, and a cheque for £3,000, was presented to was presented to Nicholas Watts, of Vine House Farm, Market Deeping near Spalding.**

This is the second time this remarkable fenland farmer has won the Purdey Silver Award, the first being 2002. Mr. Watts is again cited for his “outstanding wild game and habitat management”. This time judges also noted several key habitat improvements such as 35km of new open cultivated strips under HLS and ELS schemes, introduction of double hedge plantings, changing local fen drainage board policy to allow single bank mowing of dykss, and since 2010 employing a full time keeper, Richard Witt, whose determined vermin control has seen Vine House Farm’s wild pheasant populations treble, and songbird species flourish.

**The Purdey Bronze Award, and a cheque for £2000, was presented to Lady Sondes, owner of Lees Court Shoot near Faversham, Kent**

for her mission, in memory of her late husband, to nurture and improve the shoot which was his passion, and to preserve a way of life at one with the local community. Lees Court, described by one judge as “a range of first class conservation projects under the umbrella of a premier league shoot”, impressed the judging team by being run in close harmony between the owner, the managing agent Rhodri Thomas of Strutt & Parker, forestry manager Steve McCarthy, and head keeper Shayne Dean who has also been ‘brilliant in engaging local schools with two way visits.’

Since August, Purdey Awards judges have been travelling the length and breadth of the country visiting the best of the entries to assess the quality of conservation work. Their decision on the winners was announced in Purdey’s historic Long Room by Judges Chairman Lord Douro.

All winners also received a bottle of Laurent Perrier Champagne.

**Other Purdey Award winners included:**

**£1000 Special Awards – for outstanding individual endeavour in game and wildlife conservation**

Patrick Bowden Smith, Pittarthie Farm, Leven, Fife, Scotland Terry Mills, Cruglas, Ceredigion, Wales

**Highly Commended**

Dorback Estate, nr Nethy Bridge, Inverness-shire (Owners J-M and J Rebilly) Kirby Estate, Inkpen, Newbury, Berkshire Threepwood Estate, Galashiels, Selkirkshire

## **Certificate of Merit**

Chilton Estate, Leverton, Hungerford, Berkshire

Kent Wildfowling and Conservation Association, Chatham, Kent

## **Uncovering Extraordinary Conservation**

*"Every year the Purdey Awards uncover the most extraordinary conservation work taking place in our countryside and we are delighted that our Awards serve to highlight these and reward the best. I hope that we will again receive a wide selection of entries from the people who work so hard throughout the year to improve the habitats of game and farmland birds and wildlife, and I look forward to meeting them." - Richard Purdey*