

B.Sc. / M.Sc. theses topics

Grey Partridges & Predation Landscape Context of Predator Activity

Background

Throughout Europe, agricultural intensification has led to a severe decline in farmland biodiversity. One of the species strongly affected by changes in agricultural practices is the Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*. Partridges used to be typical and widespread farmland birds, however, its European population declined by 96% since 1914 due to a lack of breeding habitats, decreasing insect numbers and predation pressure. Conservation measures targeted at partridges usually focus on habitat improvement by installing flower strips. These are very effective in providing nesting places and enough insects for the chicks, nonetheless, predation remains a large problem. Predation pressure is driven both by predator numbers and by landscape composition, which determines how easy it is to hide from predators.



Objectives and Approach

By using camera traps to survey predator activity in different vegetation types we aim to understand how predation risk for partridges is distributed across the landscape and what habitats and landscape elements increase or decrease said predation risk. In the end, we want to develop recommendations on how to manage partridge habitats, e.g. where to put flower blocks, in order to minimize predation pressure.



Topics and Personal Requirements

Predators (and partridges) are the main focus of the study, however, a large number of European Hares captured on camera gives us the opportunity to study this farmland mammal, too. Depending on student preferences, two broad topics are available:

- 1) How is predation risk / predator activity affected by habitat type and landscape composition?
- 2) How do hares use flower strips compared to other vegetation types? How does the surrounding landscape influence European Hare activity?

Motivation to work in the fields is expected for any thesis on predators, but everyone is welcome to join the field work. The possession of a car is recommended, but not mandatory. Field work takes place from late November – early February.

In case of interest, please contact:

ameliemarilyn.laux@stud.uni-goettingen.de

Amelie Laux (PhD student)
Department of Conservation Biology
Bürgerstrasse 50
37073 Göttingen