

Mike Russel MSP  
Scottish Government  
Pentland House  
47 Rob's Loan  
Edinburgh  
EH14 1TY

Dear Sir's,

I, as a member of  
, feel that I have to write to you to insist that action, whether by yourselves or others acting on your behalf, is taken to address the problem of predatory birds on our river.

Myself, this club and others in the Border area have noticed a huge decline in wild trout numbers in every water throughout the Tweed Catchments area. I am aware that a licence to shoot Goosander is permitted by yourselves annually to the River Tweed Commission in order to give some protection to Salmon Smolts returning to sea. We do strongly feel that this cull has no effect on the number of birds which feed year round on our Brown trout streams. Most angling clubs in the Borders own or lease tributaries and headwaters far from the main body of Tweed and it is here, the nursery grounds of wild trout, that we feel are being insufficiently protected from predation.

I need not remind you that the Goosander is a large and very efficient predator. You will also know that they were not recorded as established until the 1940's. This gives great pressure to native fish stocks which have not had time to adapt to its presence, furthermore had this bird only recently began colonising our waters it would have come under the non native species review policy. Equally you will be aware that this is an escalating population which is currently expanding its territory not only to the far south east of England but also across the Irish sea to Northern Ireland for the first time.

Trout fishing in this area has been a pastime for many throughout the Borders, with the majority of clubs being founded and run by the working people of the area.

Many feel that if stronger regulation of Goosander is not endorsed the wild Brown trout will be lost as will the anglers and clubs that have protected them for many years, falling numbers in trout club membership may already indicate this trend.

I insist that positive action is taken soon to protect the wild brown trout which in turn will save the existence and heritage of Border river angling.

We do accept that the Goosander is with us to stay now and it is not destruction of the species which is being called for. What I do ask is that a stronger management of their numbers be taken into account, more in line with the areas which affect the wild trout, and a more true assessment of their numbers be realised, it must be some time now since this birds numbers have been in an endangered state whereas if continued escalation in numbers is allowed then the species to be lost or greatly reduced will be the trout.

In anticipation of your reply,