

From: Mike Swan

Sent: 13 March 2026 17:58

To: 'Patrick.Oreilly@basc.org.uk' <Patrick.Oreilly@basc.org.uk>

Subject: Wildfowling a living heritage

Dear Patrick

I would like to express my strong support for BASC's efforts to have wildfowling recognized as a living heritage.

I inherited wildfowling from my father, who was a founder member of what was originally called the Kent Wildfowlers Association, and he inherited the sport from his father before him. I am also pleased that both my sons are keen on the foreshore too. Between our four generations we have over a century of wildfowling heritage, and I am sure that creek crawling for a few ducks will have been there in earlier generations too. This is surely a clear example of living heritage, and the importance wildfowling as an example of that.

There is a lovely story in my family, from autumn 1950. Mum and Dad had been married four years, but had probably only spent a few weeks of shore leave together between his two year tours at sea in service of our country. They had been out to the cinema that evening, and when they got home, full of romance, Dad looked up at a perfect moonlight and mackerel sky and announced that he was "off round the sea wall" with his gun, in hopes of shooting one or two wigeon.

His excuse would surely have been that meat was rationed and a couple of birds would supplement their meagre allowance. The truth is that given perfect conditions for a night flight, the romance of the shore was an irresistibly strong draw. For most the previous 15 years, since he left school, his passion for wildfowling could only be indulged during short periods of shore leave, and then only when they happened during the shooting season. This was a rare opportunity that was not to be missed.

Having learned my wildfowling from him, and spent many hours together on the marsh, I can say that he became that bit more 'alive' when we reached the sea wall. He was clearly being uplifted by just being there, and perhaps also from initiating his son in something that he loved so much. For me, the same applies, when I am able to indulge in this very special family heritage, I feel an extra sense of wellbeing, and never more so than last autumn when my younger son has his first success on the Solent foreshore. For those who pursue it, wildfowling is without doubt a spiritual experience, as well as being an expression of living heritage.

I really do hope that BASC's efforts to get wildfowling recognized in this way meet with success, and if there is anything more that I can do to help and support, please do say.

With very best wishes

Mike Swan

