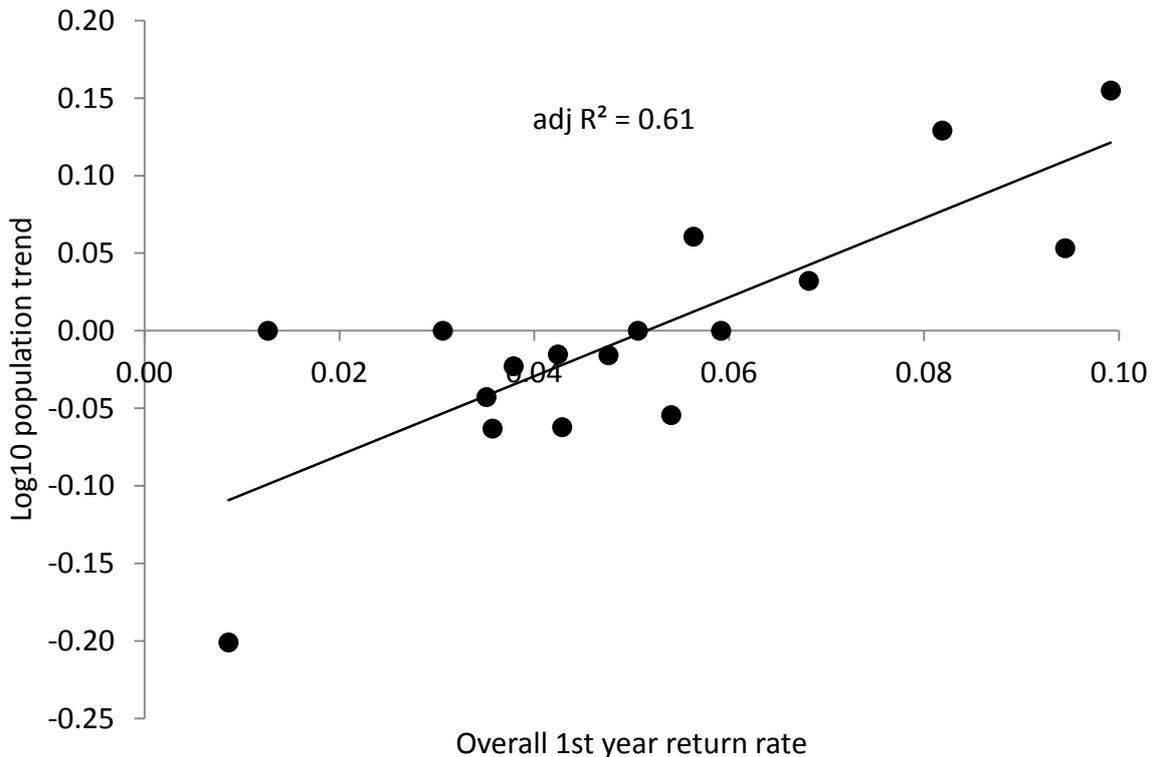


## RZSG meeting March 2016 – summaries of talks

### 1) Clunie update, GPS tags and super-ouzel

- Early season (i.e. mid-April to mid-May) breeding numbers rose from 26 pairs in 2014 to 35 in 2015, the fifth consecutive year that numbers have risen. However, numbers are still down 10% from the peak of 39 pairs in 1998.
- Mean early and late nest laying dates in 2015 (5 May & 6 June) were the latest recorded since the study began in 1998, but there was no significant trend towards later laying dates
- Mean early fledged brood size (3.4) was close to the 1998-2014 mean value of 3.5. Mean late fledged brood size (2.9) was the second-lowest recorded, and a lot lower than the 1998-2014 mean of 3.6
- So, can we explain this increase in breeding numbers? Neither overall reproductive success in 2014, nor adult return rate in 2015, was unusually high so we can rule these out as major contributory factors. However, early brood first year return rate in 2015 (13%) was the highest yet recorded, and late brood first year return rate in 2015 (3%) was only slightly below average. Overall (early and late brood) first year return rate thus appears to be the main factor driving the population trend (see graph below):



- We fitted 10 GPS tags to adult male ouzels in 2015, in order to attempt to track their migration route with greater accuracy. These tags have the potential to provide location

data to an accuracy of 10m, at the rate of 1 fix/day throughout the year. We shall see how many return in 2016, and if we can catch them...

- We now have a 7-year old male super-ouzel in Glen Clunie, who has reared 43 young in his lifetime. If he returns in 2016, he will be the new UK-longevity record holder

## 2) Trial management for ring ouzels

- Habitat management trials are being carried out on Geltsdale and Dove Stone reserves during 2014-16
- Both these reserves having valleys which have 'stable' and 'declining' RZ numbers
- Plan to encourage breeding RZ to return to the valleys where they have declined through habitat manipulations
- Geltsdale treatment valley (7 territorial pairs in 1992 to 1 pr 2013; 1 male 2014; 1 pr 2015). Geltsdale control valley (3-4 prs during 2001-13; 2-3 prs 2014; 2 prs 2015)
- Dove Stone treatment valley (10 prs in 1990 to 1 pr 2004-13; 2 prs 2014; 2 prs 2015). Dove Stone control valley (7-9 prs 2010-13; 8 prs 2014; 2-3 prs 2015)
- Geltsdale methods: Monitor ouzel numbers in both valleys on a weekly basis. Measure habitat composition in a series of 10m x 10m plots at start & end of season. Measure vegetation structure in the same plots on a 2-week basis. Will tell us if habitat composition & structure changes through the season & years Re-introduce Exmoor pony grazing in the treatment valley in March 2015, and monitor how the habitat changes. No grazing changes will be made in the control valley. Aim is to re-create the habitat currently found in the control valley, in the treatment valley
- Dove Stone methods. As for Geltsdale, except that the fence that was put up in the treatment valley in 2008 to exclude sheep from the upper moor will be left in place. Habitat re-generation will be monitored during 2014-16. Hope is that cover for nests & nestlings will be increased, thus attracting ouzels back to breed

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