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*A spectacular, new flying formation team is one of the star attractions at this year's East Anglian Game & Country Fair. Annie Hirst finds out more.*



The brand new attraction at this year's East Anglian Game & Country Fair will take your breath away. But we're not talking about planes here, for the new sensation taking to the skies will be the real thing – birds on the wing. However, the birds won't be following one of their feathered friends – rather they will be following Frenchman Christian Moullec who will be leading the flying formation in his microlight.

But he doesn't lead the birds in flight for the entertainment value; what he does has a far more serious purpose. Monsieur Moullec is a leading environmentalist and the flock consists of the lesser white-fronted geese which is an endangered species. In getting them to follow him in his microlight, he is trying to establish a new migration route that avoids areas where they have almost been hunted to extinction. There used to be many thousands of these geese but now there are only around 50 breeding pairs owing to the hunters who shoot them while they are flying from their breeding grounds in Scandinavia to their summer homes on the shores of the Black and Caspian seas.

So, together with his wife, Paola, in 1999 Christian Moullec launched a project to save them based on the fact that wild geese learn hibernation routes from their parents and that humans can become substitute parents by bringing them up from birth. The Moullecs raised 30 lesser white-fronted geese and managed to convince them that they were all part of the family. Like surrogate parents, they flew ahead of their flock – in a microlight – and led them from Sweden to a bird sanctuary in Germany. The following spring more than half the birds made their way back to Sweden – thus proving that the experiment had been successful.

A German group, the Association to save the Lesser White-fronted Goose, has taken the Moullecs' work on board and is developing the scheme to include more birds. It is hoped that by doing so they can achieve a stable population of around 500 geese in the next five years. That's the story behind the flying geese – and you can enjoy this spectacular sight at the East Anglian Game & Country Fair at the Norfolk Showground, Norwich, on Saturday, April 28 and Sunday, April 29.

"They really are an amazing sight," says show organiser Andy Grand. "I don't think they've ever been to this part of the world – I saw them at a show in the south of England and like everyone else who was there, just couldn't believe it. People were taking pictures with their mobile phones so they could show everyone what they'd seen. We're really happy that we have them appearing at the Game Fair."

But that's not the only attraction with a 'wow' factor at the two day event which will be held at the Norfolk Showground

# Follow the leader

for the fourth year running. The Tigers Free Fall Parachute Team from the Princess of Wales Regiment will be falling from the sky, while birds from Ray and Wendy Alier's Ye Olde Redtail Falconry Display will be flying through the air, as will an owl display and flight from Berkley Owls. Then, also airborne but in a different sense, there will be clay-pigeon shooting – visitors to the event can try their hand at this as well as at fly-fishing and archery.

"There are a lot of activities to try out – we've had visitors telling us that they've started up new hobbies after coming along to the show and having a go at clay shooting or fly-fishing," says Andy. "Sometimes it's a case of having the opportunity to try something new and that's what people like."

"There are plenty of new things this year – last year the new forestry area which hosted the Open East of England Cutters' and Climbers' Competition was a huge success so we are increasing this area this year with chainsaw felling, tree climbing, a sawmill and contractors, and woodland crafts taking place over the weekend. We've also got more animals this year – the Rare Breeds Society is bringing along various sheep and pigs – farm animals are always popular with children."

"Then there will be plenty for dog lovers of all ages to watch and enjoy and even for your dog to join in with. The Wroxham Agility Group will be running the dog agility and dog jumping competitions on the Sunday and there will also be 'have-a-go' arenas."

"Near that, there will be gun dog displays from the Mid Norfolk Gun Dog Club, and we'll



(Above) Christian Moullec who will be leading the flying formation of geese in his microlight at the Game & Country Fair.

also have a pet dog show and hound parade. The East Anglian Jack Russell and Lurcher Club will be running their popular terrier racing. Then we have Willow Kelly and her dog Arwen doing a routine to the music from the Harry Potter films. A lot of this is happening in the main show ring and we've added more grandstands with more undercover seating so that people can sit and enjoy the show. But really there's something for every age group and whatever people are interested in."

Attractions for younger children include animals from Melsop Farm Park and Farlacey

Alpacas, Daphne and her Otters, and entertainment such as climbing walls, bungee trampolines, slides and simulators. Plus there will be over 300 trade stands, a genuine craft marquee, food halls, helicopter flights and Scottish pipers playing plus twice daily performances from Winston the Singing farmer! John Bidwell will make a return visit to the event this year with his popular Off-the-Hip Shooting Demonstration, and will also be hosting the Clay Pigeon Shooting competition so there's certainly plenty on offer. ●

**The East Anglian Game & Country Fair will be held at the Norfolk Showground, Norwich, on Saturday, April 28, and Sunday, April 29. Advance discounted tickets can be purchased online at: [www.ukgamefair.co.uk](http://www.ukgamefair.co.uk) or from the ticket hotline on 0870 1660426 (a small booking fee applies) or in person from EDP offices around the county, or the Stratton Motor Company in Long Stratton. A family ticket (two adults and three children) is £18; adult, £7; and child (five to 16 years) £2. Tickets can be bought on the day at £25, £10 and £3; parking is free. The East Anglian Game & Country Fair is sponsored by EDP Norfolk magazine.**

Don't forget to visit the EDP Norfolk stand at Countryside Drive Stand One (opposite the tea and coffee area) at the East Anglian Game & Country Fair. On Sunday TV celebrity chef Chris Coubrough from The Crown Hotel in Wells (01328 710209) will demonstrate dishes from the Coastal Kitchen series at noon and 1pm at the EDP Norfolk stand – see you there!