

### **Restriction of Access Out of the Top Station of the Cairngorm Funicular Railway to Walk Onto the Plateau Area and the Cairn Gorm Summit, *The Strathy* July 2010**

The *Strathy* editorial stated, “*This is the only known restricted system of its kind in the world.*” Well, not so, even within Europe. On Tenerife for example, within the Teide National Park, regarding access from the cable car to the summit of Mount Teide, a vulnerable mountain, the number of people is restricted through permits. Restrictions to protect the environment or which limit the recreational value of sensitive areas are actually quite common, even in countries with a tradition of open access far predating Scotland’s. In fact they can be much more restrictive than on Cairn Gorm. In the Swiss National Park, walkers are simply not permitted to leave footpaths. In the Gerlachovsky Stit National Park in the High Tatras there are increasing and perhaps excessive restrictions of access. In the USA, permit systems are used to restrict access in certain national parks, while restrictions on use of trails, camp sites or other measures are commonplace in Park or wilderness area management plans, as in the Giant Mountains Wilderness Area in New York State.

***And so the misinformation and the Campaign’s responses in the press go on, often simply setting down well-known facts!***



### **Misinformation and The Campaign’s Action to Correct It**

Debates over wildlife management in the Cairngorms in the press are often strewn with misinformation. Below, are examples from the *Press and Journal (P&J)* and the *Strathspey and Badenoch Herald (The Strathy)* and other media which the Campaign corrected in the press. Members may find this interesting as factual background and as illustrations of the poor quality of evidence on which criticism is often founded

#### **Removal of Young Golden Eagles from Scottish Eyries to Help Re-colonise Ireland From the Strathy, August 2008**

Eagle chicks were taken from nests to re-colonise Ireland. A Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA) spokesman, Alex Hogg, was quoted asserting eagle chicks were removed when fledged and that they are removed from eyries in areas least populated by eagles and this should stop! Nonsense! Fledged young eagles are highly active creatures. Trying to catch one on a precipitous crag would be difficult and dangerous. They are removed when they begin to grow adult plumage by which stage can both control their own body temperature and feed themselves. Also, they are taken from areas with good populations, using strict SNH criteria embedded in the licence permitting it, to ensure chicks are only collected from specific areas where the golden eagle population is robust. Raptors like eagles often have more than one chick, but very frequently not all reach adulthood, partly due to competition between chicks for food. Removing and rearing a weaker chick therefore ensures its survival, increases the total number of eagles reaching maturity, and does not reduce the numbers reaching adulthood. The SGA spokesman also stated almost half the birds released in Ireland are now unaccounted for. This is not surprising. The data comes from radio tracking. Radios fail after several years and, in difficult terrain, birds can be hard to track. Because they are unaccounted for does not mean they are dead.

### **In the same vein in the Strathy in Sep 2008**

A Mr Callum Kippen accused a Campaign spokesman of ignorance in asserting the golden eagle population in the Eastern Highlands is low. Why, if this is the case, he asked, has it contributed 46% of all the Scottish eagle chicks sent to Ireland he queries? Well, persecution has ensured the population is lower than it should be but golden eagles fare best where there is a good food supply. The drier Eastern Highlands of Scotland favour golden eagles' preferred prey base, including red grouse and mountain hares. Thus eagles breed well there - when not poisoned! Mr Kippen also demanded to know how many chicks the RSPB's Abernethy reserve in the same area had contributed? The RSPB's Abernethy reserve is a Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation. The SNH licence for export of golden eagles to Ireland prohibits the taking of birds from protected areas based on EU law. Similarly red kites were not taken from protected areas in Germany and Sweden for Scottish reintroduction projects. He also asserted conservationists had caused the death of golden eagles whilst monitoring them. There is not a shred of evidence to support this rather serious allegation.

### **Red Deer Welfare and the Cover of Forests P&J 20 Dec 2010**

Mr Peter Fraser, a head stalker on Invercauld Estate, asserted red deer were better off on the open hill than in woodland because the tree canopy obscures sunlight and hence there is no ground vegetation and because wind, failing to penetrate woodlands, causes deeper snowlie within, making grazing difficult.

The Campaign pointed out that both assertions are wrong. Although dense spruce plantations shade out ground vegetation, both Scots pine and deciduous woodland like birchwoods have abundant ground vegetation. Also, tree canopy tends to trap a portion of snowfall on the branches. For this and other reasons, woodland snowlie is often less deep. In addition, woodland shelter benefits deer in several ways. Lower windspeeds reduce chill factor and hence deers' energy loss. Cloudy nights prevent low frosty temperatures because clouds reflect back heat radiating towards space. Tree canopies do the same. Hence minimum night temperatures inside stands of conifers or deciduous trees in leaf are often 10 centigrade degrees higher than outside. For such reasons and others, woodland red deer are usually larger than those of the open hill! They are, after all, a woodland species.

### **Beaver Fever – Report in P&J August 1 2007**

There are now beaver reintroductions to Scotland, and some in the western edge of the Cairngorms. There have been pointless scares as to what beavers might do to fishing and other concerns, mostly simply reflecting ignorance. Mr David Linton, chairman of the Argyll Branch of the Scottish Crofters' Union was quoted condemning the reintroduction, claiming "it would pose a major threat to the countryside" and asserting beaver were never native to Scotland.

What nonsense! In 1920, James Ritchie, in his classic book "Animal Life in Scotland" noted many examples of beaver remains from prehistoric sites here and indeed the extensive export of beaver furs annually to the continent well into the middle ages. Twentyfour countries in Europe, including the crowded Netherlands, have re-introduced the beaver. All have survived this "major threat to their countryside". In places beavers' attract visitors who contribute to the local economy. Beavers can also improve fisheries by creating good habitat for young fish and help reduce downstream flooding as their river engineering slows runoff of rainfall through rivers.

### **Pine Martens Accused of Causing the Decline of Blackgrouse. P&J Jan 2011**

Mr David Geddes asserted pinemartens caused blackgrouse declines and deerfences are no hazard to such species. Pinemartens and these bird species coexisted for thousands of years in Scotland before martens were persecuted and still do in Europe. Blackgrouse declined even in areas without martens but populations in Deeside and Speyside are stable and perhaps increasing in the presence of martens. Regarding fences, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust research showed deerfences have a major impact on capercaillie mortality through collisions. Other peer-reviewed research showed similar impacts on blackgrouse.