

Deer Management in Glen Feshie

Main Features of the Situation

In general, the situation in Glen Feshie is one where prolonged conflict has existed between red deer management as a sporting estate, and the interests on nature conservation. The nature conservation interests have presented mainly as the failure of the OCPF to regenerate due to grazing out of seedlings by red deer but other more extensive damage has undoubtedly occurred to the wider habitat. The regeneration of pine and other seedlings in Glenfeshie has been made more vulnerable by the way in which most of the mature native forest grows in the narrow floor of the glen. In winter, hard weather drives deer down into this sheltered area and a whole year's crop of seedlings can be devoured in a comparatively few days, with the high deer numbers contributing to the speed with which this happens.

Management Proposals:-

Specifically, the management proposals for Glen Feshie estate involved the following:-

- 1) The area has been divided into five subunits, for management purposes.
- 2) Within each area, accurate deer counts have been made and targets set for their reduction within stated times.
- 3) Arrangements are in place to assess progress towards a total estate population of 1050 deer.
- 4) Management success or failure will be measured by a monitoring scheme designed to measure habitat response. – tree regeneration is a significant indicator.
- 5) Since deer take no notice of estate boundaries, the exercise has been set up on an inter-estate basis, involving Glenfeshie estate, Mar Lodge Estate, FCS, and SNH. These landowners share boundaries with Glenfeshie. A dialogue continues with the National Park and with other neighbouring estates.

Background:-

These arrangements have been made possible by a combination of factors:-

- 1) The Danish estate owner in Glenfeshie has agreed to reduce the sporting stag objective from 150 to 80 meaning that the total deer population can be significantly lowered to meet this new target. He is also willing to fund and support his staff, At present it costs approx £300K per year to operate the estate, in addition to funds generated by the estate. .
- 2) The NTS ownership of Mar Lodge ; the indecision regarding the future of the NNR designation; the success that SNH can demonstrate on Inshriach ie. Good tree regeneration outside fences, and high commitment from FCS to control deer on their land.
- 3) The National Park's involvement

- 4) The resident factor who was born, reared, and educated locally who is determined to pursue such a policy, and is an advocate of transparent decision making!
- 5) A new found willingness by the Deer Commission for Scotland to stick its head above the parapet.

Important Point:-

If reduction to the new deer population targets does not lead to the regeneration of the pine forest, then the question arises as to how low a harvest of shootable stags the Danish owner will accept before the game of owning a highland estate is not worth the candle. It does beg the question . What if the planned reduction does not lead to tree regeneration? Will the landowner accept an even lower yield of shootable stags?

Proposed Actions:-

- 1) The Cairngorms Campaign send a note of support to the factor of Glenfeshie.
- 2) The Campaign also request that other NGOs express support where the opportunity presents – EG WWF. SEL.
- 3) The Campaign write to the Deer Commission expressing support for actions in Glenfeshie, including the DC's recent actions.

All these actions were carried out