

BIRSE PARISH DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Record of Autumn Meeting on 30th October 2013

Present: Malcolm Nicol and Peter Littlejohn (Ballogie Estate), Stuart Young and Robert Paterson (Birse Estate), Robin Callander, Doug Boyle and George Ritchie (BCT), Colin McClean (Glen Tanar Estate), James Scott (SNH) and Bradley Bourne (FCS)

Apologies: Andrew Farquharson and Hedge Shand (Finzean Estate), Paul Chapman (BCT), Ian Alcock (Shannel), Mike Thomson (RTS)

1. Introduction

The apologies were noted and no items raised for Any Other Business. Malcolm Nicol as Chair, recalled benefits of focused discussions and cooperation in BP DMG and gave an update on the position with the rest of EGDMG Sub-Area 3. He noted that the BP DMG area will continue to be part of the overall EGDMG area and that he will be attending the Executive meeting before the main EGDMG meeting in Finzean on 6th November.

2. Deer Management

2.1 Red Deer

In the discussion of deer numbers in different parts of the parish, it was noted that:

(a) While the number of deer in the Aven has reduced from c.200 at the start, there are apparently c.100 still there. Some stags from the head of the Allachy in Glen Tanar had come across to the rut in the Peter Hill area. RP reported that, since Glen Tanar removed its internal fence and opened up its lower ground in the 1990s, fewer deer have come across into Birse.

(b) Elsewhere in the parish, no large groups of 30 or more have been seen, apart from the 50-60 hinds in the Achnafoy / Kinminity area in July. The rut was drawn out and quiet compared to last year, with the deer just in small groups.

(c) Red deer are consistently seen in Slewdrum and there is heavy tracking in Craigbeg plantation, but no clear impression of the numbers in the area. FCS's contract controller in Blackhall is Derek Wedderburn.

(d) Ballogie Estate plans to clear the 20 or so red in the Carlogie area this winter, once their new strategic deer fence along the Cattie is finished. There is also a group of 40 or so deer in the Murley / Finzean West Woods area. Finzean have repaired the Glen Ferrick deer fence where it was destroyed by the wildfire in 2012, but still have some other parts of the fence to repair.

(e) Red deer are consistently seen in Balfour Forest, but not in large groups like last year. Few red have been seen on Birse Estate, with no stags heard on Birsemore Hill during the rut and also no complaints about red deer from farm tenants.

2.2 Roe Deer

MN noted that, while there is potentially a need for a higher level of roe cull, the Group's priority at this stage is reducing the number of red deer. It was noted that Birse are increasing their roe cull with more roe around and that, in Balfour Forest, the number of roe is still high despite the level of cull. RP reported two dead roe on Birsebeg earlier in the

year and raised the question of liver fluke. However, while this has increased in cattle locally over recent years, no-one had seen any sign of liver fluke in roe.

2.3 Related Information

(a) *Deer Fences*: It was agreed that RC will liaise with SNH and Ballogie Estate to produce a map of the deer fences in Birse parish and around its borders for the April DMG meeting.

(b) *Deer Vehicle Collisions*: JS tabled two maps showing SNH records for the area. It was confirmed that any deer recorded as killed by a vehicle collision should be included separately in culls returns.

3 **Other Species**

3.1 Red Grouse

It was noted that it had generally been a very successful grouse season with approximately 763 brace on Ballogie, 260 on Birse and 250+ on Finzean. It was reckoned that medicated grit has been used locally for 15-20 years and the general concern about the development of resistance with only one prescribed drug was discussed

3.2 Caper & Blk. Grouse

It was noted that while only one cock caper was seen on the regular lek survey, two were seen on a return visit and that black grouse numbers, while down on 2012, were still good compared to earlier years. It was agreed to circulate Paul Chapman's report from April.

3.3 Mink & Grey Squirrels

It was noted that there are no records of mink in recent years and that no grey squirrels have been reported during the year.

3.4 Pine Martens, Badgers & Hares

It was noted that there are more sightings of pine martens and badgers, that mountain hares seem to be increasing gradually and that brown hares are still present in their traditional areas.

3.5 Wildcats

It was noted that the three Estates and BCT have agreed in principle to the use of camera traps over the coming months by David Jenkins and Harry Scott to look for wild or large feral cats.

4. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.
