

BIRSE PARISH DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Record of Autumn Meeting on 26th October 2017

Members Present: Stuart Young, Robert Paterson and Josh Hooper (Birse Estate), Peter Littlejohn and Calum Robertson (Ballogie Estate), Andrew Farquharson, Alf Sorensen, Hedge Shand and Paul Tanner (Finzean Estate), Doug Boyle and Jane Winton (BCT), Robin Callander and George Ritchie (BTCO), James Stevenson (Shannel);

Others Present: Michael Bruce (SDNA DMG), Colin McClean (Glen Tanar Estate);

Apologies: Iain Hope (SNH), Michael Skelly and Willie Lamont (FCS), Malcolm Nicol (Ballogie), Paul Chapman (BTCO).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Stuart Young (SY) welcomed all as Chair and noted the five apologies received. Two items were noted for Any Other Business.

2. BP DMG Papers

- 2.1 It was noted that the Record of BP DMG meeting on 27th October 2016 was previously agreed.
- 2.2 It was noted that BP DMG Deer Management Report 2016-17 had been agreed and is available on the BCT website.
- 2.3 It was noted that the BP DMG Deer Management Plan had been extended from 3 years to 5 years (2014-19).

3. Current Deer Management

3.1 Red Deer

It was noted that the DMG's interim cull to 30th September of 88 red deer was on target for this stage of the year. It was reported that there are still around 50 stags and 75 hinds in Glen Aven and that numbers on the open hill in the Forest of Birse remained relatively low. While there had been limited issues with red deer on the low ground in Finzean, it was confirmed that there continues to be a major problem with the number of red deer on low ground in the northern half of the DMG area. It was reported that 100-120 red deer had been in the Balnacraig fields in September before moving to Glencat via Auchnafoy and then to the Birse area. It was considered that these deer are still moving around the area in smaller groups. It was also considered that this large group is continuing to increase in size each year, despite the cull effort to date. There was discussion of other possible approaches including setting up an enclosure for live capture or organising deer movement days as take place in some other countries. It was noted that there had been a poor rut in the DMG area this year.

3.2 Roe Deer

It was noted that the DMG's interim roe cull total to 30th September of 179 represented good progress towards the DMG's agreed roe cull target for the year. It was reported that roe were still relatively abundant and confirmed that members expect to reach their roe cull targets. It was noted that some leucistic roe deer with various patterns of white markings have been seen on Birse, Ballogie and Finzean Estates over recent years.

3.3 Related Information

- (a) *Deer Fences*: It was noted that no new deer fences are currently planned in the DMG area.
- (b) *Deer/Vehicle Collisions (DVCs)*: It was noted that there had been some DVCs involving roe but no more than usual and that there is not a particular location at present in the DMG area where DVCs are a specific issue.

4 **Brief Updates on Other Species**

- 4.1 Red Grouse, Black Grouse and Capercaillie: It was reported that it had been a particularly poor year for grouse on Birse Estate with none shot, while Ballogie and Finzean Estates had shot 320 and 60 braces respectively. It was thought that black grouse numbers had dropped slightly. It was noted that there had been small numbers of capercaillie at the Glen Ferrick and Newmill leks again this year.
- 4.2 Raptors, Brown and Mountain Hares: It was agreed that the summary of raptor breeding in the Birse parish area that has been provided for a third year by the North East Scotland Raptor Study Group, is a very positive and helpful initiative. It was noted that the local brown hare numbers are increasing and that white hares are numerous in the Forest of Birse.
- 4.3 Other Species: It was noted that the number of badgers in the area is continuing to increase, with them often using old fox dens. It was confirmed that there have been no signs of mink or grey squirrels.

5. **Any Other Business**

- 5.1 The Shannel: AF reported that, following the death of Ian Alcock, the Shannel is now managed by a Trust of which he, his brother and Brodies are Trustees. He confirmed that the Trust has agreed that JS will continue to control the deer on the Shannel.
 - 5.2 Sporting Rates: It was noted that some properties have received valuations for the re-introduction of sporting rates and that some owners are likely to appeal against their valuations.
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