

BIRSE PARISH DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Record of Autumn Meeting on 5th December 2022

Members Present: Andrew Farquharson, Hedge Shand (Finzean Estate), Catriona Walker (Birse Estate), Malcolm Nicol, Peter Littlejohn, (Ballogie Estate), Toni Watt (BCT), Jim Stevenson (Shannel),

Others Present: Iain Hope (NatureScot),

Apologies: Alison Bell (BCT), Toby Rider (BTCO), Robert Paterson, Drew Paterson (Birse Estate), Stuart Young (Birse Estate), George Ritchie (BTCO), Brian (Ballogie Estate), Jane Winton (BTCO)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Andrew Farquharson (AF) welcomed all as Chair. Apologies were noted and items were noted for Any Other Business.

2. BP DMG Papers

- 2.1 It was noted that the previously agreed record of the BP DMG meeting on 11th November 2021 is available on BCT Website.

4. Current Deer Management

4.1 Red Deer

The DMG's interim cull to 20th October of 101 red deer was noted. The rut seemed varied this year with Ballogie reporting a good rut with plenty of stags but very quiet in Finzean and Shannel, possibly due to deer fences hindering movement? Birse noted there had been changes in the management of volunteer effort on Birse estates with effort increasing next year in deer management.

4.2 Roe Deer

It was noted that the DMG's interim roe cull total to 20th October of 128 is about the same as last year with comments made that Jan- Mar is the best time to shoot roe. Ballogie noted plenty of bucks about in good condition, Finzean not seen many yet and Shannel all yearlings, no bucks seen at all.

4.3 Related Information

- (a) Andrew Cunningham interim keeper at Floors until spring when the post will be advertised.
- (b) Catriona Walker reported on a meeting of the estates / land managers north of the Dee aiming to map landownership / management of the area as a first step. Cull data not looked into yet.
- (c) Iain Hope reported the NatureScot's cull returns database was not ideal and is in the recommendations from the Deer Working Group to get better data, but not a straightforward process.
- (d) *Deer/Vehicle Collisions (DVCs)*: It was noted that there had been the usual amount, 3-4 DVCs involving roe and no more roe than usual spotted on the roads.
- (e) Glen Tanar fence was briefly discussed but no update on progress. The possibility of a western fence being helpful to the area as a whole was discussed.
- Andrew Farquharson has written to Michael Bruce on behalf of the BP DMG in support of the project and will update the group when he gets a reply

5 Brief Updates on Other Species

5.1 Red Grouse, Black Grouse and Capercaillie: The grouse numbers remained low this year, but Ballogie have seen slightly more Black Grouse. The Finzean rogue male capercaillie was found dead this year, but Hedge has seen a female and 2 young recently and believes there may be one male left.

Birse estate are talking to Aberdeen Trails Association to limit disturbance to the capercaillie area.

AF, MN & TW all attended parts of the Balmoral capercaillie meeting and habitat health seems crucial to any possible reintroductions and it may be the timing of insect larvae being plentiful that is impacting on Capercaillie and grouse numbers.

5.2 Raptors, Brown and Mountain Hares: The raptor report was circulated prior to the meeting and seems encouraging. There is a healthy population of brown hares but maybe not so many mountain hares this year, it will be easier to monitor in the coming weeks as they are only just turning white. There are more brown hares than rabbits.

5.3 Other Species: It was confirmed that there have been no signs of mink but the badger population seems to be increasing dramatically.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 The new fire training is being registered on Lantra so nothing to happen until the course is recognised. Need to keep communicating with the fire service and ensure they are invited to the next meeting. Two fires at Dunecht last year due to BBQ's.

Equipment and personnel list needs to be updated annually and forwarded to the fire service in February.

Birse putting on an Argo course – Catriona to circulate details. Action Catriona

6.2 Emergency mast going to planning, the proposed site is 16 and EE are running the consultation.

6.3 Iain Hope updated us with potential changes in the deer act e.g., lead ammunition but it will take time, 2-3 years, and probably be wrapped up with changes in wildlife legislation

Next meeting Date – Thursday 9th November 2023

To include: Glen Tanar, Michael Bruce, Fire Service personnel, Glen Dye,
