

BIRSE PARISH DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Record of Autumn Meeting on 9th November 2023

Members Present: Andrew Farquharson, Hedge Shand, Alf Sorensen (Finzean Estate), Robert Paterson (Birse Estate), Malcolm Nicol, Abby Nicol, Peter Littlejohn, (Ballogie Estate), Toni Watt (BCT), Jim Stevenson (Shannel), Mark Pearce (Balfour)

Others Present: Iain Hope (NatureScot), Alastair Griffiths (Fire Service), Michael Bruce, Adam Smith (Glen Tanar)

Apologies: Alison Bell (BCT), Stuart Young (Birse Estate), George Ritchie, Toby Rider, 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. Fire

Alastair Griffiths, (AG) spoke to the group, no real changes this year. Fire map has been circulated to all local stations, but we all need to update contact details. Should there be a central portal where we can all update contact details for fire service?

Malcolm Nicol, (MN), requested SFRS to institute a unified standard of fire maps for all fire groups / DMG's.

Michael Bruce, (MB) to send fire group list to AG.

MB updated the group on fires last year and locally on Dinnet Moor fire where there were access issues, but communications worked well.

It was noted that helicopter call out is a joint decision by property owner and fire service.

November 12th / 13th 2024 Annual Wildfire Conference to be held in Aberdeen. Volunteers will be needed. MB to email information around the group.

Fire Service possibility of getting on the ground training with the estate's keepers AG to follow up.

Iain Hope, (IH), could NatureScot Nature Restoration Fund be used for fire groups capital spend as wildlife and habitats are at threat from wildfire?

3. BP DMG Papers

- 3.1 It was noted that the previously agreed record of the BP DMG meeting on 5th December 2022 is available on BCT Website.

4. Current Deer Management

4.1 Red Deer

The DMG's interim cull to 20th October of 127 red deer was noted. The rut seemed varied this year with mainly small groups of red deer seen although Ballogie had more stags and reported plenty of roaring in cold weather. Overall, there seem to be smaller transient groups of red deer on all properties.

Adam Smith, (AS) Glen Tanar estate also reported the rut was up and down, good in cold weather and quiet in the warmer weather, and again with no big groups of red deer being seen.

Compared to helicopter counts AS reported they are “losing” 100 hinds a year indicating a lower calving rate than estimated on the hill, possibly due to weather patterns.

Deer Count is important, but was managed by Colin Mclean at Glen Tanar who has now left, how can it feasibly be resurrected given staffing levels?

4.2 Roe Deer

It was noted that the DMG's interim roe cull total to 20th October was 149. Again, numbers varied between the estates with Ballogie reporting slightly more bucks, Finzean had balanced numbers and Shannel very few.

4.3 Related Information

(a) MB reported on the difficulties the Glen Tanar Deer fence encountered with the various government and statutory bodies.

(b) MB reported on the use of Trico a new deer deterrent spray for young trees made of emulsified sheep's fat. Glen Tanar is trialling its use and spray rates, and it appears that conifers need 1 application in winter whereas broadleaves require 1 in winter and 1 in summer. Seems to be working well, supplied by Laronkarn.

(c) Iain Hope, (IH), NatureScot, reported on changes to the Deer Act with a key theme of updating and modernisation in the context of the other relevant countryside legislation

Main changes coming into place:

- Removing closed season for male deer.
- Legalising the use of night sights and thermal imaging only if you have authorisation from NatureScot to shoot deer at night. (It is not illegal to use thermal imaging / night sight during the day)
- Making it easier to use non lead ammunition.

IH noted there was a Venison Capacity Research Report published which he will pass on to be forwarded around the group.

There was a discussion on using a drone for woodland deer counting.

(d) *Deer/Vehicle Collisions (DVCs)*: It was noted that there had been just a few DVCs involving roe at Corsedardar and no more roe than usual spotted on the roads.

5 **Brief Updates on Other Species**

Anderew Farquharson, (AF), reported no capercaillie at all at the Finzean lek site.

AOB

Included in items above.

Next meeting Date – 7th November 2024 2pm