

Welcome

Richard Cooke, Chairman, ADMG

The ADMG Newsletter has a new name and a new look. This publication now becomes SCOPE, and its little brother, e mailed out on a regular basis, will become E-SCOPE in the near future. I hope that you like them and continue to find them helpful, useful and informative. Your comments and views are of course welcome and our contact address is on the back page.

A run down of the main articles contained in this issue features below while we cover a number of short news stories here on the front page and elsewhere in the publication. Most importantly, this SCOPE contains an interim report on the Stalking Benchmarking Survey where we explore what estates and deer forests are charging for their red stag and hind stalking. This survey is ongoing, and we would like a further 40 or more returns to allow us to build on these initial findings and publish a full analysis in our next Newsletter. If you have not yet completed and returned a survey form please do take a few minutes to do so – there is one at the middle of this issue that you can pull out. Thank you and read on.

Acharacle. Photo: Glyn Satterley



New Outdoor Events Guidance

Scottish Natural Heritage has published new guidance to help event organisers, land managers and public bodies to plan and manage events in Scotland that centre on outdoors recreation – such as walking, running, cycling, horse riding and canoeing. The 10 page booklet is available from www.snh.gov.uk



Boreland. Photo: Glyn Satterley

Photography for Stag Season Review 2011

ADMG is looking for at least two estates or deer forests that might be able to facilitate a visit by photographer Glyn Satterley to take pictures for the 2011 Stag Season Review sponsored by Knight Frank. The host locations will receive a selection of Glyn's pictures to use in their own promotional material or on their website. Interested? Contact dick@playfairwalker.com

SCSTG first foray to CLA Game Fair

The Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group (SCSTG) is exhibiting this summer at the CLA Game Fair at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire from 22 - 24 July.

Victoria Brooks, SCSTG Project Coordinator, comments: "In the past there has been no national representation of Scottish country sports at the world famous game fair - this has to change and the SCSTG intend to lead the way. As a nation we are extremely proud of our land and sport and we need to show it off a bit more!"

Inside SCOPE this time

2 Richard Cooke, ADMG Chairman, says that there is as much as ever to do in the deer sector

3 Finlay Clark, ADMG Secretary, reviews the ADMG position on the draft Code of Deer Management Practice for which the consultation period has just concluded

4 Interim Report on the Stalking Benchmarking survey undertaken by ADMG



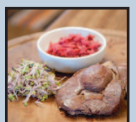
7 Dick Playfair reports on a well attended ADMG AGM at Kingussie in February

8 Sustainable Estates – Jayne Glass, Research Associate at the Centre for Mountain Studies, Perth College, UHI explains what is happening with this important project, now in its synthesis phase to UHI gives us an update on this important project.



10 The Scottish Venison Working Group becomes the Scottish Venison Partnership, and all the latest news from the venison sector

12 New recipes - Stalker's Pie and Venison Steak with horseradish and beetroot relish



There is, as ever, much to do in the deer sector



Richard Cooke, Chairman, ADMG

I feel very privileged to have been elected Chairman of ADMG at the AGM in February. Having been involved with the organisation since it was formed in 1992, I am proud of what has been achieved within the sector over the years. I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor Robert Balfour for his leadership of the Association, and the work he has done over the last six years - and in particular his contribution to the debate leading up to the Wildlife & Natural Environment Act, the outcome of which is that the voluntary principle survives meantime.

The initiative therefore remains with us to make the best of the unique resource that we manage and continue to do justice for Scotland's deer species into the future.

Robert played a leading part in persuading the Scottish Government that we could meet that challenge despite pressure from many quarters for a regulated approach. The legislation will be reviewed in five years and we have that period of time to demonstrate that deer can be managed sustainably, meeting our own objectives and taking proper account of the public interest in its broadest sense.

There is, as ever, much to do in the deer sector. Firstly, we have to address the immediate challenges of agreeing the Code of Practice on Deer Management, and the sector is working on developing existing training systems to demonstrate 'competence' as is also required by the Act.

There is also an immediate need to take on board the failure of a significant number of designated sites within the upland deer range to achieve favourable condition, and this needs to be addressed actively by DMGs at local level. ADMG will assist with this and I will make myself available whenever possible to attend DMG meetings. I have already been involved in a number of extremely constructive discussions at Group level in this regard and Ron Rose, seconded to ADMG by SNH, is now helping with a number of deer management plans.

There is likely to be a small number of DMGs that may not meet the requirements of the proposed Code of Practice, but the necessary improvements can easily be achieved if there is a willingness to communicate effectively, to compromise where necessary and to accept responsibility. However DMGs can only be effective if all landholdings within their areas are represented and play an active part and there can be no exceptions. I regard the Code as an opportunity to make things better - not as a threat of more interference, at least not if we can raise our game.

ADMG aspires to support and represent all deer managers of all deer species throughout Scotland and I believe there

is more to do in respect of the management of lowland deer. This is under active consideration at present and we also hope to bring forward soon an initiative that will be helpful to the professional and recreational stalkers, farmers, foresters, and local authorities who are involved with lowland deer management in Scotland.

As we make progress on these issues I look forward to your continuing support.



New Minister for Deer

Stewart Stevenson is the new Minister for Environment and Climate Change and assumes the responsibility for Scotland's deer following Roseanna Cunningham's move to the portfolio of Community Safety and Legal Affairs.

Stewart is MSP for Banffshire and the Buchan Coast. He retired from the Bank of Scotland as a Technology Director and was first elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2011. He served as Transport minister from 2007 – 2011.



New ADMG Project Officer

Ron Rose has been appointed as ADMG Project Officer splitting his time equally between SNH and ADMG. He is based in the SNH office at Battleby.

Since starting in his joint SNH/ADMG post, most of Ron's time has been spent meeting, listening and hearing about the challenges facing Deer Management Groups.

He says that there are some common themes emerging including how best to agree and deliver deer management plans, cull planning, carrying out Habitat Impact Assessments and looking at how DMGs should be structured to help ensure that sustainable deer management is delivered.

He will be working closely with the ADMG Executive Committee and colleagues in SNH to seek to prioritise key areas of work that are important in strengthening the voluntary approach and the work of the Deer Management Group structure.

Ron can be contacted on t 01738 444177 or e ronald.rose@snh.gov.uk

New on the ADMG Executive Committee

John Bruce (British Deer Society), Dr Justin Irvine (The Hutton Institute) and Douglas McAdam (Scottish Land & Estates) have agreed to be co-opted onto the ADMG Executive Committee.

Draft Code of Deer Management Practice out for short consultation



Finlay Clark

Earlier this year, the drafting of a Code of Deer Management Practice was the remit of an industry group - possibly one that was too broadly based to make anything other than slow progress. However, the former Minister for Environment, Roseanna Cunningham's deadline of September 2011 for the Code to be finalised and in place, meant that SNH took the drafting back in house while keeping its 'stakeholders' informed. The result in our view is now a hastily completed draft Code and a very limited consultation period of just six weeks that will, by the time of publication of this newsletter, have already concluded if ADMG's bid for an extension has not been successful.

We do acknowledge that the Code is a necessary requirement. ADMG argued through the preamble and the Committee stages of the WNE Act against a duty of statutory deer management, and one of the consequences of that success is the necessity of a Code. But do we think the Code as currently drafted will successfully deliver what it sets out to do? The jury remains out until we see the final version.



What is ADMG's view of the draft Code?

If we go back to basics, the purpose of the Code must be to link the 2009 paper 'Wild Deer – A National Approach' and the Best Practice Guidelines developed by the industry and that demonstrate how to carry out many aspects of deer management on a practical level.

The Code should also set out the criteria on which 'sustainable deer management' is based, allowing deer managers to satisfy themselves and demonstrate to the public that wild deer are being managed with regard to their welfare and their environmental, economic and social impacts.

The draft Code sets the scene well, but fails to define these criteria sufficiently. Indeed, it largely ignores the important contribution that deer and the deer sector make to the Scottish rural economy as well as extending into detail that would be better contained as a part of Best Practice, for instance the deer management planning process.

It also focuses largely on the management of red deer on the open range; however the WNE Act is concerned with the management of all deer species across Scotland, and in emphasis also there is an underlying tone that deer are a problem when in fact they are a national asset and an important economic resource. There is no recognition of this.

ADMG supports the objectives identified within the draft Code being consistent with 'Wild Deer - A National Approach'. However, there is an inherent difficulty in defining sustainability and agreeing management solutions over designated sites, especially where there are a number of qualifying features requiring different measures to be taken. ADMG accepts that there may be other aims such as the delivery of the Scottish Forest Strategy for example, but the social and economic impacts of forest expansion must also be weighed up against its impacts on other land uses including deer management.

The importance of dispute resolution is also not sufficiently recognised in the Code. One of the major breakdowns in effective, sustainable deer management at this time comes when neighbouring landholdings often with a range of different management objectives are unable to arrive at compromise to enable progress. However, the message clearly is that the sector must solve its own problems in this regard to avoid statutory intervention, and ADMG will work with individual DMGs to help in bringing local solutions forward.

Where the voluntary principle cannot be made to work, there are compulsory backstop measures available, but these must be seen as a last resort. The recent development and implementation of Section 7 agreements has more often resulted in effective collaboration and delivery of objectives, and we hope that such problem-solving solutions would continue to be employed before resorting to a heavier statutory approach.

ADMG regards the Code as of great significance to the deer sector and that therefore it is more important to get it right than to conclude its development hastily. We do not think that the abbreviated consultation time will allow the draft to be fully considered by all in the sector and ensure that full and constructive responses are returned to SNH. That request for an extension to the new Minister for Environment Stewart Stevenson MSP has not succeeded, it seems, thus making the timely and effective response of all those who have concerns about content of the draft Code even more relevant.

Stalking Benchmark Survey

Interim Analysis

Headlines

To date, 62 returns have been received for the survey. Of these, 5 returns were not usable, so this interim analysis is based on 57 returns from estates covering a total area of 531,645 hectares (1,313,724 acres).

The deadline for returns has been extended to generate a further target 40 responses. This should reinforce the initial findings of what is charged for stalking (red deer, stags and hinds) in Scotland, and the expectation of guests for what they pay, in addition to how estates market their stalking.

This is a summary of the key findings from the survey to date:



Boreland stag. Photo: Glyn Satterley

Stags

- The charge per rifle per day for stags ranges from £240 to £600.
- Estates providing both stalker and a ghillie charge on average £503 per day.
- Estates providing a stalker with no ghillie charge on average per day £377.
- 46 per cent of respondents let by the stag only. 22 per cent let only by the week.
- The number of stags shot per respondent range from 5 to 310, giving an average per estate of 46 stags let per year.
- The majority of respondents (52 per cent) recover stag carcasses by ATV. More recover carcasses by quad bike (11 per cent) than by pony (6 per cent). However, 30 per cent of estates use one or more methods.

Hinds

- The charge per rifle per day for hind stalking ranges from £50 to £360 with an average of £187.
- Estates providing a stalker and ghillie (30 per cent) charge on average £207.
- Estates providing a stalker with no ghillie (64 per cent) charge on average £180.
- The majority of respondents (46 per cent) recover hind carcasses by ATV. 10 per cent use quad bike, and only 2 per cent use a pony. 42 per cent use a mix of methods.

Accommodation

61 per cent of respondents let their stalking exclusive of accommodation.

Reimbursement for a blank day

63 per cent of respondents do not reimburse clients for an unsuccessful day.

Seasons

38 per cent of respondents start their stalking in August, with 36 per cent not starting until September. Only 19 per cent start in July, and 7 per cent do not go out until October.

Most estates start their hinds between 21 October and early November. The majority (44 per cent) finish hinds in February, 33 per cent finish in December, and 23 per cent finish in January.

Marketing

Repeat business is the most used mechanism for letting stag stalking (91 per cent) with other business being generated by word of mouth (77 per cent).

Repeat business also accounts for 84 per cent of hind lets, with word of mouth accounting again for 77 per cent in order of importance.

Provenance of guests

For stags, 46 per cent cite the rest of the UK (ie not Scotland) as most important; 29 per cent rank Scotland as most important; just under 20 per cent for Europe; and just under 2 per cent for the rest of the world.

For hinds both Scotland and rest of UK ranked equally at 44 per cent, with Europe ranked first by 12 per cent, and rest of the world failing to score.

ADMG Stalking Benchmark Survey Analysis 2011 – Interim Report

In association with
The Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group



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Introduction

With little consistency across the sector regarding what is charged for stalking lets, and no comparison between estates about their stalking business, the ADMG wished to ascertain prices which would be useful in helping individual estates determine what they should be charging for both red stag and hind stalking.

This first-ever Scottish stalking benchmarking survey was sent out with the ADMG Spring 2011 newsletter and on Scope to as many estates and deer forests across Scotland as possible. The survey covers red deer stags and hinds only.

With responses still being received, 62 returns form the basis of this initial report. Of those, five estates either submitted a nil return or a return that could not be used - either the estates don't let stalking or it is done by family members only. Some estates only let stags, some hinds, and some both. Some only answered some of the questions. Of those who submitted meaningful figures, the following conclusions have deduced:

1 How many sporting stags do you let per year?

Numbers ranged from 5 to 310, giving an average per property of 46 stags let per year. More than half of the estates let between 20 and 50 stags per annum.

2 Do you let by the stag, day, week or other?

25 let by stag only (46%)
5 let by day only (9%)
12 let by week only (22%)
Rest let by combination of stags/week/day/other.

3 How many hinds do you let per year?

Numbers ranged from 3 to 100, with an average of 33 hinds let per year.

4) Do you let by the hind, day, week or other?

4 let by the hind only (9.5%)
28 let by the day only (67%)
Rest let by a combination of all or 'other' (eg by the rifle).

5) How many days do you let stags in total?

The number of let stag days per return ranged from 3 to 210, or an average of 36 days. However 54% of estates reported lets of less than 30 days, with only 5 estates letting for more than 100 days. (These figures are distorted by estates with multiple beats letting more than 1 stag day per day).

6) How many days do you let hinds?

The range was between 3 and 25 days, giving an average of 18 days.

7) Do you charge extra for a trophy?

Out of the 54 estates that submitted a return, 49 do not charge for a trophy, 2 charge £20, 1 charges £35, and 1 estate from £600 - £2250 (it is assumed that this is for a 'trophy' stag).

8) How many let stags do you expect to shoot per day?

Respondents expected their clients to shoot between 1 and 4 stags per day, with more than 50% shooting only 1.

9) How many hinds do you expect to shoot per day?

All said between 1 and 5 (plus calves).

10 What do you charge per rifle per day and how do you present stag stalking?

Overall, prices charged range from £240 to £600 per rifle per day.

17 estates mostly use 1 stalker and charge between £300 to £490 per day, an average of £377..

27 estates mainly use 1 stalker plus 1 ghillie, and charge from £240 to £600, an average of £503.

8 estates use 1 stalker plus 2 ghillies and charge from £400 - £500.

11 How do you recover your stag carcasses mainly?

28 (52%) by ATV
3 by pony
6 by quad bike
1 by dragging
16 by mix of above

12) How do you present hind stalking and what do you charge?

The overall charges range between £50 and £360 per rifle per day, with an average of £187.

64% use 1 stalker only, and charge from £50 to £360 with an average of £180.

30% use 1 stalker plus 1 ghillie and charge £150 to £360, with average price of £207.

13) How do you recover hind carcasses?

22 (46%) by ATV
5 by quad bike
1 by pony
20 by mix of above

14) Do you let stalking inclusive of accommodation?

33 estates do not include accommodation (61%)
21 estates do include accommodation

Some let all-in deals for corporate entertainment

15) Do you reimburse clients for an unsuccessful stalk?

31 respondents do not reimburse clients.
18 do reimburse clients (between 30% and 100% of the charge).

Some respondents said it depended on the circumstances (eg weather). Some offer another day as reimbursement.

16) When does your stag season start and end?

The opening day, 1 July is the earliest start with most estates finishing on 20 October.

10 estates start 'sometime in July' (19%)
20 start in August
19 start in September
4 start in October.

17) When does your hind stalking start/end?

The earliest start is 21 October, and the latest finish is 15 February. Most estates start around late October or early November. A couple only do a short season (a week or a month).

14 estates finish in December
10 finish in January
19 finish in February

18a) How do you market your stag stalking?

Out of 53 estates:

48 said 'repeat business' (91%)
41 said 'word of mouth' (77%)
13 said 'advertising/websites' (25%)
20 said 'agents' (38%)
6 said 'Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group' (11%)
5 said 'ADMG stalking to let' (9%)

18b) How do you market your hind stalking?

Out of 44 estates:

37 said 'repeat business' (84%)
34 said 'word of mouth' (77%)
9 said 'advertising/websites' (20%)
6 said 'Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group' (13.6%)
2 said 'ADMG stalking to let' (4.5%)

19) Where do your stalking guests come from?

Stags

24 estates ranked the 'rest of UK' first (46%)
15 estates ranked 'Scotland' first (29%)
10 estates ranked 'Europe' first (19%)
2 estates ranked 'rest of the world' first (1.9%)

Hinds

18 estates ranked 'Scotland' first (44%)
18 estates ranked 'rest of UK' first (44%)
5 estates ranked 'Europe' first (12%)
None ranked the 'rest of the world' first

20) Approx area of ground for stalking

Stalking areas ranged from 1,848 acres (748 hectares) to 111,200 acres (45,000 hectares)
Average = approx 9,300 hectares (23,000 acres).

21) Additional comments

Around 20% of respondents mentioned problems with walkers (and to a lesser degree mountain bikers), with many stalking days being ruined.

Around 20 % of estates mentioned neighbouring estates with different management objectives (trees/regeneration, reduction culls or priority given to grouse moor management), reducing deer numbers (especially mature stags) and stalking income.

The winter of 2009/2010 affected deer numbers.

It was suggested that 'tipping' should be included in a future survey.



Association of
Deer Management Groups
(ADMG)

STALKING BENCHMARKING SURVEY

Phase II

In association with
The Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group



Sponsored by

BIDWELLS

Saffery Champness
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Work undertaken by Public and Corporate Economic Consultants (PACEC) in 2006 established the value of deer management to the Scottish economy. Now ADMG is looking in more detail into what is charged for stalking lets and how this varies by stalking experience. At present there is little consistency across the sector about what is charged, or what the market expects. The results of this survey will be helpful in determining these factors and should help individual estates to determine what they should be charging.

An interim analysis has been drawn up based on 57 complete returns from landholdings totalling some 531,640 hectares (1.3 million acres). Now we are seeking a further 40+ returns from estates and deer forests that have not previously responded to corroborate or finesse these initial findings.

This is the first in-depth benchmarking survey undertaken by the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) into the prices charged for stalking lets. This survey covers only red deer (stags and hinds); however it may be extended in future years to include other species.

It should not take long to complete this survey. All responses are treated as strictly confidential. Findings will be published in the next ADMG newsletter and in pdf form downloadable from the web.

Thank you.

STALKING BENCHMARKING SURVEY

1 On average how many sporting stags do you let per year?

2 Do you let (tick)

☐ by the stag ☐ by the week
☐ by the day ☐ Other

Additional comments:

3 On average how many hinds do you let per year?

4 Do you let (tick)

☐ by the head ☐ by the week
☐ by the day ☐ Other

Additional comments:

5 How many days do you let stags in total?

6 How many days do you let hinds in total?

7. Do you charge extra for a trophy?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what do you charge? £

Additional comments:

8. How many let stags do you expect to shoot per day?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 3+

Additional comments:

9. How many let hinds do you expect to shoot per day?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 3+

Additional comments:

10 How do you present your stag stalking and what do you charge on average per rifle per day? (tick only one)

Charge (£) inc VAT

☐ Stalker only per day £
☐ Stalker plus ghillie per day £
☐ Stalker plus 2 ghillies (eg ponyman) per day £

Additional comments:

11 How do you recover your stag carcasses (tick most used, or more than one if several used)?

☐ Pony ☐ Quad-bike
☐ ATV ☐ Drag to vehicle

12 How do you present your hind stalking and what do you charge on average per rifle per day? (tick only one)

Charge (£) inc VAT

☐ Stalker only £
☐ Stalker plus ghillie £

Additional comments:

13 How do you recover your hind carcasses (tick most used, or more than one if several used)?

Pony ☐ Quad-bike
ATV ☐ Drag to vehicle

14 Do you let your stalking inclusive of accommodation?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Additional comments:

15 Do you reimburse clients for an unsuccessful stalk?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'yes', under what circumstances?

If 'yes' what percentage of the fee do you reimburse?

16 When does your let stag stalking start and end?

Start date

End date

17 When does your let hind stalking start and end?

Start date

End date

18 How do you market your stalking (tick all used)?

Stags Hinds

Word of mouth ☐ ☐

Repeat business ☐ ☐

Advertising including website(s) ☐ ☐

Agents ☐ ☐

Scottish Country Sports
Tourism Group ☐ ☐

ADMG 'stalking to let' ☐ ☐

Other – please specify

19 Where do your guests come from (rank in order of most importance (highest importance 1, lowest 4, or leave blank if not important)?

Stags Hinds

Scotland ☐ ☐

Rest of UK ☐ ☐

Europe ☐ ☐

Rest of world ☐ ☐

20 Please use this space if you wish to include comments on population trends, other species of deer present, numbers of mature stags, presence of walkers, impact of different neighbouring management etc

22 Name

Address

County

Deer Management Group

Contact telephone

E Mail

Signature

Thank you for your help

PLEASE RETURN YOUR
COMPLETED SURVEY FORM TO:

Playfair Walker
Winton Loan
Edinburgh
EH10 7AN

Tel: 0131 445 5570
E: mail@playfairwalker.com



BIDWELLS

Saffery Champness
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

This survey is undertaken by Playfair Walker on behalf of The Association of Deer Management Groups. All information supplied will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties or attributed to specific estates or land holdings without prior permission being obtained.

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Carn Dearg House, North Road, Fort William PH33 6PP
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www.deer-management.co.uk

Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group
Croft Cottage, Trochry, Perthshire PH8 0DY
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www.countrysportscotland.com

Bidwells provides a fresh approach to the traditional business of land agency and property advice, reflecting major changes taking place in the rural economy today. A new range of skills and expertise are available to dovetail into the deep-rooted understanding of rural businesses of all kinds which is the cornerstone of our service.

Across the UK Bidwells manages, consults and offers strategic advice on over 1 million acres of farms and estates, and works with some of the UK's top performing rural businesses including individuals, trusts, colleges, charities and companies. With offices in Perth, Fort William and Inverness, Bidwells Scottish team is well placed to assist landowners in delivering their objectives.

Contact Clive Meikle, Bidwells Inverness office,
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Saffery Champness is one of the leading accountancy, tax and business adviser to landowners in the UK. Our Landed Estates Group is headed by a team of 15 partners who advise landowners, agricultural and rural businesses on financial and tax matters, particularly capital taxes, VAT and Trust issues.

In Scotland, Saffery Champness acts for and advises many leading landowners and rural businesses. Specialist sectors include agriculture, rural development, forestry, renewables and commercial sporting including deer management. We are well positioned with offices in Inverness and Edinburgh to service clients with interests the length and breadth of the country.

Contact Susie Swift, Saffery Champness Inverness office.
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Association of Deer Management Groups – AGM



Dick Playfair

The annual general meeting of the Association was held on Thursday 24 February at the Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie. This was the last AGM for Robert Balfour after six years as ADMG Chairman, with Richard Cooke confirmed at the meeting as his successor.



Dr John Fletcher.
Photo: Peter Keyser

The full session to a packed audience covered business including Scottish Government and the Wildlife & Natural Environment Bill (now Act); a report from the Scottish Venison Working Group; a talk on diversification and deer farming given jointly by John Fletcher and Alan Sneddon; a presentation from Michael Wigan of Borrobol on the changing habits of a red stag that took shelter in his woodland through the winter; a report on Heading for the Scottish Hills and the online pilot; and an update from Robbie Kernahan, Unit Manager Wildlife Operations, Scottish Natural Heritage.



Sir Michael Wigan Bt.
Photo: Peter Keyser

Robert Balfour in his Chairman's statement spoke of the final stages of the W&NE Bill, with stage 2 amendments for the Bill closing that week and the stage 3 debate following shortly afterwards. He said:

"I would like to put it on record that we are very pleased that Government has listened to most of our concerns expressed at a very early stage in the passage of the Bill.

"They have taken on board our concerns about the voluntary principle and you will note from the Bill that DMGs will remain voluntary; there will be no compulsion on them, but Government has made it very clear that if we do not deliver, then there will be an element of 'stick'. DMGs have to get their act together."

He said that he had written to the Minister to thank her for overseeing the passage of a Bill which "from a deer management point of view we think we can work with."

Robert also spoke about the National Trust for Scotland and Mar Lodge which had seen the introduction of a Section 7 agreement to bring an agreed way forward in an area of divergent management objectives.

He also spoke of issues arising in certain areas with regard to deer incursions in the National Forest Estate. He also thanked FCS for their continued support of ADMG, the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme and the Scottish Venison Partnership totalling some £28,000 per annum.



Full house. Photo: Peter Keyser

In looking back over his six years at the helm, Robert Balfour said:

"When I started, the subject top of the list was the seasons. We have moved a long way since then, and we now have the W&NE Bill - soon to become an Act - and the increased expectations of how DMGs should operate, and competence. Quality assurance was low down the agenda, but now more than 70 per cent of carcasses are produced under the Scottish Quality Wild Venison scheme.



Presentation to Robert Balfour by ADMG Vice Chairman Bill Bewsher, left. Photo: Peter Keyser

"Six years ago some DMGs barely functioned at all. We now have 90 per cent of DMGs producing a deer management plan. The Deer Commission for Scotland was in charge of deer from a Government point of view - a single species dealt with by one Government agency. Deer are now part of a much bigger organisation, are an integral part of wildlife management and dealt with by one organisation."

Bill Bewsher, ADMG Vice Chairman, thanked Robert for all his hard work during his term in office, particularly his successes latterly in working in the political sphere to deliver a broadly palatable W&NE Bill, his stance on competence, and his work on behalf of stakeholders in the amalgamation of DCS with SNH.

'Sustainable Estates' research results begin to emerge



Jayne Glass, Research Associate
Centre for Mountain Studies,
Perth College,
University of the Highlands and Islands

Overview

The Sustainable Estates for the 21st Century project has been going on at the Centre for Mountain Studies since late 2007, and includes four projects funded by the Henry Angest Foundation. It is now in its synthesis phase, which will continue into early 2012.

The overall aim of the project has been to integrate the concept of 'sustainability' into the management of large, upland estates in Scotland. This was in recognition of the fact that there has been little academic and policy attention paid to how different ownership types and management objectives relate to the principles of sustainability. Past work on estates has focused on individual estates or particular sectors, and little has been done since the Land Reform (Scotland) Act in 2003.

To ensure the on-the-ground relevance of the research, an Advisory Group helped to design the project and met with the researchers at intervals. The five group members represented key stakeholder groups (SRPBA, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Knoydart Foundation, Scottish Environment LINK) and the Scottish Government.

Four research projects with wide involvement

Over the course of the project, over 250 estate management professionals and other stakeholders have either completed questionnaires, taken part in interviews, or hosted the researchers on a selection of 'case study estates' across upland Scotland. The research team have recorded over 200 hours of interviews, which has given them a unique insight into a wide range of contemporary upland estate management sustainability priorities and challenges.

Pippa Wagstaff and Annie McKee have been studying private estate ownership and management. In 2008, they jointly conducted a major survey of private landowners who each own over 5000 acres (respondents owned 1.7 million acres of upland Scotland in total). Questions covered estate demographics, motivations for ownership, key values related to land management, as well as the opportunities and barriers to sustainable estate management. Using the results of this large survey to identify a smaller selection of estates, Pippa explored the motivations of several private landowners by working with owners who are motivated by various mixes of economic, social and environmental factors. Annie also used the questionnaire as a starting point for looking at the role of the private landowner in facilitating sustainable upland communities. Working with six 'good practice' case studies, Annie carried out a detailed investigation into the influence, interaction and engagement of private landowners with their 'estate communities'.



All photographs with this article Micah Stanbridge



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Perth College

Centre for
Mountain Studies

Rob Mc Morran has been studying large, upland, community-owned estates, with an in-depth review of the experiences of participants in community estate initiatives. In particular, Rob has identified the key drivers of buyouts and estate management, impacts of wider stakeholder involvement in buyout partnerships, and assessed the operation of estate partnerships.

Finally, Jayne Glass has been working on what is meant by 'sustainable upland estate management' in a practical sense. Jayne worked with a mixed group of estate management researchers, policy makers and professionals over the course of 18 months to develop a practical 'Sustainable Estates Toolkit' that can be used to understand how an upland estate delivers a series of sustainability goals.

Research into practice

The results of the four projects will be formally published over the next twelve months, although interested parties are welcome to contact the research team using the contact details below at any stage.

There will be two main outputs of the research which will be very relevant within the rapidly evolving rural policy context. First, a book entitled 'Lairds, Land and Sustainability' will be published by Edinburgh University Press in 2012. The book will be written for a wide audience and synthesise the results of all four projects in one comprehensive, readable volume. Second, members of the research team will be running a series of 'feedback workshops' across Scotland between August and October 2011. These workshops will offer the chance to hear more about the findings of research. There will also be the opportunity to contribute to the development of a short best practice handbook which will focus on how landowners interact and communicate with communities in upland Scotland.

For more information about the research, or to express an interest in attending the feedback workshops, please email Jayne Glass in the first instance:
jayne.glass@perth.uhi.ac.uk.

Alternatively, telephone the Centre for Mountain Studies on (01738) 877761 www.perth.ac.uk/mountainstudies



Scottish Venison Partnership launched at Blair Castle



Dick Playfair

The Scottish Venison Working Group changed its name to the Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP) and adopted a new Constitution at its first Annual General Meeting held at Blair Castle on Tuesday 3 May.

This now formalises the Scottish Venison Partnership as the organisation that brings together all the separate strands of the Scottish venison sector, and which is working to build and secure Scottish venison as a core-value brand.

Stephen Gibbs, who was elected Chairman of the Scottish Venison Partnership at its AGM says:

"The Scottish venison industry is made up of numerous players of all sizes who contribute in their own way to producing this world-renowned product. These range from the stalkers and deer forest owners to game dealers and processors and butchers who are ensuring that it is a first class product that reaches the consumer.

"The SVP pulls those strands together and compliments the individual efforts that have contributed to making Scottish venison the success it is today – but as important, we also wish to secure its place in the market for the future."

But the concerns of SVP go much further than marketing. Other areas the group is intent on addressing are quality (alongside SQWV) and supply. Specifically the aims of the Partnership have been identified as: increasing consumer and market demand for Scottish venison both at a national and local level; promoting co-operation, good practice and efficiency across the industry to build confidence in the brand and to ensure continuing

demand; liaising with the Scottish Government, and its respective departments and agencies, on Scottish venison issues; and coordinating and communicating sector views and developments both internally and externally.

One of the Partnership's key measures of success is to increase significantly the volume of Scottish venison produced, processed and consumed in Scotland by 2015.

The Scottish Venison Working Group was first formed in 2004 with its main aim to promote the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) scheme under which more than 70 per cent of venison produced in Scotland is now accredited.

But since that time it has been involved in a number of other separate initiatives and campaigns, and provided a forum for all quarters of the industry to discuss and make representation on relevant issues and concerns.

SVP's expansion into marketing, PR and other areas such as research also stems from Government Ministers encouraging the sector to become better organised, and more cohesive. The SNP administration has previously given tremendous support to Scottish venison recognising its flagship brand potential as well its fitting neatly with a number of their own strategic objectives on sustainable economic development and social well-being.

The Partnership currently comprises:

- Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG)
- Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)
- British Deer Farms and Parks Association (BDFPA)
- Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)
- Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association (SFMTA)
- Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA)
- Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
- Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV)
- Other co-opted members



Members of the newly formed Scottish Venison Partnership before their first AGM at Blair Castle in May, left to right, Willie Lamont, Forestry Commission Scotland; Christian Nissen, Highland Game; Johnny Morison, Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV); John Fletcher, British Deer Farms and Parks Association (BDFPA); Will Boyd Wallis, Cairngorms National Park Authority; Alan Sneddon, BDFPA; Pete Moore, SNH; Stephen Gibbs, Chairman, Scottish Venison Partnership; Bruce Brymer, Scottish Craft Butchers; Ali Loder, BDFPA; Leo Barclay, SQWV; Bill Bewsher, ADMG; George Macdonald, Scottish Gamekeepers Association.

According to Mintel, sales of venison across the whole UK rose from £32M in 2006 to £43M in 2009, an increase of over 34 per cent, and the focus of SVWG has latterly shifted towards promotion, PR and increasing awareness of Scottish venison as a generic brand across a range of targets UK wide – trade (restaurant, catering, retail), and consumer to underpin its major contribution to this uplift.

A main priority has been to develop, launch and maintain the website www.scottish-venison.info as the definitive information source for Scottish venison, the sector and the product.

In addition, SVP has set up an annual focus for Scottish venison in the UK food calendar with 4 September launched in 2009 as 'Eat Scottish Venison Day' and which this year will be trailed with a special event in the Cairngorms National Park area.

Last year *Scottish Venison: An Industry Review* was commissioned. Funded by the Scottish Government this substantial report explores the position of Scottish venison in a global market context, its opportunities and threats, and makes recommendations about what needs to be done over the next 5 – 10 years to meet growing demand and increase efficiencies across the sector.

Despite demand well outstripping supply, SVP will also continue to sustain a promotional programme to encourage further penetration, maintain awareness, and build the Scottish venison brand to a point where it has across-the-board recognition from consumer and trade.

The work of the Scottish Venison Partnership continues to be generously funded by contributions from its members including SNH, SQWV, FCS and CNPA, supported by the 1p/kilo levy agreed by all producer members of ADMG.

A round up of recent stories from the Scottish venison sector

SQWV makes scheme more attractive to smaller producers

Scottish Quality Wild Venison, the quality assurance accreditation scheme for wild venison, is changing its subscription levels. Some game dealers pay a bonus for quality assured venison and SQWV's new pricing means that all quality assured venison can benefit. For example, the new subscription for a producer of up to 25 carcasses is just £50 with that for 26 – 75 carcasses £75. More information from www.sfgc.co.uk

Roe deer venison served at GWCT Scottish Auction dinner

Roast haunch and braised loin of roe deer gifted by Highland Game was on the menu for the 400 guests attending the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust Scottish Auction Dinner at Prestonfield House, Hotel, Edinburgh on 12 May.

Prepared by Prestonfield House head chef John McMahon, the roe venison was served on a beetroot gratin with honey roast parsnip and traditional rumbledethumps! Denzil Skinner, Chairman of the GWCT Scottish Auction, said:

"This is the first time in 23 years that venison has been served at the dinner. The meat was tender, pink and delicious and went down a storm with the guests. We are hugely grateful to Highland Game for generously providing such wonderful venison."

www.highlandgame.com

News from Balagowan

Winston Churchill Venison now has its online shop up and running with a new barbecue pack available for the summer season.

Apprentice butcher Peter has now passed all his exams and is fully qualified. Winston Churchill Venison now also produces a regular newsletter keeping those interested up to speed with what is happening on the estate and in the shop including a feature on TV on Countrywise. Sign up for it at www.winstonchurchillvenison.com

Venison Masterclass DVDs from Nichola Fletcher

Renowned venison chef Nichola Fletcher has produced a new venison masterclass DVD set explaining different cuts and joints, how to select the most suitable venison for every style of meal, flavour pairings, a wealth of simple but clever tips and 19 step-by-step recipes. The two DVDs contain 4 hours of material. Great for cooks of any level, the DVD can be ordered through: www.seriouslygoodvenison.co.uk or www.bds.org.uk

BDFPA urges parkland owners to farm more deer

The British Deer Farms and Parks Association (formerly the British Deer Farmers Association) is urging deer park and parkland owners to farm their deer in order to help meet the shortfall in venison supply in the UK. The association says that a 25 per cent rise in demand annually has provided an opening for deer park and parkland owners with red and fallow deer.

BDFPA says it will offer help to parkland owners and farmers to ensure that their operations are viable.

BDFPA Vice Chairman Nigel Sampson said: "Venison demand is seeing unprecedented growth across all sectors in of the UK retail, catering and online markets. But the dearth of home-grown product presents an opening for New Zealand's deer farming industry – the largest in the world." www.bdfpa.org

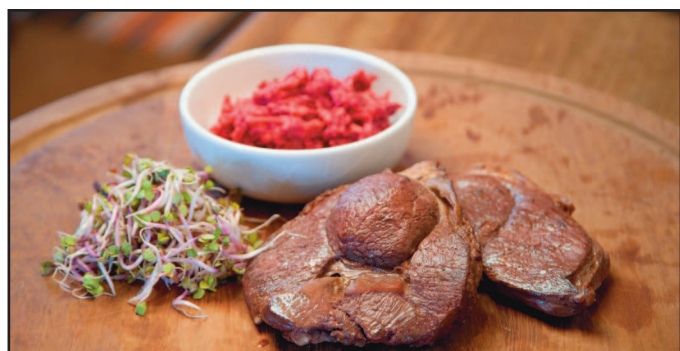
Venison Steak with horseradish and beetroot relish - Serves six

by Amy Willcock

(and with thanks to the Shooting Gazette)

Ingredients

6 venison steaks
4 medium beetroots, peeled and cooked (you can buy them like this)
150g grated fresh horseradish (or a little more or less to taste)
275ml rice or white wine vinegar
125g caster sugar
1tsp sea salt



Method

The relish is all about the balance of flavours that suits you, so the quantities are as a guideline only. A relish is uncooked or semi cooked and is not a true preserve. Don't put relishes in airtight jars as they may explode as they ferment!

Grate the beetroot and put in a bowl with the grated horseradish. Set aside.

Pour the vinegar, sugar and salt into a saucepan and bring to the boil for a minute. Taste and adjust the seasoning. It should be a sweet, sour and salty balance. Pour the pickling mix over the beetroot and horseradish and fork it through gently to mix. Cover the bowl with clingfilm and put in the fridge overnight (or for up to three days before serving).

Just before cooking the steaks, remove the relish from the fridge and spoon some into a bowl. If there is any free liquid drain it off and put it back with any leftover relish. Cook the steaks in a cast iron griddle pan as you like them - about two minutes per side depending on size, and transfer to a warmed plate to rest for at least 5 minutes. Serve with the relish and a radish sprout salad.

Amy Willcock lives on the Isle of Wight and writes for Shooting Gazette. She has also written a number of cookery/country living books.



Jeremy Wares - Stalker's Pie

Serves four

Jeremy Wares, Michelin-awarded chef and former owner of Perth's 63 Tay Street

and The Anglers Inn, Guildtown, with wife Shona has produced a new Gourmet food range which can be ordered on-line and delivered to your home.

A Master Chef of Great Britain, Jeremy has cooked for celebrities including Michael Caine, Liam Neeson and Joanna Lumley - and President Mitterrand. But whether cooking for princesses, actors or patrons in Perth, he is just keen to deliver good old-fashioned tasty dishes like Stalker's Pie, featured here.

"It's all about the quality and taste for me. I have a passion for food and since I was diagnosed with Parkinson's at 36, I realised I couldn't keep working the 16-hour days you need to put in to run a top restaurant. But I am determined not to let this condition stop me. It doesn't have to. I launched the gourmet range so that people can enjoy the taste of fine dining in the comfort of their own homes at a fraction of the price."

For the full home dining range see www.jeremywaresfood.co.uk

"All the produce that we use is locally sourced and it's free from artificial preservatives, colourings and additives. It's good wholesome, healthy food," he says.

Contact Jeremy direct on info@jeremywaresfood.co.uk or call **01738 624284**.

Ingredients

2000g Mash (potatoes, milk, butter)	20g Olive Oil
1000g venison mince	20g balsamic vinegar
500g Beef Stock	10g tomato puree
100g carrots	50g celery
100g turnip	Salt
20g flour	Pepper

Method

Fry off mince, when browned add the vegetables and cook for a further 5 mins. Add the tomato puree and the flour. Cook out the flour then add the stock, cool and top up with mash. Place in a hot oven for 40 minutes or until piping hot.

Mash, steam or boil potatoes till soft, then add butter and milk to the mashed up potatoes, salt and pepper to taste. Delicious.

Newsletter produced by

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