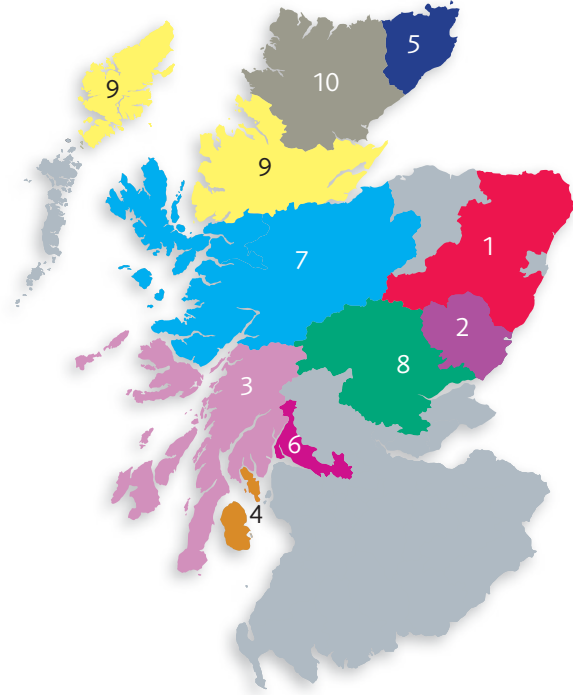


# ADMG - Knight Frank 2009 STAG SEASON REVIEW





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The Association of Deer Management Groups is the representative body for deer forest owners and deer managers in Scotland. [www.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.deer-management.co.uk)

Front cover: *Spying, Kingie, Inverness-shire*  
 Back cover: *Stag on the skyline, Kingie*  
 All photography by Glyn Satterley, [www.glynsatterley.com](http://www.glynsatterley.com)  
 except pages 8 and 9 by Angus Forbes [www.amforbes.com](http://www.amforbes.com)



Knight Frank is delighted to continue its support of the annual Stag Season Review which is now in its 5th year since the Association of Deer Management Groups jointly with Tony Jackson and Shooting Times took on the task of sourcing the data from deer forests all across Scotland and providing the analysis and narrative.

The report continues the work of Kenneth Whitehead who died in 2004, whose annual stag season reports were held in high regard, and who himself wrote for Shooting Times for more than 50 years.

This year we have received a record number of entries, but we still have a way to go before we can claim to have every relevant landholding returning a form. That apart, the 2009 list is impressive.

This year we have included a response card. If your stag numbers are not yet included, or you do not receive the necessary form from your deer management group, do use it.

E mail addresses will ease the gathering of data, and the broadening circulation of ADMG's online news bulletin, Scope, if you do not already receive that. As an incentive to encourage your comments and response we will be awarding a case of Knight Frank Champagne to one respondent drawn out of a hat. The draw will be made on the ADMG stand at the Scottish Game Fair in July.

It remains for me to say that Knight Frank, through our offices in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Lauder and of course London would be delighted to talk to you about your rural property needs. We have a pedigree of involvement in the sale and purchase of estates, farms and rural property on behalf of our clients, and offer valuations for a wide variety of purposes.



We look forward to the next five years.

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North Uist



# 2009 RED STAG REVIEW

The red stag review from across Scotland tells of deer in good health after summering exceptionally well. **Tony Jackson** presents the reports.

Perhaps the most significant thing to emerge from the 2009 red stag review is the fact that with very few exceptions stags seemed to have summered extremely well. Most forests reported deer in good to excellent condition with reasonable body weights and plenty of fat, even towards the end of the season when stags are run. As usual there was no consistent pattern to the rut and though the first roars were heard from early to mid September, in many cases stags did not break out until the beginning of October.

The weather showed no consistent pattern. Some forests reported a very wet September and then milder conditions in October with low cloud and mist. Hardly any days were lost apart from a few to hillwalkers ignoring signs and causing disturbance. However, many forests avoided problems of this kind so there are some indications that walkers are beginning to co-operate with estates.

## Aberdeen-shire

Several forests reported an early start to the rut at the beginning or middle of September, but for some it started later. Colin McClean, stalker at Glen Tanar, recorded the first roar on 5 September, whereas Ian Campbell, stalker at Mar Estate, reported that the rut did not get underway until 12 October. For most forests, however, the rut was in full swing by early October. Weather conditions were generally good with westerly or south-westerly winds. There were only a few wet days and it was not too warm for comfortable stalking. The condition of deer was described by almost every forest as good, but at Mar Lodge Estate, though deer were in reasonable condition, weights were disappointing. Michael Falconer, stalker at Glen Callater, reported seven blank days and scarcity of mature stags, with hind numbers well down due to heavy culling enforced by the Deer Commission for Scotland. Mar Estate reported disturbance by walkers.

## Angus

Fred Taylor, stalker at Invermark, reported a normal rut starting at the end of September. At Tulchan, according to stalker W Mearns, the rut was early and lasted several weeks. The stags were in good condition with plenty of fat over their kidneys. Nicholas Gibb, stalker at Glenisla, noted that the weather was milder than usual. The weather at Invermark was mostly good with dry conditions and only a couple of days of mist. At Tulchan, September was warm and sunny.

## Argyll and Dumbartonshire

Generally the weather conditions for the Argyll forests were persistently rainy with hill mist through most of August and September, followed by fair conditions from the latter part of September to the end of the season. Mark Brown, stalker at Castles and Glen Strae, summed it up as "rain, mist, hail, swirling winds, sunshine and more rain – a typical West Coast stag season".

For most forests, the rut commenced in the middle or end of September, though for some it did not get underway until the middle of October. The majority of forests reported that stags were in good condition with plenty of body fat even towards the end of the season. Only one forest, Ardtornish, reported weights down and less fat. Niall Rowantree, stalker at Ardnamurchan, had an excellent season with some of the finest stags seen in years – 13 weighed more than 20 stone. Hillwalkers caused relatively few problems, though paragliders jumping from the high tops at Black Corries created some disturbance on the last Saturday of the season. Stalker D McPhee reported that ticks were very bad in some areas at Dunlossit on Islay.

In Dumbartonshire, The rut began on 28 September on the Garabal Estate, and stalker Ove Wolff Madsen reported that deer were in very good condition. However, it rained on five out of eight days' stalking.

## Arran and Bute

Alastair Chalmers, stalker at Dougarie, recorded a late rut with the first roar heard on 21 September. The stags were in very good condition, but following the wettest August in 20 years, low mist made several days impossible. There were no problems with access except during a designated walking weekend in September.



*Going ashore, Kingie*

## Caithness

The rut got underway at the beginning of September and on Sandside Estate it was over by 20 October. Most forests reported deer in good condition, though stalkers J Miller and J Bain from the Braemore and Langwell Estates noted that though deer were in reasonable condition, they were not as good as in the past two seasons. F McKay, stalker at Glutt, recorded reasonable weather and no days were lost; Sandside had only a few clear days.

## Inverness-shire

The majority of forests reported a good to very good rut. For many, the first roars were heard in the middle of September, though at Achnacarry North, the first stag with hinds was shot on 11 September. Graeme Macdonald from Alvie Estate recorded the first roar on 29 September and the best rut in four years, but at Ben Alder it was slow to start and then patchy.

At Coignafearn, stalker Sandy Dey recorded a very late start on 9 October and there was a similar situation at Erchless with a late rut, which never really got going.



Glenbanchor reported a steady rut with more mature stags than in past years, and this was also the case at Glenaladale. At Glenquoich the first roar was heard on 14 September and though there was a slow start with big stags holding hinds, there was a great deal of activity in the last two weeks. There was a short rut at Struy and though there were a good number of mature stags on the ground, few were exceptional. Nearly every forest reported stags in good to very good condition, with plenty of fat and weights holding up until the very end of the season. This was probably due to the damp summer producing plenty of grass. The weather conditions varied a great deal from forest to forest, but overall it was wet, windy and misty with the odd fair, dry day. Alan Currie, stalker at Achdaliu, described the wet and misty weather as "rubbish", whereas at Coignafearn the season was mild and reasonably dry with strong, west winds. At Glenbanchor there were some still days, then howling gales, and four days were lost to mist at Glen Mama. Stalker at Killiechonate, A Walker, noted a terrible season with almost unrelenting mist and rain.



Heading home, North Uist

Whereas many forests reported no problems with hillwalkers, several suffered from an increase in walkers, climbers and mountain bikers. Signs saying that shooting was in progress were ignored and there was an increase in litter. Year round disturbance at Glenquoich resulted in empty corries. A stag was shot on 8 October at Kingie in full velvet.

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest
<b>ABERDEENSHIRE</b>						
Balogie	Mr R and Mr M Nicol	Various	Peter Littlejohn	12	14-04	20-03
Glenmuick	Sir Andrew Walker-Okeover	N/a	A B Taylor	79	13-03	18-10
Glen Tanar	Michael Bruce	N/a	Colin McClean	78	14-01	23-06
Invercauld	Baddoch	N/a	Colin Farrel	26	14-00	17-01
	Glen Callater	N/a	Michael Falconer	51	13-07	16-03
	Home	N/a	John Cruickshanks	41	13-08	16-10
	Invercauld Trust	Mr D Pennell	Ian Campbell	51	14-00	17-00
Mar	Mark Nicolson	N/a	Stewart Cumming	87	12-00	17-05
Mar Lodge Estate	National Trust for Scotland	N/a				
<b>ANGUS</b>						
Glenisla	Major J P O Gibb	N/a	Nicholas Gibb	13	13-09	16-02
Glenlethnot	Edimore Trading Ltd	N/a	Gavin Hannam	-	-	-
Invermark	Earl of Dalhousie	N/a	Fred Taylor	102	13-06	17-12
Tulchan	Not given	N/a	W H Mearns	130	13-12	17-12
<b>ARGYLL</b>						
Ardchonnell	Sir J McGrigor Bt MSP	N/a	-	0	-	-
Ardkinglas	D Sumsion	N/a	Jason Ferguson	51	9-02	13-10
Ardnamurchan Estates inc Glenborrodale						
Ardnamurchan Estates	Various		Niall A Rowantree	76	16-01	26-07
Ardtornish	Ardtornish Estate Ltd	N/a	Simon Boulton	21	15-01	17-05
Argyll Estates	Duke of Argyll	N/a	Tom Kirsop	57	09-05	20-04
Black Corries	Vicomte Adolphe	N/a	D P Thomas	45	13-07	17-09
	de Spoelberch					
Blackmount	P Fleming	N/a	A Macdonald	85	13-10	18-01
Blairghour Farm	Firm of Ernest Crawford	N/a	-	7	-	-
Castles	Mr D Rees	N/a	Mark Brown	7	13-07	15-07
Dalness Estate	R J Fleming	N/a	Alastair Hunter	8	14-03	15-05
Druidraig	H I Macrae	N/a	Ian Culbertson	10	13-08	
Dunlossit Estate	Dunlossit Trustees Ltd	N/a	D J MacPhee	33	14-03	20-07
Glencoe and Dalness	National Trust for Scotland	N/a	John Macdonald	32	13-08	19-07
Glenetive	P Fleming	N/a	Ian Dingwall	8	13-08	16-05
Glenforsa (Mull)	Glenforsa Estate	N/a	G Waugh	20	14-01	22-00
Glen Strae	R D Schuster	N/a	Mark Brown	21	13-05	17-03
Inverinate Estates	Killilan	N/a	Andrew Slaughter	96	13-08	18-05
	West Benula	N/a	Andy Drummond	62	13-08	17-05
	Inverinate Beat	N/a	Duncan Macleod	65	14-03	21-01
Laggan Estate, Isle of Islay	Laggan Properties Ltd	N/a	Neil Park	25	13-06	20-00
Shiel Bridge	S Holman and others	N/a	Doug Macdonald	22	14-08	20-03
Strone	Jonny Turnbull	N/a	Jonny Turnbull	34	12-08	18-08
<b>ARRAN AND BUTE</b>						
Dougarie	S C Gibbs	N/a	Alastair Chalmers	38	14-12	19-10





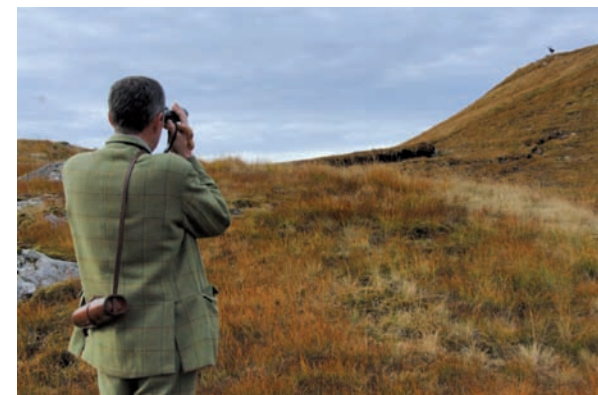
Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest
<b>CAITHNESS</b>						
Braemore Estate	Welbeck Estates Company Ltd	N/a	J Miller	40	14-02	19-00
Dunbeath	S W Threipland	N/a	W Milne	61	15-06	22-03
Glutt	S W Threipland	N/a	F Mackay	22	14-03	17-12
Langwell Estate	Welbeck Estates Company Ltd	N/a	J Bain	55	14-09	20-04
Sandside Estate	Geoffrey Minter	N/a	Alan Sandison	15	14-06	18-08
<b>DUMBARTON-SHIRE</b>						
Garabal	Turo Daugard AS	N/a	Ove Wolff Madsen	9	-	-
<b>INVERNESS-SHIRE</b>						
Achdalieu	West Highland Woodlands	N/a	Alan Currie	32	14-11	18-00
Achnacarry North	D A Cameron of Lochiel	Various	Alex Macdonald	57	14-13	18-12
Achnacarry South	D A Cameron of Lochiel	Various	Brian Green	37	14-04	18-13
Alvie Estate	Alvie Trust	N/a	Graeme Macdonald	33	13-02	17-05
Ardgour Estate	R MacLean	J Guthrie	Iain Laing	32	13-11	17-13
Ardverikie	Ardverikie Estate Ltd	N/a	Dougie Langlands	134	13-08	18-06
Barisdale	R & J Gordon	N/a	Craig Harbison	19	14-08	17-01
Ben Alder	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Ian Crichton	62	13-08	16-03
Camusrory	The Hon Rupert Soames	N/a	Victor Stockwell	11	15-12	18-02
Coignafearn	Coignafearn Estate	Various	Sandy Dey	160	14-07	18-08
Conaglen Estate	J Guthrie	N/a	Ross MacLean	41	14-08	20-13
Culachy	Management Ltd	N/a	Scott Bremner	46	14-10	18-02
Dalmigarry	Dalmigarry Estates Co Ltd	N/a	Allan Hodgson	8	12-02	14-07
Dalwhinnie	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Iain Macdonald	17	13-03	15-03
Dell Estate	J P G Finnis	N/a	Colin Barclay	17	13-04	15-05
Dunachton	J Forbes-Leith	N/a	Andrew Drummond	39	10-07	12-11
East Benula	R Turcan & Partners	N/a	Angus Hughes	20	15-06	17-00
Erchless	E M W Robson	N/a	George Fraser	23	13-01	15-06
Glenaladale	R G Cheape	N/a	David McCauley	15	14-00	17-00
Glenbanchor	Glenbanchor Estate	N/a	Jim Grant	36	14-00	17-00
Glen Mama	Dr D F Berardelli	N/a	Paolo Berardelli	18	14-00	15-08
Glenmazeran	The Englefield Estate	N/a	James Irvine	31	14-09	17-09
Glenquoich	D Gordon	N/a	Lea Macnally	34	13-12	15-12
Glenshero	Rio Tinto Alcan	Various	Bruce Hendry	98	12-13	18-02
Glenshiel	Burton Property Trust	Colin Campbell	Colin Campbell	34	11-00	13-00
Glenspean Estate	Mr S Smith and Mr A Bruce	N/a	Phil Hoare	15	-	-
Kilchoan	Mr E Delwart	N/a	Iain Biggart	32	15-01	22-04
Killiechonate	Rio Tinto Alcan	Various	A Walker	42	13-12	16-08
Kingairloch	Kurt Larson	N/a	Ewen Kennedy	50	15-01	21-00
Kingie	I & H Brown	N/a	John Cameron	24	15-02	17-06
Kinloch Hourn	H Birkbeck	N/a	Donald Cameron	16	13-12	16-00
Knoydart	Knoydart Foundation	N/a	Jim Brown	50	14-11	18-08
Lochailort	Mr and Mrs T Leslie	N/a	Archie Gillies	20	14-06	19-02
Morar Forest	Ian Bond	N/a	Alex Mackay	35	15-00	23-04
Nevis	Nevis Estates Ltd	N/a	R MacKinnon	12	-	-
North Morar Estate	Ian Bond	N/a	Alex Mackay	33	14-12	23-04
Pitmain	Not given	N/a	Graham Mabon	24	13-04	15-12
Struy	Angus Spencer-Nairn	N/a	Roddy Legge	27	14-02	16-00

## Perthshire

There were mixed reports on the rut. The majority of forests recorded first roars in early to mid and occasionally late September, but with stags not really breaking out until early October. Camusericht reported a good steady rut, as did Cluniemore. Stags were still rutting at the end of October at Atholl (Dalnamein), while at Remony a stag was still roaring on 6 November. On the whole, it was a good rut. James Barrie, stalker at Glenlochay, noted an intermediate rut. There was a lot of roaring and then nothing, but the deer were in very good condition with lots of fat. Most stalkers reported stags in good to very good condition, though weights tended to drop fast towards the end of the rut in some forests. Several noted fewer ticks than usual. George Coyne, stalker at Suie, reported that stags were in the best condition seen for years.

For many forests, August and much of September was wet. However, drier conditions then prevailed with westerly winds below low mist and fog caused problems for some forests at the end of the season.

Though the majority of forests reported little or no disturbance from hillwalkers, several experienced an increase in walkers, dogs on the loose and an increase in litter. Camusericht had seven days totally ruined by hillwalkers, with gates forced open and fencing wrecked.



Stag against a perfect sky, Kingie



**Ross-shire**

For many forests the rut began early, with the first roars heard from mid to late September, but at Inverbroom, gales and rain delayed the rut by about ten days. At Kildermorie, stalker Dougie Russell reported an unusual rut with no obvious peak, which was over by 19 October. At Laudale, stags were roaring from early September into November. Every single forest, with the exception of one, reported stags in good to very good condition. However, at Inverbroom they were all well down on the usual weight and never attained peak condition.



*Spying, Ardkinglas, Argyll*

The weather, like the curate's egg, was only good in parts. Several forests reported drier than usual conditions, others a great deal of rain, low cloud and mist. It was wet and windy for most of September. There was snow on the 24th at Dundonell, but Inverbroom had a drier than usual season. Most forests reported few access problems, but several noted excessive disturbance with walkers showing a complete disregard for stalking. At Strathconon there was an increase in litter left on pony paths and markers were knocked down.

**PERTHSHIRE**

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest
Acharn	A N B Baillie-Hamilton	Keith Hall	Keith Hall	9	6-11	8-08
Atholl	Clunes Bruar Trust	Various	Ronnie Hepburn	66	13-06	16-10
	Bruar Trust	Various	D Morrogh-Bernard	36	13-02	15-05
	West Hand Forest Lodge	Various	Graeme Cumming	47	13-07	18-08
	Dalnamein	Various	Richard Fraser	92	13-02	17-09
Auch	Bruar Trust	Various	Kevin Grant	69	12-13	16-03
Auchlyne	Mr Adam Besterman		J Campbell	15	12-04	16-12
Ben Lawers NNR	Mrs E Patterson	Various	George D Coyne	22	13-06	16-12
(Lawers and Morenish)	National Trust for Scotland	N/a	Andrew Warwick	21	7-12	12-07
Camusericht	Agro Invest Overseas Ltd	N/a	George A Macdonald	55	13-13	18-04
Clunimore	Pitlochry Estates Trust	Various	Brian Troup	20	15-02	18-10
Corrievarkie	Agro Investments	Various	Richard MacGregor	25	12-05	16-09
Craiganour	Astel Ltd	N/a	David Olds	78	12-02	16-00
Dunalastair Hill and Crossmount	I C de Sales La Terriere	N/a	Mark Mackenzie	46	13-07	20-02
Dunan	Hamish McCorquodale	N/a	David Rankin	46	14-07	19-02
Edrynate	Michael Campbell MBE	DL Alex Cargill	Alex Cargill	8	10-05	14-04
Glenartney	Baroness Willoughby	N/a	Alistair Work	136	13-09	18-04
Glenlochay	Struan Robertson	N/a	James Barrie	60	12-04	18-06
Glenlyon & Farlayer	Iain Wotherspoon	N/a	Jimmy Lambie	58	13-00	19-00
Glenturret	Mr and Mrs Seldon	N/a	Ian Macphee	7	-	14-10
Innerhadden	R Barclay	N/a	Craig Macintosh	32	13-05	16-05
Innerwick	Mrs Elaine Whewell	N/a	David Pirie	34	13-08	16-04
Invergeldie	Priestley Family	N/a	Richard Eadington	15	10-01	14-05
Invermearn	Mr Adam Besterman	N/a	J Campbell	56	13-12	19-00
Lochs	Lochs Estate Trust	N/a	Chris Murphy	48	13-04	18-06
Lude	Duncan Gordon	N/a	Alastair Stephen	69	14-01	17-06
Meggernie Estate	Mrs B J Malim	N/a	Chris Murphy	58	14-01	18-01
Monzie	Mrs C M M Crichton	Glenturret Estate	Ian Macphee	6	-	14-06
Remony	A & J Duncan Millar	N/a	Bruce Blackley	42	13-05	17-12
Rhiedorrach and Glenshee	Invercauld Estate	N/a	Liam S Donald	314	14-07	18-13
Suie Estate	Mrs E Paterson	Various	George D Coyne	18	14-12	20-02
Tarvie	J Colman	N/a	Jim Tod	30	13-10	15-10

Forest	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest
<b>ROSS-SHIRE/ISLE OF LEWIS</b>						
Achnashellach	Nicholas Wills	N/a	Christopher Mackenzie	19	13-07	17-02
Applecross	The Applecross Trust	Deer Management Consultants	David Abraham	63	14-03	21-10
Arnisdale	J H Richmond-Watson	N/a	Ewen Ballantyne	41	14-06	21-01
Cluanie, East Quich Estate	Mr Siva-Jothy	N/a	Rhuaridh Campbell	40	14-05	17-08
Corrielaire	I Brown	N/a	John Matheson	20	14-04	16-09
Dundonnell Estate	Sir Tim Rice	Various	Alasdair Macdonald	30	-	20-05
Eilanreach Estate	Lord Dulverton	N/a	Alan A Mackenzie	34	14-02	-
Eishken, Isle of Lewis	N Oppenheim	Various	Chris Macrae	74	12-00	17-00
Fannich	Medieval Industries	N/a	Ruari Matheson	37	13-04	16-11
Glencarron and Genuaig Deer Forest	Mr and Mrs Alasdair Douglas	N/a	Brian Watson	38	13-11	17-00
Glen Dessary	Sir Patrick Grant	N/a	-	29	15-11	20-01
Inverbroom Inverbroom	Estate Nominees Ltd	N/a	Allan Cameron	42	13-2	16-4
Inverlael	Van Beuningen Family	N/a	Alan MacGillivray	36	-	-
Kildermorie	Ian and Carol Duncan	N/a	Dougie Russell	46	12-04	16-01
Kinloch Luichart	I H Leslie Melville	Various	Glyn Robson	93	13-03	18-04
Laudale	Keith Falconer	N/a	Steven Brazendale	40	16-00	23-04
Lochrosque & Kinlochewe	Pat Wilson	N/a	Ronnie Ross	74	13-08	17-07
Strathconon	Kirkbi Estate	Various	Angus Cameron	151	11-08	17-00
Strone	Van Beuningen Family	N/a	Ian Fraser	30	-	-

## SUTHERLAND

Badanloch	Badanloch Estates Ltd	N/a	Brian Lyall	45	14-08	18-13
Balnacoil	Mr and Mrs P Nissen	N/a	John McMorran	37	15-04	18-12
Borrobol	Michael Wigan	Various	John Macdonald	67	13-09	17-06
Corriemulzie & Loubcroy	C/o Bell Ingram	Various	Alasdair Mackenzie	80	-	20-02
Croick	J Hall	N/a	Alasdair Sutherland	26	15-10	19-00
Dalnessie	Ericht Farming Co	Various	Andrew Mackay	35	14-06	17-00
Dunrobin	Countess of Sutherland	Various	Ian Smith	30	14-06	18-03
Glencalvie	Glencalvie Estate	Various	Andrew Sutherland	94	14-04	20-13
Glencanisp and Drumrunie	Assynt Foundation	N/a	John-Alex Boyd	90	13-05	20-05
Glencassley Estate	Not given	N/a	M White	50	14-02	20-02
Kinloch Estate	A W G Sykes	N/a	Hugh Montgomery	52	14-09	18-07
Merkland	MR and Mrs R Woods	N/a	R Watt	62	14-04	18-09
Reay Forest	Duke of Westminster	N/a	David Allison	174	13-06	20-00
Rispond	C Marsham	N/a	Andrew Marsham	20	14-02	17-06
Strathmore	Heather Gow	N/a	John Spence	27	14-03	16-10

## Sutherland

The first roars were heard in the first and second weeks of September and most stags had broken out by the beginning of October. John McMorran, stalker at Balnacoil, wrote that the rut ended abruptly on 10 October. Nearly every forest reported stags in good to very good condition, but at Dalnessie, though the stags were generally excellent, there were three in poor condition carrying a heavy fluke burden. The weather tended to be warm and mild, with strong westerly or south-westerly winds and heavy rainfall in September. Several forests reported disturbance from hillwalkers, but others noted no problems.



Ardkinglas



North Uist







# SCOTTISH VENISON - FROM HILL TO PLATE

Dick Playfair meets **Tom Lewis**, irrepressible chef and stalker

Tom Lewis has lived at Monachyle Mhor for 27 years. Highly acclaimed chef and enthusiastic stalker, Tom's parents made the decision to diversify the family farm into a hotel and restaurant business, and it is that same concern that he now runs with his brother and sister. Monachyle Mhor is without doubt an establishment that has put Scottish hospitality at its best firmly on the map.

Nestling right above where Loch Doine and Loch Voil meet, four miles west from Balquidder, the ground behind the hotel rises steeply to Meall Monachyle and Am Mam, with the peaks of Stob Binnein and Ben More beyond.

Tom, originally from Wales, left school at 16 for a job in sheep shearing. However, it was while shepherding in the hills of Highland Perthshire not long afterwards, that he shot his first deer.

"It was a way to supplement our meagre wages," he says. "We didn't earn much from the sheep, but we could sell a deer carcass to one of the hotels for £30, and have the liver and heart ourselves." His antics escaped detection however, and he has left those errant days of impetuous youth well behind!



He has also stalked, or 'hunted', in North America, New Zealand and Australia. It was sheep shearing again that took him on his travels. In South Dakota he worked on a farm that held 36,000 sheep. "That's a frightening number of sheep, when it's your job to shear them," he says. But on days off they used to go hunting white-tailed deer in a style completely alien to that back home.

Tom says:

"Everyone hunting over a particular piece of ground would buy a 'ticket', and there could be as many as 25 guns out in a small area at any one time, so being highly visible was a real advantage. That's why we all had to wear bright orange day-glo vests and hats! It's a totally different hunting experience from Scotland."

Back home, Tom now shoots around 12 - 15 stags each year, and 20 - 25 hinds. Their ground is bounded by forestry, and he also has agreement to shoot over some Forestry Commission land. "It can be tough terrain. You learn from experience where not to shoot a beast - there is one Coire like a huge basin, and a kill in there means you are going to be dragging a long way up, before dragging down."

This is the countryside of Rob Roy, and the fictional route of the long walk of Alan Breck and David Balfour in 'Kidnapped' who came cross country from Tyndrum and Crianlarich to Balquidder on their way south. While the history, fictional or otherwise is an attraction for visitors to the glen, natural history is of equal importance.

Alan Sneddon, the farm manager, is now equally likely to take guests out from the hotel on a wildlife safari as to take them stalking. Tom says: "armed with their cameras and binoculars they go after our big four, red squirrel, red deer, golden eagle - and highland cow!"



Tom has been a great supporter of the recent Eat Scottish Venison campaign, and when it comes to cooking he is probably one of its greatest enthusiasts - no matter what species, whether in its prime, or from a run stag right at the tail end of the season.

"A good, creative chef can always make something really tasty out of Scottish venison - whether it be burgers or ossobuco.

"I love the variety that venison offers. Whether as conventional joints or cuts, or prepared as salami or chorizo using fat from our own Tamworth pigs, or in our venison pies which sell like hot cakes from our bakery in Callander. Or as breasola, which is a real favourite."

Tom's venison breasola is made from seam-cut sliced haunch, soaked in equal parts of red and white wine with salt and peppercorns, orange zest and thyme for four to six days, and then eaten cold or hung in muslin to dry. It tenderises in just a few days and, as an option, can be stored in olive oil. At Monachyle Mhor, all the venison is seam-cut as routine with all sinewy tissue removed.



Tom sees Scottish provenance as a great asset. He says:

"Scotland itself is an excellent brand - it works for beef and lamb, so why not for venison? Say 'Scottish' and automatically there is value-added. And that doesn't just go for food.

"What makes Scotland different? In terms of stalking Scotland offers the full package, a real sense of tradition that guests are happy to pay for, and prepared to pay for. They want stalkers in tweeds, who command respect for their knowledge, skill, field-craft."

And Tom's view on what drinks well with Scottish venison:

"My preference would be a 17 year old Glengoyne, or a Talisker with a touch a water. The common belief is that you have to drink big, robust wines with venison, but that's not the case. It all depends on the dish with which it's being served."

"I find great fulfilment both in stalking, and in the preparation, cooking and presentation of venison."

Visit Monachyle Mhor and seek Tom out, with his infectious enthusiasm - and he knows a thing or two about Scottish venison!

For more details about Monachyle Mhor visit [www.mhor.net](http://www.mhor.net) or telephone 01877 384622.

For more details about Scottish venison visit [www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)







## The Muckle Hart of Acharacle High Street

The highland rain was falling fast,  
The wind was in the east;  
When we set out, the gang of five,  
To stalk the muckle beast.  
This stag of over twenty stone  
Was known to one and all,  
(We spied him from the wheelie-bins  
Outside the village hall).  
The muckle hart was well renowned  
For cunning and for guile,  
On tireless legs we followed him  
For nearly half a mile.  
And when, at last, we found our foe  
Concealed in bracken deep,  
The legendary high-street stag  
Was deep in blissful sleep.  
We roared and whistled,  
Clapped and yelled,  
We even fired a shot!  
The high-street stag did not respond  
He didn't care a jot.  
But on and on for long Scot's hours  
He slumbered, dreamed and snored,  
While we all lay there soaking wet,  
Hung over, cross and bored.

And as we waited, damp and sore,  
With many a muttered curse,  
The highland midges all came out  
And made things even worse!  
So when, at last, that idle beast  
Rose yawning to his feet,  
He paid for all his lethargy-  
Revenge was swift and sweet.  
He's sleeping now forever more,  
That soporific stag;  
The skills of Dougie and McPhail  
Had put him in the bag.  
Our aching legs and blistered feet  
So manfully we bore  
Along the weary journey home-  
Six hundred yards or more!  
But still there was more pain to come-  
Up many a rocky track  
We pushed the bloody Argocat  
To bring his body back.  
And to this day they raise a glass,  
From Dingwall to Dumfries,  
To drink the health of those who stalked  
The muckle high-street beast!



ADMG and Knight Frank thank Rodger McPhail for his wonderful contribution in verse and pictures to this year's report





*Spying on Kingie*





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