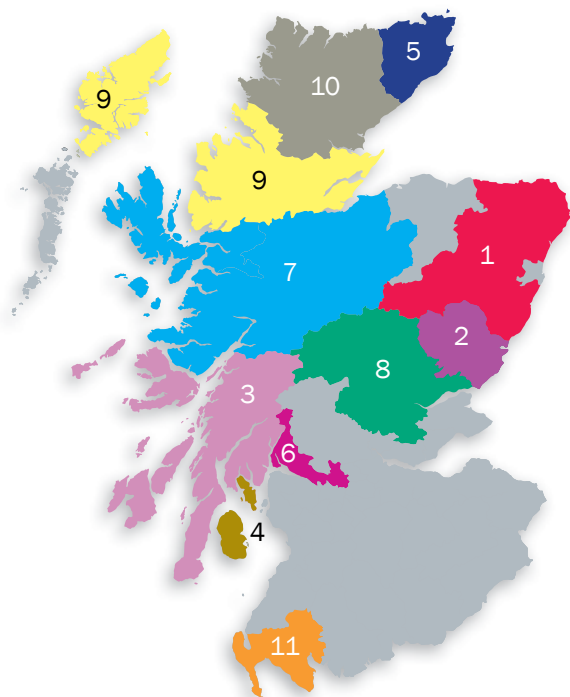


ADMG – Knight Frank 2013 STAG SEASON REVIEW



IN ASSOCIATION WITH
SHOOTING TIMES
A FORESTRY MAGAZINE

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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

Front cover: Homeward bound and wet, Garrogie

All photography by Glyn Satterley, www.glynsatterley.com (except pages 10 and 11)



Regardless of what implications there may be for owning land and specifically rural property in Scotland post the referendum on independence in September 2014, Scotland's deer management sector has once again been in the spotlight in political circles. Was that ever not the case?

The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee of the Scottish Parliament held its own inquiry into deer management and the environment in November last year. This stemmed initially from a breakdown over the way forward within a deer management group (DMG) in Scotland's north-west, and consequently the whole of the system was brought under scrutiny. It was a rigorous process with written and oral evidence sessions, one lobby promoting a move towards a statutory regime, while the other favoured the status quo, encouraged and enhanced to function more smoothly and publicly. Don't forget that the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act also took a detailed look at deer management not long ago, and yet here it was once again back on the political agenda.

The outcome of that is that the current voluntary DMG system has until 2016 to become more effective, albeit there are some very sound, well functioning DMGs already, and the response from Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Environment to the inquiry recommendations was, generally, encouraging.

Concurrently, the Scottish Affairs Committee at Westminster held its own inquiry into land ownership in Scotland, with its initial report published in March. This raises many of the recurrent calls for change in relation to land ownership though not directly in connection with deer. However, the breadth of its recommendations is of concern, ranging from changes to the tax system, to community ownership and right to buy, foreign ownership of estates, and the re-introduction of sporting and non-domestic rates.

Coupled with this, the Scottish Land Reform Review Group published its final report at the end of May containing what can only be described as a number of radical recommendations in addition to those already mentioned above.

All of this is a reflection that issues surrounding land ownership in Scotland generally, and deer management specifically, continue to be prominent. In presentation terms the view going forward may be that the annual stag cull is about effective management foremost - and venison production, and 'sport' as integral parts of that - whilst recognising also the significant benefits that sporting tourism brings and, in particular, that six week period that is at the heart of our annual stag season.



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2013 SCOTTISH STAG REVIEW

Tony Jackson

A season notable for the lateness of the rut.

The one theme common to nearly all forests throughout Scotland was a late rut. On many estates the first roars were not heard until the last week of September and in some instances the rut was brief and subdued. There were also reports of stags remaining together in groups and taking little interest in hinds until the end of October or into November. Weather conditions may have had some part to play in this tardy rut. It is impossible to generalise, but for many forests the weather was mild in the early part of the season with prolonged periods of mist causing days to be lost. In addition, cold easterly or south-easterly winds caused problems on many forests.

On the whole, the condition of deer was described as good to very good, though a few estates noted that weights were down compared to the previous season. The late cool spring doubtless affected many deer, and although fat was put on during the warm summer, the deer had not gained the weight normally expected. Several forests reported far fewer deer than seen in the previous two or three seasons.

There were reports from only two forests of disturbance to stalking from hill walkers – a considerable reduction on previous years, and perhaps a sign walkers are beginning to co-operate and understand the need to manage red deer. Summing up, the 2013 red deer stalking season in Scotland passed without notable incident, other than the lateness of the rut. The condition of the deer remains satisfactory on most forests and reflects well on the overall standard of management by professional stalkers throughout the regions.

Aberdeenshire

Headstalker at Glenmuick Estate, Mr A B Taylor, reported that the rut began on October 1 but there were still a few large stags with hinds in mid-December. Some 49 stags were taken, and in good condition. Richard Thomas, headstalker on the Invercauld Home Beat, with 30 stags taken, noted that condition was very good. Weather conditions were mixed. Heaviest stag was 18st 3lb.

Angus

Nicholas Gibb, headstalker at Glenisla House, reported a late rut with little activity until October 8. Weather conditions were good, with a south wind, and dry for the first two weeks. Some 25 stags were taken, all in good condition. No deer were missed or wounded. Again, a very late rut was reported by headstalker W H Mearns from Tulchan of Glenisla Forest (90 stags were shot and the heaviest, 21st). Condition of the deer was very good, as was the weather.

Argyll

Reports from 12 forests indicate that the rut was fairly quiet and, in some instances, quite late. Mark Brown, headstalker from Glen Strae, noted that hill stags were in poor condition and around a stone lighter than the previous season. Forestry stags however were in good order. Mark Shone, headstalker from Glen Etive, reported a very slow rut with many of the mature stags spent before it really got under way. Weather here was poor, with mist on the tops leading to blank days. From Ardnamurchan and Glenborrodale, headstalker Niall Rowantree also noted that the rut was a stop-

and-start affair, with peak activity around 10 October. Some 75 stags taken, heaviest of which was 28st 1lb. It was the wettest season in over 20 years. From Argyll Estates, headstalker Tom Kirsop reported 120 stags killed and their condition was better than usual. Not a very exciting rut, and fewer stags than usual roaring. At Ardtornish, headstalker Simon Boulton reported a fairly quiet rut while poor weather made the season less enjoyable than usual, though stags were plentiful. Heads not as good as usual due to very late spring. A young stag with three antlers on one side was seen.



Ayrshire

David Anderson, headstalker at Dougarie, reported 25 stags shot, all in excellent condition. Heaviest stag 20st 8lb. First roar heard on 21 September and rut then in full swing. Weather conditions were good.

Caithness

J H Miller, headstalker at Braemore, reported 25 stags taken, averaging 15st 10lb – a record for this forest. The rut was late. At Langwell, stalker J Bain, noted 31 stags taken, with the last shot on 8 October, Average weight was 15st 8lb.

Dunbartonshire

From the Garabal Estate, stalker Ove Wolff Madsen noted a very slow start to the rut and mild, damp and misty weather. Some 13 stags shot and in very good condition.



Estate	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest	SQWV Member
ABERDEENSHIRE							
Glenmuick Estate	Sir Andrew Walker Okeover	N/a	A B Taylor	49	13-09	17-04	-
Invercauld - Home Beat	Invercauld Estates	Moors Partnership	Richard Thomas	30	14-02	18-13	Q
ANGUS							
Glen Isla	Major J P O Gibb	N/a	Nicholas Gibb	25	13-00	17-00	-
Invermark	Lord Dalhousie	N/a	Garry MacIennan	78	12-09	17-02	Q
Tulchan of Glenisla	Dr Florian Kuehnle	N/a	W H Mearns	90	13-08	21-00	Q
ARGYLL							
Ardchattan Estate	Ardchattan Priory	N/a	Bruce Campbell	13	10-12*	15-10*	-
Ardnamurchan and Glenborrodale	Ardnamurchan Estates	N/a	Niall A Rowantree	75	16-05	28-01	-
Ardtornish	Ardtornish Estate Co Ltd	N/a	Simon Boulton	50	15-08	24-11	-
Argyll Estates	His Grace the Duke of Argyll	N/a	Tom Kirsop	120	14-02	20-07	-
Black Corries	Black Corries Estate Management	N/a	Davy Thomas	35	13-05	17-06	Q
Black Mount	P Fleming	N/a	A MacDonald	91	13-06	18-10	Q
Glenstrae	R D Schuster	N/a	Mark Brown	24	12-00	19-08	-
Glenetive	Philip Fleming	N/a	Mark Shone	20	14-00	18-13	Q
Glenforsa	Trustees of Glenforsa Estate	N/a	Graham Waugh	22	14-07	20-07	Q
Kinlochteacuis	Dr Peter Lawson	N/a	Iain Thomber	9	13-09	19-08	-
Laggan Estate	Laggan Properties Ltd	N/a	Neil Park	28	14-05	19-08	-
Laudale Estate	Jonathan Turner	N/a	Neil Roberts	36	14-12	20-07	Q
Lochbuie, Mull	JJ, PR and RL Corbett	N/a	Anthony Dod	33	13-13	18-09	-
ARRAN AND BUTE							
Dougarie	S C Gibbs	Various	David Anderson	25	13-11	20-08	Q
Sannox	Lady Jean Fforde	Charles Fforde	James A Mckinnon	40	15-06	20-10	Q
CAITHNESS							
Braemore	The Welbeck Estates Co Ltd	Various	J H Miller	24	15-10	19-08	-
Langwell	The Welbeck Estates Co Ltd	Various	J J Bain	31	15-08	18-06	-
DUNBARTONSHIRE							
Garabal	Ove Wolff Madsen	N/a	Ove Wolff Madsen	13	10-07*	13-08*	-
INVERNESS-SHIRE							
Achdaliu	West Highland Woodlands	N/a	Alan Currie	34	13-08	17-11	Q
Achnacarry North	D A Cameron of Lochiel	Achnacarry Sporting and Country Pursuits	Alex Macdonald	52	14-06	18-10	Q
Achnacarry South Forest	D A Cameron of Lochiel	Achnacarry Sporting and Country Pursuits	John Morrison	51	13-09	19-08	Q

Estate	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest	SQWV Member
Ardgour	E MacLean	J Guthrie	Ross MacLean/ David Mackenzie	36	14-00	19-07	Q
Ardnish	Colin Stewart Sandeman	West Highland Hunting	Niall Rowantree	10	13-07	17-06	-
Ardverikie	Ardverikie Estate Ltd	N/a	D Langlands	120	14-01	17-09	Q
Barisdale	R and J Gordon	N/a	Craig Harbison	27	14-09	19-01	-
Ben Alder	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Ian G Crichton	50	13-11	17-00	-
Braeroy	Wildland Ltd	N/a	Ian Stewart	58	12-10	16-12	-
Braulen	Andras Ltd	N/a	Richard Smith	135	14-06	19-12	Q
Cluanie, East Quoich Estate	Christian Siva Jothy	N/a	Rhuairidh Campbell	40	15-04	18-08	Q
Coignafearn	Coignafearn Estate	N/a	Sandy Dey	252	15-01	22-10	Q
Conaglen	J Guthrie	N/a	Ross MacLean	42	14-00	18-01	Q
Culachy	Culachy Estate Management Ltd	N/a	Scott Bremner	51	14-03	17-08	Q
Dunachton	J Forbes-Leith	N/a	Andrew Drummond	28	12-04*	21-00	-
East Monar	D C R Allen	N/a	Stephen Potter	20	13-02	17-00	-
Fassfern	West Highland Woodlands	N/a	Alan Currie	29	-	18-02	Q
Garry Gualach	Forest Enterprise	Achnacarry Sporting & Country Pursuits	Alex Macdonald	17	14-03	16-08	Q
Glenaladale	Ronald Cheape	N/a	David McCauley	16	13-05	16-05	-
Glenavon	Glenavon Estate Ltd	N/a	Richard Greenlaw	42	14-05	17-06	Q
Glenbancher	Mr Bulgheroni, c/o Strutt & Parker	N/a	Jim Grant	40	14-00	19-06	-
Glen Dessary	Sir Patrick Grant	N/a	Fraser Mackay	35	14-05	18-07	-
Glendoe	G and R Vernon	N/a	Jonathan Carslaw	41	14-02	17-00	Q
Glenfinnan	I Leith	N/a	Alistair H Gibson	26	14-01	17-13	-
Glenmazeran	The Englefield Estate	N/a	Jimmy Irvine	26	13-05	15-10	-
Glenquoich	D W J Gordon	N/a	Lea McNally	31	13-11	16-03	Q
Glenshero	Rio Tinto Alcan Estates	Various	Bruce Hendry	104	13-03	17-05	Q
Glenshiel	Glenshiel Estate, c/o Strutt & Parker	N/a	Colin Campbell	33	11-00*	13-08*	-
Killiechonan Forest	Rio Tinto Alcan Estates	Various	Jamie Hendry	63	13-07	17-00	Q
Kingairloch Estate	Anglea Yeoman and Susan Larson	N/a	Steven Brazendale	39	14-13	20-00	Q
Kingie	I & H Brown Ltd	N/a	John Cameron	18	14-02	16-08	Q
Kinloch Hourn	Henry Birkbeck	N/a	Donald Angus Cameron	12	14-09	15-12	-
Knoydart Estate	Knoydart Foundation	N/a	Jim Brown	79	14-00	19-00	-
Lochailort Estate	Glenshian Estate	N/a	Archie Gillies	9	14-06	16-01	Q
Mamore	Rio Tinto Alcan Estates	Various	George Loudon	13	14-09	16-07	Q

Inverness-shire

A grand total of 36 forests returned reports from which a selection has been made. The majority of forests reported a late or very late rut. There were however exceptions. John Morrison, stalker at Achnacarry reported the rut started on 24 September (and was full on), while other forests were complaining about the lack of rut. Lea MacNally, headstalker at Glen Quoich, had a late rut with a scarcity of mature stags and many young or inferior stags holding hinds. Stags were not as fat as usual and horn quality was poor. Alex Macdonald, headstalker at Achnacarry North Forest, noted the rut never really got under way in a season of continual mists. At North Morar Estate, Alec Mackay, headstalker, reported the best wild head seen in the area was shot. A 13 pointer, it had clearly been a 16 pointer the previous season but was going back and was very wide.

Deer condition seems to have been average to good on most forests. However, John Cameron, headstalker at Kingie, reported deer fat enough, but lacking usual body weight. He was also short of mature stags. Lower weight reports came from Glen Dessary, though the heaviest stag was 18st 7lb. It's of interest to note that 27 wild boar have also been shot here. Condition of the deer on the Culachy Estate was very good. Both Kingairloch Estate and Glenaladale Estate reported deer in very good condition, the same too at Ardnish where deer were carrying plenty of fat and with well-coloured heads. On the whole, condition of deer, with a few exceptions, was good to excellent due, perhaps, to a fine summer. Stephen Potter, headstalker at East Monar Estate, reported a very hard season with a lack of deer and some stags with their hinds for the entire rut, so little activity.

Perthshire

The consensus of opinion from 38 forests is that the rut was late, or very late, and on some forests running well into November, on others stopping and starting. This was the case at Lochearnside where headstalker John Anderson also remarked on a very misty and wet start to October. A late start too at Glenfalloch Estate, where the rut was fitful, with some stags holding hinds as late as 27 November. It was delayed at Dunalastair Estate, but plenty of activity (though very few mature stags). However, at Balvarran the rut was prolonged and very active, with more hinds coming into heat due to a good summer. Here, too, grouse have fared well and it is also an active peregrine falcon area. At Craiganour, headstalker Kevin Grant reported a very slow start to the rut, with groups of stags lying together through October, nowhere near hinds. There were regular sightings of sea eagles sometimes being mobbed by golden eagles. Nearly all forests reported deer in average to good or excellent condition, although Glenbeich Forest reported average to poor condition.

Weather varied considerably. Many forests reported mild, misty conditions with days occasionally being lost to the weather. However, some forests reported dry conditions, others wet and stormy towards the end of the season. At Straloch the early rut was sunny, very warm with light winds, but later, grey days with drizzle and fog.

There was a shortage of stags at Dalnaspidal Estate during September, while at Glen Bruar (Atholl Estates) an eagle was seen to swoop on a roebuck with a raven almost on its tail! At North Chesthill Estate, owner Alastair Riddell shot a 'going back' royal on the last day of the season. At Clunes (Atholl Estates) a 16 point stag was frequently seen, while a sea eagle spoiled five stalks by swooping on a small herd of stags. There was a good number of big stags at Auchlyne and Suie Estate, with good heads and a 14 pointer shot.



Estate	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest	SQWV Member
Nevis Estate	Not given	N/a	Robert Grant	10	12-01	18-08	-
North Morar	Ian Bond	N/a	Alec Mackay	30	15-03	19-06	-
Pitmain Estate	Pitmain Estate Ltd c/o Smiths Gore	N/a	Graham Mabon	23	13-12	15-05	-
Roshven Hill	J A P Forbes	N/a	Colin Surman	8	09-05	16-05	Q
Struy	Michael Spencer-Naim	N/a	Duncan McPherson	29	13-07	17-07	-
PERTHSHIRE							
Acharn Hill	ANB Baillie-Hamilton	K Hall	Keith Hall	8	05-07*	07-13*	-
Atholl - Clunes	Bruar Trust	Various	Ronnie Hepburn	67	13-09	16-10	Q
Atholl - Dalnamein	Bruar Trust	N/a	Benjamin Rhodes	46	14-00	17-05	Q
Atholl - Glen Bruar	Bruar Trust	Various	Dominic Morrogh-Bernard	29	14-08	18-00	Q
Atholl - West Hand	Brair Castle Estate Ltd	Various	Graeme Cumming	53	13-12	17-02	Q
Auchleeks	Nial Mackinlay	N/a	Bob Pirie	33	13-06	17-10	Q
Auchlyne & Suie	Mrs Emma Patterson	Various	Ian Dingwall	33	14-00	20-02	Q
Balvarran	Mr R Stormonth-Darling	S Wade	S Wade, J Readhead	8	11-01*	11-09*	-
Boreland	Judge R A R Stroyan	N/a	Morven Frost	67	13-03	19-04	Q
Camusericht	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Duncan Richardson	70	13-07	18-00	Q
Cashlie	W H Porter	N/a	Steven Martin	49	13-12	17-07	-
Corrievarkie	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Richard Macgregor	25	12-06	15-03	Q
Craiganour	Astel Ltd	Various	Kevin Grant	97	12-05	16-02	-
Dalnaspidal	Ben Alder Estate Ltd	N/a	Ian Kennedy	30	13-05*	16-08*	Q
Dunalastair and Crossmount Estate	Ian de Sales La Terrière	N/a	Mark MacKenzie	39	Not given	Not given	-
Dunan	Hamish McCorquodale	N/a	Ian Sutherland	49	14-00	18-00	Q
Dun Coilich	Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust	N/a	Rob Coope	1	10-03*	10-03*	-
Glenartney	The Rt Hon the Baroness Willoughby d'Eresby	N/a	Peter Cramb	110	15-00	18-07	Q
Glenbeich	Mrs C Holcroft	N/a	John Murdock	22	12-00	17-04	-
Glenfalloch Estate	Lowes Family	N/a	Falcon Frost	40	13-07	18-01	Q
Glenfemate	David H Amory	N/a	David Michie	140	11-03	14-02	-
Glenlyon Estate	Iain Witherspoon	N/a	Ali McNaughton	45	13-06	19-00	Q
Glenshee and Rhiedorrach	Invercauld Estate	W Johnston	Liam Donald	53	15-02	19-02	Q
Glenturret Estate	Mr and Mrs Seldon, c/o Managed Estates	N/a	Mike Reddington	5	14-07	18-02	-
Griffin Wind Farm	Scottish & Southern Energy	N/a	David Campbell	20	07-06*	09-02*	-
Innerhadden	Richard Barclay	N/a	Craig MacIntosh	35	13-08	18-00	Q
Innischoarach Estate	David C C Brown	N/a	Ewan Kennedy	45	15-10	16-09	Q
Invergeldie	Mr R Priestley and Mrs S Throne	N/a	David Mills	23	11-03	19-01	-
Lochearnside	Drummond Estate	N/a	Jimmy Anderson	25	12-12	18-09	Q

Estate	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest	SQWV Member
Lochs Estate	Lochs Estate c/o Managed Estates	N/a	Steven MacDonald	35	12-08	18-02	-
Logiealmound	Mansfield Estates	N/a	Stewart McIntosh	16	11-00	18-00	-
Meggernie	Mrs B J Malim, c/o Managed Estates	N/a	Steven MacDonald	61	13-04	19-07	-
Monzie	Mrs C M M Crichton, c/o Managed Estates	Glenturret Estate Ltd	Mike Reddington	2	07-00	07-12	-
North Chesthill	Alastair J Riddell	N/a	David McKenzie	20	12-13	21-00	-
Remony	Remony Estate Partnership	N/a	Bruce Blackley	26	11-06*	17-06*	Q
South Chesthill and Inverinain	C A Ramsay Partnership	N/a	Hamish Rae	44	14-04	21-09	Q
Straloch	Mrs M A Lascelles	Woodmill Shootings	S Wade, J Readhead	21	11-04*	13-01*	-
Tarvie	J Colman	N/a	Jim Tod	21	13-10	16-00	-
ROSS-SHIRE AND ISLE OF LEWIS							
Achnashellach Estate	Capt Nicholas Wills	N/a	Christopher Mackenzie	27	13-02	18-02	Q
Arnisdale	Mr J H Richmond-Watson	N/a	Ewen Ballantyne	35	14-01	18-04	Q
Corriellair	I Brown & Sons	N/a	Johnny Matheson	21	-	-	-
Coulin	The Hon Philip Smith	N/a	Neil Morrison	25	13-06	17-00	Q
Diabaig	Sir Paul Nicholson	N/a	Donnie Beaton	10	14-00	17-07	Q
Druidraig	H I Macrae	N/a	Ian Culbertson	9	13-10	16-02	-
Dundonnell	Sir Tim Rice	N/a	Alasdair Macdonald	26	-	17-12	-
Eilean Darach	N Crawford	N/a	Brian Fraser	22	13-08	16-02	-
Eisean Dubh	Mr and Mrs T Bowie	N/a	Tim Bowie	2	08-11*	11-11	-
Eishken Estate	Mr N Oppenheim	Various	Chris Macrae	92	12-00	14-08	-
Fannich	Baron Van Dedem	N/a	Ruari Matheson	34	13-08	16-08	-
Heights of Kinlochewe	David Willey	N/a	N Kelman	35	14-08	17-12	-
Inverbroom	Inverbroom Estate Ltd	N/a	Stephen Gow	47	13-09	18-08	-
Inverpolly	Polly Estates Ltd	N/a	David Davies	20	14-10	17-04	-
Keanchulish	David Bulmer	N/a	Arron Matheson	10	14-06	16-00	-
Kildermorie Estate	Ian A Duncan	N/a	Dougie Russell	49	13-02	18-00	-
Kinlochdamph	Mark Adams	N/a	Duncan Macleod	18	14-04	18-11	-
Kinlochluichart	I H Leslie-Melville	Various	Jamie Stewart	58	14-05	17-08	-
Lochrosque and Kinlochewe	Pat Wilson	N/a	Ronnie Ross	59	13-05	17-05	Q
Scardroy	Kirkbi Estates	N/a	Colin Hendry	9	14-01	17-00	-
Strathbran	Seligman Family	N/a	David Bennett, Ewen Bennet	20	13-00	16-06	-
Strathconon Estate	Kirkbi Estate Ltd	Various	Angus Cameron	82	14-05	19-09	Q
Strathvaich	Creasey and Daniels Families	N/a	Donald Macrae	70	13-07*	17-10*	-
Torridon Estate	National Trust for Scotland	N/a	Seamus Macnally	7	12-11	15-02	Q

Ross-shire

Almost without exception every forest reported a late or very late rut. At Kildermorie Forest there was a short vigorous rut between 4 and 15 October, then quiet again, and condition of the deer was consistently good and weather mostly warm, humid and sunny. At Torridon Estate, headstalker Seamus MacNally noted deer in very good condition and weather mainly fine, with days of east wind towards the end of the season. Some 82 stags were shot at Strathconon and headstalker Angus Cameron reported condition fairly good with the heaviest stag 19st 9lb. Weather here fairly dry, with the first snow on 15 September. At Arnisdale Estate, headstalker Ewen Ballantyne reported a difficult season due to a late rut and constant east or south-east winds, which do not suit this ground. At Kinlochdamph a good seven point stag was found dead in a peat bog, where it had drowned after being pierced in the gut by another stag. Jamie Stewart, headstalker at Kinlochluichart Estate, reported many hillwalkers ruining stalks and camping in the middle of the ground.

Some 70 stags were shot at Strathvaich Estate with an average larger weight of 13st 7lb. Condition of deer was good, despite a poor start to the year.

The condition of deer was very good at Diabaig and the heaviest stag 17st 7lb. Weights were light at Coulin, and red stags are dropping in numbers every year in the Torridon mountains. Headstalker Neil Morrison believes they will soon be extinct here. Weather conditions were quite good with south-easterly winds, though wet at the start of the season. Heaviest stag at Dundonnell owned by Sir Tim Rice, was 17st 12lb.

Stirlingshire

Headstalker at Innischoarach Estate, Ewen Kennedy, reported the first roar on 12 September, with activity until 20th and then the rut slowed until after 10 October, continuing well into November. Deer were in good condition, though body weights were down due to a previous hard winter and cold spring. Weather was cold in September, but warmer in October, with prolonged periods of easterly wind.

Sutherland

Once again, most forests reported a late rut with the first roars being heard towards the end of September. However, Duncan Bentley, headstalker at Achentoul Estate, noted a very good and loud rut with many stags on the ground. By contrast, stalker Andrew Mackay, Dalnessie, reported a late rut, with big stags slow to get going, and very little sign of fighting. Groups of stags were still together well into October, and more days than normal were lost to mist.

There was a shortage of mature stags at Strathmore, and the rut never really got going on Ledmore Estate and was over very quickly. At Croick Estate the rut took a long time to get going and was very quiet. Most forests reported deer in good to excellent condition, though not as good as last year at Badanloch. Headstalker Brian Lyall noted stags were very fat, but lacking weight, having failed to gain muscle in the spring and putting on fat during the warm summer. The weather was generally mild with light winds. At Dalnessie, despite a good start to September, the wind went into the south and east from the 20th for the rest of the season, with much rain and many days lost to mist. Weather at Ledmore Estate was dry and the best they've had for years.

At Glencalvie Estate, two days' stalking were interrupted by walkers, but most access issues were resolved, with walkers co-operative. On Inchnadamph Estate a stag was shot with a big coil of wire around its head and antlers, while at Alladale Forest two stags were found dead through fighting, and two were also badly gored. Roddy Watt, headstalker at Merkland Estate, reported a "fantastic amount of good shootable stags about. The most I've ever seen since I've been here."

Wigtownshire

Len Dey, headstalker at Stair Estates, reported a very early rut, with the first roar on 18 September and finished by 15 October. Twelve stags were shot and all in good condition. The weather was very mild and dry, with only two ground frosts during the season. The heaviest stag was 17st 3lb and the average weight was 11st 13lb.



Estate	Owner	Tenant	Stalker	Stags Shot	Average Weight	Heaviest	SQWV Member
SUTHERLAND							
Achentoul	Sir John Nutting QC Bt	Various	Duncan Bentley	39	15-06	20-11	-
Achnabourin	Ross Peters	N/a	Simon Peters	4	08-00*	08-00*	-
Alladale	Paul Lister	Various	Innes MacNeill	60	13-03	17-07	-
Badanloch	Badanloch Estate LLP c/o Strutt & Parker	Various	Brian Lyall	29	14-10	18-09	-
Borrobol	Michael Wigan	N/a	John Macdonald	42	15-00*	18-07	Q
Clebrig	A W Nicholson	N/a	A Robertson	19	15-07	18-12	Q
Corriemulzie	The Corriemulzie Trust	Various	Alasdair Mackenzie	70	14-01	19-07	Q
Croick	Croick Partnership	N/a	Alasdair Sutherland	21	17-05	20-10	-
Dalnessie	Ericht Farming Company	Various	Andrew Mackay	30	14-13	20-00	-
Glencalvie Estate	Glencalvie Estate	Various	Andrew Sutherland	67	13-13	18-01	-
Glencanisp and Drumrunie	Assynt Foundation	N/a	John Cullen	65	11-00*	14-02*	-
Inchnadamph	George Vestey	N/a	Craig Ross	43	13-09	21-04	-
Ledmore	David Bulmer	N/a	Arron Matheson	23	13-02	18-09	-
Loubcroy	Mr A Gopill	Various	Alasdair Mackenzie	22	14-00	15-12	Q
Merkland Estate	Robert Woods	N/a	Roddy Watt	46	14-02	19-10	-
Shinness Estate	CGA Fletcher and Family	N/a	Derick Sutherland	6	-	-	Q
Strathmore	Mrs Heather Gow	N/a	John Spence	20	14-07	17-08	Q
Syre/Rosal	Syre Estate	N/a	David Horsburgh	5	14-04	18-00	Q
WIGTOWNSHIRE							
Stair Estates	The Earl of Stair	N/a	Len Dey	12	11-13*	17-13*	-

* denotes larder weight

Q advised by respondent as member of Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme

- denotes non member of SQWV or information not given

More than 70 per cent of Scottish Wild Venison is produced under the SQWV scheme. Not all properties involved in the scheme contribute to the Stag Season Report. No returns from Forest Enterprise larders, which are all SQWV assured, are included in the report.

More information on the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme can be obtained from:

Jonathan Whitehead Scheme Manager
T: 0131 335 6657 e: Jonathan.Whitehead@sfqc.co.uk

SQWV Assured game dealers/processors:

Ardgay Game
t: 01863 766 162
e: enquiries@ardgaygame.co.uk

Highland Game
t: 01382 827 088
e: cn@highlandgame.com

Yorkshire Game
t: 01748 810 212
e: r.townsend@yorkshiregame.co.uk



STALKING ESTATES - TIME TO LOOK INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL



Ran Morgan

Head of Scotland Residential, Knight Frank.

2014 - the year of Natural Scotland, the year of Scottish homecoming, the Commonwealth Games, and the most important decision on our constitution for over 300 years, all conveniently converge in this most important of years. The questions surrounding the independence referendum continue, with estate owners, managers, stalkers, employees, agents and game dealers alike trying to work through the fog and obtain a clear picture of what life will be like after September - whichever way the vote falls.

The market for deer forests has remained stable for the best estates, as has been the case since the collapse of Lehman Brothers. The value of those estates that are blighted - for whatever reason - will be questioned, tested and put under pressure as buyers are more exacting about quality.

We have certainly seen a 'ceiling' develop in the market for estates that could not be described as truly unique and exceptional. Five estates sold last year, all of them privately. Three were sold to special purchasers in the form of neighbours, and two of them were the absolute 'best in class for their type'.

Supply has been restricted because sellers have been put off marketing their estates due to a perceived lack of buyers, caused by uncertainty over the referendum. Buyers on the other hand cannot understand the lack of supply, the common question being: "If you are concerned over Scotland's future why not sell now?"

A 'yes' vote is bound to bring a degree of uncertainty while all the practical details of independence are agreed. A 'no' vote will bring more property to the market that has been put on hold, and this could put pressure on values.

Independence does bring with it the threat of a new political agenda in the form of land reform and the absolute right to buy for agricultural tenants. Consequently there is a danger that a two-tiered effect is created in the market between those estates that are farmed in-hand and not subject to crofting and tenancies, and those that have tenants and crofters.

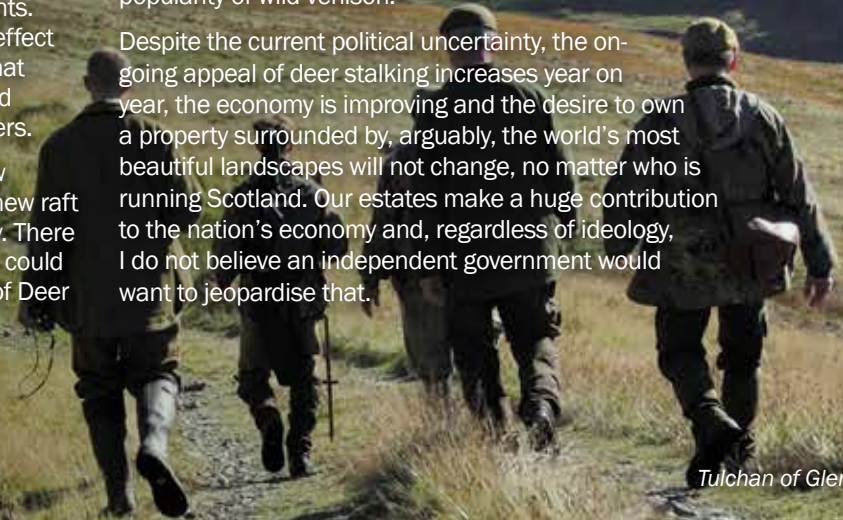
As for the management of sporting estates, a new independent Scotland is bound to bring with it a new raft of civil service departments, legislation and policy. There is no room here to speculate on how the changes could affect deer forests. However, the voluntary Code of Deer

Management must be seen to be working, and working well, if statutory control is to be avoided.

If the appeal of sporting estates is diminished following a 'yes' vote then this will bring uncertain times for those whose livelihoods rely on them.

The appeal of Scotland however may be enhanced with an increased sense of nationhood - on the assumption that an independent government is capable of running the country. Tourism may well benefit, improving the demand for sporting holidays, and Scottish products are likely to hold more appeal, which could help further boost the increasing popularity of wild venison.

Despite the current political uncertainty, the ongoing appeal of deer stalking increases year on year, the economy is improving and the desire to own a property surrounded by, arguably, the world's most beautiful landscapes will not change, no matter who is running Scotland. Our estates make a huge contribution to the nation's economy and, regardless of ideology, I do not believe an independent government would want to jeopardise that.



Tulchan of Glenisla



JAMES SIMPSON – MAN OF MANY PARTS

Dick Playfair meets and talks to **Jimmy Simpson**, vet, stalker, and deer enthusiast



Photos this page: Ian Jacobs

James (Jimmy) Simpson is a vet. Not just any vet, but a vet on a mission to find out more about diseases and abnormalities in deer, and a leading light in The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies Scottish Deer Project.

He didn't start out as a vet. That came after studying agriculture at Edinburgh University, farm management, and work for the Agriculture Research Council where he studied for an HNC in biology on day release and was admitted to the Royal (Dick) Vet as a mature student with his fees paid through the Andrew Carnegie Trust. In one way or another he has been attached to this prestigious centre of veterinary teaching and learning ever since, becoming Head of Small Animal Medicine and at the forefront in developing endoscopy for dogs and cats. He was 'awarded' a Winston Churchill Fellowship to study at an American university where he further developed his skills. Latterly he obtained a personal chair in canine medicine. However, in career terms he is a relatively new arrival to the deer world and to stalking. He says:

"I had always been a keen shot, right from school when I was in the CCF and the shooting club, and had access to some rough shooting and low ground stalking through a neighbour at Eddleston.

"But only in the last 10 years has the deer veterinary stuff really got going. That's when we realised there was a huge void in knowledge about diseases in wild deer, and that is why we set up the Scottish Deer Project with Anna Meredith, and Linda Morrison around 2009.

"Anna is a Professor of exotic medicine, and Linda a pathologist, so the project is run by a team with a range of

skills and specialisms, and we are on a mission to gather as much information as we can about deer diseases and abnormalities."

Jimmy is also an accomplished stalker over both low ground and the hills. He has DMQ 1 and 2 and is on the SNH Fit and Competent register. He pays much credit to Argyllshire stalker David Bukowski for mentoring him through the learning period - if that ever stops.

Now retired from the University he splits his time between consultancy assisting with veterinary medicine, endoscopy work, the lecture circuit, deer management and stalking, and pursuing a passion for anything and everything about deer and deer health.

"Stalking each of our deer species requires different skills over different terrain, and each has its own wonderful magic," he says, but he recollects outings with AB Taylor on Glen Muick, and in very different countryside in the



west with David Bukowski. He says of an outing in Glen Muick where they spied three deer on the far side of a steep gully:

“AB likes crawling so we belled down this hill for around 500 metres, through typical wet, boggy stalking country. And we were soaking. For much of our stalk in the deer were looking straight across the gully at us, but we got to within 200 metres behind a peat hag, and we shot all three hinds. It was amazing to be in full view of them as we moved in to find a good shooting position, but they stayed right where they were. Often the thrill of the stalk is far more exciting than the shot itself.”

He has also hunted in South Africa - a hugely different experience involving no crawling - and tracking wildebeest, impala and warthog. Jimmy tells of one day going out in known black rhino territory:

“You get a briefing at the start of the day,” he says, “and you’re told that when and if you see a black rhino, or rather it sees you, this is what you do. You stand still, and you look for the nearest tree, and then you climb.”

“Well, it was mid morning, we were out looking for impala, there is a tremendous crashing and there, 15 metres away, is a black rhino. Much against my instinct I stood absolutely still and looked around – but there were no trees, only bushes and tall grass. It was an interesting stand-off and our guide started to bang a stick repeatedly on the branch of a bush – for what seemed like an age. Eventually the rhino trundled off. When I asked afterwards, the guide told me that the stick banging would encourage the rhino to do one of two things. Fortunately for us it made the right choice!” But returning to Scotland, Jimmy has huge admiration for stalkers and the stalking fraternity.

He says: “Stalkers, in my experience, are very knowledgeable, interested, enthusiastic and open-minded. I think their input is grossly undervalued, as is their contribution overall to wildlife in Scotland. They have a huge knowledge base, some of which they have inherited,



some learned at first hand. That breadth of knowledge is immense - and what I want to do with our deer project is to tap into that for evidence of disease and abnormalities, like freemartins, hermaphrodites, or roe with perruque heads. From these ideally we need photographs of the head, and the reproductive tract, ovaries or testes so that pathology can be carried out and the x/y chromosomes can be studied. We can then make blood sample comparisons between the normal and the abnormal.”

Jimmy clearly loves working with deer and working with stalkers. Given time he would like to assemble this knowledge into a book as good reference for those approaching DSC1/DMQ 1, the benchmark for ‘competence’ in Scotland. But he also recognises that deer are a “significant economic driver”. He says:

“Deer bring people to the countryside, and they keep people in the countryside. They are an important species for tourism, and that in itself is a vital reason to know more about them – and we have so much more to learn.”

The Scottish Deer Project www.scottishdeerproject.co.uk

The aim of the project is to develop a database to provide as comprehensive and clear an insight into the diseases present in wild deer in Scotland. Through articles and training programmes, the data collected will be available to those involved in deer management, and for the improved welfare of our deer. Those wishing to assist with the project should contact:

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EH25 9RG

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Christina Ellis with Victor (Garroge Estate), winner of the Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for Working Stalking Ponies, July 2013

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