

Deer management review should show a dynamic, forward looking land management sector



Richard Cooke, Chairman
Association of Deer Management Groups

By the time this is published all the second assessments of Deer Management Groups by SNH will have been completed and the results set against the baseline assessment of Autumn 2014.

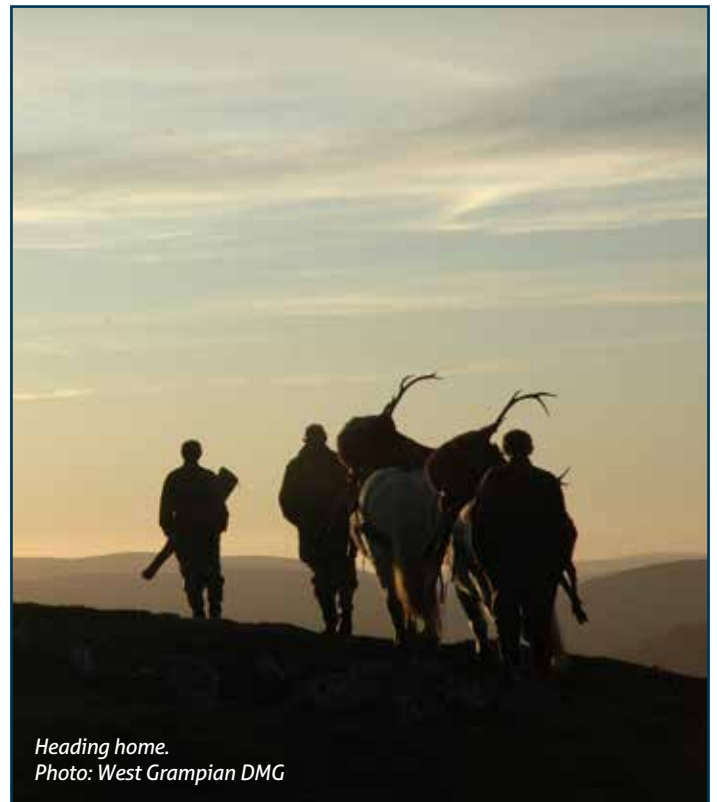
We were told at the end of the 2014 Review by the RACCE Committee of the Scottish Parliament that the deer sector was expected to demonstrate a 'step change' in its approach to the management of wild deer under the voluntary principle and in particular we should be able to demonstrate the extent to which deer management contributes to the public interest. We have been assured that the 2016 Review, which has since been brought forward by 3 months, will be objective and evidence based. The main evidence will be in the form of an SNH report based largely on the outcome of the assessments.

I have been greatly impressed by the extent to which Deer Management Groups (DMGs) have risen to this challenge and this is reflected in the very comprehensive deer management plans which have been written, many with the assistance of consultants and with the benefit of a 50 per cent grant from SNH, over the last year or so - a remarkably short time for a very complex collaborative exercise. My thanks to all concerned. I am confident that a 'step change' can indeed be demonstrated and that the SNH Assessments will provide the objective evidence of that, as well as forming the core of the SNH progress report to the Cabinet Secretary. The formation of a number of additional DMGs over the same period is also a good indicator of the unprecedented process of change.

The 2016 Review will not however be the end of the story. Our sector is dynamic; it must adapt to changing circumstances and that will continue. An amendment in the final stages of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act requires SNH to carry out a three yearly review of the effectiveness of the Code of Practice on Deer Management. Thus we may expect to be re-examined on a three -yearly basis for the foreseeable future. Subsequent reviews are likely to focus on how effectively deer management plans are being used in practice in meeting individual land management objectives and in delivering public benefit. The immediate task for all DMGs will therefore be to start to implement their new deer management plans. As a priority, future meeting agendas should focus on this and provide for annual review and adjustment of the population models.

There is undoubtedly still a view in some quarters that deer management under the voluntary principle is not fit for purpose. I do not accept that perception and ADMG's job over the coming months will be to ensure that the considerable progress made is effectively communicated to Scottish Government; that reality is a dynamic forward-looking land management sector that plays an important environmental role in addition to contributing to the employment and income generation associated with a £140m industry (PACEC 2016). Additional powers created under the recently passed Land Reform (Scotland) Act, which ADMG did not oppose, enable SNH to intervene in any situation where things are going wrong, so further statutory measures are now superfluous and DMGs can be trusted by Government to get on with practical deer management having due regard to the public benefits this can and should deliver.

Finally, the outcome of the independent panel review of Authorisations is awaited with close interest. Concerns have been expressed in some quarters as to how these 1996 Deer (Scotland) Act measures have been used and it is to the credit of SNH that it has elected to revisit its procedures.



Heading home.
Photo: West Grampian DMG

The changing landscape of deer management in Scotland



Victor Clements

Within the current deer management debate, we often see people arguing that deer management in Scotland is stuck in the past, and is incapable of evolving. The arguments and statistics used are often outdated and, in many cases, deliberately misleading. Much of this commentary does a great disservice to the many people involved in deer and wider land and conservation management and all the work and local initiatives that they get involved in, with the current deer management process highlighting the very great range of aims and objectives which actually exist, even within the private sector.

Changing times

Deer management in Scotland does evolve and change and is not stuck in the Victorian age. The formation of the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS) twenty years ago heralded a huge change in culture, with the accompanying Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 still providing the essential working mechanisms of the system we have today, mechanisms which are likely to continue going forwards because they cover all the basics and the range of conflict situations which potentially exist. The coming of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 sent out a very strong signal that access to democratic structures was going to be enhanced, and that debate over land management issues was going to take place a lot closer to home than it did previously. All interest groups developed their capacity for lobbying and policy development, and the standard of argument improved considerably from all sides of the debate.

For example, the access legislation of the first Scottish Parliament, while not perfect, provided for a common-sense resolution of issues which had previously seemed impossible to negotiate or even to acknowledge. Government agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the then Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS) improved their ways of analysing situations and gathering information, and replaced a rather haphazard and frustrating system which relied on the whims of individuals with procedures which were more consistent and evidence based. They formalised their grounds for intervention, and this enabled the Deer Act of 1996 to be used effectively to protect the natural heritage for the first time. The result of this has been that the status of designated sites started to improve, and that has continued through to today at a steady pace. When the DCS used their teeth for the first time at Glen Feshie in 2003, they caused an argument, but owners took note and changed their approach to conflict situations accordingly. Things would be done differently in future, and a range of difficult land use disputes at a local level got quietly resolved. The current deer disputes we have in Scotland that have received media coverage are notable partly because we have had a decade without them. They are a throw back to another time. The wider range of management objectives on private properties became evident very quickly in the mid 2000's, with a younger generation of owners being quite happy to address environmental issues. It wasn't all about deer. It is interesting to note, for example, that by far the greatest area of new native woodland plantings in Scotland is within the red deer range in the Highlands, with owners

looking to diversify habitats for the future, constrained only by the very limited Scottish Government funding available for this. Best Practice Guidance was developed which has stood the test of time, and which stalkers and estate owners readily bought in to. Formalised training has become widespread, and the Scottish Quality Wild Venison scheme (SQWV) introduced in 2003 has very rapidly increased the levels of professionalism in larding and meat preparation. Today, the vast majority of venison is produced to this standard. Marketing efforts have been hugely successful. An industry that was exporting ninety percent of its produce because nobody here wanted it now has to import 1000 tonnes a year due to demand. Venison is seen as a quality Scottish product, and rightly so, with chefs and politicians keen to be associated with it.

The colleges have played their part as well, turning out young graduates with a wider range of skills and interests who are sought after by forward-looking estates, and it is these people who are now making the greatest impact in driving change within the sector. They are capable of managing a range of activities as well as deer, and understand environmental monitoring techniques and their implementation. These computer-literate young keepers with good communication skills are now coming into their 30's and 40's and taking up roles of influence within the industry. You can pick them out at deer





View inland from Kinlochbervie.
Photo: Victor Clements

group meetings. They can explain what they do and why, and are capable of articulating that to a wider audience. They have given unanimous support to the current deer management planning process, see not a threat but an opportunity in that, and in many cases have been able to persuade their bosses of the merits of doing this. They can argue their point convincingly on radio, television or social media, and many are writers in their local press.

Deer have become a core part of many new businesses which rely on wildlife watching, either as safaris, or as subject material for photography. It fills in slower periods of the year, diversifies income, and provides material for the promotion of estates and wider geographic areas. In many cases, such opportunities are intimately integrated with Bed & Breakfast accommodation, either on the estates concerned, or in local villages, where every pound is important.

Get involved

For those who think that deer management in Scotland is somehow a closed shop, look at some of the people now involved in running deer management groups. Senior staff from the RSPB and The National Trust for Scotland chair DMGs, one of which is administered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Forest Enterprise has fulfilled this function in the past. Grazing committees, community groups and crofters chair a range of groups, including a recently re-invigorated group on Skye. The range of people providing secretarial and administrative support to deer management groups is even wider. As well as a variety of woodland advisors, I can think of a retired school teacher, a college student, a fisheries trust and a community group.

The Executive Committee of ADMG includes at least two woodland advisors, two representatives of environmental NGOs, agricultural interests, a retired Director of the Forestry Commission and past employees of SNH and the DCS, as well as practical stalkers and people who have a wide range of other land use experience. The opportunity to contribute has always been there, and this will allow the deer sector to adapt and go forwards in the future as it has been doing so for over twenty years.

The challenge for those who disagree is to get involved, and bring practical skills to the table so that elements of the public interest can be better assessed and developed together. If the deer sector can evolve and change, those standing against it must evolve and change as well.

Victor Clements is a woodland advisor working in Highland Perthshire, and is an Executive Committee member of the Association of Deer Management Groups as well as the Secretary of the Breadalbane DMG.

An expanded version of this article has also been published in the *Scottish Gamekeepers' magazine*.



Woodland creation behind fences in Highland Perthshire.
Photo: Victor Clements

ADMG London Meeting and launch of ADMG Project Fund



Richard Cooke, Chairman
Association of Deer Management Groups

ADMG London Meeting

A well-attended London meeting took place on 16 June 2016 at the offices of Stonehage Fleming (UK) Limited. This was attended by Richard Cooke, Finlay Clark, Randal Wilson and Linzi Seivwright and was held to brief London members of ADMG on the current process of change within the deer sector. David Lowes, Vice Chairman of the Inveraray & Tyndrum DMG also spoke about some of the practical considerations of applying a Deer Management Plan. The reports from ADMG were well received and stimulated a wide-ranging Q & A session with a number of appreciative notes received from attendees following the meeting with some welcome promises of support for the new ADMG Project Fund.

Launch of ADMG Project Fund

ADMG is seeking donations from members with the aim of raising a project fund totalling £50,000 to £75,000. This is intended to cover a development programme over the next three years involving a number of specific projects. These include:

SWARD

SWARD is a data handling system developed specifically for DMGs. It was developed as an SNH project and has already been trialled, but SNH funding cuts have led to suspension of its roll-out programme. This is a critically important part of the further development of DMGs and ADMG intends to pick up the project and take it forward.

Wild Deer Best Practice (WDBP)

Similarly WDBP is no longer fully funded by SNH and the Best Practice Guides are now in need of updating and further development. WDBP is highly thought of both in the UK and internationally, and is an essential component of deer sector development. It is ADMG's intention to work with other sector partners to reactivate it.

DMG Accreditation Scheme

By the end of 2016 all DMGs will have effective deer management plans conforming to a standard recognised by SNH and covered in the DMG Assessment. The intention is to use and develop the Assessment process as a means of accrediting DMGs.

A number of private donations to the project fund have already been promised and additional offers are invited by way of direct contact with the Chairman rc@dalhousiestates.co.uk. Further details on the projects and how the funds will be applied to them will be available shortly.

Across the Burn by Ian MacGillivray

In addition to the fundraising campaign a most generous offer has been made by the artist Ian MacGillivray of one of his highly regarded stalking paintings (*below*). This will be on display on the ADMG stand at Scone and is offered for sale by sealed offer to be submitted to the ADMG Chairman by 12 noon on Thursday 20 October. The reserve price is available on application.

The 30" x 44" picture (unframed) is oil on linen, and was painted following time spent by Ian on the Garrogie Estate in 2012. Victor, the pony featured in the picture, was the first winner of the Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair at Scone in July 2013. The pony man is David Brown from Garrogie - and Yorkshire.



Spongiform encephalopathy found in reindeer in Norway



John Bruce

In March this year, a Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy, TSE, referred to as Chronic Wasting Disease when found in a deer was diagnosed in a free-ranging reindeer from

southern Norway by the Norwegian Veterinary Institute who are monitoring the reindeer herd.

It has been confirmed that this case of disease is associated with prion infection. Prions are miss-folded versions of proteins commonly associated with the central nervous system.

Please see link below.

<http://bit.ly/1Q7LWX2>

The Animal & Plant Health Agency became aware of the event on 5 April 2016, and alerted DEFRA.

DEFRA published in March 2016 a revised assessment of the risk of CWD to Great Britain. The revised assessment includes evaluation of the risks posed by importation of deer urine lures from North America to the UK, following the BDS survey on use of urine lures by stakeholders, see; <http://bit.ly/1WOvKYg> At present, there remain many unknowns with respect to the Norwegian case:

- The origin of the prion is not known. Prions are transmissible between individuals within a species, and some are transmissible between species. However, they can also arise spontaneously. It is not yet possible to conclude whether this prion was imported into Norway or arose there independently.

- It is not clear which prion has caused the disease in this reindeer. Scrapie in sheep and goats, BSE in cattle, FSE in cats, TME in mink, CWD in cervids and CJD in humans are all caused by prions. It is not possible clinically to distinguish between TSEs caused by prions from different sources (e.g. CWD and BSE) within the same species.

It is not clear whether this is a single case or is indicative of wider infection in the herd. However the Norwegian Veterinary Institute is continuing its routine surveillance, which detected this case.

The initial speculation that the case in the reindeer could have been a sporadic prion disease was ruled out by the confirmation of CWD by the OIE reference lab in Canada. The British Deer Society has been monitoring CWD in North America and has established connections throughout the scientific world on this topic, the Society is well informed and well connected, it will bring news on this event to you as soon as it is available, meantime we propose that we should all maintain our duty of care, and responsibilities if travelling around the world by being as hygienic as possible with our outdoor clothes and footwear and by minimising traffic in un-proven disease-free animals or their body parts.

Subsequent to this initial report a second incident of TSE was diagnosed in Norway in May in a young adult, pregnant, moose (referred to as elk in Norway). The moose had shown abnormal behaviour and was in poor bodily condition. The moose comes from a different area (Selbu municipality in Sør-Trøndelag, close to the Swedish border) than the CWD case in the reindeer reported in Norway in April this year. The situation is being closely monitored and further updates are available on the BDS website www.bds.org.uk



Glen Dessary,
Photo: Victor Clements

Market for venison remains *strong*



Dick Playfair
Secretary, Scottish Venison Partnership

It has been a challenging year for Scottish venison. Whilst from a UK market perspective sales of venison have continued to rise there has been a set back in the form of the E. coli O157 outbreak in September last year. The market however remains extremely buoyant with Mintel reporting that by the end of 2015 UK game meat sales would reach £106 million, up from £98 million in 2014, with growth expected to continue, and forecast to hit £143 million by 2020.

Mintel stated that: *"It is venison which is the star performer in the market, fuelling growth in game meat. Indeed, usage of venison has increased from 13 per cent to 17 per cent over the last 12 months."*

Also, in its report, 'The 50', published last year, Mintel said: *"Soaring venison sales have put game meat in the spotlight. While the size of the game meat market is dwarfed by that of poultry (with sales of £97 million in 2014, versus £1.7 billion for poultry) the game meat market has enjoyed strong growth in 2014, increasing around 9% from 2013. This rise in sales has largely been thanks to the popularity enjoyed by venison. The fact that many more UK consumers have expressed an interest in trying game than have eaten this type of meat before, highlights the significant growth potential in this sector. Leveraging the health credentials of game such as venison will help to position it as a better-for-you alternative to red meat, thus boosting sales further."*

Another highlight was the announcement by Sainsbury that its venison sales were up 115 per cent in December 2015 over the previous year. So indicators are that the market remains strong.

E. coli O157 however came as a wake-up call for a sector that has been virtually trouble-free in terms of health scares. 11 cases of the potentially killer bug were reported, traced back as far as could be possible to one batch of wild venison. The Scottish Venison Partnership is working with SQWV and Food Standards Scotland to address those areas of greatest risk in the supply chain, and demonstrate that the necessary steps are being taken. There are expected to be modifications to the SQWV standards, additional training made available on food hygiene, and increased checking and sampling. There is also discussion, in its very early stages, for an E. coli O157 research project to assess the scale of presence of the bacteria in wild and farmed deer.

A thorough refresh of the Scottish Venison website was undertaken in advance of Scottish Venison Day on 4 September and all entries on the site (under buy, stock, sell) updated as appropriate. Activity for Scottish Venison Day itself centred on an online recipe competition with the prize of a weekend at the acclaimed hotel and restaurant Monachyle Mhor, its owner/chef Tom Lewis being one of the judges. Winner of the competition was Graeme Taylor from Glasgow with his recipe for 'venison and haggis en croute'.

The Deer Farm and Park Demonstration Project concluded in 2015. The Scottish Venison Partnership was one of the partners in this project with Scotland Food and Drink, NFU Scotland and SQWV Ltd. The project was designed to deliver

10 demonstration days over two years at deer farms and parks in Scotland. Ultimately the days took place at five locations, Culquoich, Strathdon; Gledpark, Dumfries & Galloway; Clathic, Perthshire; and Wester Balcormo and Downfield in Fife, the latter also being the site of the new dedicated deer abattoir. A starter guide to deer farming is also now available on the project website <http://deerfarmdemoproject.scottish-venison.info/>

In terms of results, an analysis of attendance over both years of the project shows a total of 324 individuals after de-duplication of names for 2014 and 2015. The total number of visits over the two-year programme was 580.

Also, whilst there were fewer attendees overall in 2015, a slightly higher number of farmers and landowners attended (135) than 2014 (125). This may have been as a result of the project covering three different locations (Perthshire, Dumfries & Galloway, and Fife) in its second year and therefore reaching a wider potential audience rather than just the one location (Strathdon) in 2014.

It also should be noted that during the period of the project a number of notable and related successes for the sector have taken place:

- The largest deer farm in Scotland (and potentially in the UK) is now under development in Midlothian.
- Deer farming is now covered by the Basic Payment scheme.
- A dedicated facility for killing deer is now operational in Fife (previously the closest abattoir for deer was Yorkshire).
- The first Deer Park to gain accreditation under the new BDFPA/SFQC Quality Assurance Scheme was Gledpark, one of the project's selected demonstration units.

Finally, the Scottish Venison Partnership with SNH has for some time been developing an application for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for Scottish Wild Venison. The draft application is now with SAC Consulting who will take it forward on SVP's behalf. The designation is being sought for all Scottish wild venison from animals culled (although not necessarily processed in Scotland), and discussion is ongoing as to whether this proposal can apply to all Scottish wild venison legally produced, or only that produced under the SQWV scheme.



Venison and haggis en croute. Photo: Graeme Taylor



Photo: Peter Keyser

The Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for Working Stalking Ponies

The working pony is a treasured tradition on many of Scotland's sporting estates and deer forests, and the GWCT Scottish Game Fair this year hosts the fourth running of this event for working ponies held in memory of Fred Taylor, former Head Stalker on Invermark Estate.

The event takes place on Sunday 3 July. All ponies entered are accompanied by a stalker/ghillie in estate or sporting wear. Ponies must be turned out in appropriate tack for the hill, either to carry a stag, or panniers, or other hill work. Every pony entered must be working or have worked on an estate or deer forest during the stalking/shooting season.

The parade and judging take place in the Fair's main ring, followed by awards of rosettes and prizes. Judge for the event this year is Chris Macrae from the Eishken Estate, Isle of Lewis.

At the time of going to press declared entries were as follows:

- Virginia of Ardverikie, Ardverikie Estate - *Sam Patterson*
- Whatton Manor Moy, Ardverikie Estate - *James Smith*
- Atholl Clover, Atholl Estates - *Debbie McLauchlan*

- Atholl Sorrel, Atholl Estates - *Rebecca Cantwell*
- Balmoral Gairn, Balmoral Estate - *Lucy Riddell*
- Balmoral Clunie, Balmoral Estate - *Sylvia Ormiston*
- Gille of Croila, Glen Prosen Estate - *Ali Beveridge*
- Coll of Liosmor, Glen Prosen Estate - *Eric Stark*
- Kincardine Fionnlagh, Invermark Estate - *Garry MacLennan*

The sponsors are George Goldsmith and the Highland Pony Society (Bronze medal, sash and rosettes). The prizes will be given by Anne Taylor, who will also present a bottle of whisky to the winner.

The event is organised by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust in conjunction with the Association of Deer Management Groups.

The 2015 winner was 11 year old Tyree from the Dalnacardoch Estate, Perthshire, pictured above with stalker Duncan Fernie.

The Wild Beast of Barrisdale

Iain Thornber

Loch Hourn is a 14 mile long sea loch snaking inland from the Sound of Sleat, opposite the Isle of Skye, to the head of the loch at Kinloch Hourn. The popular translation of the Gaelic name of this sea loch is Loch of Hell, but according to Celtic scholars the name is a less exciting one and means Loch of Berries. Glen Barrisdale lies in the Knoydart Deer Management Group Area on the south shore of the loch and is famous on three counts. Its ancient Scots pines (which by the way, is a tree that grows in an unbroken arc all the way to Vladivostok), a family called MacDonell who were out in the '45, and a mysterious animal which acquired so terrifying a reputation that it became known as the 'Beast of Barrisdale'.

What was the Beast and when did it exist? According to Fr Andrew MacDonell (1870 - 1960), a Benedictine priest from Fort Augustus Abbey standing in for the priest at Inverie, its blood-curling howls were first heard about 1845 and continued, off and on, until 1900. Fr Andrew, who was clearly interested in the history of the area, gathered some fascinating stories about the Beast from a number of stalkers, not one of whom, he recorded, would dream of trying to deceive him.

Ronald MacMaster (1829 - 1906) the Barrisdale keeper, told Fr MacDonell that one day in November, he set off in the morning for the summit of Sgeir a' Choire-beith, a 3,000 ft hill overlooking Glen Barrisdale, to shoot ptarmigan. No sooner had he reached his destination than a flock of birds he had



Ronald MacMaster, the Barrisdale keeper

heard ahead of him, rose and flew off in alarm. He thought they might have been disturbed by a fox but the snow-covered ground revealed a set of fresh tracks which were far larger than that of a fox or indeed of any other animal he knew. Guessing that it may have been the 'beist mhor' (Gaelic, big beast) he followed them until he came to a long rocky ledge twelve to fourteen feet high on top of which he found four large paw marks indicating that the animal had without any hesitation surmounted it in one leap. The gamekeeper's description of the tracks was interesting. He said they were almost round



The Knoydart hills

and about four inches in diameter and gave the impression of a heavy animal. There was evidence of four toes but no central pad and the mark of a claw behind the paw.

Ronald MacMaster's son John (1865 - 1913) who lived at Runival a few miles up the loch from Barrisdale, was out on the hill and saw what he took to be the paw mark of a hound in a patch of soft peat. Stopping to take a closer look he realised it was far too large for any dog and that its dimensions closely matched those his father had seen a few years before on the summit of Sgeir a' Choire-beith. On another occasion two stalkers watching deer on a clear, calm summer's afternoon, heard strange roaring and howling coming from a corrie on the opposite hill about three miles away from where they lay. The deer took no notice but the dogs they had with them became very agitated and unmistakably frightened.

Although very vocal, the Beast shunned human contact except in the depths of winter when food was scarce. Descriptions of it vary. The few who had actually seen it seemed to think it was about the size of a small donkey, with a mane and tail like a horse. The head was broad at the top between the ears similar to the head of a boar, but instead of a snout the lower part was rounded with a heavy upper jaw and large red, overhanging lips. The face, they described as being hideous and terrifyingly ugly.

So what was this animal that had put the inhabitants of Barrisdale and its neighbouring communities in a state of fear and alarm for so many years? The answer - a hyena! Now you may well ask how did a hyena, a native of Africa, arrive on Loch Hour-side in the mid 1800s. It seems a small travelling circus or a menagerie was en route overland to Skye by way of Invergarry, Arnisdale and Glenelg when somewhere around Kinloch Hour a hyena managed to escape. Although these picturesque travelling menageries, often consisting of no more than a bear on a chain, a monkey, a chimpanzee, a zebra and in this case a hyena, did not usually stray far from towns and villages, they were not unknown in the Highlands and Islands where the exotic animals they brought with them were, understandably, a great attraction.

In many respects, other than its size and age, the descriptions of the 'Beast of Barrisdale' collected by Fr MacDonnell, were fairly close to that of a hyena especially the vocalisations, including wailing calls, howling screams and the well-known "laughter" used to alert other clan members up to three miles away of a food source. One day perhaps its skeleton will be found in a cave or a peat hag in Glen Barrisdale and that will confirm its identity beyond all doubt.

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Future advertising and tendering of deer culling contracts and deer management permissions on the National Forest Estate

Ian Fergusson

Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 came into force on 18 April 2016, and this now affects the way in which Public Sector bodies manage and deliver their procurement process.

Procurement activity from a threshold of more than £50k for goods and services and more than £4million for works will be subject to a regulated process. The new regulations require all public sector bodies to advertise all regulated contract opportunities and award of a contract on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS).

Forestry Commission Scotland will be adopting an electronic platform to manage its tendering activities. This will introduce a greater degree of standardised tendering and best practice in line with the Scottish Government Procurement Journey www.procurementjourney.scot/

To allow more opportunity for public sector contract opportunities, it will be beneficial for suppliers to register with Public Contracts Scotland www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk

Forest Enterprise Scotland will also use Public Contracts Scotland to run non-regulated opportunities. To find out more about the registration process, please access the Public Contracts Scotland Supplier Registration Guide at <http://bit.ly/1Ua6xqw>

Forestry Commission Scotland will advertise as a result of the regulations on PCS; however regulated tenders will be delivered by PCS-Tender (see link below). It would be an added advantage

for suppliers to also register with PCS-Tender. Once registration is complete for both systems, a single sign on can be set up. PCS-Tender has the following advantages:

- Users will have instant access to tender document responses from any location, at any time.
- Reduce duplication of effort with the ability to store and re-use answers to standard ITT questions multiple times.
- Previous submissions and documentation will be saved in supplier profiles for future reference.
- Improved communication with a standardised message service with buyers.
- Time and resource saving.
- Single sign-on through Public Contracts Scotland service.
- The ability to edit responses as many times as necessary up to the tender submission deadline.

Both PCS and PCS-Tender are both free and easy to use, and an online helpdesk is provided to support suppliers with every process.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact: Procurement.Scotland@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

The link for PCS-Tender is: <http://bit.ly/1yqKIDL>

Ian Fergusson is Forest Enterprise Scotland Deer Management Officer (South)

Wild deer management in New Zealand



Bob McIntosh

Given the current scrutiny of deer management practices in Scotland it is always useful to compare our approach with that of other countries. In the last edition of Scope,

John Bruce described the game management practices in Germany and a recent holiday in New Zealand gave me the opportunity to gain some insight into deer issues in that country.

New Zealand has, apart from a couple of bat species, no native mammals so the country's ecosystems evolved without mammalian herbivores and without mammalian predators. As a consequence, a number of bird species had evolved to be flightless. The first human settlers were Polynesian people who appeared some 800 years ago and brought rats and dogs, which had some impact on the native wildlife, and the early settlers were largely responsible, through hunting, for the extinction of the Moa, a very large flightless bird. However their impact was nothing compared to that of the European settlers who arrived in the early 19th century. They were responsible for introducing over 25 species of mammals and a large number of plant species. Indeed Acclimatisation Societies were formed throughout New Zealand to facilitate the introduction of exotic species. These introductions, which included deer, have had a significant negative impact on the native New Zealand habitats and species. For example, rabbits were introduced and became so abundant that stoats and weasels were introduced to control their numbers.

These predators, plus the introduced rats, had, and continue to have, a significant impact on native bird species. Some 60 bird species have been lost and the native forests, grasslands and alpine habitats have suffered degradation and loss of species as a result of browsing and grazing by deer and possums.

Deer were first introduced around 1850 and other introductions took place over the next 70 or so years, including from Woburn Abbey and Warnham Park. Red deer predominated but other species introduced were sika, fallow, wapiti, white-tailed, rusa and sambar. Red deer are now the most common deer species and are present throughout most of the country. Initially they were protected, to ensure successful colonisation, but finding the climate and habitats much to their liking, they quickly spread and multiplied so that by 1919 it was estimated that the population was 300,000 and increasing by 25 per cent annually. It was becoming apparent that they were causing significant environmental damage as well as competing with domestic livestock. Attitudes towards deer changed, protection was removed and replaced by large scale culling effort. Following a 'Deer Menace' conference in 1930 to discuss practical ways of carrying out their destruction, deer were declared to be a pest species. This saw the introduction of recreational hunting, the use of Government appointed cullers and the spreading of poisoned carrots from the air. Between 1930 and 1953 some 670,000 red deer were shot by teams of Government cullers. As a result, a significant and profitable trade in venison developed, helped by the introduction of helicopters to enable access to, and carcass extraction from, the previously difficult to access high tops. It is estimated that two million animals have been killed in the wild



Stag near Queenstown, New Zealand.
Photo: © Irishkoala | Dreamstime.com



Typical red deer habitat in the native forests of south west South Island

throughout New Zealand since helicopter operations started in the 1960s, the majority of them red deer. The developing venison market led to the introduction of deer farming and commercial hunters turned to capturing live deer for farms.

In parallel with these developments tourism hunting for red deer was increasing, with some exceptional trophy heads on offer and hunting remains a popular pastime in New Zealand. While protection of the indigenous species and habitats remains the highest priority for the New Zealand Government there are signs of a recognition that eradication of deer everywhere is unrealistic and that recreational hunting has economic and social value. Indeed in the last few years the Government has established The Game Animal Council, a statutory body which represents the interests of the recreational hunting sector. Its role is to advise the Minister on hunting issues, to provide information and education to the sector, to promote safety issues and conduct research. This body works alongside the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Government body responsible for promoting the conservation of the natural and historic heritage of New Zealand. The DOC has a deer control policy which essentially accepts the existence of commercial and recreational hunting but which makes it clear that the protection of New Zealand's unique indigenous biodiversity takes precedence over the commercial and recreational value of deer as a hunting resource. Tensions undoubtedly still exist with concerns by the DOC that recreational hunting is not exerting a significant enough impact on deer populations and concerns by hunters that populations are under too much pressure in some areas. A particularly controversial issue is the continued use of the poison 1080 for control of pest species. Aerial spreading of this poison is not currently being used for deer control but deer can be a by-kill of baits spread to control rats and possums.

Hunting is fairly readily accessible in New Zealand on privately owned land and on the public conservation lands under the control of the DOC, which manages some 8 million ha, about a third of the land area. As well as deer, chamois, feral goats, feral pigs, feral sheep and tahr (a Himalayan goat type animal) can be hunted. Many recreational hunters head for the public conservation lands where permits are readily available, except for certain areas during the rut (or the roar as the New Zealanders call it) when applicants may need to enter into a ballot system. The rut is the most popular time, with some very large heads a possibility. The DOC may restrict access to some areas because of research or recreational activity but otherwise there are few restrictions. Any rifle calibre of .222 or above can be used and bow hunting is also permissible. There are no close seasons and, generally, no bag limits. Much of the conservation land is steep and mountainous with dense natural forests on the lower slopes and few tracks. Access can be difficult and sometimes involves helicopter or boat transport and/or hiking with overnighing in tents or the DOC huts which are available to hunters and walkers. As a result, the more remote areas get less hunting pressure and many carcasses are left where they are shot with only the trophy and/or some choice cuts removed and carried out.

So the deer story in New Zealand has gone through three phases. The Introduction, protection and colonisation phase was followed by a deer destruction phase and in the current phase there is an uneasy truce between conservation and hunting interests and a continuing concern about deer impacts on the natural heritage. The 1987 Conservation Act ruled that an introduced animal shall be treated as a pest if it compromises conservation values. The deer population is smaller than it was at its peak but the DOC sometimes still finds it necessary to complement commercial and recreational hunting effort with contract culling operations.



Herd of Deer graze on the mountain pasture at early morning, Canterbury, New Zealand Photo: © Kira Volkov | Dreamstime.com

Wild deer management in New Zealand (*Continued*)

There are undoubtedly many differences between the Scottish and New Zealand approaches. Deer welfare is clearly much less of a consideration in NZ and the fact that deer are not native to NZ brings a different dimension to the debate. The attitude to public hunting is also quite different. The permit system on the public conservation estate means that cheap hunting is easily accessible by the whole population and, perhaps, as a consequence, the proportion of the population that takes part in hunting is significantly higher than in this country.

Most medium sized towns that we visited had a large chain store hunting and fishing shop and a study in 2008 found that 5.7 per cent of registered voters had hunted game animals in 2007. If replicated in Scotland that would mean

around 240,000 hunters within the Scottish population, considerably more than currently exist.

However there is one aspect that we have in common. Having accepted, sometimes reluctantly, that deer have value and cannot be eliminated everywhere, the debate in NZ now revolves around questions such as what density is appropriate, who makes that decision, on what basis, and how should control best be carried out? Does that sound familiar!

Bob McIntosh was Head of Forestry Commission Scotland and the Scottish Government's Environment and Forestry Director. A keen stalker with a lifetime's interest in deer, he is a member of the Executive Committee of ADMG.

Authorisations Review, ADMG Communications and Scottish deer forest wanted

Authorisations Review

The Authorisations Review Panel has met four times to date, has seen written submissions and also taken verbal evidence from a number of organisations including ADMG, LDNS and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association. The report is due from the Panel at the end of August to be shared with the SNH management team, and made public thereafter. All information about the Panel's procedure, terms of reference, members and meetings of the Panel including minutes of meetings can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/1sHxWEf>

ADMG Communications

At the time of going to press, 24 Deer Management Groups had made their Deer Management Plans (DMPs) available online, via the DMG web portal at: <http://bit.ly/1MLp8Sn> In total, 30 DMGs now have information available either on their own websites or on a web page on the ADMG site. Deer Management Plans are put online as part of the consultation

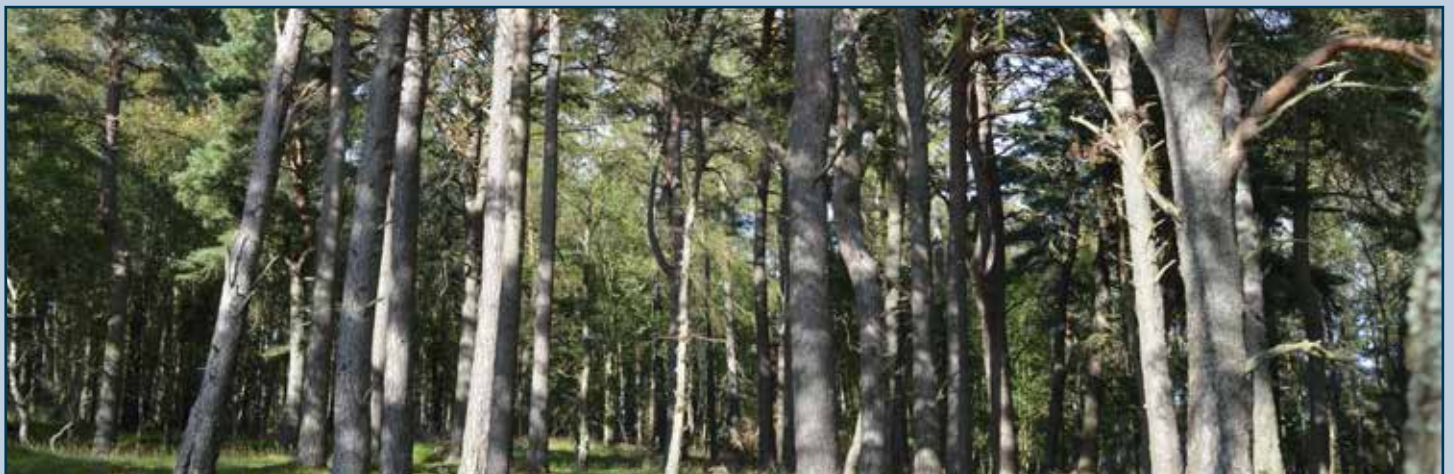
process. DMGs however have no obligation to have a website and could equally make their plan available via their Secretary, or through advertising in the press. Public meetings have also been used, with varying levels of attendance, for DMGs to discuss their draft plans with those who might be interested.

The level of information about DMGs now available online is considerable, in many cases showing not just the nature of the ground that the DMG covers and its key features, but also details of landholdings, contact details for the DMG, as well as Deer Management Plans. Many sites are also supported by maps and photographs.

Scottish deer forest wanted

ADMG has been approached by a potential purchaser wishing to buy a Scottish deer forest, with or without a house or buildings, and lease deer stalking on Scottish highland and lowland estates, and purchase a Scottish sporting agency.

Contact: redriver@live.com or **Tel:** 07836 626550



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