



Photo: Laurie Campbell



**Tom Turnbull, Chairman**  
Association of Deer Management Groups

## Deer managers vital in delivering Government's climate change ambitions

Deer managers in the Highlands sit on the cusp of some big changes over the next few years.

We will continue to be challenged to bring deer numbers down and target densities, whilst often a crude snapshot of population levels, will likely be the measure of success.

We believe however that it is time to consider a more nuanced measure of deer populations based around occupancy, deer movements and the all-important Habitat Impact Assessments (HIAs) that Deer Management Groups undertake. 10 deer per sq km is the target set out in the Deer Working Group Report and those DMGs that currently have higher densities than this must be aware that it is likely that they will come under increased scrutiny from NatureScot.

We would urge all members to look carefully at their population models and consider what might be sustainable for them and the habitats that they manage whilst not losing sight of the vital contribution that deer management plays in sustaining remote rural populations.

With the ADMG Vice chair, I recently met online with Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. We were able to promote the good work that has already been undertaken by Deer Management Groups in light of the climate crisis and their ongoing commitment to working in the public interest, we stressed our concerns over blanket densities as a simplistic tool and the implementation of statutory cull targets in achieving the Scottish Government objectives, and which may hinder successful collaboration.

The Minister was aware of the importance of collaborative, landscape scale deer management as well as the vital role that deer managers will play in achieving Government ambitions. The all-important venison industry was also covered, and the Minister showed enthusiasm to see more venison consumed across Scotland. We will continue to engage with Scottish Government and its representatives wherever possible to ensure that our members' views are heard.

# Chairman's editorial

Continued...

At the June National Access Forum meeting ADMG was given the opportunity to outline the challenges facing deer managers and the importance of close liaison between deer managers and access takers. We requested the creation of a small working group aimed at tackling some of the issues that deer managers sometimes face including access hotspots, occasional related problems with commercial access and possible improved funding and support from Scottish Government on associated access problems. We look forward to progressing this work with the NAF.

The next few years will undoubtedly be ones of change for us all, but I am sure that deer managers have an increasingly important role to play. Proper use of all the data and information that we have gathered will ensure that we hit climate targets as well as maintaining the important heritage of deer management.

Finally, you will have noticed the new ADMG logo on this edition of Scope and on the stand if you attend the GWCT Scottish Game Fair at Scone. It is sad to say goodbye to our old logo and I want to stress that this is not a move away from our all-important

stalking heritage but, that at a time when land management objectives are changing, we feel that this new design better represents the broad spectrum of our membership.

We do nonetheless want to maintain those important elements of our stalking background that we all value and we are considering ways of better promoting the ongoing training and use of ponies for extraction as well as the potential benefits that this may have for the carbon footprint of deer management. We hope that you like the new look.



*Photo: Glyn Satterley*

## HSE consultation on lead ammunition

**In April 2021 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) received a request from the Defra Secretary of State, with the consent of the Scottish and Welsh Governments, to prepare an Annex 15 restriction dossier assessing the risks to the environment and human health from lead in ammunition.**

In the EU a restriction was adopted for lead in shot over wetlands in January 2021 and a restriction for lead in shot, bullets and fishing weights is now in progress. The Annex 15 dossier prepared by HSE examines the prospect of a similar restriction in the UK covering lead in ammunition across all habitats.

Defra has asked HSE to consider the risks posed by the use of lead in ammunition and the potential need for further risk management measures beyond those already in place.

It is understood that the writing is already on the wall for rifle ammunition with proposals expected to put forward a transition period of 18 months to 5 years between the introduction of new rules and a total ban in place. The 18 month period would be for large calibre rifle ammunition with the 5 year period applying to airgun and smaller calibre rifle ammunition. The longer transition is to allow for non-lead alternatives to be developed.

Comments on the consultation which runs until November can be submitted here:

### **Submit comments >>**

With the change being driven by the market as well as the EU deer managers are advised to liaise closely with their game dealer/processor as their protocols may be changing in any event and ahead of the outcome of the HSE consultation.



# A Walk with Shaun

480 miles on foot for stalkers, ghillies and gamekeepers

**In May Ronald Rose who many readers will know completed *A Walk with Shaun*, an incredible 480 mile fundraising walk from one end of Scotland to the other in 24 days.**

He was raising vital funds for the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust (GWT) in its Year of the Gamekeeper and was also generating invaluable awareness among his peers of the assistance the GWT provides.

Ronald, a Wildlife Ranger Manager for Forestry and Land Scotland, is from a long line of deer and wildlife managers. Despite many years in this line of work, or perhaps because of it, he doesn't take the personal challenges lightly: long hours; challenging weather; solitary working and more.

Ronald lost a much-valued friend and colleague in 2019 when Shaun took his own life. He wanted to walk in Shaun's memory and contacted the GWT in February 2022. He said:

*"Given the work the GWT does to support those in our industry, I wanted to use the trek to fundraise for the GWT and raise awareness about the help available for those struggling with their wellbeing in general, as well as those who consider taking their own life."*

Starting 15 April at the Solway Coast, where Shaun was a regular visitor when wildfowling, *A Walk with Shaun* continued up to Cape Wrath, Scotland's most north-westerly point. The walk included known trails like the Annandale Way, John Buchan Way, and West Highland Way, taking Ronald through a wide variety of landscapes managed by the very people he was walking for.

Ronald sent daily updates to the GWT, who managed a Facebook page to keep *A Walk with Shaun's* many followers up to date. He reached Cape Wrath on 9 May.



Photo: Gamekeepers Welfare Trust

*A Walk with Shaun* was very much a team effort: Ronald had a wonderful send-off from both his and Shaun's friends, family, and colleagues, some of whom joined him for stretches of the walk. His wife Jo's flapjacks gave him much needed sustenance along the way.

Helen Benson, Chief Executive Officer for the GWT said:

*"Ronald's Walk with Shaun has been an amazing feat, and all the more humbling since he has raised over £3,000 plus Gift Aid for the GWT. We're very grateful to him for his incredible effort."*

On the penultimate day of *A Walk with Shaun*, Ronald commented:

*"This has been an emotional day for me because of the realisation that I will be continuing to walk with Shaun on a daily basis for a long time after I reach Cape Wrath."*

*"It's OK not to be OK. And it's more than OK, it's the strong thing to do, to tell a family member, a trusted friend or work colleague, or specialists like the Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust, about what problems you are facing and how you are feeling."*

# Megan Rowland, deer manager, named INEOS Grenadier Countryside Champion 2022

Megan Rowland, a deer manager from the Highlands, has been chosen as the overall winner of the INEOS Grenadier Countryside Champion Award 2022, coordinated by GunsOnPegs.

**The judging panel members were unanimous that Megan was a worthy winner, embodying not only the award's aim to highlight the impact of unsung rural heroes but also the 'spirit and grit' of INEOS Grenadier, the award's sponsor.**

The judges were impressed by Megan's communication skills and tireless championing of sustainable deer and land management in the highlands and beyond. They also acknowledged her support and encouragement for women and girls in the rural sector, leading by example and breaking down stereotypes in a traditionally male-dominated industry, and that she was an inspiration for others.

Megan is currently a Deer Management Officer for NatureScot but has also worked as a professional deerstalker on a Sutherland estate, guiding clients from around the world. Her route into the profession was unconventional; for the first 18 years of her life she was a vegetarian, before adopting a 'locavore' diet, which includes small quantities of

self-sourced local meat. Her interest in conservation and ecology led her to pursue a career as a deer manager.

Using her personal blog and social channels she has built a platform to document her life as a deer manager and make the case for hunting as a conservation tool. Her prolific twitter feed and thoughtful writing has led to numerous appearances in the media, including on BBC Scotland, BBC Radio Scotland, the *Into the Wild* podcast and regular columns for Shooting Times. She has also supported the Rural Youth Project and Women in Wellies with a view to encourage more women into the rural sector, and launched 'Hind Sight', an initiative to provide women with an interest in deer management with an open and supportive environment to learn more.

Megan said:

*"I'm surprised and delighted to have been named as INEOS Grenadier Countryside Champion. Since becoming actively involved in deer and countryside management over*



*a decade ago I've always tried to be honest and open about what we do – and the good that comes of it. This award, for me, is a recognition that the more we talk about what we do and tell our stories the better."*

Information supplied by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

## Nature based finance opportunities

New sources of private finance for the stewardship of land, water and nature are emerging in Scotland.

**These sources of finance seek positive environmental outcomes and a financial return and provide opportunities for rural land managers to receive an income for their continuing stewardship role, or for environmental improvements.**

The new guidance has been written to help managers of rural land in Scotland consider the opportunity of nature-based finance, and to assess its implications for their work.

These new opportunities can help land managers to deliver their own climate change mitigation measures, to grow the financial value of their assets, and to make additional positive contributions to the life of rural communities.

**More information is available here >>**





Photo: William Hawes



**William Hawes**  
*Head of Natural Capital (Scotland), Savills*

## Update on the Peatland Code

**Hot on the heels of the Woodland Carbon Code, the Peatland Code has also been updated with a key purpose of these changes to allow for quicker delivery of restoration projects. Peatlands hold nearly 30% of the world's soil carbon yet cover only 3% of the world's surface, and in Scotland they cover more than 20% of our land area.**

Healthy peat plays a vital role in carbon storage and combating the effects of climate change, and in maintaining Scotland's water quality and rich biodiversity. Peatlands reduce flood risk and support farming and crofting. They are also part of the wild landscapes that attract tourists to Scotland.

### **Some of the key changes to the Peatland Code:**

- Restoration work can begin before project validation, subject to sufficient baseline evidence being provided to the validation body. It's important to note that the risks of a project not achieving validation post restoration will rest with the developer.
- A restoration validation step has been introduced. Within one year of the completion of the restoration

works, a validation inspection will be undertaken to assess the works against the original restoration plan and confirm that the Peatland Code requirements have been met.

- At least 75% of all peat depth survey points must exceed the minimum peat depth required for a project's duration. Project length is linked to the peat depth over the project area. Previously, depth had to be a 75% average of the site and in excess of 50cm. This is a material change which impacts on which projects can qualify for the Code, and for how long.
- The importance of stakeholder engagement is increased. Developers will be required to demonstrate that they have engaged with neighbours and local communities in respect of their restoration plans, and public consultations could be required for some projects.

The changes to the Code take effect in full on 1 September 2022.

# News from Food Standards Scotland regarding wild game work streams

## TRAINING OF HUNTERS IN HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Persons who hunt wild game with a view to placing it on the market for human consumption (and are not subject to any of the relevant exemptions from the requirements of 853/2004) must have sufficient knowledge of the normal anatomy, physiology and behaviour of wild game; abnormal behaviour and pathological changes in wild game; the hygiene rules and techniques for the handling of wild game; and relevant legislative and administrative provisions.

This is to ensure they can undertake an initial examination of wild game on the spot to determine its suitability for the food chain. Retained EU Regulation 853/2004 requires that training covering the above points “must be provided to the satisfaction of the competent authority.”

FSS/FSA intends to address this issue and in addition to clarifying the training requirements for hunters and the process for a hunter to become a ‘trained person’, FSS would also like to ensure that the different training options currently provided by a range of providers meet the required standard (that is, that they cover the points above).

To this end, FSS is engaging with relevant stakeholders in the wild game sector, including those organisations which provide training to hunters. The focus will be to explore training material available to hunters, in order to sufficiently demonstrate their knowledge to the satisfaction of FSS under Paragraph 4 (a) to (d) at Annex III Section IV to retained Regulation (EC) 853/2004.

## WILD GAME POST-MORTEM INSPECTION (PMI) REQUIREMENTS AND THE CONCEPT OF ‘COLLECTION CENTRES’

FSS has had previous engagement with the sector regarding a new Official Controls Regulation (OCR) requirement to have post-mortem inspection (PMI) carried out on wild game carcasses as soon as possible, or a maximum of 24 hrs (depending on low-capacity status) following their arrival at an approved game handling establishment (AGHE). It was made clear to FSS by AGHEs and other industry members that the implementation of this requirement simply wasn’t feasible for most Food Business Operators (FBOs) and would negatively affect food safety.

Currently it is common practice to store carcasses in AGHE intake chills for periods far greater than 24hrs before they are brought into the processing area and PMI is performed. This is seen as positive for food safety as most AGHEs have invested heavily in their chills which are spacious, frequently inspected and have good temperature controls. The alternative would potentially be for carcasses to remain in game larders or in the field for longer, with potentially negative consequences for food safety.

One option that FSS has explored, and which was discussed with potentially impacted Local Authorities (LAs) last September, was to alter the curtilage of the AGHE so that their intake chills were instead under LA control. This would mean that when the carcasses are brought into the intake chill, they haven’t yet ‘arrived’ at the AGHE and the 24hr requirement for PMI would be delayed until they are moved into the processing part of the curtilage. However, FSS temporarily stopped exploring this option when investigation was undertaken of

amendments that the EU had made to Regulation (EC) 853/2004 with regards to wild game.

These amendments came into force (only in the EU, not GB) last September and introduced the concept of a ‘collection centre’ for wild game. Collection centres are defined as “an establishment used to store the bodies and viscera of wild game before their transport to a game handling establishment” and can either be registered or approved depending on whether they are first receivers of game or whether they receive game from other collection centres.

FSS wished to explore the concept of collection centres further in the hope that this might offer an alternative solution to the 24hr PMI issue and has now received legal advice from the Scottish Government Legal Directorate (SGLD) in this regard. The advice states that there would be no legal basis for sending carcasses from the primary production stage (ie the field or a game larder) to any establishment other than an AGHE. This is because in Annex III, Section IX, Section II (3) and Section III (3) of Retained EU Regulation 853/2004, it states that “meat of (large and small) wild game may be placed on the market only if the body is transported to a game-handling establishment as soon as possible after the examination referred to in point 2.”

FSS would therefore need to create an intervening legal step (ie somewhere carcasses are sent from the field and stored before going to AGHEs) which is what the EU have done by introducing ‘collection centres’ into law. Our intention is that, should we introduce this amendment into Scottish law, we can re-classify AGHE chills as collection centres and the existing wild game supply chains can continue largely unaffected. FSS discussions with SGLD are continuing and as yet no final decision has been made.





Photo: Laurie Campbell

## *Scotland's wild deer and venison production*

Greenhouse gas emissions, carbon and the climate emergency

# *A STATEMENT OF INTENT*

*by the Scottish Venison Association*

.....

We want a sustainable wild deer presence across our countryside but accept that, as we respond to the climate emergency and aim to reach net zero, whilst deer bring positive benefits (economic, social, cultural) methane emissions from them as well as the potential for high densities to hamper biodiversity recovery are possible areas of concern. There have been widespread efforts made to reduce open range deer populations and these actions are expected to continue.

.....

**For reasons of conservation and welfare, and in the absence of a natural predator, deer numbers need to be managed.**

In addition to grazing impacts, damage caused by trampling may be an issue, particularly in the upland range where peatland – one of our greatest carbon stores – suffers loss under high footfall. Where sheep are present they may also be a cause of damage.

Venison from wild deer is an increasingly popular, marketable natural protein and, for those choosing

meat as part of their diet, it is the healthiest and most sustainable of all our red meats, sourced from our wild free ranging animals.

The report *The Life Cycle of Scottish Venison* (1) in 2009 found that the total average GHG footprint from all wild venison processed is estimated at 12,523 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e/tCW. For a table showing the carbon footprint of other elements of the red meat sector see note (2).

An overall summary of results for wild venison is captured below:

**Summary of emissions at each stage of the life cycle**

Life cycle stage	Carbon emissions (kgCO <sub>2</sub> e/tCW <sup>1</sup> )	Proportion of footprint (%)
Estate level	11,716	93
Transport to processor	327	3
Processing	480	4
Total	12,523	100

It is emissions of methane from deer, produced as a by-product of digestion (enteric fermentation) and the decomposition of manure that were estimated then to make up the greatest contribution to the carbon footprint of venison, accounting for approx 76% of overall emissions. It should be noted that for the 2009 report figures for farmed deer were used as the most reliable estimate available. We do not know yet whether emissions from wild deer may be significantly different.

At the estate level, direct fuel use for vehicles and machinery was also found to account for some 15% of the total footprint.

At processing stage, it was the consumption of electricity that accounted for the majority of GHG emissions (approx 83%).

Natural gas used for heating was also found to be a significant contributor, making up around 9% of the footprint during processing, while the generation and disposal of waste is estimated to account for 7% of emissions at this stage.





## *The climate impacts of deer management*

As with every sector, deer management practice incurs an environmental cost. We need to know more about this by quantifying figures for vehicle trips to the hill, for the recovery of carcasses, ammunition (including switching to non-lead), fencing, larding, storage, packaging and transport to market.

### **Scotland's deer management and wild venison sector intends to:**

- Commission research to quantify greenhouse gas emissions associated with deer populations and deer management practice, including primary processing, to include updating of the 2009 report.
- Commission the desk-top examination of existing material to assess the GHG emissions per animal from deer on the ground.
- Take steps to reduce these as close as possible to net zero or beyond.



## *Venison processing*

We need to know more about the carbon impacts of secondary processing. Also, we recognise the incurrance of food miles of varying distance, depending whether supply is to local markets or through a game dealer/processor and into the mass markets that they service.

Our work will look at transport from larder to plant, processing, and freight to customer or distributor. Data may already exist from other parts of the red meat sector that can provide sufficient information for an initial assessment.

### **We intend to:**

- Commission the desk-top examination of existing material to establish the carbon footprint of high-volume aspects of the processor supply chain.
- Assess the carbon footprint for low-volume routes to market.
- Evaluate these and establish appropriate steps to be taken to limit carbon outputs including encouraging local processing and local sales.



## Conclusion

**It is the Scottish wild venison sector's intention to examine the main environmental costs of venison production so that recommendations for further improvements can be developed and implemented.**

In addition to the validation and updating of the 2009 report we will produce a set of simple principles that can be undertaken by individuals, land management agencies and businesses to reduce the carbon footprint of venison production and processing including that:

- Processors should work with their suppliers to balance carbon outputs through mutual arrangement of what can be achieved in terms of carbon mitigation and by whom.
- New, appropriate guidance is added to both Deer Management Best Practice and the Scottish Quality Wild Venison standards, and where possible basic carbon accounting included within the SQWV scheme's assessment process.
- A programme of research and resulting action is developed to achieve carbon neutral status or better for the sector by 2035.

**Wildlife managers and estate owners can help by** changing their practices to reduce impacts, taking steps to ensure that their deer densities are sustainable, and implementing actions that deliver a beneficial response to the climate emergency.

**Venison producers and processors can help by** reducing food miles and examining systems to reduce other carbon positive factors such as packaging and waste.

**Our customers can help by** thinking about where their food comes from and by buying products that are produced sustainably and locally where possible.

### Notes

(1) Life Cycle of Scottish Wild Venison: Deer Commission for Scotland/ Natural Capital 2009

(2) HIE Carbon footprint of agricultural produce 2008 (figures for packaging and distribution have been removed from dataset for easier comparison with venison)

Stage	Dairy kgCO <sub>2</sub> e/t milk solids	Beef kgCO <sub>2</sub> e/t carcass weight	Lamb kgCO <sub>2</sub> e/t carcass weight
Farm/estate	12,007	20,171	23,583
Transport to processor	57	7	6
Processing inc waste	979	204	1,093
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,043</b>	<b>20,382</b>	<b>24,682</b>

This **Statement of Intent** has been developed by the Scottish Venison Association, in conjunction with The Association of Deer Management Groups, BASC Scotland, Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS), Scottish Environment LINK, Ardgay Game, Highland Game, Scottish Quality Wild Venison, and NatureScot.

*Scottish Venison Association*

[www.scottish-venison.info](http://www.scottish-venison.info)



June 2022



# Report shows the need for better protection of Scotland's wild scenery

**Scotland is renowned the world over for its wild and spectacular scenery of mountains, moorlands, lochs and rivers and coasts, a draw to locals and visitors alike. Those areas with least human impact have been labelled as 'Wild Land Areas' by NatureScot, and research shows that there is strong support from the Scottish people to retain the wildness of these areas.**

Our wildest places and scenery need strong protection so they can be seen and enjoyed by future generations. However, a newly published report *The State of Wild Land in the Scottish Highlands* shows that this wildness is in long-term decline because of the continuing pressure for development, both within the Wild Land Areas and around their fringes.

The report concludes that the overall rate of loss appears to be increasing as the scale of development has also increased. Current developments that pose the greatest threat are energy generation and associated infrastructure (hydro-electric schemes and wind farms), plantation forest expansion and hill track construction, the latter often associated with estate management. This long-term attrition of wild land is not helped by the fact that there has been a lack of consistency by planning authorities in the way they have handled its protection from new developments.

The Scottish Government has been consulting on its strategic plans for the country through the draft National Planning Framework 4. If Scotland, and particularly the Highlands, is to retain its reputation for its iconic scenery, it is imperative that the importance of its protection, including its wildness, is fully recognised in the new Framework. This includes stronger protection for Wild Land Areas than is currently envisaged.



Dr James Fenton of the Scottish Wild Land Group, who coordinated the report, says:

*"There has long been a mismatch between the commonly stated view that the Highlands are renowned for their scenery and the practical measures in place for their protection. This report should be a wake-up call for us all to realise that the Highland landscape is under threat from ill-sited development."*

*"If we really do care for our scenery, we must ensure that there is strong protection for it in the planning system, including the Wild Land Areas. Otherwise attrition of this fantastic asset will continue apace, and, in time, future generations will inherit an impoverished landscape."*

*"Of course, we need development in the Highlands, but it must be in the right place and not destroy what is the essence of the Highland mountain landscape."*

## Report details

The report was commissioned by the Scottish Wild Land Group in association with the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and The Cairngorms Campaign, all of which are voluntary organisations with a keen interest in the protection of wild land. The research was undertaken by Wildland Research Ltd, who have long-running experience in the mapping and evaluation of wild land in Scotland, and by the Ian Kelly Planning Consultancy who have particular expertise in looking at the impact of renewable energy schemes on wild land. A sample of four Wild Land Areas were analysed in detail to show the landscape changes which have occurred from the 1750s to the present day.

**The report is available to download from the Scottish Wild Land Group's website [here >>](#)**

Further information and hard copies (free), can be obtained by contacting James Fenton at: [ecology@fenton.scot](mailto:ecology@fenton.scot)

# Large scale nature restoration and rewilding

A new report released by NatureScot in April 2022 examines what lessons can be learned from large-scale nature restoration and rewilding projects in Scotland and beyond.

**With increased attention on these approaches as a solution to the twin crises of nature loss and climate change, this new report reviews 25 case studies from Scotland and further afield across Europe to highlight what worked and why, as well as barriers that some projects faced.**

Environmental benefits identified included habitat creation and connection at large-scale; carbon capture and storage through woodland regeneration, tree planting and peatland restoration; flood management; and water quality improvements.

Additional benefits included opportunities for new green jobs, educational programmes, nature-based tourism, local investment, and volunteering.

Barriers encountered included limited access to longer-term funding, some local opposition to some proposals, complex land ownership issues, and in some cases cultural differences over land use and conservation.

The report emphasises the importance of early and comprehensive engagement with local communities, landowners and managers to ensure the long-term success of projects.

The need for ongoing deer management was identified as a key issue for projects in the Scottish Highlands, such as woodland regeneration and expansion, and peatland restoration.



Photo: Linzi Seivwright

Nick Halfhide, NatureScot Director of Nature and Climate Change, said:

*"Large-scale nature restoration and rewilding projects are vital to help us tackle the twin crises of nature loss and climate change.*

*"NatureScot is taking an increasingly prominent role in many such projects, both as a partner and as a funder, especially through the Scottish Government's £65m Nature Restoration Fund, an important new source of finance for large-scale, multi-year projects of this kind.*

*"Rewilding and large-scale nature restoration projects are becoming increasingly important in our drive*

*to revive and regenerate Scotland's nature. We are learning from existing projects, both nationally and internationally, to ensure that we can make this work effective and successful. Already, other countries are coming to us for expert advice on peatland restoration.*

*"This wide-ranging review is an important addition to our evidence-base, and we will build on it as we develop new projects across Scotland."*

**Large scale nature restoration and rewilding report >>**



# Is Scotland ready for lynx?

For the first time, the social feasibility of returning lynx to Scotland has been assessed.

**Previous research suggests that the Scottish Highlands has enough habitat and prey to support around 400 wild lynx but reintroducing an apex predator is more dependent on people's attitudes than the ecological science.**

The year-long *Lynx to Scotland* study consulted a wide range of national stakeholders and local communities in the Cairngorms National Park and Argyll, and although the study revealed significant barriers to a trial reintroduction, there is an appetite to explore how those barriers might be overcome.

All of the participants were respectful and open in contributing their views, knowledge and experience.

So, what happens next? A big question is who should have a say in deciding whether to re-introduce lynx and this came up frequently with stakeholders. The fear of loss of control and a breakdown in rural order have also been recurrent themes in discourses opposing wildlife reintroductions.

The lynx study recommends setting up a *Lynx Action Group* to build trust between stakeholders and to address areas of disagreement over science and local knowledge, as well as the real and reasonable concerns of some stakeholders.

Scotland: The Big Picture's website states:

*"Here in Scotland, there have been several studies to evaluate the ecological feasibility of bringing back lynx but until now, people's beliefs and perceptions around the concept have not been fully assessed. Throughout 2021, the Lynx to Scotland partners carried out a comprehensive study across the Cairngorms and Argyll, to accurately evaluate the social feasibility of returning lynx."*



Photo: Mark Hamblin / Scotlandbigpicture.com

*"The study revealed wide-ranging perspectives from a diverse range of rural stakeholders, including farmers, gamekeepers, foresters, conservationists, landowners, tourism operators and rural communities. The study showed that views about lynx reintroduction are far more diverse, nuanced and complex than a simple 'for' and 'against'."*

*"Five different broad perspectives were identified from those who considered Scotland ready for lynx to those who are firmly opposed, while other contributors were either not yet convinced or felt that Scotland was not yet ready."*

**Lynx to Scotland study >>**

## Also from Scotland: The Big Picture

Rewilding is seen by many as a transformational approach to addressing the dual crises of climate breakdown and global nature loss. But as rewilding has grown in popularity, some have expressed concerns about what changes it might bring about.

In 2021, Scotland: The Big Picture commissioned a report to identify the social and cultural barriers to rewilding in Scotland. This report *Hearts & Minds* seeks to assess those barriers and crucially, how they might be overcome.

Find out more and download/read the report here:

**Hearts and minds report >>**



Iain Thornber

## Lament for an old deer hunter

**What Cairn Toul is to the Cairngorms, Sgurr Dhomhnuill is to Lochaber. At just under 3,000 ft this conspicuous peak lies between Strontian and Ardgour in the East Loch Shiel DMG and although it lacks the crags and precipices of lofty Ben Nevis lying seventeen miles to the east, it is nevertheless, one of the grandest mountains in the west Highlands.**

Its Gaelic name means, 'Donald's Peak' and takes its name from Donald Maclean, the first of the Maclean chiefs of Ardgour who was killed by a stag when hunting in its foothills more than six hundred years ago. Donald was the natural son of Lachlan Maclean of Duart and Margaret Maclean of Kingairloch. The story of how he and his henchmen, the Boyds, invaded Ardgour in 1410 is well told by the late Sir Fitzroy Maclean in his wonderful

book, *West Highland Tales*. From this we know that Donald was offered a charter of Ardgour, Kingairloch and the island of Carna in Loch Sunart, if he could extirpate the small MacMaster clan who had settled there sometime previously. They ran the important ferry over the Corran Narrows and were no friends of the Lordship.

Donald married the girl next door who was a daughter of Cameron of Lochiel. He loved hunting deer, foxes and wild boar in the surrounding glens and for this he was known in Gaelic as, '*Dhomhnuill na Sealgair*', Donald the Hunter. His son Ewen must have been a renowned archer as he was called, '*Ewen of the Feathers*', referring to the flights on his arrows.

Long ago deer were not stalked and shot with firearms. Instead, they were driven into turf and stone enclosures called, '*Tigh 'n Sealg*', literally, 'hunting

houses' where they were slaughtered at close quarters by the waiting chief and his friends' armed with dirks, arrows and spears. The island of Rum has some fine examples. It was a dangerous business. According to tradition it was on one such occasion, high in Glen Scaddle on the eastern flanks of Sgurr Dhomhnuill, that Donald was fatally wounded. The details are sketchy, but it is likely that he slipped and was gored or trampled by a stag. He was buried in the ancient graveyard of St Modan's Church at the foot of Beinn na Cille, where his descendants are still laid to rest and such was his popularity, his name was given to the hill on which he died.

Sometime in the early 1880s the composer Harold Boulton (1859–1935), most famously author of the lyrics to the '*Skye Boat Song*', passed through Ardgour and heard an old Gaelic poem about Donald the Hunter. He was so taken by the legend that he translated it into English and included it in his *Songs of the North*, calling it the Lament for the Maclean of Ardgour.

The present chief, 18th in direct line from Donald the Hunter, still lives in Ardgour in company with the Boyds.



He has left the high ground to a younger and fitter generation and has replaced his rifle, gralloching knife and deer hound with a Labrador, an old hazel stick and a pair of binoculars.

Although he still takes an interest in the pleasures of his ancestor through the stalking adventures of his siblings and ghillies, his sporting and natural history activities are confined to watching wildfowl on Loch Gour, a few days affable pheasant shooting on the stubble fields of Moray, hunting foxes with legendary huntsman Roy Newton in the Lochaber shrubberies and counting adders in Glen Gour.

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## The Lament for the Maclean of Ardgour

From an old Gaelic ballad. Words by Sir Harold Boulton

*'Wail loudly ye women, your coronach doleful,  
Lament him ye piper tread solemn and slow;  
Mown down like a flower is the chief of Ardgour,  
And the hearts of the clansmen are weary with woe.  
In peacetime he ruled like a father amongst us,  
Unconquered in battle was the blade that he bore,  
But the chase was the glory and pride of his manhood,  
Strong Donald the Hunter  
Macgillian More (The son of the Big Maclean).*

*'Low down by yon burn that's half hidden with heather  
He lurked like a lion in the lair he knew well;  
'Twas there sobbed the red deer to feel his keen dagger  
There pierced by his arrow the cailzie-cock fell.  
How oft when at e'even he would watch for the wild fowl,  
Like lightening his coracle sped from the shore;  
But still, and for aye, as we cross the lone lochan,  
Is Donald the Hunter, Macgillian More.*

*'Once more let his war-cry resound in the mountains,  
MacDonalds shall hear it in eerie Glencoe,  
Its echoes shall float o'er the Braes of Lochaber,  
Till Stewarts in Appin that slogan shall know;  
And borne to the waters beyond the Loch Linnhe,  
'Twixt Morvern and Mull where the tide eddies roar,  
Macgillians shall hear it and mourn for their kinsmen,  
For Donald the Hunter, Macgillian More.*

*'Then here let him rest in the lap of Sgurr Dhomhnuill,  
The wind for his watcher, the mist for his shroud,  
Where the green and the grey moss will weave  
their wild tartans,  
A covering meet for a chieftain so proud.  
For, as free as the eagle, these rocks were his eyrie,  
And free as the eagle his spirits shall soar,  
O'er the crags and the corries that erst knew the footfall  
Of Donald the Hunter, Macgillian More'.*

### Images

1. Sgurr Dhomhnuill - the highest hill lying between Strontian and Ardgour named after Donald Maclean (Photograph Iain Thornber)
2. Robin Maclean, 18th chief of Ardgour boating between Glensanda and Kingairloch in the wake of his famous ancestor, Donald the Hunter (Photograph Iain Thornber)



Photo: Glyn Satterley



Dick Playfair

## Deer People

A new book that explores and illustrates the lives and interests of 24 individuals and what red deer and deer management means to them.

**A new book *Deer People* is a collaboration between artist Ian MacGillivray, photographer Glyn Satterley, and Richard Cooke, the long-time former chairman and secretary of the Association of Deer Management Groups in Scotland.**

The hardback glossy publication explores the thoughts, work and the interests of 24 people in Scotland whose lives in one way or another have been or are dedicated to the UK's largest land mammal, the red deer.

In commentary, quotes and anecdotes, individual portraits and black and white photography the book paints a picture of the breadth of involvement of these 24 individuals in the world of the wild red deer. As Richard Cooke writes in his introductory paragraphs:

*'Those portrayed in its pages include professional stalkers and deer forest owners across the age range, the managers of conservation land, a forester, a crofter and community representative, a scientist/professional adviser, a venison dealer, a rifle maker, a chef and a Government official.'*

But he admits that these are just a handful of the numerous characters on whose lives and interests the book could have drawn.

The book will be launched at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace on Friday 1 July 2022 and following that will be available by mail order through the Association of Deer Management Groups and the Brechin Castle Centre websites, or by contacting the authors.

Richard Cooke says that it was firmly the objective from the outset to make this a work about people:

*'Deer, red deer especially, are constantly in the news and are always at the centre of the debate about our upland environment and what needs to be done to improve it in the light of the new imperatives – climate change and the biodiversity crisis. So much is heard about red deer numbers, densities and negative impacts that we felt it important to offer a reminder that the management of deer involves people, deer people.'*

Proceeds from the sale of the book will be used to start an educational fund. It is planned that this will support a range of projects such as providing travel grants for young deer managers to experience wildlife management in other countries of the world and supporting educational initiatives within Scotland to take deer and their management into schools.

**Purchase your copy of *Deer People* online here >>**

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