



Capercaillie LIFE Project Closing Conference

Report of Proceedings

Albert Hall, Ballater, Deeside

6th & 7th November 2006

Solas Business Services Ltd

Introduction to this Report

This report documents the Capercaillie LIFE Project Closing Conference held in Ballater on the 6th and 7th November 2006. It is ordered according to the events on each of the days.

Day One – Monday 6th November 2006

Opening Address – Rhona Brankin MSP, Deputy Minister for the Environment and Rural Development

Towards the end of the 20th century the outlook for capercaillie was uncertain. The Scottish population was still under serious threat having fallen from 20,000 in the 70s to less than 1,000 in the late 90s. Changes in climate were certainly having an impact but it was clear that a number of other factors, such as fragmentation of habitat, were adding to the problem.

I am, however, delighted to be able to say that the decline has now been turned round and that there is good evidence that local populations are increasing. Figures from the recent survey carried out by the Game Conservancy Trust are very encouraging in terms of the breeding successes which were found on a range of sites. Forty chicks reared in one Strathspey forest alone – tremendous! The efforts being made in many areas to improve habitat are now beginning to yield the desired results. And the benefits of this work will hopefully continue to build for many years as the habitat carries on improving.

How times have changed. I'm told that in the late 90s some owners may have been a bit nervous if a capercaillie was sighted on their land, because of the perceived adverse implications. But now, I have even heard of one or two cases where estate agents have included the presence of capercaillie in sales particulars to entice potential purchasers!

Anyway, we are here today to celebrate the success of the LIFE project on 'Urgent Conservation Management for Scottish Capercaillie'. LIFE is one of the spearheads of the European Union's environmental policy, and Scotland has an excellent track record in drawing down this EC funding to benefit biodiversity, in particular the conservation interests of our part of the NATURA network.

Since LIFE first came on the scene, Scotland has benefited from projects worth over £32 million which have been funded by the programme - £22 million of this over the past five years alone. Much of this support has been directed towards our native woodlands and forests - oakwoods, pinewoods, mixed broadleaved woodlands and wet woodlands have all benefited.

Capercaillie is, of course, an iconic pinewood species closely associated with the old Caledonian Forest. This project, which is one of the largest ever undertaken in Europe, has been at the heart of the Scottish Executive's efforts to reverse the decline of the species. The project has brought together a broad range of partners with an interest in, and responsibility for, capercaillie conservation. Collaboration between the various bodies involved has been important, with each of them making significant contributions. For example:

- Forestry Commission Scotland and the Scottish Executive have supported predator control and the removal and marking of potentially damaging fences in the wider countryside;

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- Scottish Natural Heritage assessed and recommended 4 new Special Protection Areas for capercaillie, which have now been designated by the Executive. This has brought a substantial proportion of the population within the 11 capercaillie SPAs;
- RSPB Scotland has played a significant role, particularly in the development and management of the LIFE project, and in increasing our knowledge of the ecology of capercaillie;
- And all these bodies have got together to fund the Capercaillie Project Officer, who has been providing very helpful specialist advice to landowners and agency staff.

However, these bodies, and other supporting organisations such as Highland Birchwoods and the Cairngorms National Park Authority, could not have made the project a success without the many landowners who have been a key part in the partnership approach. I would like to thank them for their commitment and enthusiasm. Well done.

And let's not forget the tacticians behind all this who have been directing operations - the Steering Group for the Capercaillie Biodiversity Action Plan. The Group has been highly effective in delivering a well-thought strategic approach to capercaillie conservation, as well as initiating valuable research work.

Additionally, the Scottish Executive has specifically strengthened its commitment to biodiversity in recent years. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy has increased awareness of the need to halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity, and we have developed a number of specific targets including an increase in the proportion of designated sites under assured management. And more specifically, the Nature Conservation Act deals with protection of capercaillie leks from disturbance, and tighter control of the use of snares. I am therefore very pleased to see that the LIFE project has embraced these issues, and in particular by supporting work on all eleven of the NATURA sites designated for capercaillie.

It is also very relevant to mention the Executive's Scottish Forestry Strategy, which I launched last month. One of its key outcomes is to "help protect and enhance biodiversity" - and again, I am delighted to see that the project is contributing significantly in this respect.

The work that the project has been carrying out is very much linked to the Forestry Strategy aims on, for example, restoring and enhancing priority habitats, increasing the focus on priority species, securing biodiversity benefits from sustainable forest management, and promoting a landscape approach to habitat networks.

On the advisory front, the project's publication giving guidance on land management for the benefit of capercaillie will be a key best-practice document for landowners. While on a wider scale, the progress the project has made to increase awareness and involvement in all sectors of society has been crucial, and very impressive.

I mentioned earlier the valuable contribution from landowners. So, as the biggest landowners in the country, Forestry Commission Scotland has a major part to play in capercaillie conservation. I was therefore pleased to announce last Friday that the Commission will be raising the bar even further in relation to its environmental input on the national forest estate. Following an independent and comprehensive review of its environment work on the estate, the Commission will now be implementing recommendations from the review group on a wide range of key matters including

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diversification, habitat networks, native woodlands, forest planning and climate change mitigation. All of which will ultimately be of benefit to the capercaillie population.

This project is one of the biggest applied conservation projects that has been undertaken for a grouse species – ever – in the world! We should all be proud of this, but we should not get complacent. We have made an excellent start at establishing a viable population of the species in this country again. However, increasing the extent of suitable forests for capercaillie, and improving existing forests to benefit the species is a long-term process, which will take decades to get right.

As you know, suitable habitat for capercaillie is inevitably fragmented in Scotland but younger Scots pine woodlands are maturing and the type of habitat creation that the project is supporting and encouraging will create a more effective network of good quality habitat.

In the longer term, Forestry Commission Scotland's very successful drive to establish new native pinewoods through the 1990s and into the current century will improve woodland connectivity for capercaillie and other pinewood species. The creation of forest habitat networks at a landscape scale will help fragmented woodlands function as larger ecosystems, and the creation of these networks will also help many of the associated species adapt to climate change.

I am looking forward to seeing the outcome of some of this work when I visit the beautiful woodland at Cambus o' May later this morning. And although I perhaps won't have the time to create a habitat network as such, I will certainly do my bit by planting a single Scots pine!

So, in conclusion, I am sure that you will all agree with me that this has been an extremely worthwhile project which is delivering tangible results on the ground. I have no doubt that the benefits of the work achieved will continue to develop long after the project has ended. Congratulations again to all those who have been involved.

As I said earlier, the signs are there that the decline has been reversed, and the challenge is now to continue increasing the population to a sustainable level. This particular LIFE project is ending, but life itself will go on, especially for the capercaillie!



Capercaillie LIFE Project and successful partnership working – Ian Jardine, Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr Jardine began by thanking everyone involved in the Capercaillie LIFE Project, and hoped the conference was a good chance to talk about lessons learned and time to look to what we still have to learn.

To an extent, the need to have ‘Urgent Conservation Management’ is an admission of past failure. The 1998/99 capercaillie census that produced a figure of around 1000 birds in Scotland was a wake up call. Caper were recognised as the high profile species most likely to become extinct in this country. Such species declines are rarely due to a single factor. Or where one factor causes a decline, other factors that have been present all along, such as predation or fence collisions in this case, can become critical to longer-term survival.

There was also the realisation that this species was declining across much of Europe: in France, in Spain, in Sweden, in the Southern Alps so we couldn’t justifiably assume we could leave it to others to look after its future.

Much of the priority for species protection since the 1940s has been focused on identifying sites for special protection. That has generally worked well and I’d be the last person to cast doubt on the value of protected areas especially for habitat conservation. For species, we know they work best for well-behaved species that stay put. The capercaillie, like many others, demonstrates both the important role of core protected sites, and of the need to work on a much broader scale. As climate change causes us to reassess the future of some of our protected areas, and to develop an ability to plan and manage on a bigger scale, to look at adaptation to change, at habitat networks etc. then it’s clear that the need for joint working - for partnership approaches - becomes ever more important.

In that context this is an important project, not just for capercaillie but also for how we will manage species conservation issues especially at a time of changing climate. The involvement of the public, private and charitable sectors, of large organisations like the Forestry Commission and small ones like Highland Birchwoods, of conservation bodies like RSPB and of a large number of private sporting estates shows both a shared concern and commitment, and a way of addressing conservation issues in a more integrated and thorough way.

The project did not of course appear fully formed out of the blue. A lot of work goes into developing these things, and it has built on earlier work by many of the organisations concerned. The development of the Capercaillie Officer post supported by SNH, FC, RSPB was one early measure, as was the Challenge Fund launched by the Executive in 2001 which paid for the removal of 260km of fencing. Private estates were taking their own measures through voluntary cessation of shooting and in some cases captive rearing and release.

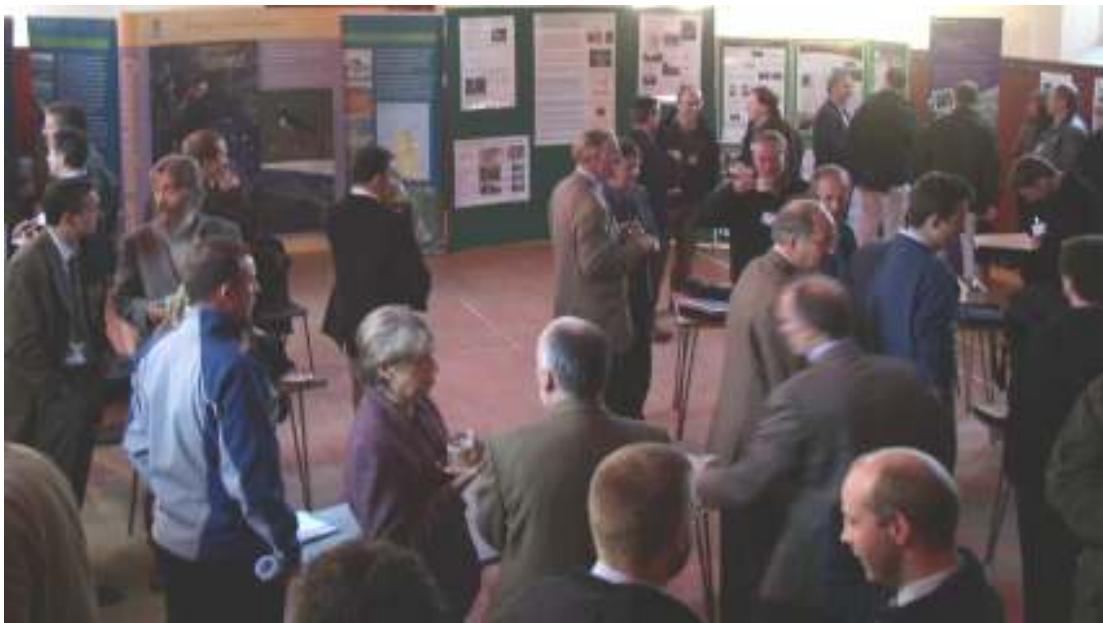
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The development of ideas through the Capercaillie Biodiversity Action Plan group, and gathering experience from elsewhere in Europe all helped to form the basis of this large and complex project the results of which we are now able to review.

Speaking for SNH, Mr Jardine recorded their satisfaction at the way the project has gone ahead and passed thanks to all the partners involved. SNH contributed £285,000 – which sounds to us like a lot of money, but clearly insufficient on its own to tackle the task, and it was only through a project such as this that sufficient overall funding could be obtained.

We must also think about what happens next, many of those present are involved in that discussion now as far as the measures and projects that we will hear about today are concerned. There have also been a number of related activities, not part of the LIFE project, that have gone ahead and more will undoubtedly happen in the future.

Finally Mr Jardine noted the importance of LIFE funding and the role of the European Commission in helping to support work aimed at ensuring the success of the European Directives on birds and on habitats and other species. It has been important to have a specific measure such as LIFE funding and I think Scotland has benefited significantly from a range of projects funded from this source. It was accepted that it is more important in the long run that other bigger funding regimes such as CAP and Structural funds take account of conservation priorities but LIFE funding has proved very useful.



Review of Project Achievements and Outputs – Jamie Dunsmore, Highland Birchwoods

Jamie opened by thanking the Minister and Ian Jardine for their background information on the project. He also thanked all other speakers, the chairpersons, and everyone for attending the conference.

The Capercaillie Project began in 2002 as a five-year project which aimed to turn the decline in capercaillie numbers around. In total there was a £4.5 million budget and 50% of this was funded by the European Unions LIFE Fund. Jamie summarised the main areas where the project has been working, and noted that over 30 private estates and 10 publicly owned forests had been involved as well as four new sites. It is important for the project to work on a large scale.

The Partnership is made up of several different bodies including Highland Birchwoods (HB), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Executive (SE), Forestry Research (FR) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). Working together is what has made the project so successful. Some partners have contributed with funding while others have carried out work on the sites. Jamie thanked the key person behind the project and the person who had developed it - Kenny Kortland.

This LIFE Project is only part of a wider strategy for capercaillie conservation in Scotland; a range of other work is being carried out and will continue beyond the end of this project.

The work carried out has definitely been beneficial; with several successful breeding seasons. The project has focused on six key areas of work:

Management planning and stakeholder co-ordination - A focused approach to local operational planning, baseline surveys and ongoing monitoring as well as a trip to Scandinavia to see work done there and experience work carried out first hand.

Reducing the risk posed by fencing - In total over 16km of deer fences have been removed and over 25km have been marked.

Restructuring dense forests and plantations – through density thinning creating small glades and sometimes removing invasive non-native tree species

Improving habitat for brood rearing - Improving ground vegetation and structure through a range of operations including swiping & burning heather, controlling bracken

Predator control - Predator control is carried out at key areas and certain times of year. It is targeted to give capercaillie broods the best chance of survival. Lek counts & brood counts are carried out at project sites each year

Promotion and dissemination – through events, project website, leaflets and newsletters, posters and displays. As well as this more signs have been put up, foot paths have been re-routed, and a hide for Caperwatch has been built. A management booklet had also been prepared.

Several outputs expected to be achieved -

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- Heather burning & swiping – 160 Ha
- Drain blocking - 20 Ha
- Variable density thinning – 400 Ha
- Glade creation – 50 Ha
- Removal of invasive non-natives – 500 Ha
- Brash piling – 160 Ha
- Retaining windblown trees – 100 Ha

In conclusion, the key achievements of the project so far include –

- Very successful partnership including a large number of private land owners
- Providing a focus for practical capercaillie conservation work
- Helped to provide information and guidance which will be relevant into the future
- Improved habitat over a huge area which will benefit capercaillie and other woodland species into the future
- Helped to raise the profile of capercaillie conservation and the place of this iconic bird in Scotland's forests

For further information and a flavour of some of the work carried out please visit the project website (www.capercaillie-life.info).

QUESTIONS

Q - Can you tell us more about the concept of variable density, as this has not been used too much in other countries?

A - Good habitat for capercaillie includes a mosaic of forest structures – we want to create some more open spaces with plenty of light and enough blaeberry, but also need sheltered dense areas. Through the project this has been done on a large scale.



The LIFE Project on Private Estates – Atholl Estates and Novar Estate

Andrew Barbour, Atholl Estates

Atholl Estates have 5500 ha of woodland, with 2500 ha new native woodland. Capercaillie are recorded as using all long-established woodlands (3000ha) at some point since 1999, including the Baluain Wood which is a Core Capercaillie Area.

The Baluain is made up of 1000 ha coniferous woodland on at least 3rd rotation. 80% is larch and pine and 300 ha managed on as continuous cover.

Funding has been used to remove fencing on the estate, but the main work carried out has been predator control. Deer management is a key area for the long term plan. This plan also now includes capercaillie.

Over the years some of the key management for capercaillie in Baluain wood has been -

1992 – Old Woodland Grant Scheme supported natural regeneration

1995 – Deer excluded from all woodlands – ring fence

2000 – Deer managed to facilitate regeneration & benefit biodiversity without internal fencing

2000 – Removal of redundant deer fencing (FCS)

2001 – Long-term forest plan: supported by FCS

2002 – Predator control – through LIFE project

2005 – Deer management supported by S2 grant

From an estate's point of view the project has meshed in with other grants, wider predator control and other land uses. The project has also helped build and maintain rural employment. Atholl Estate is happy that they still have capercaillie and the work has benefited other species of conservation interest.

The estate's core business aim is recreation. They want to create a nice place for people to visit and stay - knowing that capercaillie are in the forest adds to this feel-good factor. However it is a difficult economic time and there is little or no spare cash.

Cameron Ross, Novar Estate

The owner of Novar sees the estate like a stool with all the legs holding it together. Although some are stronger than others, they are all required and support the overall function. The following make up Novar Estate –

- Forestry
- Agriculture
- Sporting
- Property
- Renewable energy
- Environment
- Recreation

Novar was ready to face the 21st Century but there have been many changes in the last few years, both challenges and threats. Some of these include:

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- Timber prices
- Agricultural returns
- Common Agricultural Policy reform
- FSC certification
- Grant changes
- Special Protection Area designation
- Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Rising fuel and power costs
- EU Working Time Directive
- EU Water Directive
- Landlord registration
- Access legislation

These have all had a direct impact on the estate. With this in mind the long term management of capercaillie is very difficult and success is dependant on a wide range of economic factors.

All the schemes contribute to costs, but there is no real return on capital and without the LIFE project the work carried out at Novar would not have gone ahead.

On Novar Estate the following has been done –

- Thinning regimes adjusted – tried a bit of everything
- Clear fell – range of group sizes
- Predator control – unsure of what should be done for the best
- Other management issues – annual lek counts and brood counts
- Deer management (out with LIFE)

For ongoing management the funding has to be there, and it has to be in the form of stable grant schemes, straightforward, easy and flexible.

Management for Capercaillie on the national forest estate. A Case Study from Glenmore and Inshriach Forests – David Jardine, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

David opened by thanking the Inverness Forest team. Both the Glenmore and Inshriach forests are in the Core Capercaillie Area. Tourism in the area is clearly very important and has a very big influence - turnover £128 m in 2004 and is 80% of economic activity in area, employing 4500. Recreation is a very important factor to consider.

Some key facts about these project sites–

Glenmore

- Forest area - 1900ha
- Large Caledonian Forest Reserve - 1000ha, some plantation Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine
- Adjoins Rothiemurchus and Abernethy Forest
- Varied age and forest structure
- Intensive recreational use - c 350,000 visitors pa

Inshriach Forest

- Large plantation -3700ha
- Scots Pine forest, planted c 50 years ago
- Small remnants of Native Pinewoods
- Rothiemurchus and SNH adjoin forest
- Bog woodlands
- Lower recreational use
- 87 capercaillie killed in 1941

Work was already being carried out before the LIFE project in these areas, such as the Caledonian Forest Restoration project, the removal of 82 km of fences, habitat improvement through thinning, deer management and the bog woodland project.

Life during LIFE?

- Marked more fences
- Increased predator control
- Habitat management
- Tried to improve visitor management
- Further reduction in deer numbers

There are other issues that need to be managed such as the use of zones in the forest, helping others understand the needs of the capercaillie, understand the needs of others and trying to deliver these in a capercaillie-friendly manner. Trails and routes also need to be looked at and finding alternatives to work round the capercaillie. With regards to forest management, they were able to influence the timing of forest operations, and continue to carry out thinning and managing natural regeneration.

Overall, the FES involvement in the project has helped forest managers focus on key issues affecting capercaillie conservation and this was shown by results in lek and brood

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counts. Figures were shown with cock, hen and brood counts at both Glenmore and Inshriach.

Action which will continue after the LIFE project include continuing to manage predators, recreation management, actively managing the woodlands through thinning, managing natural regeneration and maintaining low deer numbers to encourage natural regeneration of trees.

In conclusion, some of the key benefits from the project include the reversal in decline in these forests, the habitat improvement for a range of other species and a greater understanding of the special qualities of this area. Furthermore, the projects work has been fitted into the ongoing forest management without causing any notable disruption.

Forest Research monitoring work and future requirements – Chris Quine, Forest Research (FR)

The monitoring work carried out by Forest Research focuses on evaluation, and not fundamental investigations. It looks at the evaluation of effectiveness of fence marking, predator control and habitat enhancement.

Fence marking was taking place before the project came about and although it did help to reduce fence strikes, further investigation of methods of fence marking methods was required. This was taken forward to include trials of new materials, advice on appropriate techniques (fence strengthening, fixing and marking), the effectiveness in reducing collisions and monitoring of fence strikes before and after marking at three sites.

A graph was shown to illustrate the positive results on monitored fences across the wider range of more durable marking methods that are now available. Marking reduces collision rate very substantially (almost 10 fold). However, fence removal is still the preferred option where appropriate.

The impact of predator control efforts (control of foxes & crows) on predator populations was also monitored. This involved using six sites in three pairs with the removal of foxes and crows from one of each pair. It was concluded that predator removal reduces the indices of both foxes and of crows.

Lastly the results of monitoring habitat response to variable density thinning were examined. Trials were undertaken at three project sites containing mid-range Scots Pine, including Inshriach, where monitoring trials were able to build on previous habitat management trials. It was shown that vegetation composition has slowly changed towards that preferred by capercaillie. Blaeberry cover has increased in the variable thin plots, but perhaps the transition has been slower than initially hoped.

Work is still taking place and the next steps planned are:

- Predator signs - DNA confirmation of scat ID
- Habitat enhancement - further monitoring and analysis, including influence of past vegetation/forest cover
- Synthesis of results to refine guidance

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- Publications - including revised fence marking guidance

In summary the evaluations carried out by Forest Research indicate favourable impacts of project activities. There were some surprises in the detail and more analysis is required to finalise conclusions. The refinements to guidance will emerge.

Questions

Q - End of LIFE project, Scottish Forestry grant finished...what to do?

A - No more grants for the next few years but FCS staff working closely to look at this. Simple grant schemes to deliver projects on the ground. Jobs rely on this. Structure for the next few years. Bob Dunsmore will talk more about this tomorrow.

Q - Thinning – at what age would you expect to have a first thinning?

A - Scots Pine may differ from other countries, but usually 23/25 years. After thinning the commission management table fits fairly closely.

Q - We talk about money, are any evaluations of the socio-economic impact of this type of work planned? Any evaluations would certainly be well worth doing, this would be a good project to illustrate good spend.

A – We are currently looking into pulling something together now.

Field Trip to Cambus o' May led by Kenny Kortland

During a fine afternoon the group then visited Cambus o' May Forest. This visit looked to demonstrate first hand work which had been carried out on this Forestry Commission Scotland owned project site and look at the factors influencing management decisions, historically and into the future. Actions such as predator control and capercaillie population surveys have been carried out on this site, other Forestry Commission sites in close proximity have also been involved in the project and a range of habitat management actions have been carried out in this area to benefit capercaillie at a large scale.

Throughout the field trip Kenny Kortland (Capercaillie Project Officer) and the Forestry Commission hosts pointed out a range of quality habitat i.e. variable density woodland; suitable cover/shelter; presence of boggy areas and also asked delegates to look for what they considered to be opportunities or constraints to capercaillie conservation. At each of the stops on the walk the delegates were encouraged to give their thoughts on management options and their own experiences of managing conifer woodlands for capercaillie conservation. This visit was a valuable opportunity for those who had been involved in the LIFE project in a wide range of capacities to share their views and experiences of capercaillie conservation.



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Day Two – Tuesday 7th November 2006

The project in a European context – Pekka Helle, Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute

Pekka began by thanking Kenny and others for inviting him to talk at the conference. He noted that there were grouse issues worldwide and this was not just affecting Scotland. The IUCN Grouse Action Plan combines 110 specialist groups within IUCN responsible for grouse, and this has been relatively active in the past few years. The action plan was first published in 2000 and then revised in 2005.

Globally Threatened Grouse - in total there are close to 20 species, most of which are threatened and endangered and this is a very concerning matter.

- 7 of 18 grouse species globally threatened
- 14 of 18 nationally red-listed
- Habitat loss, fragmentation, deterioration
- Forestry, agriculture, infrastructure

What is needed –

- Approaches for integrating habitat needs with land use interests
- Studies on population effects of land use change
- Well-documented management experiments

The above things have been carried out in the Scottish project. Scotland is a good case for teaching other European countries how to do things.

There are many projects in Europe but perhaps the best known one comes from Finland, and the Boreal Forests. The western part is owned by State which is very important for planning. Leks have been studied with much analysis and this shows how important forest cover is for leks. Where leks are situated in the landscape is also very important.

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Where they are situated in large patches of forest land, with many patches already isolated, the leks are easily deserted. In continuous forest areas leks extend up to 1 km from the lek centre. In fragmented landscape the spatial requirements of the leks may extend up to 3 km from the lek centre.

Pekka finished by congratulating everyone for their very best efforts for wildlife species, financial support and planning large scale. This project is a good example of how things could be done, and is officially supported by IUCN Grouse Specialist Group, is used as a model by GSG members and is the biggest applied conservation project for capercaillie ever.

Questions

Q – With regards to your examples, what happens when land is in the private sector?

A - There have been a lot of problems. There is no planning and it is up to the owner to make a decision. There are some guidelines and regulations, and different experiments are being tried.

Capercaillie in the Cairngorms National Park – David Bale, Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)

A National Park is designated as an Act of Parliament. Conditions include the outstanding national importance because of natural heritage (and cultural heritage); area of distinctive character and coherent identity; meets special needs – ensures coordinated delivery of aims. Four aims essential for management are:

- Conserve and enhance natural and cultural heritage
- Promote sustainable use of natural resources
- Promote understanding and enjoyment of area (recreation)
- Promote sustainable economic and social development of area's communities

Many people confuse the park itself with the park authority. The purpose of the National Park Authority is to ensure that the National Park aims are collectively achieved in a coordinated way, but if there appears to be a conflict, then the first aim is given greater weight.

There is a long history of management in the park with the Capercaillie LIFE project there already before the Park Authority.

National Park Plan

- Plan for the area not the CNPA
- Vision for next 25 years
- Strategic objectives
- Outcomes for first 5 years
- Action priorities for first 5 years

Park Plan Priority Outcomes:

- Species and habitats of highest priority in CLBAP (Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan) and Scottish Biodiversity Action Plans will be protected and under

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- positive management. - continue conservation management projects targeted at priority species including capercaillie.
- All designated sites under positive management towards favourable condition – ecological viability enhanced by appropriate management of surrounding land.
 - Enhanced connectivity within forest habitat networks through implementation of a landscape-scale approach to forestry.
 - Management of the deer population to meet a range of objectives in a manner that safeguards the Park's special qualities as appropriate to the land.
 - Deer Management Groups/ Plans
 - Deer Act
 - Local Plan - will ensure that all approved developments protect the Park's special habitat and species qualities - need for good quality information to advise decisions.
 - Behaviour of providers and recreation users positively influenced by better understanding of rights and responsibilities.
 - Funds from CNPA and other bodies in various permutations.
 - positive projects
 - Research
 - Grants to others

CNPA has a small budget and less staff. It is impossible to fund everything ourselves. If we use money that comes in in an effective and targeting way then this can bring results and becomes very important.

Questions

Q – Are there any conflicts with regards to privately owned land?

A - All legislation works with private landowners, the whole system has been developed and geared towards public sector with private landowners, all mechanisms are tied in. However, where there are totally different objectives then there are obviously conflicts. People stopping at NO makes things very counter productive.

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Supporting further developments – Bob Dunsmore, Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)

Bob began by pointing out that he has been to a number of Eastern European countries, all with the same capercaillie decline for a number of reasons. The support for the future is not all about money - it covers a range of things and is about a multi-faceted approach.

Policy is a key driver for ensuring ongoing support – either EU or other.

Community Biodiversity Strategy - Develop (or adapt existing) national plans and strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Integrate conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies. Cross border co-operation is essential.

Scottish Bio Strategy is a useful document and one that we adhere to. It develops a set of indicators to measure success.

Environment 2010 “Our future, our choice” covers climate change, nature and biodiversity, the environment, health and sustainable use of natural resources and waste.

Forestry Strategy - All about the social, environment and economic factors. It looks at inputs, activity outputs and outcomes. Capercaillie have a central place in the strategy.

Regulation - backstop for policy delivery

- Birds and Habitats Directive - 11 Special Protection Areas
- Nature Conservation Act - all agencies need to take account of biodiversity, protection for capercaillie leks
- Environmental impact assessment regulations
- Wildlife and Countryside Act
- Forestry Act
- Deer Act

Regulation – if we had to rely on this and nothing else we would find it impossible. We need to consider all forest legislation - a combination of these can be highly effective.

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Information and advice - to ensure best practice

- The new forest management guidance book for capercaillie is very positive and a move in the right direction.
- Biodiversity Action Plan group – collective knowledge
- Research is critical in this – making sure decisions are based on good science.

Grants – secure public benefits

- SFGS – The Minister has this year given £32 million for grant aid
- High demand for the funding, it is not that less money is available, just more people wanting it. This competition for money may lead to more sophisticated and better quality applications.
- A proposal has been made by Jamie and Kenny for the extension of the project and further funding. A range of other grants are also available, partnership funding is a good way of doing things. It just goes to show that small pots of money deliver good results.
- Environment payments – modest investment.

This is what we would like to do but depends on Europe and the Scottish Executive.

Whole range of topics – opportunities for private landowners to do good things for capercaillie.

Environmental education and awareness raising

Important to take every opportunity to get information across and working with business in market is critical. Getting big companies changing the ways they operate.

Partnership and co-ordinated action - to secure effective delivery

Further developments – agency collaboration, but also about gamekeepers, landowners and the community. It's not all about money however, although money is important.

Questions

Q - Just a point of information – not delivered what promised, this is not a sustainable situation, the information was there many years ago but nothing happened. We need to be realistic about solutions and the extent of the problem.

A - To say nothing has happened is not right. As mentioned earlier there is now more money available, it is just that demand has increased too. As demand increases life gets tougher. Hopefully this will bring a higher quality of work.

Q - When are we likely to hear about the results of the extension?

A – We hope to hear by December, but there is no fixed timescale.

Update on latest research on Capercaillie – Dr. Robert Moss, Capercaillie Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group

Dr Moss opened his talk by remembering Jimmy Oswald who died earlier this year. He had been heavily involved with Capercaillie conservation.

In the 1990's, many people thought that it wasn't worth spending money on the capercaillie. However, some did and they campaigned for action. That the LIFE project exists is down to their early efforts.

We need to know more about the following things:

Hens' nutrition in spring

In the 1970's, hens put on weight in spring because of predictable nutritious plant growth. Research suggests that weather patterns in spring are changing and the diet of capercaillie hens at this crucial time is being affected in a negative way. More research is required.

Habitat Management

Short-term – removing forest fences, support killing of foxes and crows

Longer-term – counteract climate change by providing a wide range of feeding, improve brood habitat.

Breeding success has varied across project sites; apparently in relation to management intervention – not all of it targeted at capercaillie. More research is required here. If we know what is important then we can manage it better. Three factors to look at:

- Fox and crow control
- Reducing red deer
- Silviculture

Genetics/DNA

Research has shown that there are six distinct subpopulations (termed metapopulations in the project) and that gene flow has virtually ceased between them. Future conservation effort should attempt to link up these subpopulations to create bigger populations, which will be more robust.

Recreation/Disturbance

Research is needed to identify what disturbs capercaillie. Some work has been carried out and this suggests capercaillie avoid busy places in forests. It seems that capercaillie can become habituated to predictable disturbance, but that unpredictable events, e.g. people wandering off tracks, can have a more detrimental impact. Research and management trials are needed to inform management.

Fox Killing & Snares

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Killing foxes is essential in capercaillie management in Scotland. However, in the 1990's, too many steel snares were used in woods. Although these were efficient in terms of killing foxes, they caused damage by killing capercaillie too. There are other methods of killing foxes but none as easy as snares. Some work is being carried out by the Game Conservancy on alternative methods of catching foxes. In the short term, objective research on the safe use of snares should be carried out.

In conclusion, if we want to enjoy capercaillie and want our children to enjoy capercaillie we need to all work together and we need to understand more about some of the subjects I have described.

Questions

Q- You mention that snares are essential for killing crows and foxes. Is there any evidence to support that this is the best thing to do?

A - Yes, it is better for the capercaillie – evidence has shown that.

Q – And what about disturbance evidence?

A – Yes there is evidence, disturbance can work both ways though.

Q - Is DNA limited in Scotland – how can they respond to disease etc?

A - The Scottish population is split up into sub-populations. Limited genetically for each sub-group but if these could mix it would help. Justification for stepping stone forests.



Future management for Capercaillie in Scotland – Kenny Kortland, Capercaillie Project Officer (RSPB)

Kenny began by showing a range of pictures from throughout the project, thanking everyone for their dedication and hard work. He said that it could not have been done without the enthusiasm from the estates and the estate owners that had been involved. The project was definitely worthwhile, as there had been an increase in capercaillie numbers, and that is the most important thing. He also explained that the project had acted as a major catalyst for large amounts of additional work for capercaillie, the benefits of which would continue to accrue for many years.

Kenny displayed graphs which showed an increase in cocks and hens during the past five years, and although results for 2004 were poor, this could be attributed to bad weather and poor productivity with a late breeding season making population monitoring more difficult.

The future – three management scales and key things to do:

Forest stand scale and **forest patch scale** - create leks by restructuring forests; reconcile silviculture with capercaillie through good planning; . Intervene by thinning. Good at managing lek ranges – trying more silviculture systems. Distribute impact of felling.

Hen nutrition – recreating forest bogs, larch in forest, allow ample feeding opportunities

Predator control - combat predation by providing capercaillie with cover; this could make a big difference. Not just about killing predators. Deer – still a problem, need to manage small fragments

Disturbance – research has shown to avoid habitats near tracks.

Forest plans – capercaillie now an objective in plans, these have now been altered to include the capercaillie.

Landscape scale – birds disperse from key areas – need to enhance dispersal and connectivity of habitat to create viable population and bigger core areas. Capercaillie, (mainly hens) fly between the discrete forest patches and link the separate sub-populations

Overall, we are all actively doing work to improve the management for capercaillie and an application for a project extension has recently been submitted. This includes all the previous sites as well as some new ones in the Moray district. The scale of the project is increasing. It is clear that intervention is good.

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Questions

Q - Hens seem to be doing well – increased more than the leks?

A - Hens harder to count, but this is our impressions. There was a 1:1 male/female ratio in 2003/2004, but not sure now.

Q – You mentioned expanding areas to Moray and Strathspey – what about Deeside?

A - Attempting to join sub-populations, so concentrating on Strathspey because it is easier, and certainly not rejecting other areas.

Q - An increase in counts is good news – what timescale for a viable population?

A - It was put forward that there would be 5000 by 2010. If the conditions are right then the birds can do well.

Q - Glen More success – is this a trend?

A - Associated with silviculture and may be a one-off. Evidence is saying that intervention is a good thing however.

Q – Is the purchased forest land going to be used as a demonstration site?

A - Not yet been in to do a great deal. Create cover and wait and see what happens. It will be used for demonstration purposes once something is worth seeing.



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Conference close – Stuart Housden, RSPB

Stuart closed the conference by congratulating everyone who had worked so hard on the project. The project has shown fantastic spirit which has been evident over the past five years. Partnerships can sometimes hinder progress, but this is not the case here and all statutory bodies have been involved along with the land owners and managers and also importantly the people who are actually carrying out the work on the ground. Many hardworking individuals and organisations have been involved in this project and it is the effort of these people, which has helped shape the project into what it has become. The Scottish Executive have also played a part and have been very supportive throughout the projects development and implementation.

This partnership is real and genuine. Everyone is very interested and that is what keeps the energy and enthusiasm going. Even if the bid to Europe for a project extension is not successful, we will keep working to find solutions and working towards finding optimum brood and capercaillie conditions.

Overall, we are very optimistic about the project and feel that it has gone in the right direction, particularly as we have seen capercaillie counts turned around.

Stuart finished by congratulating everyone once again and hoped that spirit we have seen would be kept going into the future.



Field Trip to Glen Tanar Estate led by Michael Bruce & Eric Baird

Glen Tanar has been involved in the habitat management work carried out through the project, particularly in management of the field layer through heather burning and swiping. Across the 3000+ hectare estate work funded through the LIFE project has included capercaillie population surveys, baseline habitat surveys, detailed GIS mapping and management planning, heather swiping, heather burning, bracken control, brash piling, installed a set of capercaillie panels and hosted a wide range of visits for the public, professionals and visitors from across Europe.

The purpose of this visit was to see the effects of habitat management actions carried out to improve the availability of good capercaillie brood habitat. Several areas which had been subject to heather swiping and burning were visited and the response of blaeberry in these areas was impressive. The heather had been removed in a large enough quantity to provide an excellent source of food for the capercaillie and had been planned to create a mosaic and network pattern of good blaeberry habitat and retained heather for cover and shelter.

During one of the stops on the visit Michael Bruce (the estate owner), Eric Baird (head ranger) and Findlay Bennett (SNH) gave a brief history of the estates management and some of the issues surrounding a privately owned estate, such as Glen Tanar, which has a range of designations for important species and habitats. The hosts were able to describe in detail the techniques used to create this improved capercaillie habitat, as well as further emphasising some of the lessons learned when carrying out this type of habitat management.



Field Trip – Glen Tanar Estate led by Michael Bruce (Owner and Estate manager) and Eric Baird (Head Ranger).



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Capercaillie LIFE Project - Closing conference

*Albert Hall, Ballater, Deeside
6th & 7th November 2006*

Monday 6th November – A review of the project

09:45 – 10:15: Registration

Chair – Bob McIntosh, Director, Forestry Commission Scotland

10:15 – 10:25 – Opening Address from Rhona Brankin MSP, *Deputy Environment Minister*

10:25 – 10:35 – Capercaillie LIFE Project & Successful partnership working - *Ian Jardine (Chief Executive, SNH)*

10:35 – 11:05 – Review of project achievements & outputs - *Jamie Dunsmore (Highland Birchwoods)*

11:05 – 11:45 – Coffee break

11:45 – 12:15 – The LIFE Project on private estates - *Andrew Barbour (Atholl Estates) & Cameron Ross (Novar Estate)*

12:15 – 12:35 – Management for Capercaillie on the national forest estate – *David Jardine (FCS)*

12:35 – 13:00 – Forest Research monitoring work & future requirements – *Chris Quine (Forest Research)*

13:00 – 14:00 – Buffet Lunch

14:00 – 16:30 – Site visit to Cambus o May

16:30 – 19:30 – Reception & Poster Session at Mar Lodge

19:30 – on – Evening meal

Tuesday 7th November- Looking to the future

Chair – Stuart Housden, Director, RSPB

09:30 – 09:50 – The project in a European context – *Pekka Helle (SGS)*

09:50 – 10:10 – Capercaillie in the Cairngorms National Park – *David Bale (CNPA)*

10:10 – 10:30 – Supporting further developments - *Bob Dunsmore (FCS)*

10:30 – 11:10 – Coffee break

11:10 – 11:30 – Update on latest research on capercaillie – *Dr. Robert Moss (Capercaillie BAP Group)*

11:30 – 12:00 – Future management of capercaillie in Scotland – *Kenny Kortland (RSPB)*

12:00 – 12:10 – Summing up, Conference close

12:10 – 16:30 – Lunch & optional afternoon field visit to Glen Tanar Estate

