

The management of land at Spittal of Glen Shee

Description

I was out ski touring on Saturday on Glas Tulaichean near the Spittal of Glen Shee which was brought into the Cairngorms National Park when its boundaries were extended in 2010. The south side of the river here is part of the Dalmunzie Estate which has an interesting history

<https://www.dalmunzieestate.com/history/> – its striking just how many people lived here before the estate was cleared – and until the 1970s had its own railway to help transport deer carcasses off the hill in the days before bulldozed tracks.

Dalmunzie is still a stalking and grouse shooting estate and its eagles featured in this year's BBC Winterwatch. While there were lots of red grouse on the lower part of the hill, higher up there were plentiful mountain hare, the favourite food of eagles. My suspicion is that unlike in the Angus glens Dalmunzie is not involved in slaughtering mountain hares to prevent ticks spreading to red grouse. <https://raptorpersecutionscotland.wordpress.com/2016/02/15/more-mountain-hares-slaughtered-in-the-angus-glens/> Fewer hares for eagles of course makes it more likely they will come into conflict with game interests which just encourages further persecution. The Dalmunzie estate has recently been sold <https://www.facebook.com/DalmunzieEstate/?fref=nf> and it remains to be seen whether it remains a wildlife friendly place. The new owners are not named and there are no controls over who is allowed to buy stalking and grouse shooting estates, not even in our National Parks, so we have no idea whether the estate will be managed in sympathy with the National Park's objectives. Will the new owners promote conservation, encourage outdoor recreation (as the previous owners did) or even



After coming off the hill, I noticed recent landslip activity on

the hillside on Ben Gulabin on the north side of the river, part of the Invercauld estate. The hillside is so bare there is nothing left to hold the soils in place, the legacy of years of overgrazing. Sheep were dotted all over the lower hillside and one wonders just how long it would take for our National Parks to do something? I am reminded of the hillside above the Rest and Be Thankful pass where sheep farming continued long after the landslips which blocked the main road to Argyll became a national story. They were belatedly removed but our National Park Authorities still show extraordinary little interest in what is the greatest ecological issue facing Scotland, overgrazing.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. land reform
3. overgrazing

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