Raptor persecution and the proposed Partnership Plan for the Cairngorms

Description

Raptor Persecution Scotland published yesterday a list of over 60 illegal raptor persecution incidents since the Cairngorms National Park was created https://raptorpersecutionscotland.wordpress.com/2016/09/06/the-illegal-killing-of-birds-of-prey-in-the-cairngorms-national-park/ and are promising a further piece on how the Cairngorms National Park Authority has so far failed to address the issue. The list is likely to be the tip of iceberg but is well worth reading: I was particularly struck by the number of persecution incidents that have taken place in the vicinity of Grantown on Spey, where the CNPA headquarters is located. It appears to me to be symbolic of the powerlessness of the CNPA to date. If they cannot stop raptor persecution in their own backyard what hope for the remoter parts of the National Park where persecution is much less likely to be detected?

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This history â?? and I look forward to Raptor Persecution Scotlandâ??s further analysis of why this has been allowed to happen â?? should be reason enough for anyone who cares about raptors or our wildlife to respond to the CNPAâ??s consultation on their new Partnership Plan. Indeed the CNPA has encouraged people to respond to their proposals on grouse moor management which I covered in a previous post https://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/2016/08/29/grouse-moor-management-cairngorms-national-park/.

Its worth also being aware that there is a short section in the Plan http://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/160608CNPPP3mainDoc1.pdf on â??Protecting and enhancing species diversityâ?•:

> *â?• The Cairngorms is home to a vast array of rare and endangered species, with at least 1,200 of regional, national or international significance. While our work on habitat enhancement should secure species diversity in the long-term, there are some species that need targeted action in the short-term, for example the freshwater pearl mussel, capercaillie, and raptor species. This means:*
>
> > *â?¢ connecting individual species management needs into the wider vision for habitat enhancement and land management practices;*
> > *â?¢ joining up habitat management, recreation management and development management to address pressures on species in a co-ordinated way, specifically implementing the Capercaillie Framework;*
> > *â?¢ co-ordinating action to control further spread of invasive non-native species;*
> > *â?¢ taking a planned approach to potential species restoration.*

I donâ??t understand what â??connecting individual species management needsâ?• in the first bullet point means. I think itâ??s trying to say â??the way individual landowners/estates manage speciesâ?• needs to be connected â??into the wider vision for habitat enhancementâ?•. Whether I have got this right or not, I believe the emphasis on â??managementâ?• is wrong. Generally, what we need in our National Parks is much less management (apart from preventing further spread of non-native invasive species) and many more â??wildâ?•. What this should mean is there should be a presumption in favour of protecting all our native wildlife (foxes, stoats, weasels, hares, crows) within the National Park instead of culling these species in order to maximise game species like pheasants or red grouse. There could then be specific exceptions made to allow hunting (not vermin control) of certain species such as red and roe deer, red grouse and rabbits. This should take place under licence which the CNPA could introduce through its byelaw making powers. A condition of all licences would be they could be withdrawn where there was evidence of persecution of protected wildlife. This proposal goes far beyond anything being proposed by the CNPA in the Partnership Plan but I am afraid without it wildlife such as raptors will continue to be persecuted while their potential food supply will be artificially reduced (e.g the culling of hares reduces the food available to golden eagles).

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The draft Plan looks at Issues, Targets and Mechanisms to reach these. Its positive the draft Plan identifies Raptor Persecution as an issue. I have previously commented that the Target/Preferred Direction to â??Improve raptor population conservationâ?• is feeble and misses the point â?? raptors need to be protected and if they were numbers would increase significantly. The only mechanism being proposed for raptor protection/conservation is the â??East Cairngorms Moorland Partnershipâ?• . This only covers part of the National Park, the part of the Park where the absence of raptors is most noticeable. It will never achieve the National Parkâ??s Targets/preferred direction.

Instead or in addition, I would suggest that to protect raptors and other wildlife the CNPA should introduce the following mechanisms:

- license all hunting within the National Park
- license all hunting dogs within the National Park (e.g terriers are used to kill foxes) and estates should only be able to keep them if they agree to conditions for their use
- ban all traps (through bye-laws)
- satellite tagging of all the rarer raptor species to help identify areas where illegal persecution is taking place
- publicise the whereabouts of raptors to improve their protection and give the public an opportunity to enjoy them rather than keeping their whereabouts secret which plays into the hands of the persecutors

I hope these proposals provoke debate and there may be other or better ideas/suggestions but the more people who respond to the Park Plan consultation demanding that the CNPA introduces effective measures to protect wildlife in the National Park the more chance there is of achieving change.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. wildlife persecution

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