

Who is the Cairngorm National Park for?

Description



I was in Aberdeen on Tuesday night giving a talk to the North East Mountain Trust on “*What* is the Cairngorm National Park for?”. I have been a member for years, because of the excellent work they do and their magazine Mountain Views, which I regard as an essential source of information for anyone who cares about the Cairngorms.

The latest issue contains the responses the Scottish Government has made to questions in the Scottish Parliament about the continued killing of mountain hares. Before my talk one of their

members told me they had driven over the Lecht that afternoon and seen a group of gamekeepers by the road with rows of dead hares like those that have been featured on raptor persecution Scotland ([see here](#)). If they'd taken a photo I'd have ask to post it here but unless you have a camera with a powerful telephoto lens or are fearless (and possibly foolhardy), its very difficult to record these incidents. Most massacres of mountain hares in the National Park, just like the illegal killing of raptors, are simply not recorded.

In my talk I showed some photos of grouse moor management taken on a recent walk around the Dinnet Estate including the mountain hare above. I remarked on the number of traps I had seen and asked the audience if there was anywhere worse in the National Park?



Trap Glenfenzie



Two traps, one on either side of pool, leaving nothing to chance, Morven burn

A chorus of estate names rang out from the back of the room, including Invercauld which borders on the Dinnet Estate. A hillwalker had found a common gull caught in a trap earlier in the year at Geallaig Hill on Invercauld ([see here](#)) and unusually, the Gamekeeper in this case has been dismissed, although he has not apparently been charged.

At the end of my talk I was asked what we could do to make the Cairngorm National Park more effective in protecting wildlife and our landscapes. My reply was to the effect that photos are worth a

thousand words and that ideally more people should keep a keen eye on the workings of the National Park and not just respond to consultations but take more active roles through submitting FOI requests and complaining where necessary. In responding, I was aware that I had not entirely convinced myself or the audience. While photos and lobbying can effect some changes, these will only go so far.

Yesterday, I thought about this again, prompted by accounts I had heard after my talk about how NEMT members were involved in not just enjoying that National Park but in practical conservation work such as maintaining paths and monitoring tree regeneration on Mar Lodge estate. This reminded me that the recreational community, in a broad sense (not just physical activity but observing the landscape and nature) cares far more about the Cairngorms than most of the people who own it (who are responding for the persecution of wildlife and the trashing of the landscape with tracks and developments). Yet the recreational community, who are people who basically argued for National Parks in the first place have been sidelined and don't have a seat at the table in the proposed Partnership Plan. Instead, what we have is Fergus Ewing MSP accusing the Cairngorms National Park Authority of bias ([see here](#)) for not privileging gamekeepers above all other interests. As a former member of the Mountain Rescue one might have hoped he would have appreciated the need for the recreational voice to be at the centre of what the National Park does.

So, I think the answer to the question of how do we make the Cairngorm (and indeed the Loch Lomond and Trossachs) National Park more effective, is that the recreational organisations need to assert their right to be centrally involved in running our National Parks. The answer to the question "What are our National Parks for?" lies in the question "Who are our National Parks for?".

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. landed estates
3. landscape
4. outdoor recreation
5. wildlife persecution

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