

And a partridge in a willow scrub

Description



Looking back from ground west of the Allt na Benne towards Newtonmore

Last Saturday, I had a great day ski touring around and up Chailleach above Newtonmore. There were feet of snow at the back of Chailleach and it's wonderful how it obliterated most of the usual signs of human impacts, instant re-wilding!

We skied from the village, gliding over the fields by the wildcat trail which are usually a cattle induced quagmire and over the flatter area of boggy moorland. Both areas I would normally avoid. On the far side of the moor, as the hill began to rise, we flushed what I at first thought was a huge flight of red

grouse, over 150 birds. I then realised they were red legged partridge, just a few hundred metres from the feeding station we had seen a few weeks before ([see here](#)). You could see where they had been sheltering and feeding in willow scrub between the moraine. Higher up they gave way to red grouse and above that we saw several dozen mountain hare at the top of the Allt na Benne

And that prompted this thought for the first day of Christmas. How is it that in the Cairngorms National Park, which should be the finest area for nature conservation in the British Isles and where wildlife should be wild, that there are no controls on the introduction of game birds but beavers are subject to strict controls?

Red Legged Partridge, a native of south west Europe, may now be naturalised in the British Isles but its range has only extended to the Highlands because of deliberate introductions. This partridge is said to favour dry farmland, heaths and scrub, similar to the mediterranean habitats from which it originates and yet we are allowing landowners to breed it on bog. Perhaps this wouldn't matter if they provided food for hen harrier but that bird is conspicuous by its absence. Meantime, there is plenty of suitable habitat for the beaver downstream at the Insh Marshes but there are no plans to re-introduce what was a native species to the Cairngorms. Would that the National Park could re-wild as quickly as the snow

Happy Xmas!

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. conservation
3. landed estates
4. wild land
5. wildlife persecution

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