

Starvation on the Scottish hills

Description



Photo taken in Glenshee from the A 93 on 25 Feb 2020 – in the Cairngorms National Park.

Anyone trying to understand Scotland's deer problem need only travel between Perth and Braemar and see the herds of deer desperately seeking food and shelter in the snowy wilds.

This photo is taken close to the location where Brian Shackleton filmed masses of deer on the move a few years ago ([see here](#)).

There are still far too many deer on the nearby estates of Balmoral, Invercauld and Tulchan, and nearly 20 years of effort by Scottish Natural Heritage to persuade these estates to reduce deer numbers to

levels appropriate for the habitat and the deer's own welfare have failed ([see here](#)). This failure was well exposed in the Sunday Mail on 23 Feb and once again demonstrates the urgent need for legislative change to impose public control over deer management in the face of private neglect:

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Sunday Mail February

MONARCH TOLD TO KILL MORE BALMORAL ST

■ Norman Silvester

The Queen has been criticised by green groups for not killing enough red deer on Balmoral estate.

Activists say the monarch and neighbouring owners are letting too many of the animals breed, which harms the environment and worsens climate change.

Deer numbers in Scotland are at record levels, and campaigners say the animals eat young trees before they can grow.

They added that over-grazing by deer damages the soil and increases the risk of landslides and flooding.

Balmoral is one of five privately owned estates in the Caenlochan Glen area of south Aberdeenshire.

Between 2003 and 2016, the deer population at the Queen's summer retreat rose by 16 per cent to 3367. But in the same period, the numbers culled fell by 12 per cent.

Environmental campaigner Dave Morris, a former director of Ramblers Scotland, said: "Estates like Balmoral are not culling enough deer."

"We have major problems in Scotland with too many deer and the effect it's having on the natural habitat."



CONCERNED
Dave Morris

"I think Caenlochan is the worst area for deer in Scotland and Balmoral is part of the problem."

"Balmoral have failed to take the necessary steps to reduce excessive numbers."

"They've been given loads of advice over 20 years and have been advised by many experts to reduce deer numbers."

"It's time the Royal Family, if they are serious about climate change, start reducing the numbers of deer."

Landowners such as the Queen enter into voluntary "control agreements" to cull deer.

But green campaigners say that power over the process should pass to a government body such as

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) who would bill them for the cost.

Reports by SNH and the



Creatures branded a blight on lands

DEER AND PRESEN DANCE



At the heart of the problem is a reliance on traditional methods of deer management on these estates which appear to have changed little over the last 100 years. This is illustrated in a video describing a recent day's stalking at Balmoral ([see here](#)) which shows how the enjoyment of a sporting experience seems more important than effective management of the grazing pressure on the habitat.

Balmoral and its fellow estates in the South Grampian Deer Management Group need to learn how deer are controlled on Glenfeshie Estate, further west in the Cairngorms National Park. Sustained culling of deer, through many months, by night and day, is required to secure deer population levels appropriate to the available habitat. Otherwise no trees will regenerate on Balmoral and its neighbours as thousands of deer wander the snow covered hills desperately trying to avoid starvation.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. balmoral
2. CNPA
3. conservation
4. Deer
5. landed estates
6. scottish natural heritage

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