

The Cairngorms National Park wildlife sink hole – part 2

Description

Little did I know when blogging about the Cairngorms National Park wildlife sinkhole ([see here](#)) that the League of Cruel Sports was going to publish their report, Calculating Cruelty ([see here](#)), on 14th August. The Report, if you have not seen it, is based on a comprehensive field survey of seven estates. From this it is estimated that annually in Scotland *“a quarter of a million animals are killed each year in an attempt to totally eradicate foxes, stoats, weasels, along with any other animal that indiscriminately fall into the traps and snares”*.

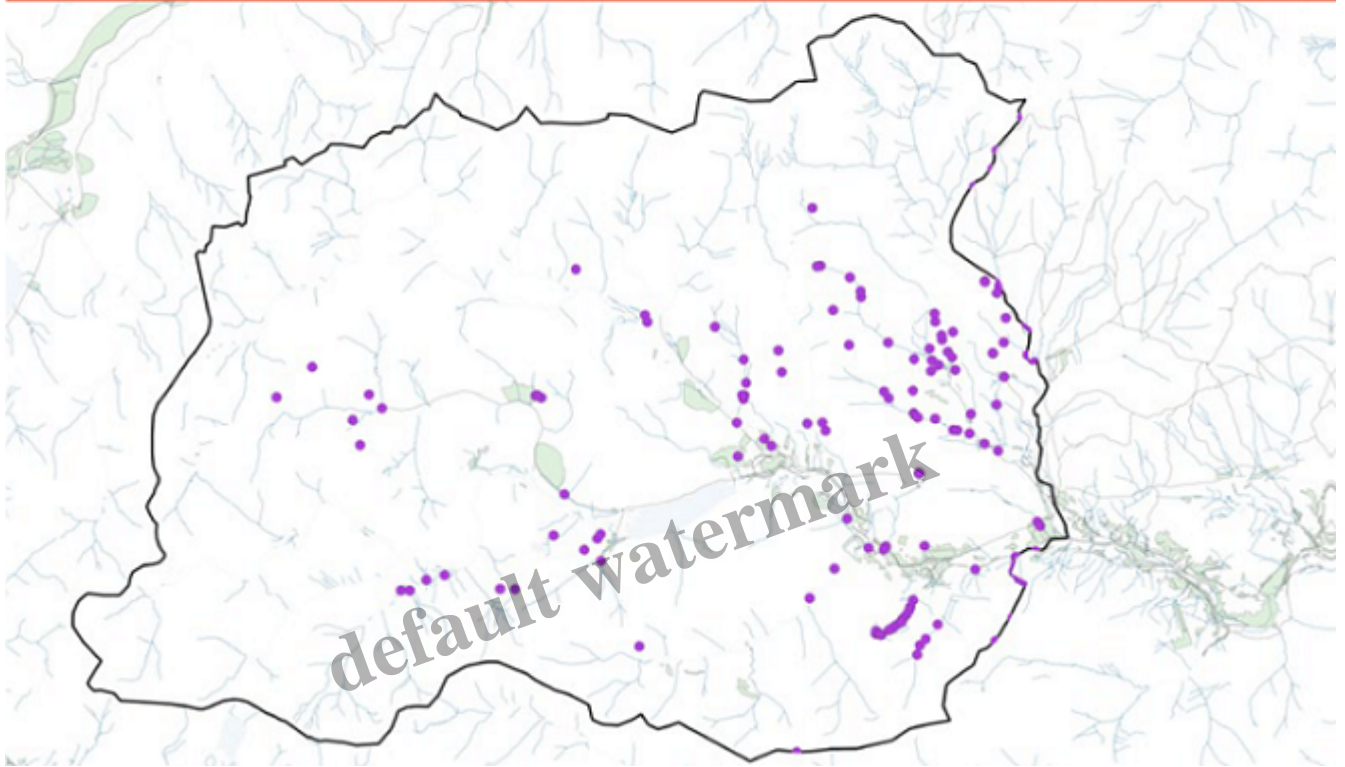
Two of the seven estates surveyed, Invermark and Tillypronie, lie partially within the Cairngorms National Park:



Invermark estate boundary with area within the Cairngorms National Park depicted in green -map credit CNPA

Invermark estate, Angus

Traps and Snares



Extract from Calculating Cruelty

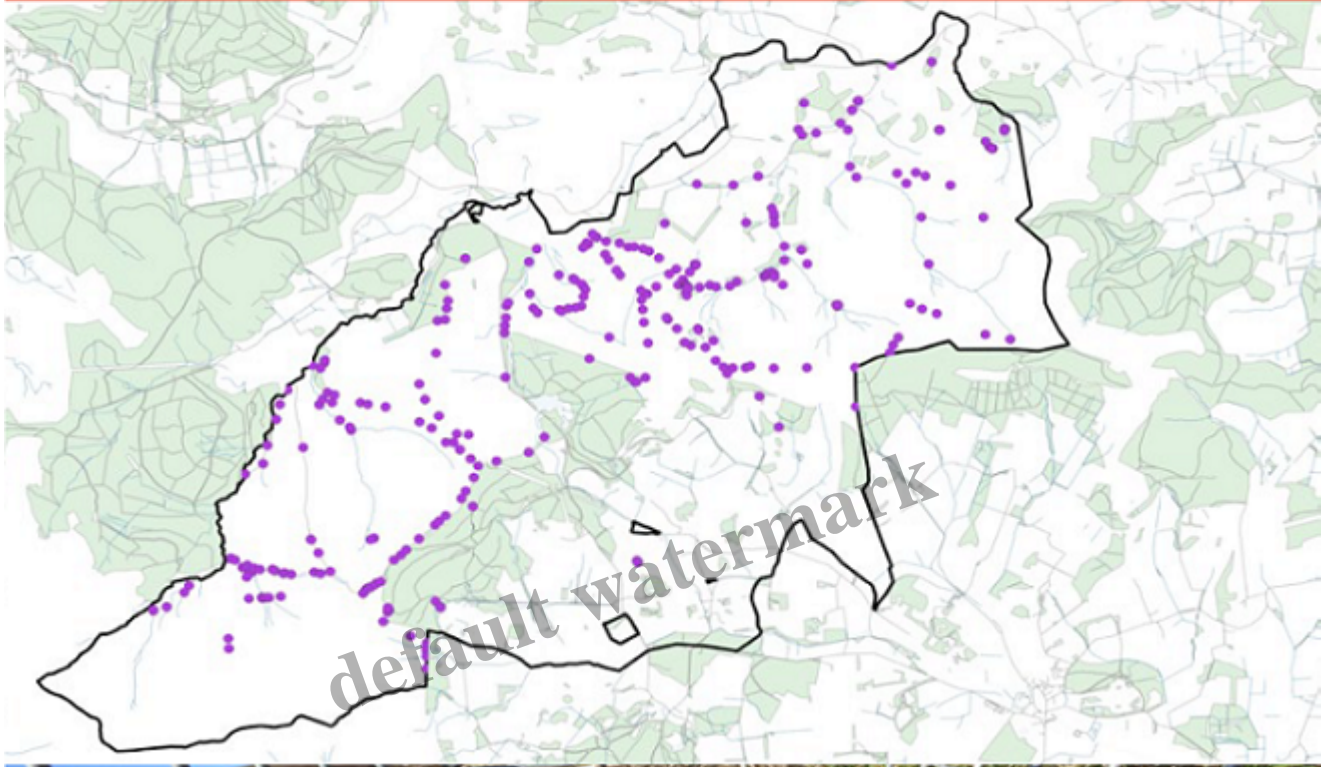
The most intensive trapping at Invermark is in the more accessible part of the estate which lies just outside the National Park boundary. (Remoteness offers protection to animals from gamekeepers which is one of the reasons why it is so important the Cairngorms National Park Authority stops the proliferation of bulldozed tracks). The number of traps and snares recorded by the survey may be lower than on the neighbouring Millden Estate, which lies entirely outside the National Park, but it would appear significant numbers of animals are being killed each year. The Cairngorms National Park Authority, which has a statutory duty to put conservation first, should know how many, but better not to find out about something which is impossible to justify.



Tillypronie Estate with the area within the National Park demarcated by the area of solid green. Map CNPA

Tillypronie estate, Aberdeenshire

Traps and Snares



Credit, Calculating Cruelty

At Tillypronie, the most intensive trapping appears to take place inside the National Park boundary, a reflection that this forms the most important moorland on the estate.

They may not be the worst estates featured in the report but the level of trapping and intensity of estate management at Invermark and Tillypronie appears significantly higher than a couple of other estates covered by the survey. Not what anyone should expect from a National Park.

Parkswatch has previously criticised the level of trapping that is taking place in the Cairngorms National Park ([see here](#)), ([here](#)) and ([here](#)). The evidence suggests that the numbers of animals being exterminated across much of the National Park is significantly higher than the Scottish average. I have previously argued the Cairngorms National Park Authority could use its conservation byelaw making powers to ban or strictly limit trapping ([see here](#)). So far the CNPA has done nothing to progress this.

The CNPA shouldn't be waiting until the Environment Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, announces the Scottish Government's response to the Werritty Review into grouse moor management ([see here](#)). Last week she was forced to promise she would do in the Autumn ([see here](#)). That just promises more delay. The CNPA could start by committing to make public the level of trapping that takes place in the National Park, rather than trying to work behind the scenes to influence landowners, as it is attempting to do through the east Cairngorms Moorland Partnership ([see here](#)). That has no chance of working

while the current system, designed to promote numbers of red grouse at the expense of everything else, remains in place.

What is the way forward?

The solution to the destructive impacts of intensive grouse moor management advocated by the RSPB ([see here](#)) and some conservation organisations, the licensing of grouse moors, is unlikely to provide any short-term solutions that are fit for a National Park. In case after case of disappearing raptors, for example, it has proved impossible to prove who has been responsible. That would not change under a licensing scheme and any licensing authority would be left with the thankless and almost impossible task of trying to prove whose license should be revoked.

Nor is waiting for landownership to change a solution. In a welcome development it was revealed on Sunday that one of the estates surveyed, Kildrummy ([see here](#)), located just outside the CNPA boundary, has recently changed hands and the new owners intend to manage it for conservation. Since Percy Unna started buying up land for the National Trust for Scotland, we have seen a slow but steady acquisition of sporting estates by conservation minded owners, first non-governmental organisations, now increasingly by the conservation minded very rich, the Rauslings and Povslen's on this world. They have contributed a great deal but that has not stopped the collapse of hen harrier numbers in Scotland. If hen harriers, weasels, stoats and foxes are allowed to live unpersecuted under the Bently's at Kildrummy, that will be a welcome improvement, but as soon as that wildlife tries to move into the National Park, there is a very high likelihood it will get killed.

A more radical solution is needed for our National Parks, a ban on all driven up grouse shooting and the intensive estate management that accompanies this (trapping, muirburn, use of medicated grit etc). This would not require the Scottish Government to introduce any new legislation as it could be achieved through the conservation bye-law making powers of our two National Parks.

The Scottish Government could, if it wishes to credibility on wildlife matters, ask the Cairngorms National Park Authority to starting scoping now how such byelaws might work, assess their likely environmental and economic impact and produce proposals that ensure not a single rural job is lost as a consequence. With a little political will, free from landowner influence, far better use could be made of the land in our National Parks, to the benefit of both wildlife and humans.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. CNPA
2. wildlife persecution

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Author

nickkempe