

How many game birds are released into the Cairngorms National Park each year?

Description



Yesterday, on my way up to Speyside I pulled into a layby and parked behind a trailer loaded with crates. I did not realise immediately but half were packed with adult red legged partridge (you can just see them in the lower four crates on the left).

Breeding of red-legged partridge is now a sizeable business – about 10 million birds a year – and they are sold as eggs, chicks, poults and adults ([see here](#)). The shooting season for red legged partridge started on 1st September, a month before pheasants, so presumably this delivery was because some shoot or shoots decided they were short. Birds released during the shooting season are in no way wild.

I don't know the destination of the birds in the trailer, but there are no controls in place to prevent them

being delivered to estates in the Cairngorms National Park. Earlier this year Wild Justice issued a legal challenge to the release of game pheasant and red legged partridge in protected areas in England. A hearing is now due in November ([see here](#)), too late to affect this year's shooting season. If successful, however, it will have implications for the Scottish Government.

Meantime our National Park Authorities have done absolutely nothing to monitor how many game birds are being released each year or to consider the impact this has on conservation. There is, for example, not a mention of pheasant and red-legged partridge in the Cairngorm Nature Plan ([see here](#)), despite the implications for other species. Yesterday evening I went for a run on the Pitmain Estate and I have never seen so many pheasant in my life. They were everywhere, awaiting massacre on 1st October – I saw nothing else.

Much of the National Park is now just one big game farm, pheasant and red legged partridge on the lower lying areas, grouse on the moors. This is completely incompatible with our National Parks' statutory duty to put conservation first. Irrespective of the outcome of the legal challenge from Wild Justice, our National Parks need to start considering the issues now. There is a strong argument for a total ban on game bird farming or releases in both our National Parks.

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. CNPA
2. conservation
3. landed estates
4. LLTNPA

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