

Deer and the continued destruction of the Caledonian Pine Forest – the failures on the Dulnain

Description



About 30 deer grazing in the Kinveachy Caledonian Pine Wood within the Cairngorms National Park boundary 2/01/23. The dead trunks in the foreground mostly date from a large fire in the 1940s. Photo credit Parkswatch reader.

Following the completion of my post on Deer and Peat Bog restoration on the Glen Banchor estate, I was sent a photo by a reader of deer grazing the Caledonian Pine forest remnants at Kinveachy, all of which is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and some of which is a Special Area of Conservation.

Strathcauldih explained the problem in the Monadhliath Strategic Deer Management Plan 2015-24 ([see here](#)):

In the case of the Kinveachy SAC, it is apparent from the data being gathered by SNH that recovery to favourable condition²² will take many decades and, even then, will not produce the extensive areas of new pinewood perhaps envisaged at the outset. The fact that Kinveachy is such a draw for deer in the winter, and yet a 'limited tolerance' policy to deer will remain in place for years to come to try and secure pinewood regeneration, means that neighbouring owners can expect little change in the approach taken to culling in the near future. Given it is such a problem perhaps some compromise could be found in how the site is currently managed, so that neighbouring estates to the west are more motivated to work together with Kinveachy Estate and SNH to help achieve the aims of the SAC and the neighbouring Monadhliath SAC.

Note 22 states: "The aim of management at Kinveachy is to facilitate regeneration of the pinewoods, and the primary management action is to reduce the level of deer occupancy then maintain it at a level compatible with allowing young trees to establish".

There is not a hope of that happening if, whenever there is snow or bad weather, Red Deer are forced down the Dulnain/attracted to the Caledonian Forest remnants at Kinveachy where they gobble up any natural regeneration.

Parkswatch has referred to this problem before when considering BrewDog proposals to create and plant new fenced enclosures on the Dulnain as part of their Lost Forest proposal ([see here](#)) instead of working with Kinveachy to reduce deer numbers. If Scottish Forestry agrees to pay to BrewDog for further fencing on the Dulnain, it will make the problem downstream at Kinveachy worse, not better as deer will have even less ground to forage in winter.

The photo illustrates the failure of our public agencies to work effectively to protect the Caledonian Pine Forest better than any words.

Postscript

After I published this post it was pointed out to me that readers might think there had been a total failure to restore the Caledonian Pinewood Forest on the Dulnain. I did not intend to imply that and it is not the case: there are areas of natural regeneration at Kinveachy and the fact those are not fenced is a great strength. However, the regeneration is not as extensive as it might be due and is far slower than that on the restoration side of Mar Lodge and in Glen Feshie and that is in part to incursions by red deer. The problem is different estates are working to different objectives and that is undermining the attempts by Seafeld Estates to regenerate the pine forest at Kinveachy.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. conservation
2. Deer
3. scottish forestry

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