

The Cairngorms wildfire and pinewood recovery

Description

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Forest of Birse. Photo credit Victor Clements

This very short post is concerned with pinewood recovery after wildfire, and based around a 10 minute video shot in the Forest of Birse on Deeside, 23 years after a big fire there in 2003. The video can be found viewed [here](#).

The context is the big fires taking place at Glenmore Forest and Abernethy at the moment.

In this case, it took 3-4 years to get a feel for what might happen, but the result was that 80-100 ha of very scattered Scots Pine trees in long heather, possibly 15-25 years old, was replaced with a younger cohort of trees, growing at perhaps 10- 20 times the density. The unburned ground is regenerating, as can be seen in the video, but that is very sparse and gradual in comparison. The new wave of regeneration was able to overwhelm any deer that might have been present. There was no contraction of pinewood area, just that the new cohort was much thicker, and it happened very quickly.

Fresh seed fall on to burned ground will obviously have germinated much more easily than previously, perhaps with a lower mortality but it must also have been the case that the fire itself activated seeds, perhaps even as the trees were being burned. Others will understand the mechanisms better than me, but the outcome here as been markedly better than you might have anticipated.

I was employed on a neighbouring estate at the time, and until SFRS arrived, was partly responsible for those who attended, having taken the phone call that came in and initiated the response. I have had no input in to this from 2006, and this was just a return visit to see what was going on twenty years later.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. conservation
2. forestry
3. wildfire

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