

Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Group

Annual Report Year to 31 March 2017



DMG Chairman: Angus McNicol
Email: angus@invercauld.estate

DMG Secretary: Tom Willis
Email: TWillis@savills.com

DMG Website: <http://egrampiandmg.deer-management.co.uk>

Prepared by: **Dr Linzi Seivwright** BSc PhD

Caorann
Tel. 07547 676509
Email: linzi@caorann.com
www.caorann.com



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1. Introduction

1.1 This is the first annual report from the Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Group. The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overall summary of management activities undertaken and progress to date in the delivery of the Upper Deeside and Donside Deer Management Plan (DMP) (<http://egrampiandmg.deer-management.co.uk>)

1.2 Key Deliverables of the plan

Over the next 5 years, the main deliverables of the Group are as follows:

- To have implemented management to help Designated Sites to achieve Favourable/Unfavourable Recovering management status;
- To use the Mar Lodge Section 7 review process, the Cross-DMG Working Group and the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (2017-22) (see Part 1 Section 1.3 for details) to review deer movements, review DMG boundaries and implement collaborative deer management to deliver the combined objectives of conservation and the sustainable harvest of deer at a landscape scale;
- To have implemented DMG wide Habitat Monitoring of Heather Moorland and Blanket Bog to help inform future management;
- To have conducted two full aerial counts of the population in Winter 2017 & 2020;
- To have secured additional Funding through ECAF to carry out a review of existing native woodland and explore opportunities for woodland expansion.

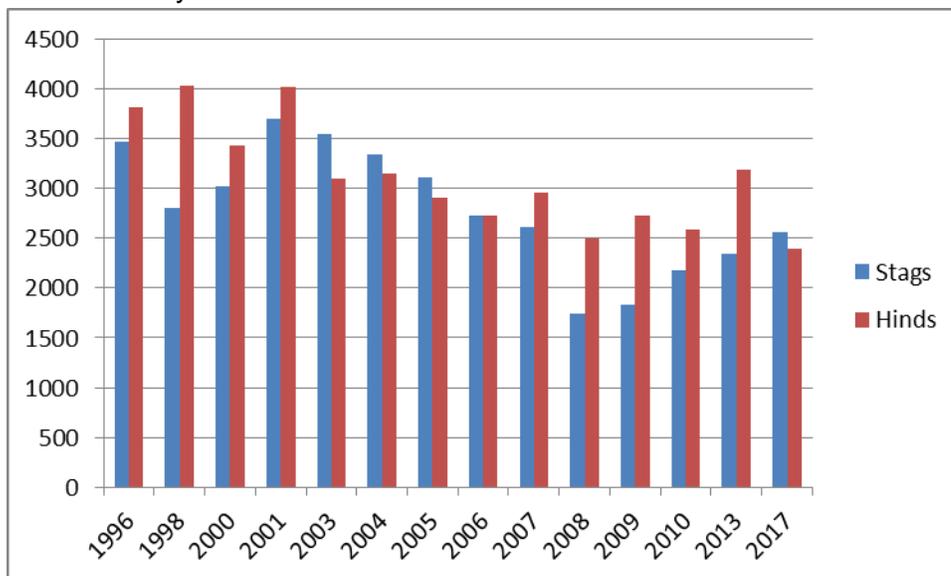


2. Red Deer Counts 2015 – 2017

Over the last 20 years, the Group has conducted regular counts either on foot or using a helicopter. The last count was conducted by helicopter in the west group in Spring 2017. A foot count was also conducted for East Group due to the low numbers of deer present overall.

The deer count is split into West and East due to the properties in the east being separated from the main red deer range by deer fences in order to achieve a range of management objectives. The deer population across the whole Group area is currently estimated to be 5,821 deer representing a density of **6 deer per km²**.

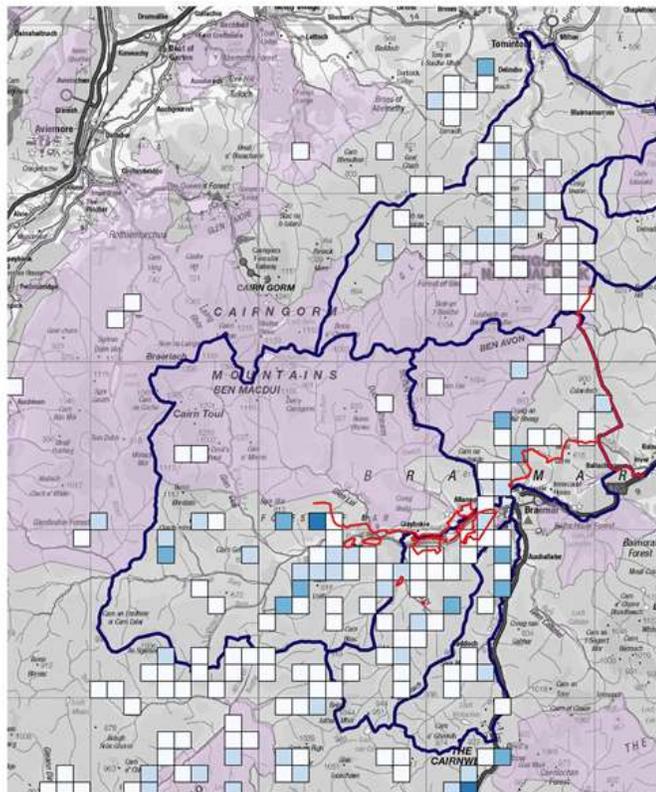
The main point to note is that the number of hinds across the group area is currently the lowest it has been over the last 20 years due to increased culling efforts of group members. Stag numbers continue to fluctuate largely due to the ability of stags to move and to redistribute themselves over much greater areas and also their tendency to be attracted to areas into where hind numbers and sheep have been reduced.



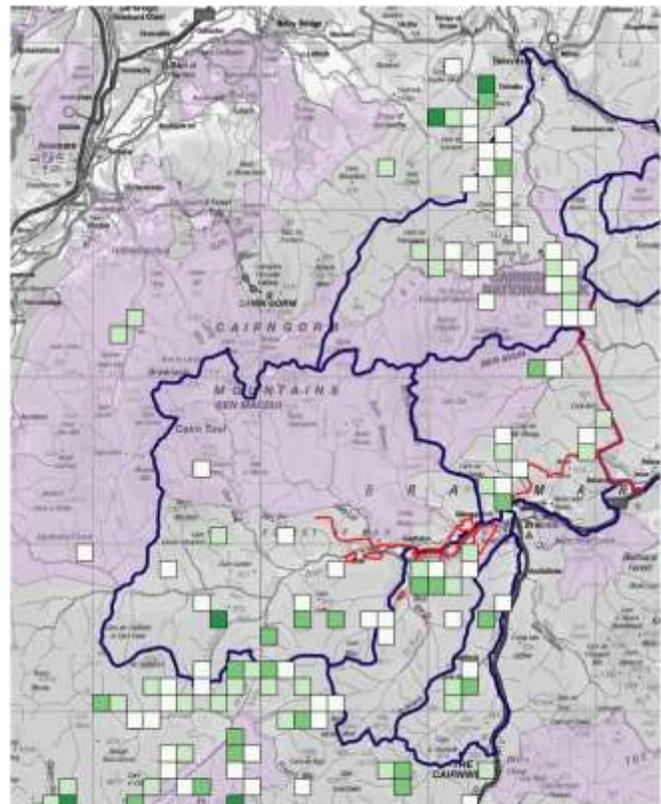
Management of deer to reduce impacts on Designated Sites continues to be a priority for the Group. Figures 1 and 2 show the relative distribution of stags and hinds counted in February 2017. It should be noted however, that deer counts provide a snap-shot of the temporal distribution on the day of the count. Deer movements and distribution may vary considerably throughout the year depending on factors such as the time of year, and disturbance.

In addition to the strong conservation objectives of the DMG, the commercial harvesting of stags is an important socio-economic objective for the Group. The current density should sustain a commercial harvest of 250 stags for the properties in the west.

Figures 1 and 2: Distribution of stags and hinds counted by helicopter in February 2016.



2.5 0 2.5 5 7.5 10 km
 Deer management unit
 SAC
 Deer Fence
 Stag Density 2017
 1 - 22
 22 - 63
 63 - 125
 125 - 432
 432 - 831
 Data produced by Scottish Natural Heritage
 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown
 copyright and database right [2017]



2.5 0 2.5 5 7.5 10 km
 Deer management unit
 SAC
 Deer Fence
 Hind Density 2017
 1 - 27
 27 - 71
 71 - 138
 138 - 298
 298 - 460
 Data produced by Scottish Natural Heritage
 Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown
 copyright and database right [2017]



3. Population Modelling and Deer Management

Deer management planning is an adaptive process which relies on a suite of information to be gathered and updated on an annual basis in order to help inform future management. This information includes:

- Information about habitat condition and the impacts of herbivores
- Population estimates
- Cull information about the number, sex and age of deer culled annually
- Deer welfare information relating to the health, condition and reproductive capacity of the population
- Changes in management objectives which may require different grazing/browsing pressure.

Red deer culls within the Group are set annually using population modelling techniques based upon all these factors above. All members of the Group are committed to working collaboratively to achieve agreed culls.

4. Summary of events and DMG management activities 2015 -2017

During the development of the Deer Management Plan in 2015 and 2016, and the ongoing delivery of the plan, the Deer Management Sector as a whole has been involved in a series of reviews and consultations conducted by the Cairngorms National Park, Scottish Natural Heritage and, latterly, the Scottish Government Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

April 7 th 2015	Consultant appointed to begin work on the development of a new Deer Management Plan (DMP). DMG agrees to extend the previous DMG Boundary to include Glenavon to the north and the properties of Delnadamph, Allargue, Candacraig and Dinnet to the east to improve coverage of management area.
March 24 th 2016	DMG meeting to discuss Plan development.
Summer 2016	DMG Website goes live and draft plan undergoes a period of consultation with stakeholders and local community
August 19 th 2016	DMG undergoes a repeat Assessment by SNH
November 18 th 2016	SNH published Review of Deer Management
November 2016	Mar Lodge and Invercauld Helicopter Deer Count
November 2016	Existing ECAF scheme withdrawn.
January 11 th 2017	Deer Management Plan and revised Constitution formerly adopted at DMG Meeting.
February 28 th 2017	Helicopter deer count of Upper Deeside & Donside, Cairngorms & Speyside and West Grampian DMGs.
April 3 rd 2017	The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee publish a review of Deer Management .
April 2017	Publication of Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (2017 - 2021)

5. Summary of activities undertaken by individual DMG Members

The following table details some of the deer management activities undertaken from 2015 to Spring 2017 in the DMG area which contribute to delivering the local public interest identified in the Deer Management Plan.

Property	Management Activities
Glenavon	<p>Hosted habitat training for estate staff from Glenavon and Allargue Estates in spring 2017.</p> <p>Notification of risks of and precautions against Chronic wasting disease now written into contracts for all stalking lets.</p> <p>Additional stiles/crossing points added to the march fence with Delnadamph, along with increased signage to improve permeability.</p>
Allargue, Delnadamh & Dinnet	<p>All properties maintaining low deer densities to encourage good habitat condition & to support Grouse Moor Management. All properties interested in carrying out Habitat Impact Assessment Training scheduled for 2017. Ongoing roe deer management carried out in lowland/woodland.</p>
Candacraig	<p>Peatland restoration works completed in 2016 on Camock Hill and a further project presently underway on Carn Fiachlach and possible further smaller areas in 2018. Renewed LTFP has been approved by FCS and is presently on Public Register with formal sign off anticipated by the end of this year. Welcome to the Moor signage fitted across the estate. No DVC's identified.</p>
Mar Lodge	<p>Mar Lodge continues to work collaboratively with neighbouring properties in adjacent DMGs. North Geldie to be re-designated from moorland zone to regeneration zone. Section 7 Agreement targets on track to be met early.</p>
Mar Estate	<p>Peatland restoration project undertaken in 2015, completing the works commenced in 2014. A further project to be considered for Autumn 2017. Riparian planting up the Glen Ey burn in conjunction with River Dee Trust. Community hydro scheme to have riparian enclosures constructed on Corriemulzie Burn. Estate interested in Habitat Impact Assessment and to consider next steps, training to take place in 2017. Estate update to LTFP to be produced in 2017. Damage to deer fences on River Dee from January 2016 spate to be repaired. Estate to continue to provide guidance to responsible access takers, in addition to participating in the Heading for the Scottish Hills initiative and to continuing to engage with the local community and neighbours. No DVC issues identified.</p>

Property	Management Activities continued
Invercauld Gairnshiel	Area of Peatland Restoration adjacent to Candacraig Carnock Hill completed in 2016 with further work proposed for 2017. May 2016 - Crathie school visit to the moor. Dundee photography visit to the hill. Estate provides articles for local newspaper. Signage to assist in education of public in land management to be rolled out. Welcome to the Moorland signage installed to assist the public in their understanding of management in the area. Heading for the Scottish Hill website checked.
Invercauld Corndavon	Dry heath, wet heath and Blanket Bog Monitored last year. Approximately 20 conservation students from Aberdeen University taken round moor on 9th April 2017 to explain deer and grouse management and integration with other conservation measures. Tree planting along Slugain Burn (2016). Attendance at Community Council meetings to take questions on deer management. Heading for the Scottish Hill website checked.
Invercauld Baddoch	Attendance at Community Council meetings to take any questions on deer issues. Additional tree planting undertaken as part of Pearls in Peril initiative. Welcome to the Moorland signage installed to assist the public in their understanding of management in the area.. Heading for the Scottish Hill website checked.
Invercauld Homebeat	Dry heath, wet heath and Blanket Bog Monitored last year. Risks of Chronic Wasting Disease intimated to stalkers along with tick awareness. Approximately 20 conservation students from Aberdeen University taken round moor on 9th April 2017 to explain deer and grouse management and integration with other conservation measures. Braemar Primary school taken onto hill edge and helped plant trees. No issues with Deer Vehicle Collision issues identified. Tree planting along Slugain Burn (2016). Attendance at Community Council meetings to take questions on deer management. Heading for the Scottish Hill website checked.
Invercauld Micras Moor	No Deer Vehicle Collision issues identified. Works undertaken to Gealig Hill track using prior notification planning procedures to improve access. Continuing member of SQWV. Heading for the Scottish Hill website checked. Stock fence erected along east side of B976 increasing safety by reducing sheep access to road. Signage to assist in education of the public rolled out.