



SCAN NEWSLETTER March 2010

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Land Use Strategy Discussion Workshops

A further workshop has been arranged for 8th April, Atlantic Quay, Glasgow, 1430 - 1700

If you wish to register, please reply to Allan Fraser at allan.fraser@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131 244 7726. When you register, please feel free to mention any key issues or questions you think should be covered at the workshops.

The event is free, with teas and coffees provided. Further event details will be provided upon registration.

Scotland's Wild Landscapes

13th and 14th May, SNH Battleby Centre, near Perth

A conference and discussion forum has been organised by the Centre for Mountain Studies and Perth College UHI, in collaboration with Leeds University (Wild Land Research Institute), Lochaber College UHI, the Scottish Wild Land Group (SWLG), Scottish Natural Heritage, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the John Muir Trust.

The event aims to:

- raise awareness among key stakeholders and the general public of recent research, policy developments, and key issues relating to Scotland's wild landscapes
- identify synergies across different policy agendas which relate to wild land conservation and restoration
- identify future opportunities for wild landscapes
- provide a discussion forum around which to foster future collaborations
- develop recommendations for the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's wild landscapes

and is open to researchers, practitioners, policy-makers and all relevant stakeholders, including the general public.

Full details are available on www.wildlands.info

If you have any general enquiries contact Rob McMorran at robert.mcmorran@perth.uhi.ac.uk

Raven Impact on Waders

The Moorland Group of the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA) is disputing recent claims made by the RSPB that ravens do not impact on upland wader species.

A recent study was co-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage to provide evidence or otherwise for raven licence applications. SRPBA argues however that it did not address the nub of the problem, the impact of growing flocks of sub-mature ravens, instead confining its findings to resident breeding pairs of ravens based on data 7 – 9 years old.

The development of raven 'gangs' has not been scientifically monitored. For example, in NE Scotland, raven numbers increased by over 400 per cent up to 2002, and that growth rate has continued. In early spring, juvenile ravens congregate in highly mobile flocks of 200 – 300 birds and predate for food across wide moorland areas. Prime targets are the eggs of ground nesting birds such as curlew and lapwing. The ravens panic the birds off their nests, take their eggs and then move on. By early summer the raven 'gangs' have dispersed – the only evidence of their activity being a marked decline in numbers of the birds on which they predate.

John Forbes-Leith, Chairman, the SRPBA Moorland Group, says:

“We think that recent RSPB media comments on this show that unfortunately they are in denial of a very real problem, because they do not wish to unlock the door to licensed control of ravens or any other species. But ravens are intelligent, devious and hungry birds – vandals of the moorland, plundering birds' nests in one area before moving on to wreak havoc elsewhere.

“In our view the science that has so far been presented is inconclusive, but there is very real eye-witness evidence that could have been gathered to support our claims of the damage that juvenile ravens can do.

“We think that public funding should have been directed at measuring these impacts, and not on desk based historical analysis.”

Ron Macdonald, Head of Policy & Advice, Scottish Natural Heritage, says:

“We recognise that there is a developing issue with large flocks of sub-mature, non breeding ravens and the potential negative impacts they may have on wild birds, and we are working with land managers to try and find practical solutions to these problems. Licences can be issued under section 16(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to control some wild predators for the purpose of conserving wild birds, subject to the guidelines which SNH have developed together with land and wildlife management organisations.”

Dr Adam Smith, Director Scotland, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, says:

“Although it doesn't make headlines, this study indicated that at a biologically interesting level, increasing raven numbers were associated with decreasing lapwing and curlew numbers. Overall however this study had to use data from 2002 and before to try and inform policies in 2010 and beyond. It cannot provide a reliable basis for SNH to form policies on the need for licences to take ravens to protect wild birds. However, we can all agree that there is now evidence of increasingly large numbers of ravens in the same areas as poorly performing upland wader populations. Our research experience suggests that the licensed control of ravens and an assessment of the response of wader populations would be a constructive approach to this issue.”

SRPBA, with other industry organisations are working together to seek to have licences made available to allow limited numbers of ravens to be controlled in areas where specific problems are identified in order to scare the juvenile flocks away. The legal mechanism already exists for farmers to protect their livestock in this way.

SNH has existing mechanisms to enable such licence applications to be granted, but there is concern that this study will be used against applicants as evidence that a problem does not exist.

Current News Items

The following news items may be of interest to you:

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/scottish-secretary-caught-in-centre-of-row-as-residents-try-to-block-teen-gangs-with-gates-1.1009911>

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/estate-owner-can-keep-wild-animals-1.1003120>

SCAN Conference

Finally, don't forget our conference at Birnam Institute, by Dunkeld on Friday 7th May 2010, details below. A registration form is available on our website, www.scottishcountrynet.org

Making the Case for Access

At the recent SCAN Access Summit one concern was voiced loud and clear - the most pressing worry at the moment is finding the money and resources to implement and sustain outdoor access work, whether core paths, rights of way or just general access rights.

As local authorities tighten their belts and more people are seeking limited funds and grants, how can outdoor access hold its own?

This conference will demonstrate how outdoor access can be embedded at the heart of local government policy, reflecting its relevance to strategic agendas such as health, climate change and regeneration.

The invited speakers will help us understand how best to engage with Single Outcome Agreements, Community Planning Partnerships, the National Planning Framework and other national and local strategic planning processes that influence budget allocation.

How can important linkages be made across service delivery? What partnerships are there to be developed (and exploited)? How can financial planning be influenced, to keep access high on the political agenda?

The presentations will include inspirational success stories as well as tips on how to avoid the pitfalls. This event will help ensure that time and effort is best targeted to gain maximum results.

Aims of the conference:

- * increase understanding of national and local budget processes, including Single Outcome Agreements
- * Share ideas of how best to keep public access on the political agenda
- * Explore case studies of successful methods of enhancing resource opportunities

