

Scottish Moorland Group

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Scottish
Land & Estates

Scottish Moorland and Grouse Management Fact Sheet

- The UK holds 75% of the entire world's resource of open heather moorland, and most of that is in Scotland. An estimated 70% of our drinking water is collected from the uplands. The UK uplands as a whole store some 5 billion tonnes of carbon in the peat soil – more than all the forests of Britain and France combined. Careful management of surface vegetation, as carried out by moorland managers in Scotland, helps to preserve the precious peat below the surface.
- Almost a quarter (24%) of Scotland's heather moorland was lost in the last 60 years but it has been best looked after in areas where there is management for grouse shooting. Between the 1940's and 1980's moors managed for grouse shooting lost on average only 24% of their heather cover while non grouse moors lost 41% of their heather.
- Research by the University of Strathclyde estimated that there were 485 active grouse moors in Scotland in 1991 covering 1.86 million hectares. In 2009 the estimate was 304 actively managed grouse moors. The estimate is now that an area of 1 million hectares or 2.5 million acres is used for grouse shooting in Scotland.
- Moorland is an important breeding or feeding habitat for 57 bird species, of which eight occur in internationally important numbers in the UK and 12 are listed in Annex 1 of the EC Birds Directive 1979. - The most protected specialist birds of moorland and moorland fringe are Lapwing, Hen Harrier, Black grouse, Ring Ouzel, Golden eagle, Merlin, Red grouse, Dotterel, Dunlin, Snipe, Curlew, Redshank and Short eared owl.
- Management for grouse shooting directly benefits many of these birds. Grouse moors typically have five times as many golden plover and lapwing and about twice as many curlews as other nearby moors without that management regime. The control of foxes, crows and stoats as practised on grouse moors has been proven to lead to three times better breeding success of Lapwing, Curlew and Golden plover compared to moors without predator control (Game and Wildlife conservation Trust, 2010).
- There is a complex relationship between grouse management and birds of prey. Fox and crow control also protects the Red grouse itself – now Amber listed - but also ground nesting birds of prey – particularly Merlin, Hen Harrier, Short eared owl which in turn benefit from the food source supplied by that management. The red grouse is the UK's only truly native bird and it is only found on moorlands; and unquestionably saved from extinction in many areas by the interest in shooting.
- Moorland keeping is a highly skilled job requiring dedication and tough people. More and more hill keepers are college trained now but many of the best hill keepers are still those with a family history in the job. There is an increasing amount of public relations work and keepers have to know

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all the law and all about wider conservation management. They are real day to day conservationists – practical bird and plant experts.

- In 2011/12 it was estimated that the equivalent of 2640 full time jobs and £30.1 million in wages are generated for the Scottish rural economy as a result of grouse shooting, mainly in remote rural communities.
- Shooting and stalking of all types in Scotland involves 1.5 million gun days per year, worth £240 million to the Scottish economy. Shooting influences the management of 4.4 million hectares. The contribution of shooting, stalking and fishing has now been recognised by Visit Scotland <http://www.visitscotland.com/see-do/activities/country-sports>.
- Sportsmen come from within the UK and from many other countries around the world each year to shoot grouse and it is a significant “export” for Scotland. The best estimate is that there are over 6000 participants each year in Scottish grouse shooting. Grouse is a highly prized food; the young birds go to restaurants as a seasonal speciality, or sold privately, while some of the older birds are processed or exported.
- A typical shoot day is very carefully organised, as the outcome of just a few days shooting per year can make the difference to people’s livelihoods. As in all forms of game shooting, gun safety is paramount.

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