

Local Land Use

BCT's habitat map for Birse parish shows that the major proportion of the parish is covered by woodlands and moorland and it is in these areas where BCT looks after extensive land use interests on behalf of the community.

BCT manages 1,000 hectares (2,500 acres) of woodland with Slewdrum Forest, Balfour Wood and the Native Pinewoods in the Forest of Birse Community, while also being involved in the management of the other 3,000 hectares of the Community. As a result of these involvements, BCT works closely with Ballogie, Birse and Finzean Estates.

Capercaillie Conservation

Previous Updates have described the co-operation between BCT and the Estates to conserve capercaillie locally. In September, BCT hosted a visit by the RSPB's national group known as The Friends of Capercaillie. The event involved presentations and discussions in Finzean Hall followed by site visits, during which the Chairman of the Friends, Lord Lindsay described Birse as 'the finest example in Scotland of locality wide collaboration to conserve capercaillie'.

Recently BCT and the Estates have extracted records from estate game books of the numbers of capercaillie shot annually in the parish during the 20th century. This has been part of the work for a

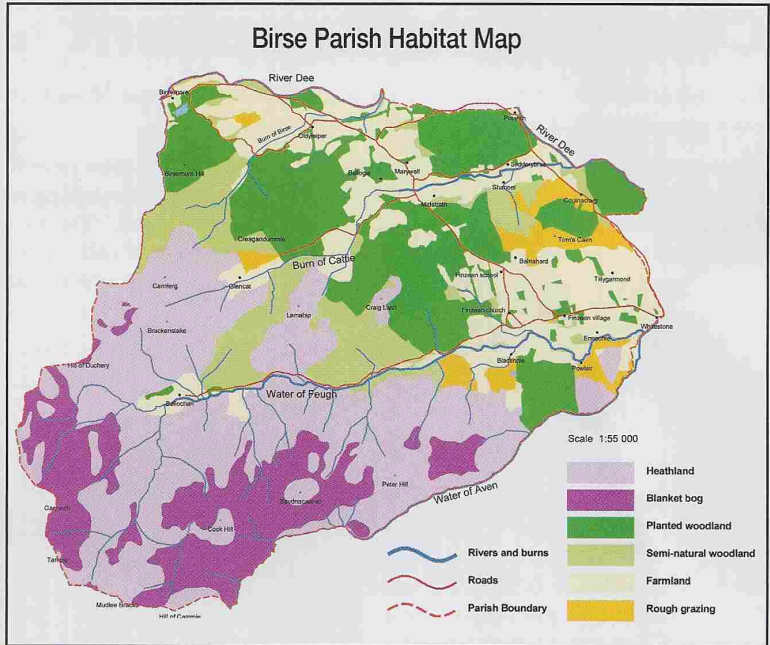


Male capercaillie displaying at a lek in Birse parish.

report that BCT is currently producing on the history and management of capercaillie in the parish. Copies of the report will be available from BCT's office in due course for those who are interested.



Discussion at Corybeg in the Forest of Birse Community as part of the visit to Birse by The Friends of Capercaillie.



Deer Management

BCT and the Estates also co-operate closely over the management of red and roe deer in the parish to try to ensure that damage to other land use interests is kept to a minimum. The importance of deer management locally is reflected by the fact that an average of around 300 red deer and 200 roe deer are culled each year in Birse parish.

In February this year, BCT and the Estates agreed a new five year Birse Parish Deer Management Plan. This sets out the aims and objectives for local deer management and provides the framework for how these will be achieved. There are then two main local deer management meetings each year at which progress can be reviewed and new targets set.



Grey Squirrel Control

Over the winter, BCT and the Estates have also taken forward their existing co-operation to try to prevent grey squirrels becoming established in the parish. This has included BCT erecting several squirrel feeders across the parish to monitor for the presence of greys, as well as the leaflet distributed to local households to encourage residents to report any local sightings of grey squirrels to the BCT office or one of the local estate offices.

Currently, BCT and the Estates are discussing the scope to take a coordinated approach to local consultations about the Forest Management Plans. These need to be drawn up for much of the woodland area in the parish as part of the Scottish Government's new grant regime.

