

confirms Vessuri's (2007) opinion 'that blocking other narratives is evidence of power and domination', whereas Esses et al (2010) consider to deny voice to the outgroup results in reduced competition.

In a similar vein, a young scientist, Ben Adam, is criticised for having the audacity to analyse the findings of the SNH commissioned report No. 982 Analysis of the fates of satellite tagged golden eagles in Scotland. (Whitfield, D.P. & Fielding, A.H. 2017). The contractor for this report was Natural Research, the managing director of which is also D. P. Whitfield. Ruth Tingay who embraces this report, worked for a time as a senior project co-ordinator with Natural Research (The Peregrine Fund, 2020).

The report to which many anti-shooting protagonists contributed, in which Whitfield in particular regularly cites his own work, where wind turbines/power cables are not considered hazardous to golden eagles and intra-guild predation is not considered a contributory factor, (intra-guild predation was the causes of two young eagle deaths in the South of Scotland Eagle project,) concludes that from 84 sat tagged eagles, 38, were missing under suspicious circumstances.

Cause of Tag malfunction	
Died of natural causes	9
Tag Stopped malfunction	6
Tag Battery drained	7
Tag Dropped not suspicious, harness failure	18
Tag Dropped suspicious, considers harness was cut	1
Killed	5
Stopped no malfunction	38

Data extracted from
Whitfield & Fielding (2017)

With reference to the 38 eagles whose tags had stopped, but there was no evidence of malfunction, the authors claim: 'In many or most cases this could potentially suggest, intrinsically, that evidence of the dead bird and its tag had been disposed of after the bird's presumed death' (Whitfield & Fielding 2017, p. 7). As a result of these presumptions, Environment Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham commissioned The Grouse Moor Management Review, (2019) the 'Werritty' report. The Eagle report, therefore has had far reaching consequences, reflected in Natural Research accounts, 'The report has

been and will continue to be a highly influential piece of research' (Natural Research, 2019).

The RPUK blog endorses the report but inevitably those who evaluated it are rebuked for their supposed lack of intellect:

'The laughable critique of the eagle report' RPUK 26.3.18

'Let's call them Honorary Professors of Idiocy at the Angus Glens Institute for Critical Thinking.'

'Some quotes from these esteemed Honorary Professors of Idiocy include statements such as [The report would] "never stand up to scientific scrutiny and would clearly fail in any peer-reviewed process due to extremely poor science, multiple assumptions and total lack of robustness...'

To offset the Honorary Professors' obvious lack of scientific credibility, the Angus Glens Institute for Critical Thinking has recently invited a 'proper scientist' to critique the golden eagle satellite tag review.

Who is this proper scientist? A young man called Ben Adam (BSc, Physics), who apparently works as a Revenue Officer for HM Revenue & Customs. And in which learned academic journal was his 'scientific critique' published? Er, that'll be on his Dad's blog. And who's his Dad? That'll be David Adam, an artist from the Angus Glens, mates with Mike Groves... who spends a lot of time and effort slagging off members of the Scottish Raptor Study Group and slagging off the practice of satellite tracking raptors for scientific research.'

Any attempt to critique this report is met with hostility and those involved are undermined with slurs and derision. These are not isolated insults; this is a distinct pattern of behaviour which reveals further acrimony directed towards the outgroup. An outgroup who have equal claims to knowledge, who are learned and skilled in their own professions, but who are ridiculed for their lack of academic output.

In a different context, further scurrilous commentary appears regarding the proposed South of Scotland Eagle project when Alex Hogg expressed concern about the impact of the release of golden eagles and their impact on hen harriers, this concern was met with contempt and arrogance by Ruth Tingay:

"My 'overriding feeling' is that Alex Hogg has the intellectual capacity of a cabbage." (with photo of cabbage) RPUK blog: 7.9.15

Further insults include:

'Those award-winning scientific gurus at the Scottish Gamekeepers' Association

have been sharing their intellectual acumen as they interpret recent scientific research relating to raptors

First up is Professor Bert Burnett, who chose Facebook as his outlet (well, scientific journals are just so passé) for an examination of the recent paper on historical eagle distribution in the UK and Ireland. His thesis starts with...

Professor Burnett's esteemed colleague, Professor Alex Hogg, also had his own unique interpretation on recent scientific research, this time on the DEFRA buzzard 'study'. Choosing that highly-acclaimed scientific journal Shooting Times to report his scientific results, Prof Hogg wrote this...' (RPUK 11.6.2012)

Photo courtesy of Michael Callan



RPUK rounded on SNP MSPs for not signing a petition by Green MSP Alison Johnstone calling for raven control in Strathbraan (a research project aiming to reduce Wader predation) to be stopped.

Another conservation initiative, 'Understanding Predation' was funded by the Scottish Government through the Moorland Forum. In an attempt to transform conflict, this project aimed to combine different types of knowledge, scientific and local ecological knowledge and involve different stakeholders. The purpose of the project was to establish and further understand predation impacts on various vulnerable species of waders and nesting birds through collaborative working. However, this initiative was also met with disdain:

'Ah, there's that local knowledge is just as important as scientific evidence piece of guff theory.' RPUK

Yet this was not the conclusion of Ainsworth et al (2020) who, in their case study of Understanding Predation, acknowledged the importance of 'building trust and collaborating on mutual goals' and considered 'efforts should be made to integrate not just scientific and local knowledge, but also strategic knowledge held by participants and researchers, and all relevant parties should be involved in a genuine manner throughout the process'. (The understanding predation project revealed considerable predation by ravens. Although SNH initially issued a licence to control a certain number of ravens, a challenge brought by Ruth

Tingay, Chris Packham, RSPB and the Scottish Raptor Study Group resulted in suspension of the licence).

Despite her academic credentials, it appears that Ruth Tingay is dismissive of any type of knowledge that challenges her opinions and her authority. Whilst Kogan considers 'Knowledge is power and the authority of power lies in the academic domain' in respect of the commentary on RPUK blog, it is more than this. It is an ideology which if undermined or contested is met with vehemence and denial.

Conclusion

Whilst the RPUK website claims to highlight raptor persecution incidents in the UK, it is also a political lobbying platform that seeks to abolish game shooting. Politicians and the police are held to account, leading academics are criticised and alternative scientific findings and different types of knowledge are dismissed. Those working in the shooting industry are considered

beneath contempt or labelled as criminals. The blog is a source of hate and aggression and serves to prevent any form of partnership working within the conservation arena. Stern (2004) considers 'All hate beyond the purely individual, has of course a political purpose' and any proposed policy should be 'implemented in a way that can improve intergroup relations, marginalise haters and reinforce ideas of community'. Will then the Scottish Government take heed and reject the constant challenges and interventions by Ruth Tingay and colleagues demanding urgent legislation?

Furthermore, the impact of this hate, energised by power which accentuates difference, results in labelling and stereotyping of the outgroup, in this case those involved in game shooting. These stereotypes have become embedded within the public domain and as such exert a huge impact on the way in which individuals embrace and propagate derogatory beliefs (Yzerbyt, 2010). In addition, the consequences of these negative

stereotypes to the outgroup include status loss and discrimination which serve to stigmatise. 'Stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic and political power – it takes power to stigmatise'. (Link and Phelan, 2001). This stigmatisation is real; it is structural and political; SNH and the Scottish Government bow to the power of Wild Justice, they ignore local knowledge and endorse and fund the conservation organisations within Scotlink, actively promoted by RPUK and Ruth Tingay, which campaign against the shooting industry in all its forms thus demonstrating bias in policy. 'Institutional bias is much more likely to occur at the hands of groups in society who hold power, because those groups will be the ones who control the institutions and therefore determine and carry out the policies that are part of those institutions (Henry, 2010). This structural bias and discrimination must surely be addressed by the Scottish Government, sooner than later. Equally raptor persecution is unacceptable and cannot continue.

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