

## **Survey Findings, 2019.**

The confidential short-term survey was undertaken by 7 regional moorland groups in Scotland, with additional research data gathered by The Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA). Estates provided information on the basis that they would not be named, to avoid potential targeting. The survey represents a snapshot of Scottish grouse estates, only, as not all are represented by regional groups. Similarly, only a portion of existing regional group members responded to the email survey.

This information is indicative of illegal activities by third parties encountered on Scottish grouse estates since 2018 but cannot, by its nature, cover all incidents. Despite prompting by representative bodies like The SGA, some estates do not record incidents as they do not have faith their requests for action will be heeded. Police Scotland officers have told gamekeepers there is no specific offence by which to prosecute, for example, trap or snare vandalism.

Where crime/incident numbers have been given to estates by Police Scotland, these are detailed, as are incidents 'reported' to Police Scotland but where numbers have either not been obtained or Police have not given them despite requests. There are other incidents detailed where crime numbers were obtained but respondents have either been unable to match them to particular incidents or cannot locate them. Some incidents were reported to Police by estates which report so many that their records are not fully up to date.

Separate information, for 2018- to the present, from a longer-term survey undertaken by The Scottish Gamekeepers Association has also been presented, at the end of the survey findings.

### **Grampian Incidents:**

3 respondent estates: Key Findings.

Estate 1: Incident Number 92: Covert filming of gamekeeper's family home and home of an Under-keeper. Police notified after 2 cameras found by estate staff. Estate itself fitted a tracker and obtained an image of a male, with face covered, returning to collect 2nd camera (photo provided). Images given to Police. Police admit a crime had been committed but unsure of which category of crime.

On same estate, burned-out barbecue, with no evidence of cooking, found by estate staff on the moor during a time of heightened wildfire risk (time of Moray wildfire, 2019). No action on any cases.

Estate 2: Number: CF 0063160319. 2019. Removal of securing bolts from a legal High Seat, for deer management, which could have caused serious injury, particularly a fall with a firearm. PS-20190408-3552: 6 traps vandalised across estate. One trap smashed after it was photographed ( set legally ) on a 'moorland' activist site. Snares were illegally placed on fences, filmed, and shown online. When gamekeepers went to the site of the filming, the snares had been removed. The film was tagged to Cairngorms National Park Authority figures, leading to questions for the estate's reputation.

2 Carrion Crows released from crow trap, April 2019. Reported to Police.

CF0115150519: Trap stolen, May 2019.

Dead mountain hare tied on rope to a birch tree and left visible near a public road. Estate reported this to Police.

2019: GPS tracking device, known to be used by UK saboteurs for fitting to vehicles, found at cattle grid.

June 2018: Trap tampered with. Reported to Police. No action on any cases.

Estate 3: 24th June 2019. Incident 2227: Side panel of gas gun (used to move on juvenile non-breeding ravens) smashed with rocks. Batteries thrown away, gas pipe attempted to be cut.

Estate testimony: "We are using the gas bangers as a legal deterrent for large flocks of non-breeding ravens that are devastating to our ground-nesting birds on the hill. We have had groups of 60+ ravens descend onto the hill. They hunt in large groups and will wipe out the nests and chicks of any ground nesting birds in that area if they are allowed to settle there. The bangers are an attempt to keep the flocks moving. We have large populations of curlew, lapwing, golden plover and other rare birds on the hill, here. We are trying to protect our grouse stocks, primarily, but this protection also allows the rare wading birds a safe haven to breed. The vandalism we are experiencing on the hill is a growing problem, causing more and more of a financial cost to the estate, as well as a cost to wildlife on the estate."

Feb 2019: Crime number 0034770219: Stolen Fenn Trap.  
2019: PS-20190730-1728: Damaged Fenn Trap

Previous Incidents- same estate:

2017: Ref: 0987: Dirt bikes on estate without permission and trap vandalism. Trap fronts thrown away and excluders left in place.

CF0008140117 Snare and Crow Cage damage.

CF0217460716 and 0072500317, trap damage and trap theft.

334371117: Cat cage theft.

2016: 0244940816: Fenn trap stolen, damaged rail trap, 10 traps sprung.

CF0009260117: Stolen stealth camera.

Other: CF0200360513: 4 snare tags stolen, with operator's personal ID number.

CF0029600112: 2 smashed up Fenn traps.

**\*\*Further Notes:** After appearing on a BBC Countryfile programme, Grampian group gamekeepers were targeted with online death threats and intimidation.

Incident 3612: Beat keeper filmed from a moving vehicle whilst in his garden by a male in camouflaged clothing, using long lens camera. Police informed.

No action on any cases.

## **Angus Incidents:**

5 respondent estates: Key Findings.

Estate 1: 4 traps damaged or stolen- all reported to Police.

Estate 2: Number: PS20190429-1922 7 separate trap incidents reported to Police as either tampered or vandalised. Police attended on 2 occasions but no action taken. In one incident, where damage to a crow cage was undertaken using wire cutters, a group were filmed at the cage (see photo). Film handed over to Police. No action.

Estate 3: 20 incidents reported to Police in last 6 years. One Argo vehicle worth £25 000 rolled down a hill causing damage beyond repair. Trap damage ranging from sticks being placed in traps to traps stolen and smashed to pieces. Crow cages vandalised and call birds released, sometimes on a weekly basis, to the point estate staff had to abandon using the trap.

CR/015126/17 In 2017, 30 traps damaged between 7th and 10th July, logged as intelligence by Police. Some had restrictors removed and were left set, making it possible to illegally catch, which could have caused the estate to be under criminal investigation.

Estate reported 3 dead buzzards it believed were planted by third parties.

Estate 4: Several traps sprung in 2018 and medicated grit boxes kicked across the ground.

Estate 5: 3 crow cages damaged and reported since Spring 2019 plus 2 incidents of traps (totalling 6) vandalised. Police notified, crime number sought, but no crime number yet given.

\*\*Further Notes: Personal, hand-written, hate letter received by Angus Glens Moorland Group to family home. 2018. Letter handed over to Police.

\*\* Businesses supportive of local grouse estates received online abuse and reputation damage after showing support in an STV news item. 2017.

\*\* An award winning charity programme devised by the Angus group, involving the delivery of free game and recipe cards to vulnerable families was placed in jeopardy after activists targeted the charities following a 2017 blog written by former RSPB Conservation Director Mark Avery, who seeks to ban grouse shooting in the UK.

No action on any cases.

## **Tayside and Central Scotland Incidents:**

3 respondent estates: Key Findings

Estate 1: Incident numbers Cr/025527/18, Cr/2087/18, Cr/003233/18, Cr/1683/18, Cr/2446/19, Cr/1442/19 (These are only some of incident numbers available for collation)

-33 separate incidents reported to Police of trap damage/vandalism and interference in 12 months since July 2018.

These include traps smashed, 2 snares stolen, snares smashed, damaged and stolen. 19 separate incidents of call birds being released from cages (not reported as not treated by Police as a crime). A gate, lock and strainer broken and reported but not recorded as a crime.

Estate Testimony: "This is not everything which has happened. I have recorded whole families, cycling groups, school teachers, professional people wrecking and even urinating on snares; snares that I handle. Out of all this, there has only been action taken on one individual."

\*Images of male urinating on snares is currently with Police Scotland.

Estate 2: Incident of estate staff member being watched, reported to Police.

3 incidents of Fenn Trap damage (unreported), 1 crow let out of cage.

Estate 3: Trap tampered with by member of the public caught a protected pine marten, leading to investigation of estate staff. Average 10 traps vandalised or stolen per year, crow cages damaged and crows released from cages.

Action on 1 case. Female given a warning.

## **Southern Uplands Incidents:**

2 respondent estates: Key Findings

Estate 1: Since 2018, 36 traps stolen, 33 traps vandalised, 72 snares sprung or tampered with, 4 snares stolen, 20 snares vandalised.

13th May 2019, 2 people were caught on CCTV tampering with traps. No response from Police Scotland, despite reporting.

Estate Testimony: "Multiple crows have been released from cages and rabbit boxes have been vandalised. Most of the incidents were given crime numbers but the estate has been targeted so often it is now losing track of which number relates to which crime."

Estate 2: May 2019: 2 recorded incidents of traps damaged and traps stolen. Both reported to Police.

No action on any cases.

### **Tomatin area Incidents:**

4 respondent estates: Key Findings

Estate 1: PS-20181019-1134, cage trap and trail camera removed.

Other Incidents over 6 years: MO99631 Gate cut open with chainsaw by off-roaders seeking un-permitted access to hill

M051859 5 traps damaged, 5 snares vandalised, one trap removed.

L053856 Trap stolen

Estate 2: Numbers 20180310-1018, 20181212-1251, 20190114-1609, 20190213-1681, 20190213-2347. 5 damaged traps.

Number 20181125, damage and theft of snares.

Estate 3: No: 3819 April 2019: Fire started by third parties on estate. Police and Fire Service called. Fire Service extinguished the fire, which then re-started.

Estate 4: Number NN/1356/19 4 traps vandalised

Number NN/8275/18 Rail trap vandalised

Since 2017: NN/26611/17 12 rail and box traps vandalised

R004050 5 snares pulled

NN/7665/17 snare theft.

No action on any cases.

### **Speyside Incidents:**

1 respondent estate. Key Findings.

Estate 1: Since 2018, Q021531 and Q020292- crow traps smashed

NM18117, snare theft. PS201801146, trap theft.

3499-18/4 several rail traps wrecked in one incident.

PS-20180419-1913 3 Fenn traps stolen.

No action on any cases.

### **Loch Ness-side Incidents:**

2 respondent estates. Key Findings.

Estate 1: 2019, 2 call birds released from cages. Sign advising dog walkers to stick to paths during breeding season torn down. Larsen Trap broken, call bird released.

Estate 2: Flattened Larsen mate trap (see photo), 2018.

No action on any cases

## **2018/2019 Incidents Recorded by The Scottish Gamekeepers Association**

#### Perthshire Incidents:

- Fenn trap ripped from rail and buried under stones in river. Reported to Police but no incident number issued.
- Decoy bird released from trap (reported to Police and Wildlife Liaison Officer (WLO))- no response.
- Trap interfered with.
- Larsen trap damaged and call bird released.
- Snares reset (reported to WLO who claimed to know nothing about it despite numerous calls/emails).
- Side torn out of crow cage (WLO contacted, no response).
- Traps for grey squirrels damaged.
- Rail trap damaged and the trap sprung.

#### Highland Incidents:

- Snares removed by SSPCA and not returned to owner.
- Larsen trap damaged, call bird released.
- Call bird released and trap destroyed.
- Crow trap destroyed in a non-public area (perpetrator knew the ground).

#### Aberdeenshire Incidents:

- Traps damaged (WLO called but no visit).
- Traps stolen and damaged.
- Traps damaged.
- Fenn trap stolen and reported (number given but owner cannot relocate the number).

#### Lothians Incidents:

- Traps damaged and call birds released- reported to Police with photographic evidence of perpetrator (no Police action).
- Snares removed.
- Call birds released.

#### Fife Incidents:

- Larsen traps stolen.
- Call birds released
- Fenn traps tampered with.

#### Borders Incidents:

- Grey squirrel traps damaged

No action on any cases.