

Moorland management for grouse populations involves controlled burning, medication and wildlife management, including legal predator control. Moorland management plays an intrinsic role in the wildlife and biodiversity present in Scotland's uplands, helping maintain populations of many wild species. The practices also support numerous jobs, keeping remote, rural families and communities alive.

Key Points

Well-managed moorlands provide habitats for numerous bird species, as well as [mountain hares](#). On one moorland estate scientists recorded [98 different types of birds](#). Without shooting interests these areas would be managed differently, harming wildlife and biodiversity.

It has been estimated that moorland management supports the equivalent of [2640 full time jobs](#) and £30 million in wages for the Scottish economy, mainly in remote rural communities.

There is no other viable use of moorland that would generate the same economic and environmental benefits.

Management of the Angus Glens in 2015 was recorded to have a [net cost of £3.45 million](#) to the landowners. In many areas the management of grouse moors is not profitable and only continues because of personal or environmental interests.

The debate around moorland management is often overshadowed by allegations of raptor persecution. [Wildlife crime is at an all-time low](#) thanks to changes in culture and the law over the last decade. We fully support proper action being taken against any criminal behaviour.

Early and open sharing of satellite tagging data by owners would help land managers to search for missing birds and gather vital evidence of what has happened to them.

Moorland Management

Muirburn (controlled burning of heather) improves the habitat for wildlife and should be carried out in line with a recently updated [code of practice](#). Done correctly, it also avoids damaging peat and has been [shown not to prevent carbon storage](#). Furthermore, controlled burning will reduce the risk of wildfires. There have been very few wildfires as a result of grouse muirburn and [trained keepers are of huge help](#) to Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in combatting wildfires.

As with livestock and pets, some form of medication is used to keep grouse healthy. This should be carried out in line with legislation and [good practice guides](#).

Moorland managers take measures to control predator species that feed on grouse and other birds important to the biodiversity of Scottish uplands.

Moorland keeping is a highly skilled job requiring dedication and resilient people. Moorland management practices undertaken by the keepers has been shown to create a haven for ground nesting birds. Without these activities many iconic birds could be lost from the Scottish countryside.

There is a wealth of guidance and best practice available to help those who manage the land do so in a sustainable, wildlife friendly manner. The Moorland Forum has produced a number of documents dubbed the Principles of Moorland Management giving information

Moorland habitat

The UK has 75% of the entire world's resource of open heather moorland, most of which is in Scotland. 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.

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 1940s and 1980s moors managed for grouse shooting lost on average only 24% of their heather cover while non grouse moors lost 41% of their heather.

In 1991 it was estimated there were [485 active grouse moors](#) in Scotland covering 1.86 million hectares. In 2009 the estimate was 304. The estimate is now that an area of 800,000 hectares, less than [10% of Scotland's land](#). Since this recording a number of other grouse shoots are no longer active and private estimates suggest around 500,000 hectares are currently managed for driven grouse shooting.

Visitors come from within the UK and across the world to shoot grouse and it is a significant tourism sector for Scotland. The best estimate is that there are over 6000 participants each year in Scottish grouse shooting.

Issued: July 2019