



Foreword

by Lord Seafield

Early this summer we held an open day at the Strathspey Estate office. It was well attended by the public - predominantly those from the immediate neighbourhood. We did this to demonstrate how the estate, a modern family business, operates and why we do things the way we do. It was a great success, and tremendous credit must go to all the Strathspey Estate staff and those from Cullen for the time and effort they put into this exercise.

I am heartened by the reactions which we had to the day, and we intend to repeat the formula, or something like it, at the estate office in Cullen in 2004. And it is something we have to do and keep doing because maybe we can just change misconceptions that Scotland's landed estates are anachronistic and out of touch. Not a day goes by without another story in the media covering issues as far ranging for example as birds of prey, rural housing, deer numbers, absentee ownership and tax evasion. The majority of these still portray those who own land in Scotland as antisocial wrongdoers operating outside the law.

I hesitate to call this harassment - however from where I stand I cannot help but feel that all land owners, of whom the late Donald Dewar assured the majority they had "nothing to fear", are very much the target. Land Reform, whether under the guise of access, the community right to buy, the crofting community right to buy, or the Agricultural Holdings Scotland Act, will impact on all owners of land, not just the few rotten apples.

We welcomed and applauded the efforts of the Grantown residents and their supporters who under a community umbrella successfully bid for and gained ownership of the Anagach Woods. But this happened before the Land Reform (Scotland) Act. It was not Land Reform which enabled

News Review

Woodlands and Wildlife Photography Competition

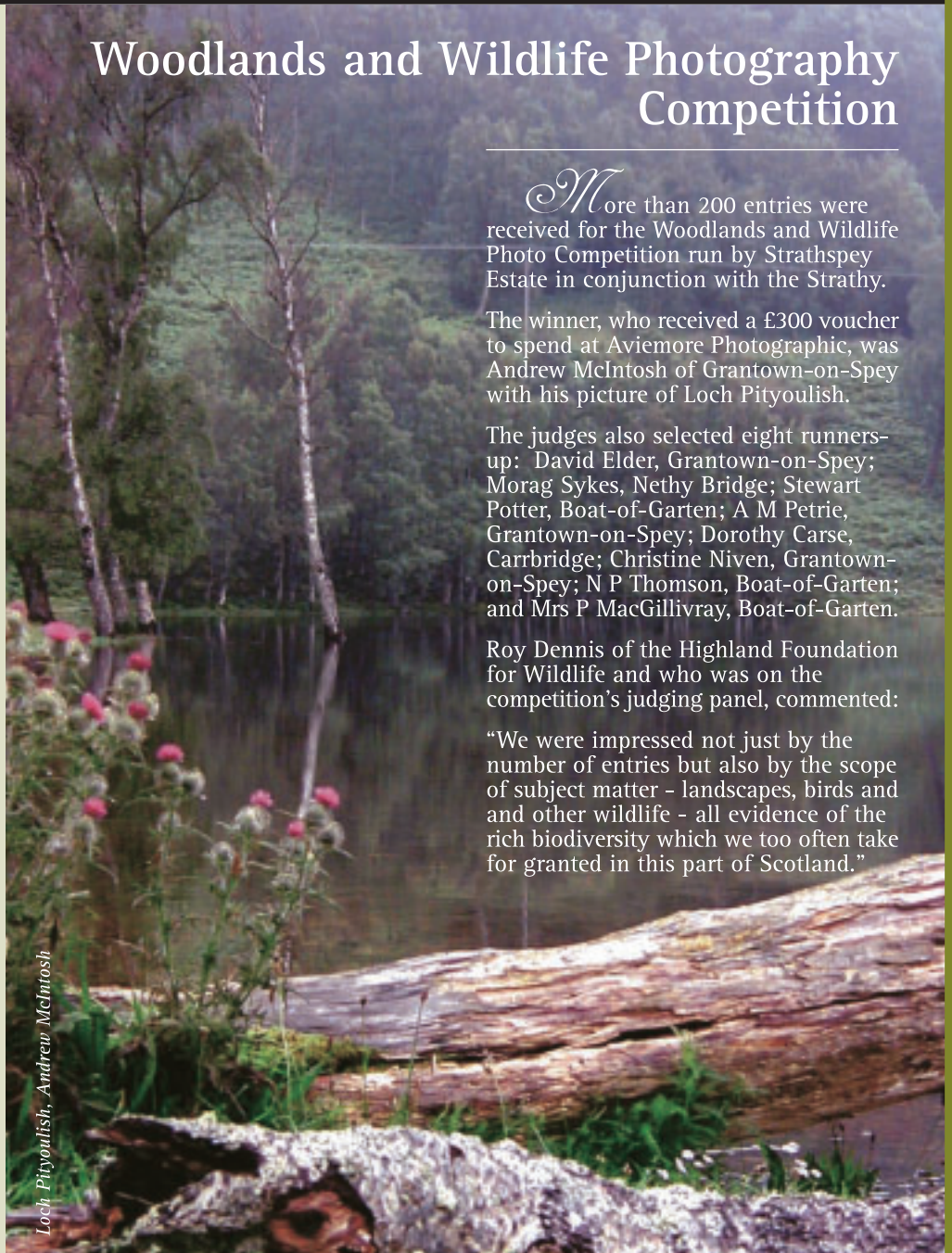
More than 200 entries were received for the Woodlands and Wildlife Photo Competition run by Strathspey Estate in conjunction with the Strathy.

The winner, who received a £300 voucher to spend at Aviemore Photographic, was Andrew McIntosh of Grantown-on-Spey with his picture of Loch Pityoulish.

The judges also selected eight runners-up: David Elder, Grantown-on-Spey; Morag Sykes, Nethy Bridge; Stewart Potter, Boat-of-Garten; A M Petrie, Grantown-on-Spey; Dorothy Carse, Carrbridge; Christine Niven, Grantown-on-Spey; N P Thomson, Boat-of-Garten; and Mrs P MacGillivray, Boat-of-Garten.

Roy Dennis of the Highland Foundation for Wildlife and who was on the competition's judging panel, commented:

"We were impressed not just by the number of entries but also by the scope of subject matter - landscapes, birds and other wildlife - all evidence of the rich biodiversity which we too often take for granted in this part of Scotland."



Loch Pityoulish, Andrew McIntosh

the community to acquire that asset, but a case of willing seller - willing buyer, and the same has been the case countless times across Scotland.

It is therefore up to us to prevent further misconceptions about the vast majority of estates, big and small, which are well run by demonstrating that these are businesses which need investment and employ people as any other form of business does. We must also show that we care for conservation of both the

natural and built heritage in the countryside and, most importantly, the people who live in it and form the communities of which we are a part.

Our conviction must lie in maintaining dialogue, understanding and open relationships with communities which neighbour or fall within the Estates, whether through open days, news letters, or personal contact. Even without land reform, it would make simple good business sense for us to do so.

Catch and Release

At the end of the salmon season, and in a year of low water levels, the Estate had returned to the river 78 per cent of all salmon and grilse caught. This compares to 31 per cent last year, and is well up on the Spey Board's target of 50 per cent.

Excluding Association fishing, a total of 3341 day rods were let, and the Estate is extremely grateful to all guests and visiting anglers for their support of the catch and release initiative. The best fish of the season with a weight of 28 lbs was caught from Craigroy on Beat No 1 on 24 September.

The Estate provided gifts of either salmon flies or smoked salmon to anglers who returned their fish to the river.

At the end of the season the Estate was able to donate almost 40 rod-caught fish to the Spey Board's hatchery, with their eggs to be hatched and released back into the river.

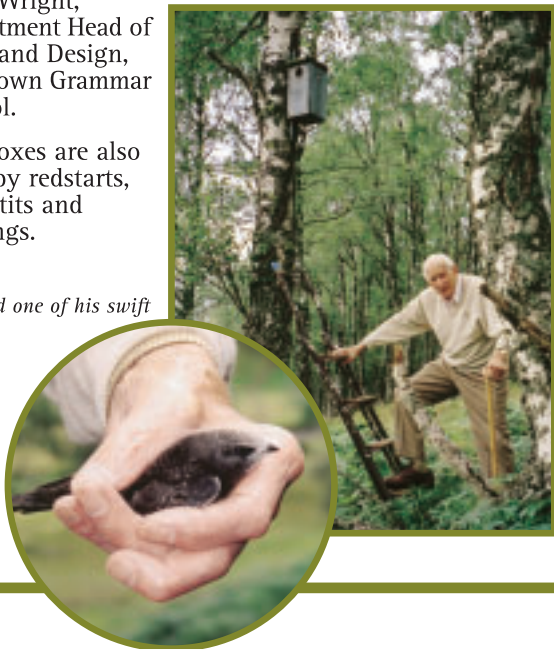
Bill Crowther - Swift Man

Bill Crowther, who will be 94 in December, is a man with a mission. Every week he goes birdwatching with his elder brother, and for more than 20 years has been putting up nest boxes on Strathspey Estate to encourage various species to breed. Having noticed a lack of suitable places for swifts to nest, he put up ten boxes especially for swifts in 1988. Although swifts were seen in the boxes, breeding was unconfirmed, and the boxes went unchecked for a number of years.

Last year however, two pairs of swifts successfully fledged young, and this year two pairs again have been successful. There are more than 20 swift boxes now up on the Estate, some made by Bill, and others built to his design provided by John Wright, Department Head of Craft and Design, Grantown Grammar School.

The boxes are also used by redstarts, great tits and starlings.

Bill and one of his swift boxes



Boyndie Wind Farm

Proposals for the development of a seven turbine windfarm at Boyndie Airfield, Whitehills, are moving forward, with the prospect of its supply of 50,000 megawatts of power each year - enough to supply almost 13,000 homes - into the National Grid.

The developer, RDC Scotland, has also proposed setting up a trust which could generate more than £500,000 for the community over 25 years, with local people also able to buy shares through a cooperative scheme in the facility.

In July, an exhibition was held at Whitehills Public Hall to give more detail about the development to the community and an estimated 60 people attended.

If the development is approved, construction work at Boyndie will start in 2004 with power being produced there within 12 months.

Castle Grant Moor recovery

In the early 1920s Castle Grant was a highly productive grouse moor. Extending to 11400 acres some 350 metres above sea level, the grouse bag in 1921 was 3648 brace.

This steadily fell through the 1970s, with a bag of 310 brace recorded in 1976, and by 1980 it was evident that something was drastically wrong with the moor. It was subsequently discovered that louping ill, which we now know is a tick-borne virus lethal to grouse, was the problem.

With input from The Game Conservancy Trust, the Heather Trust, Dr Robert Moss, and Prof Peter Hudson at Stirling University, the link was confirmed between the virus and ticks carried by sheep, red deer and mountain hares.

The sheep flock which was managed in hand was removed, and at the same time deer and mountain hare numbers were reduced. This subsequently has resulted in a decline in tick numbers and a decline in the the virus. For the last two years grouse numbers have responded to give a small shootable surplus, this year's bag of 660 brace being the highest for 28 years.

The recovery gives a small return to the massive investment made in management over the years.

Castle Grant Home Farm

A new bedded cattle court, including scraped feed stance and feed bins and extending to almost 775 sq metres has been installed at Castle Grant Home Farm, replacing old courts which were in a run-down condition.

Advice was taken from the Scottish Agricultural College Building Design Services Division, Craibstone, Aberdeen. A grant covering 35 per cent of the cost was secured from the Agricultural Business Development Scheme, with the balance being paid by the Estate.

Robert Macdonald, general partner, Castle Grant Home Farm, commented:

"This new shed has been a tremendous asset to us, especially at calving, enabling us to house all the cattle. This is a good example of a landlord willing to invest in their tenant's holding to provide a long term asset for the landlord to the benefit of the tenant."

Photo Competition

Some of the runners-up in the Woodlands and Wildlife photo competition.

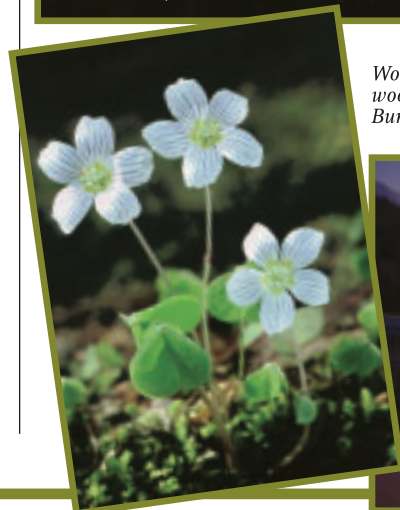
Sorry there's not space to print them all.



Red Squirrel, Dorothy Carse



Anagach Woods David Elder,



Wood Sorrel in woods at Dreggie Burn, Stewart Potter

Cowhythe Fish Hatchery

Earlier this year Lord Seafield performed the official opening of a new fish hatchery at Cowhythe Farm, near Portsoy. The hatchery, which has cost around £15,000 and occupies a restored cart shed, will supply young salmon and sea trout for the Boyne Burn, as well as carp and roach for Portsoy Angling Club's coarse fishery at Loch Soy.

Douglas Cook, the Club's secretary, said the Club wanted to bring the burn back as a thriving fishery after years of neglect, natural predation and the effect of poachers. It is hoped that a restocking programme will in time ensure a healthy population of fish despite natural predation by seals, mergansers and herons.

All the work on the new hatchery has been done entirely by volunteers, with funds and support from other organisations including the Co-op's community fund, the Portsoy Thrift Shop, the Portsoy 75 Club, the Banff Area Network Development Group, and the Deveron Fishery Board.

Strathlene Driving Range

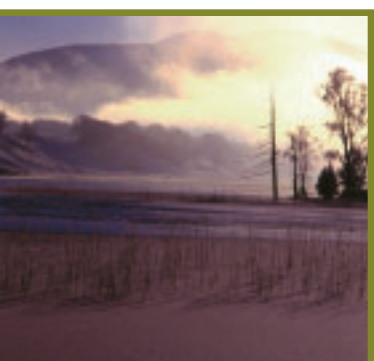
2.87 hectares (just in excess of 7 acres) of estate land has been leased to the 126 year old Strathlene Golf Club for the development of its new all-weather golf training facility, driving range and practice area. Phase 1 of the project, which has been widely supported through sponsorship, and which has taken three years in planning and development, was officially opened at a ceremony in September.

At the opening Councillor Sinclair Longmore said:

"There is a lovely golf club at Strathlene, and now this new project. I think this is just great, a training range for the young and old from Cullen to Portgordon, and anyone outside of the area will be a bonus and most welcome."

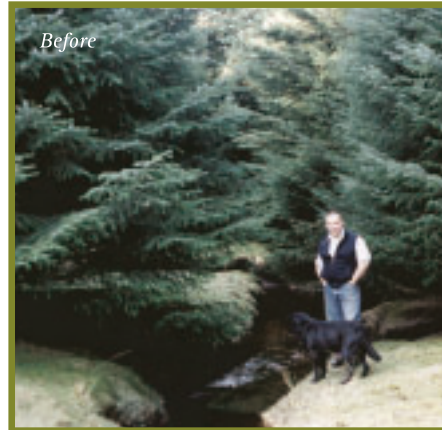
Councillor Bill Jappy said:

"It was a great experience to be involved with this project, and I wish it the very best of luck. Everyone worked very hard to make it happen, and it deserves the best of success."



*Loch Pityoulish,
N P Thomson*

Habitat improvement on the Milton Burn



A further section of habitat improvement work has been carried out on the Milton Burn at Castle Grant, a tributary of the River Spey, complimenting a number of bank-side and in-stream improvement projects undertaken on Strathspey Estates during the last three years.

In partnership with the estate, the Spey Fishery Board bailiffs have cleared 1400 metres of conifers back from the banks for a distance of 10 metres on either side. Broadleaves have been retained, and it is anticipated that with more available light and an increased food supply from the bank-side vegetation, salmon stocks in particular will benefit.

Schools Information Packs

The estates are developing an educational pack for local schools in the Grantown and Cullen areas. The packs are designed to give information on the estates, and are aimed at P6/P7 ages. Subjects covered in the packs include geography, history, and land use (including farming, forestry, conservation and leisure). They also give detail about the types of jobs which the estates provide, and information on birds and wildlife which can be seen on the estates. The Strathspey Estates schools pack has been generously supported by The Highland Council, Highland Biodiversity Project.

Janet Bromham, Highland Biodiversity Officer, said:

"I would like to wish the Estate well with the production of the schools pack which I think is a very worthwhile venture to raise awareness of the good work that the estate is doing for biodiversity in Strathspey."

Any schools wishing to receive copies of the information pack should contact either the Estate Office, Cullen on 01542 840777, or Grantown-on-Spey on 01479 872529.

Caper Update

The second year of the Caper LIFE project has now come to an end. Funding has enabled the employment of two seasonal keepers to work in areas where there is known caper activity. The main emphasis of their work has been to mitigate the effects of predation, reducing primarily crow numbers, as well as foxes and mink.

Kenny Kortland, Project Officer, says:

"For the second year running, the Capercaillie LIFE Project has gone extremely well on Seafield Estate. This is largely due to the enthusiasm of estate staff.

"In order to increase the capercaillie population we need to reduce crow and fox predation of capercaillie across a wide area. The work on Seafield Estate is part of a coordinated programme of legal predator control in Strathspey designed to benefit capercaillie.

"Capercaillie survey work this year has been encouraging - with a previously extinct lek site becoming re-established on the estate. However, it's very early days in terms of the project and we need to continue to work with estates such as Seafield to secure the future of this wonderful bird in Scotland."



Maitland Mackie gives talk for Seafield tenants

In early November more than 25 of the estate's agricultural tenants attended a meeting and talk in the new conference room in the Cullen estate office. Guest speaker, Maitland Mackie, past chairman of the Scottish Agricultural College, presented a global view of agriculture, and urged tenants and the estate to work together, showing initiative and flexibility, to produce quality products at a price suited to the global market.

All agreed it was a stimulating evening, appreciated by all who attended.

Maitland Mackie said following the event:

"There is a huge challenge for our farming sector to become world-competitive. There is not a single answer to delivering that, but scale, skill, and investment in up-to-date technology will be important components."

"Estates such as Seafield, working with co-operating long-sighted tenants, could play a big, innovative part in aiding a voluntary restructuring of its farms and buildings so as to secure efficient, effective market-driven farming businesses, competitive at world market prices. Given the will to explore for joint solution, there is very likely to be a long term win-win solution for all."

"The decoupling of financial support from production continues to deliver substantial financial protection whilst at the same time placing our farming products into a market in which the prices found will be much influenced by that of world markets. It will provide some considerable security whilst we find our way to be competitive at these prices. We would do well to use this period of security to seek for and implement all the actions we can to meet that challenge."

Staff Training

The estates' staff training programme is essentially dictated by the skills and respective responsibilities of the staff themselves, and training this year has covered a diverse range of disciplines including 180 degree excavator (digger) use; use of abrasive wheel; tractor driving; and deer management qualifications, as well as more general subjects such as first aid, manual handling and fire awareness.

In addition this year Health and Safety Consultants, Croner Consulting, have given health and safety awareness training for all estate staff - the aim of these courses is to make staff more safety conscious, and to consider health and safety issues in all aspects of their work, whether office or field based.

Contact us

If you have any comment on the content of this news review, or wish to contact Seafield or Strathspey Estates on any relevant issue then you can write, or telephone our offices:

Sandy Lewis, *Chief Executive*

Andrew Norval, *Property Director*

Bob Furniss, *Forestry Director*

Seafield Estate Office
Cullen
Buckie
Banffshire AB56 4UW

Tel: 01542 840777

Fax: 01542 841413

E Mail: mail@seafield-estate.co.uk

Web: www.seafield-estate.co.uk

Frank Law, *Sporting Manager*

Strathspey Estate Office
Old Spey Bridge Road
Grantown-on-Spey PH26 3NQ

Tel: 01479 872529

Fax: 01479 873452

E Mail: mail@strathspey-estate.co.uk

Web: www.strathspey-estate.co.uk

Strathspey Estates Open Day

An open day was held for the first time in the grounds of the Estate Office, Grantown-on-Spey in May this year.

The initiative was undertaken to give both local residents and visitors an insight into what happens on a modern, working estate - with displays covering agriculture, country sports, conservation and the uplands, forestry, and the River Spey. Other exhibits explained how the estate works with different interests and organisations including the Highland Foundation for Wildlife, the RSPB's Capercaillie Project and the Spey Board.

As well as things to see, participation was also encouraged - with argocat rides, fly casting and air rifle competitions and pony rides for children. All visitors had the chance to complete the Estate Factfinder, with prizes including a day's trout fishing for two, a haunch of venison, and wild honey from the estate.

The winner and runners-up in the Woodland and Wildlife photographic competition run by the estate in conjunction with the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald were also on display.

Many local residents came to see the displays and meet the staff and, given the day's success, a similar event is planned for Cullen in 2004.



The air rifle range run by the stalkers proved very popular.



The estate ghillies staged a fishing exhibit and demonstration casting on the River Spey.