



Carrbridge Capercaillie News

December 2020

Winter work for capercaillie

When all you eat in the winter are low calorie pine needles, saving energy is the name of the game for capercaillie right now. But the same can't be said for the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group, who have just launched a busy action plan for the winter.

Based on feedback from the consultation on the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy, and what's practical in these Covid times, the group are going to work on the three actions below over the next six months.

Actions for Winter - Spring 2021 from the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy:

1. Increase our understanding of factors affecting capercaillie and implement activities that can help.
2. Focus on opportunities to enjoy the Carrbridge area while minimising impacts on capercaillie.
3. Increase awareness of the plight of capercaillie.

Detailed activities are planned for each action, so to find out more please visit cairngormscapercaillie.scot/carrbridge And if you've got some ideas to add, you can always share them by emailing capercaillie@cairngorms.co.uk

In the spring, when Covid restrictions will hopefully have eased, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group will revisit the strategy to update their action plan again.

New Community Ranger

Duncan Macdonald may already be a familiar face to some having been a Ranger with the Highland Council, a wildlife guide and Ranger with the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Last month Duncan started his new Community Ranger role, as part of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project, taking over the reins from Emma and Tom. He's already been getting to know folk around the village and will be busy over the winter helping to deliver the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy.

One of Duncan's first jobs as part of the strategy is to create an audit of all the trails and signs around the village to help identify improvements in places that are less sensitive for capercaillie, like the riverside walk. This work is all about helping to make the village an even nicer place to be, for residents and visitors, whilst ensuring that capercaillie also have the space they need to survive.



Duncan, the new Community Ranger



How many capercaillie are there?

To really help capercaillie it's important to know, as far as possible, how many birds there are. If there are only a few hundred capercaillie left in the UK, for example, the actions in the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy may be very different to what they are now.

Based on the last national survey in 2015/16, there are approximately 1114 capercaillie in the UK. Last December, the Scottish Capercaillie Group agreed that there is strong evidence to indicate a consistent decline in capercaillie numbers since 2015/16, and the population is likely to be lower than 1114. To help do some more number crunching around this, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have commissioned a statistical analysis.

All relevant capercaillie data since the last national survey will now be analysed and a revised population estimate will be produced. The estimate won't be as robust as the national survey, but it will be the best possible insight into capercaillie numbers, using the best available data from the last four years. Once the estimate is available in the spring, the group will share it with the community and use it to inform the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy.

The group will also be keeping an eye on the work of a Glasgow University student who is now preparing to trial some population modelling using existing capercaillie data, with help from the RSPB and NatureScot.

Shedding light on predators

Lots of Scottish and international literature indicates that predators can have an impact on capercaillie and the research behind the Carrbridge Capercaillie Conservation Strategy found that residents were aware of this, but consensus around the topic varied quite a bit. To help inform conversations about predator issues locally, for those who are keen to know more, the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have approached a local scientist for help.

Dr Kathy Fletcher, who lives in the community and works for the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, is an expert in her field and someone who knows Kinveachy Forest inside out. In 2014, she surveyed all of the capercaillie areas in Kinveachy Forest using trail cameras. She left the cameras in place for 6 weeks over the winter to identify predator activity in those areas.

The Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have asked Dr Fletcher to repeat her study so we can identify, using a science-based approach, the activity of predators within the core capercaillie areas in Kinveachy Forest and whether that activity has changed since 2014.

Win a festive Hapi Capi

Hapi Capis are continuing to bring a bit of cheer in these tough times, and it's never too late to adopt one, or win one! Keep an eye on the Carrbridge News Facebook page for our 'name the festive Hapi Capi' competition.

