

FORESTRY COMMISSION
North (Scotland) Conservancy



NOTES
on
CORROUR FOREST

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TOUR NOTES

HISTORY

Corrour Estate was acquired from Colonel Walker by Sir John Stirling Maxwell in 1891. Prior to that date it was solely a stalking estate based on Old Corrour Lodge at the southern end of the property. The main enterprises since 1891 have been stalking and forestry. Some pastoral farming was practised for a short period after the last war.

1. Forestry

Planting started in 1892 in the Loch Ossian area. At the outset, Scots pine from Speyside was used but by 1905 when turf planting techniques were introduced, it had largely given way to Sitka spruce which thereafter became the principal species planted and today occupies about 75% of the Loch Ossian plantations. Norway spruce and European larch are also well represented together with many other small plots of exotic conifers. Over 70 species have been introduced. The woodlands were dedicated in 1951 and planting by the Estate was completed in 1957. Since 1952 some 130 acres of the older plantations, comprising the best stands, have been managed by Edinburgh University Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, and this arrangement continues. In the past progress of management has been limited by the difficulty of selling timber in such an inaccessible place.

2. Stalking

Records show that in 1850 the number of stags killed was only 25, and although the number had almost doubled by 1890, only parts of the Estate regularly carried deer. In 1892 the old Deer Forest of Fersit was added to Corrour and in 1895 three hinds were imported from Exmoor to improve the quality of the stock. For a period of forty years thereafter, stags were regularly fed with hay and corn but there has been no feeding since the last war.

Prior to acquisition by the Commission the stag shooting was let seasonally and the hinds culled by the Estate keepers.

The average kill was about 60 stags and 170 hinds, the stags weighing just under 14 stones.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

In 1966 some 42,000 acres of the estate to the east of the Fort William/Glasgow railway line, including the Loch Ossian and Fersit plantations and containing 9,000 acres of plantable land and 1,200 acres of existing woods were acquired by the Forestry Commission. From the outset it was decided to manage the large afforestation scheme in conjunction with running the deer forest as a commercial proposition.

A tentative management plan has been prepared after consultation with the Red Deer Commission, the essence of which is that the forest enclosures will be in three zones yielding a forest area of not less than 8,000 acres.

1. At north end of the estate taking in the most extensive area of plantable land, - approximately 5,500 acres, - and including the Fersit Woods.
2. At Strathossian Lodge enclosing 800 acres of plantable land.
3. A long narrow series of blocks at Loch Ossian enclosing approximately 700 acres of plantable land together with the loch-side woods.

Provision for the deer has been made by excluding important wintering ground along the full length of the River Ossian, on the south side of Loch Ossian and along Loch Treig. Deer avenues of more than a mile wide will be left between the three main afforestation zones.

Clearly there will be a considerable displacement of deer despite the allocation of the above areas to deer management and deer census work has given the following information on which the present cull is based.

	<u>1966.</u>	<u>1968.</u>
Stags	874	1,194
Hinds	758	734
Calves	242	253
Total	<u>1,874</u>	<u>2,181</u>

The kills are set at 100 stags and 150 hinds and the stag shootings are let. In addition it may be necessary to kill small numbers of deer which break into the new enclosures during the winter. Actual kills over the past four seasons are:-

	<u>Stags</u>	<u>Hinds</u>	<u>Total</u>
1966	71	56	127
1967	68	73	141
1968	100	159	259
1969	104	151	255

Prior to purchase the only access was by rail to Corrour Station and in order to develop the estate along the lines envisaged an access road became a necessity. This is now virtually complete and links the 12 miles from Torgulbin to Loch Ossian.

FORESTRY PROPOSALS

Area Statement at March 1970.

Acquired plantations ...	1,277
New Planting	1,110
Plantable Reserve	7,499
Other Land	31,888
<u>Total</u>	<u>41,774</u>

The plantable reserve will sustain a programme for 10 to 15 years. The present annual programme of 500 acres is likely to rise to 800 acres over the next few years but to some extent this is limited by the availability of labour which has to be transported daily either from the Lochaber or Newtonmore area.

The great bulk of the plantable land is of low quality, the soils being peaty gleys and peaty podsols over glacial till of Moine schist or granitic origin. Consequently choice of species is limited to lodgepole pine and Sitka spruce

with emphasis on the former. Small areas of larch are being planted for amenity purposes. Comparatively little thinning has been undertaken in the past twenty years. The acquired woods are, however, capable of yielding 25,000 hoppus feet per annum and major clear fellings could start in 1980 increasing the over-all yield to 100,000 - 125,000 hoppus feet per annum.