DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN
EAST SCHIEHALLION
2023-2025

1. Rationale

The John Muir Trust recognises that:

- Native deer species are an integral part of the natural heritage,
- Deer management can bring environmental, social and economic benefits,
- At inappropriate population levels deer impacts can damage habitat condition and suppress natural processes.

Deer populations will be manipulated through culling and strategic fencing:

- To achieve the Trust's charitable objective to "conserve and protect wild places, encouraging natural processes",
- In line with industry Best Practice Guidance,
- Not impeding public access at any time.

2. Audit

2.1 Geology, soils, habitats and species

See Management Plan

2.2 Designations, biodiversity priorities, habitat conditions

See Management Plan

2.3 Livestock

The property has regular incursions of sheep stock from land adjacent to the west and south of the estate as the Trust's boundary is not fully stock fenced. As part of our mountain woodland plan a strategic offset electric boundary fence will be installed along the north and south property boundary.

2.4 Employment and income

In Season Deer management is currently carried out by the stalker employed full time by Dalchosnie and Kynachan Estate on behalf of the John Muir Trust. Under this arrangement sport stalking is combined with management culling, most stags being shot by guests and most hinds being shot by the stalker.

In the medium-term, the Trust is committed to working with the Heart of Scotland Forest Partnership (which includes Dalchosnie and Kynachan Estate) to establish a local deer control group. This approach could enable greater collaboration between neighbours to facilitate cross-boundary stalking, with possible future opportunities to employ a trainee stalker or facilitate community stalking.

2.5 Red deer population estimates and cull figures

The following count data is available for the property:

Year	Count estimate				Cull				Roe	
	Stags	Hinds	Calves	**Total**	Stags	Hinds	Calves	**Total**	**Buck**	**Doe**
2010/11	22	205	57	285	22	53	11	86		
2011/12					10	74	34	128		
2012/13					10	52	23	85		
2013/14					11	62	32	105		
2014/15	16	84	29	129	10	37	28	75		
2015/16					5	29	16	50		
2016/17					7	26	13	46		
2017/18					7	29	18	54		
2018/19	8	66	28	102	3	21	8	32		2

2019/20					8	30	6	44	1	
2020/21	1	35	9	45	5	36	6	47		
2021/22					5	58	23	86		3

The most recent count estimate gives a broad density figure of 11-14 red deer per km^2.

3. Objectives, targets and constraints

3.1 Habitat

To manipulate the deer population through culling to enable:

- All habitats (designated and non-designated features) to be in or move towards favourable condition,
- Natural habitat processes (such as woodland regeneration) to continue or to start,
- Populations of priority species to be maintained or enhanced,
- To protect trees within fenced areas by culling deer that come into these areas if necessary.

3.2 Deer population and cull

A specific target deer density has **not** been set. Instead, culls will be adjusted in line with monitoring information and on the ground observations to achieve the above objectives. Culling will be carried out across the site to allow nature to start repairing itself.

Purely as a **guide** it is anticipated that a minimum total annual cull of around 250 deer will be required for 2023, however our habitat monitoring and on the ground observations will form the main evidence for the number of deer culled.

3.3 Employment and income

Current annual levels of employment and income are expected to be maintained.

3.4 Constraints and mitigation

It is recognised that the habitat, natural processes and priority species population objectives set out above may be constrained by external uncontrollable factors such as weather, fire etc. Livestock grazing outwith the control of the property may also impact on objectives. Where possible the Trust will seek to reduce impacts through the use of strategic fencing along with deer control and active shepherding of encroaching sheep as per the mountain woodland plan.

Both night shooting and out of season authorisations are likely to be used on the East Schiehallion estate to maximise cull efficiency and address the high numbers of deer that access the estate in late winter.

3.5 Innovation

The Trust will continue to look at new technologies to control and monitor deer, including virtual fencing and thermal drone imagery to replace foot/helicopter counts.

4. Monitoring

4.1 Habitats and species

A programme of habitat and species monitoring is in place on the property. Annual habitat impact monitoring in May and June and will be used to inform deer culls for the year. As recommended by NatureScot, new monitoring plots are being established in the SSSI for the key features of the montane assemblage. Three key habitats (calcareous grassland, alkaline mires and species-rich heath) will be

assessed using site condition monitoring methods with a three-year rolling programme.

4.2 Deer and livestock numbers

The key measures of monitoring the success of our deer management plan are habitat impact and condition. This will be the primary data used to adjust minimum cull requirements. Where possible, the Trust may participate in good quality annual range wide counts. In addition, the Trust may regularly monitor and record deer and livestock numbers on the property. Deer cull data will be recorded in line with best practice.

The Trust may look to pilot new ways of achieving deer counts through thermal drone counting to improve accuracy.

The Trust will continue to publish its deer management plans and cull information online to ensure transparency.

5. Review

Habitat, count and cull data will be reviewed annually with the plan adjusted accordingly. A review of the whole plan will take place in 2025.