



Mar Lodge Estate National Nature Reserve

2023 Annual Review

The Mar Lodge Team

Introduction

Mar Lodge Estate, the UK's largest National Nature Reserve, is managed for nature, people and Highland sport and is cared for by the National Trust for Scotland.

Every year we work to fulfil our charitable objectives of ecological restoration and conservation, promoting open access for all, and practising Highland sport including deer stalking and walked-up grouse shooting. This is our vision for the estate:

'Mar Lodge is a place which connects habitats, wildlife and people; past, present and future; integrating conservation learning, recreation, field sports and culture in one vast and diverse landscape at the heart of the Cairngorms National Park.'

This is a roundup of what the team at Mar Lodge has been getting up to in 2023. There are specific sections for key projects and also the work of the hospitality, functions, estate, stalking, ranger and ecology teams – though of course, we all pitch in together and much of our work is done in partnership between these teams and with help from Trust staff based across Scotland! 2023 has been another very busy year for us all, with our work to maintain the estate's buildings and grounds, restore ecological processes, maintain open access for all and continue Highland sporting being a never-ending task.

This year, we were delighted to be shortlisted in the Landscape Restoration category at the **Nature of Scotland Awards!** This was testament to the hard work of scores of people from all walks of life, who have spent decades working to protect and restore the nature of Mar Lodge for the people of Scotland.



Key Projects

One of the Trust's biggest ongoing projects is the **Glen Geldie Restoration Project**. We are transforming Glen Geldie for the benefit of carbon sequestration and biodiversity, particularly looking to improve the spawning ground for salmon. To date, **385 hectares of peatland** have been restored. We also completed our tree planting, bringing the total of trees planted in the Glen Geldie scheme to around **120,000 native trees** in fenced enclosures in **120 hectares** of this remote glen. These projects have been registered with the Peatland Code and the Woodland Code. This work has been carefully designed to replicate natural processes, with the species and planting locations chosen following several years of monitoring. In the long term, this work will benefit species like salmon, and provide a woodland corridor between Deeside and Speyside. The next phase will see us installing **500 large woody structures** (in this case non-native conifers that we wanted rid of) in the river, to create areas of slower flowing water, deeper, cooler pools, and to increase the amount of nutrients in the river. The estate team facilitated the harvesting of these in 2023, and they will be going into the water in 2024.

The **Mar Lodge Tracks and Bridges Project** has reached some important milestones, thanks to the estate and stalking teams and external contractors, and despite some filthy weather. Visitors might well notice a smoother journey in Glen Lui, Glen Dee and around Cairn na Drochaide. We've also been working in the background on the estate's bridges, and have **planning permission** for repairs to the Derry Dam bridge and the Allt Christie Bridge. We have **re-routed the low-level footpath in Glen Quoich**, which links the two footbridges in the Glen. This is now much improved and makes for a nice walk, with the final work due to be completed in 2024.

Maintaining the estate's buildings is important both for celebrating and sharing our rich cultural history, and also for helping us work effectively in a fast-changing world. In 2023 we prepared a **long-term building strategy**, with plans to increase the amount of housing and holiday accommodation on the estate, and to bring buildings at risk back into use. Phase One is already underway and will see us **restoring the Picnic Lodge**, as well as increasing the amount of staff and visitor accommodation in the **Stable Block**. There is also work going on behind the scenes to **improve internet connectivity on the estate**. We've gained consent to upgrade the toilets in the **Stag Ballroom**, which we hope to complete in 2024.

Our longest-running project, **restoring the estate's Caledonian pinewood**, continues apace, with woodland regenerating across over two thousand hectares of Glens Derry, Lui, Luibeg and Quoich. Our deer management work, which incorporates both landscape-scale ecological restoration and Highland sport, is also facilitating the return of montane woodland to the estate and has improved the condition of the estate's heather moorland.



Carbon Reductions Project

2023 was a year of droughts and floods, with the temperature generally high and snow cover low. The famous 'Sphinx' snow patch melted for the third year in a row – the first time that this has happened in recorded history. In fact, in the twentieth century the patch fully melted three times. In the twenty-first century, it has already done so seven times. We are already seeing the impact of the climate crisis at Mar Lodge, with arctic-alpine species suffering, and new species moving into the estate. The National Trust for Scotland has targets to be a carbon-negative organisation by 2031. We are doing what we can to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis through landscape-scale woodland and peatland restoration. For example, our peatland restoration project in Glen Geldie will save tens of thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions over its decades-long timescale. By regenerating woodland higher up the hills, we are 'future-proofing' habitat for cold-loving species like black grouse.

As well as absorbing carbon in the landscape, we are also doing our best to reduce the emissions we create in our day-to-day work. This year, we have **reduced our fleet of diesel pickups by two**, replacing one with an **electric car**. We have **another electric vehicle** on the way in 2024. This autumn we also procured **two electric mountain bikes** for staff to use on the estate's vehicle tracks instead of diesel vehicles. We've already clocked up over 1,000 miles on these between us, saving several hundred kilos of carbon emissions, reducing wear on the vehicle tracks, saving us money from fuel and vehicle maintenance, and keeping us fit!

By **replacing our backup gas boiler and increasing the efficiency of our biomass boiler**, we can also make big savings in carbon emissions. We're making better use of our workspace, so we don't have to heat so many rooms.

If you're walking around the Lodge buildings and grounds, you might notice a few other changes that we've been making. **We've planted over 1km of hedgerows** and are in the process of **reverting 1.6ha of lawns to wildflower meadow**. Meadows are less carbon intensive to manage than lawns, while also being great for biodiversity, looking beautiful, and creating hay for local graziers. Hedgerows sequester carbon, provide habitat and food for nesting birds, and will provide shade and shelter for livestock in times of extreme weather. Our meadows work has been generously funded by the Cairngorms Trust.

There's much more to do, and 2031 is not far away, so in the coming years we'll be further ramping up our efforts to decarbonise our work!

Ecology Team

The ecology team are responsible for the monitoring of the ecological health of the estate. This year, the team produced monitoring reports on **woodland regeneration** and **herbivore impacts**. Here, the news was very good, with improvements found in the condition of our woods at all altitudes, and herbivore impacts generally low across the estate. In addition, the ecology team reported on experimental work including **ring-barking**, **seed-spreading**, and **unfenced native woodland planting**. Annual monitoring of ring-barked trees is filling in our understanding of how deadwood decays in the landscape and how we can best manage our plantations to ensure a long-term supply of deadwood for species which rely on it, like woodpeckers and longhorn beetles.

It was a busy year for **raptor monitoring**, with a boom in the vole population leading to record numbers of hen harriers nesting on the site. We also worked (under licence) with our usual assortment of merlins and peregrines and helped the Scottish Raptor Study Group with their golden eagle monitoring. 2023 was also a great year for short-eared owls, which made good use of all of the voles we were tripping over all year. We were really pleased to see that our white-tailed eagles nested successfully for a second year, raising two chicks.

Other bird surveys included **wader surveys** alongside the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership, with good numbers of curlew, lapwing, redshank and snipe present on the Quoich Flats, and at least two pairs of ringed plover.

The Geldie **peatland restoration** work involves a raft of ongoing habitat and species monitoring, a further 80 ha of work were completed this year. This year we completed baseline invertebrate and bird monitoring, and started an experimental project looking at measuring the water table in restored and unrestored blanket bogs.

Up in the mountains, our **montane willow restoration project** continues. This year, a further 3,992 willows were planted in An Garbh Choire, boosting the populations of endangered downy willow and whortle-leaved willow found in that massive area. Monitoring suggests that our willows are doing well, with 98% of our monitoring sample still alive two years after planting. This year, the ecology team also took part in **intensive monitoring of dotterels**, one of the UK's rarest breeding birds which is threatened by climate change. The team spent four days in the hills looking for these remarkable birds (under licence). This year proved to be the best for several years for the species. The highlight was finding around 30 dotterels in May, displaying together and looking in fine fettle!

Twinflower is one of our rarer species, and we have been working fairly intensively with this species for the last few years to help restore the populations found here. The number of known sites has increased from three in 2013 to eight in 2023. An additional six populations have been translocated, meaning that twinflower can now be found in fourteen locations across the estate. These newly established sites are now just about beginning to flower themselves. We've also been working on **Alpine blue sow-thistle**, in partnership with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. This year saw plenty of flowers on this charismatic species, and work to understand the genetic health of Scottish populations. Annual **narrow-headed ant monitoring** has helped us work up a conservation plan for this rare species, which includes some habitat management.

We also contributed to the Trust's new **Plan for Nature**: an exciting document which will help us prioritise our work with nature across the Trust. Several of the Plan's key habitats and species are found at Mar Lodge, so this will help us with our work in the pinewoods and on the high tops, and with species like small cow-wheat, hen harrier, and narrow-headed ant.

Finally, work continues on the innovative **Knowledge Transfer Partnership** project to develop a non-lethal, non-fenced deer deterrent for use in remote locations. This nifty project, which has potential applications across Scotland, is being completed by James MacDonald in partnership with University of Highlands and Islands.



Above: Cairn Toul and Braeriach as seen from Carn a' Mhaim on a cold winter day

Regenerating pinewoods in Glen Derry, with the coires of Derry Cairngorm and Beinn Mheadhoin behind



Estate Team

Maintaining the estate's buildings and grounds is a big job which falls to the estate team. The team does everything from keeping the lights on to maintaining the estate's vehicles, to salting and ploughing the roads in winter to mowing the grass in summer. Given the size and age of the estate's buildings, this is a big job that involves much expertise, and no small amount of ingenuity! This year saw the team busy with **tarmacking and gravel laying** around the Lodge, **upgrading facilities around the workshops**, and **painting three staff houses and the old deer larder**.

The estate team manages fourteen plantations across the estate. This is done primarily for biodiversity, and so the estate team works to our long-term forest plan to open up dense planted areas, increase deadwood resource, and utilise the timber product. Around **600 tonnes** were harvested from the Craggan plantation, with **a further c.1,000 tonnes** moved by the team from various timber stacks on the estate and transported to our yard for chipping this year. This work is especially important as this keeps the estate's boiler fueled through the year. This work **saves at least £120,000 in heating bills for the estate per year!**

The estate team lead on tree safety and **maintain trees** around the grounds and roads of the estate to prevent health and safety concerns. George, Jonathan and Derek's skills came in extra handy over Christmas. You may have seen the team out and about in Braemar helping put up and take down the village's **Christmas lights!**

The estate team has also been working on 'traditional' conservation work down on the **Quoich Flats**, cutting back rushes and creating scrapes for waders. This work was appreciated by the curlews down on the Flats, who are particularly fond of the mosaic of long rushes for cover and grassy areas for feeding. **The team have also been integral in the Mar Lodge meadows project** – see page three.

Footpath maintenance work is an ongoing job, which is shared between the estate and ranger teams. Alongside drain clearing across the estate, works have continued this year at Clais Fhearnaig and in Coire Etchachan. The rangers also initiated a rolling inspection regime of hill drains on key paths, and cleared 53 drains on Beinn a' Bhùird, and 57 in Clais Fhearnaig, ably assisted by Duke of Edinburgh volunteers!





Fiona and Calum's Wedding, photo credit Karen Thorburn

Hospitality and Functions Teams

Every year, the estate's buildings and grounds are used as accommodation by around 3,000 guests, drawn to stay in our beautiful onsite accommodation, and 2023 was no exception. This vital work, which allows so many people to enjoy the estate and which provides a big chunk of the estate's revenue, is undertaken by the Hospitality and Functions teams. Over the course of 2023, there were approximately 498 property changeovers for the housekeeping team to tackle – that's an awful lot of beds to make and kitchens and bathrooms to clean!

A lot of work goes on in the background to keep the Lodge and the other accommodation on the estate up to the high standards that our guests expect. In 2023 we installed new brass signage throughout the lodge, improved the car park lighting and replaced all the crockery with a beautiful dark green Denby collection. Together with the retarmacking of the main drive leading to the lodge many of our returning guests commented on visible improvements and advances they can see being made. This year also saw the ballroom get a new look with the outdated lighting replaced with three beautiful new chandeliers.

Mar Lodge is of course very popular for big events. This year, the estate hosted twenty-two weddings, as well as a number of corporate events, leading to a busy year for the functions team, with at least one large scale function in every calendar month. Over 1,600 people attended either a wedding or corporate event at Mar Lodge in 2023! In November we hosted our first traditional Nigerian engagement ceremony – an evening full of colour and fun, with lots of very loud drumming and copious quantities of fabulous food! This year the estate hosted formal visits from groups including Scottish Government, Forestry and Land Scotland, Association of Deer Management Groups, the Cairngorms National Park Authority, and the Native Woodland Discussion Group. Across Mar Lodge, we helped out with eleven film crews and gave six talks about our work.

It's always a highlight in the year when we get to throw open the doors to the public. Back in April, there was a good turnout for our **annual open day**, despite slightly dodgy weather. It was also great to host the **Ghillies Ball** in September. We were pleased to be fully booked, with 160 guests ceilidh'ing their way around the Stag Ballroom. Swapping kilts for Gore-Tex, the Estate was a welcome stop off for 160 or so walkers on the annual coast-to-coast **TGO Challenge**. We were also pleased to be able to once again host our popular **Lodge tours** – keep an eye out for more of these evening strolls in spring and summer next year.



Above: A wild wedding at the Chest of Dee

Below: Helping out with the Ballater Walking Festival



Ranger Team

The ranger team is the public face of Mar Lodge for the majority of our visitors. 2023 was another busy year for the team. As ever, it was the chats and interactions with our wonderful visitors that kept the job so enjoyable!

Visitor numbers for the whole year were up 2% on 2022, but this masks significant weather-dependent differences. The May/June period, when we had hot, dry weather, recorded 18% more visitors than the same period in 2022. However, the soggy summer months (June to August) were down 5% on last year. The overflow car park at Linn o' Dee was needed on nine days, most of which were in May and June, but never reached full capacity. It was nice to see a surge in overseas visitors after their notable absence in 2022.

We staffed the Linn o' Dee car park every weekend between April and October, and every day during the school holidays, a total commitment of 142 days. Aided by Jennifer (Seasonal Ranger) and Tim (Visitor Services Assistant) we put greater effort into public engagement by increasing our presence and visibility in both car parks, and managed a 70% increase in the number of people (7,555) we actively engaged with (i.e. more than just a 'hello').

We counted **1,049 tents** on the estate between Apr and Oct, a 16% increase on last year. We know this puts popular areas under increasing pressure, so we installed pedestrian/bike counters at Derry Lodge to quantify human pressure there. We recorded 1,301 motorhomes staying overnight on the estate, a 28% increase on last year. Currently we take a pragmatic approach to motorhomes, permitting overnight stays in the car parks of one night only, but this may change if pressure intensifies.

It was a very challenging start to our **fire patrolling** season, with high or extreme fire risk in May/June and a surge of irresponsibly lit campfires. Between 30th May and 18th June we needed support from other estate departments to undertake daily evening patrols, which put considerable pressure on estate staff. We otherwise undertook our regular fire patrols between April and October. This year we found **94 campfire sites**, an increase of 40% on 2022. Of the 30 'hot' fires that we encountered (and extinguished) during high or extreme risk conditions, two were unattended and burning freely through the ground. Fire bowl usage continues to increase - 22 this year (8 of which were lit during high/extreme risk periods) vs 13 last year.

We had good support from Police Scotland this summer, although sadly the scheduled patrols missed the high-risk period in late spring. We were however able to pass on evidence from blocked estate gates and two 'dirty campsites', and those responsible later received letters/visits from the police.

It was a busiest year for **events** since pre-Covid days, with more than **800 people** participating in events that the Rangers were leading or assisting. This included guided walks, talks, Scout activities, volunteer taster days, lodge tours and the TGO Challenge. In the **local community** we co-organised our estate Open Day, led classes for Braemar Primary School and activities for the Cubs/Beavers, attended the Ghillie's Larder, staffed walks for the Ballater Walking Festival and Cairngorms Nature Festival, and continued our relationship with Hillgoers residential volunteer groups.

Elsewhere, aside from helping the wider estate teams when needed, we are working on the interpretation project for Queen Victoria's Picnic Lodge, revamping the estate signage, have reestablished an old path line to replace the flood-hit stretch between the two Quoich footbridges, and are looking how to facilitate visits from people/social groups who otherwise find it hard to access or visit.

Membership to the Trust is a great way for people to participate in our work to protect Scotland's heritage for the benefit of the people and nature of Scotland. The Mar Lodge Team signed up **70 new members** to the Trust – a big increase on 2022. We've also been sharing the administration of the estate's various **social media** channels, where we now have 14k followers on Facebook, 6.5k followers on Twitter, and 1.6k on Instagram.

Nature Notes

It was a bumper year for species recording, thanks in part to some big projects with plants and invertebrates. We're still crunching the numbers but it seems that over 100 species have been added to the Mar Lodge species list this year, bringing the total **number over 5,300**. In total, between ourselves, contractors, and volunteers, we made over five thousand individual records of species, including fungi species new to the UK, nationally scarce spiders, to charismatic birds like little ringed plover.

Some of our most exciting finds of the year occurred out in Glen Geldie in our peatland restoration area. It is hoped that our peatland restoration work, which creates new areas of the bog-pool systems that these species favour, will increase their numbers. Our invertebrate monitoring here also found **30 species of spider completely new to the estate**, as well as other exciting finds like the rare **northern emerald dragonfly**, which has never before been recorded in Deeside! Meanwhile, on the moors just over the way in Glen Dee, we recorded a couple dozen **Rannoch brindled beauty**. This bizarre moth, which has flightless females, was only recorded for the first time on the estate in 2022, so it was good to see that a strong population exists in the Glen. Sticking with insects, renowned entomologists Steven Falk and Nigel Jones came out in June, and picked up **Falk's dancefly**, a species only discovered as new to science by Falk himself a couple years previously. Other new species for the estate found by the dynamic duo included **tree bumblebee** and **northern sallow mining bee**. It was a good year for bumblebees in general: during a Bumblebee Conservation Trust training day, we stumbled on a large population of the **broken-belted bumblebee**. This is another new species for the estate and one that seems to be enjoying the large amounts of late-flowering plants like devil's-bit scabious now found here.

It was also a good year for fungi records, with Phd researcher Sarah Watts using innovative **environmental DNA** surveys to look at the relationship between fungi and montane willows. These records will take a while yet to process, but from early indications it seems like Sarah has found over 100 new species for the estate, and probably even some species **previously unrecorded in the UK!**

Members of the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland came out for a week to look for plants, with 2,700 individual records of 350 species recorded. Of note were records of **Issler's Clubmoss** and **small cow-wheat**, both of which are priority species for the National Trust for Scotland, with Mar Lodge being a national stronghold for Issler's clubmoss. We also found the highest altitude **Scots pine** in Scotland, at 1,160m altitude, and altitudinal records for a further couple dozen plant species. These high-altitude records are an important part of monitoring how climate change is impacting on plant species in Scotland. Other species of note included the hybrid sedge **Carex x helvola**, and **bog orchid**, a tiny flower recorded for the first time at Mar Lodge in thirty years. Later in the year, three new populations of **downy willow** were recorded. One of these, on the slopes of Carn an Fhìdhleir, one of Scotland's most remote Munros, was growing with **mountain bog sedge**, which has not been recorded on the estate for over forty years.

There were some interesting birds about on the estate. **Whitethroat** nested for the first time in recent history, showing that our new, scrubby areas of birch woodland are bringing with them more diversity in our birdlife. We also had our first ever record for **little ringed plover**. **Pied flycatcher** and **wood warbler** were also noted, both of which are now very scarce in North-East Scotland. **Nuthatch** were also seen in June and September – this is a very rare species in Aberdeenshire, which seems to be beginning to find a toehold in the area as the climate warms. **Grasshopper warblers** reached new heights, with at least four birds singing away in our wet boggy bits.

There was a pleasant surprise in autumn, when the estate was visited by a **Scottish wildcat**. This remarkable animal traversed the high peaks of the Cairngorms before pitching up at Mar Lodge for a few weeks. Our final interesting 'find' of the year came in December. We were delighted to pick up a new site for **Buxbaumia viridis**, the green shield-moss. This species relies on deadwood in damp, boreal woodland, and Mar Lodge is one of the most important sites in Deeside for the species. We've been monitoring our two known sites for ten years now, so it was great to find another site a few hundred metres away from these.



Above. Rannoch brindled beauty, a rare moorland specialist moth recorded in good numbers in Glen Dee this year.

Short-eared owl, one of several that fledged on the estate this year. Next page – field vole, which were present in huge numbers this year, much to the delight of our birds of prey!





Stalking Team

Highland sport has been undertaken at Mar Lodge for centuries, and so the Stalking Team are just the latest in a long line of people working with the estate's game species. Mar Lodge is home to a resident population of 1,650 red deer, and we manage this population for the health of our habitats and for the health of the deer themselves. Out on the moors, the team welcomed guests from across the world with whom a sporting cull of **106 red deer stags** was taken. The average stag shot was 90.8kg, and the largest 111kg. The estate also offered **let days on hinds**, which contributed to our annual cull.

In similar with other estates in the area, 2023 was a better year for red grouse than has been the case for several years, primarily due to a combination of slightly improved weather for the species and natural population cycling. The Stalking Team's annual grouse counts found three times more birds in 2023 than 2022! The team welcomed walked-up **red grouse** parties onto the Estate in August. The estate specialises in small bag days that enable our guests to experience the best of what Mar Lodge's wild land has to offer in the company of their friends and family. The stalking team were also out surveying the estate's game species, often in conjunction with neighbouring estates. This year, the team conducted counts for **red deer**, **mountain hare** and **red grouse**, with **black grouse** lek counts undertaken alongside the ecology and ranger teams. Another gamebird for which the Mar Lodge Team did surveys was **woodcock**, as part of a national survey organised by BTO and GWCT. This red-listed species is a common breeding wader on the estate, so it was good to record their crepuscular roding displays.

The stalking team are also a vital part of the delivery of the estate's conservation objectives. The stalkers were out in all weathers throughout the seasons, delivering the deer management that has so far seen the return of **nearly 2000 hectares** of naturally regenerating woodland to the estate. The team also delivered targeted predator control of foxes and crows to help with the estate's conservation objectives.

Track and ford maintenance is also an area that the stalking team has been working on. This year the team put the hours in on the Glen Lui track, making for a much easier ride/walk for people heading out into the hills.





Above: Bod an Deamhain, The Devil's Point, rises above a murky bogpool in July

Below: A remarkable encounter between a golden eagle and a red deer is caught on camera in July (Photo Ewan Weston)





Volunteer Round Up

The Trust's work could not continue without the help of its supporters and volunteers, and Mar Lodge is no exception.

Volunteers from **John Muir Trust** joined us for their annual work parties. This year they helped out with our hedgerows around the Lodge and with ringbarking in the plantation woodlands.

We were also delighted to once again host the **Hillgoers conservation volunteers** who came for four week-long residential in 2023. The groups braved Working with both the estate and ranger teams, the groups passed muster on tasks including tree planting, fence repairs, ring-barking, removing vole guards and fencing individual aspen stands. Their work with aspen is already paying dividends, with suckers growing up already around individually protected mature trees! Many of the volunteers were working towards their **Duke of Edinburgh awards**.

Many thanks to Patrick Cook and his extremely dedicated band of volunteers, who braved the midgets to look after **108 moth traps** during the summer as part of a wider project looking at moth diversity in the Caledonian pinewoods, regenerating woodland, and the open moor. Patrick the team at Butterfly Conservation are currently crunching the numbers (including 2975 individual moths!), but this project has already highlighted the importance of both woodland and moorland habitats for moths, and will be really important for our management going forwards.

Thanks also to **Bronwen**, who joined us and helped complete a small mammal survey. This will help us in the future to look at the relationship between vole numbers and birds of prey on the estate.

Key Partners we've worked with this year

Caring for Mar Lodge Estate is a massive task which wouldn't be possible without the help of scores of people from all walks of life who hold the land so dearly. This year, we could not have been completed without the groups with which we've worked, a non-exhaustive list of which is below:

This year we were supported by **CNPA ranger patrols** on 63 days, ran a joint 'pop up' event on responsible camping at LoD, and hosted a day for the Junior Rangers. We worked closely with the park through the **East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership** – a group of five estates working in partnership for nature across the Eastern Cairngorms.

We've also been working with local grazier **Becca Scott**. Thanks to Becca we have **Highland Cattle** back in the Quoich Flats, improving the habitat for waders like lapwing. We've also been working with Becca on the use of **NoFence GPS collars**, funded by East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership. These will allow us greater flexibility on how we use grazing animals on the estate going into the future. For now, you can see Highland Cattle out in the Quoich Flats or hanging out in the fields around the Lodge!

Thanks to all of the organisations we've worked with this year, a non-exhaustive list of which is below: Butterfly Conservation, Braemar Community Council, Braemar Tourism Group, Cairngorms Connect, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Cairngorms Trust, East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership, Easter Charitable Trust, Forestry and Land Scotland, Forest Research, Hillgoers, Invercauld Estate, James Hutton Institute, John Muir Trust, McGowan's, Mountain Bothies Association, Mountain Woodland Action Group, National Trust for Scotland Patrons Club, NatureScot, Police Scotland, River Dee Trust, Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh, RSPB, Scotland: the Big Picture, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Forestry, Scottish Raptor Study Group, TreeSurv, University College Dublin, University of Highlands and Islands.



Who Are We?

We've been delighted to welcome a few new members of staff to the team in 2023. Gosia and Przemyslaw have been an invaluable addition, with Gosia in housekeeping and Przemyslaw working across the housekeeping, stalking and estate teams. Rachael joins the busy functions team as our Weddings and Events Coordinator. We were sad to say goodbye to James and Ralitsa this year. James has been a key member of the stalking team for many years, and his contribution to Mar Lodge can be seen in the regenerating woods around the estate. Rali was a vital member of the housekeeping team for eight years, a firm favourite with guests, and will be sorely missed. We were also lucky to have Jennifer and Tim with us during the busy summer season.

Rachael Allen: Wedding and Events Coordinator

Przemek Miszt: Estate Worker

George Charles: Estate Worker

Chris Murphy: Head Stalker

Ben Dolphin: Ranger

Charlie Newman: Stalker

David Frew: Head of Mar Lodge Estate

Andrew Painting: Conservation Officer

Jamie Hamilton: Stalker

Lisa Reid: Estate Secretary

Dorota Jakowienko: Head Housekeeper

Shaila Rao: Conservation Manager

Michal Jakowienko: Housekeeper

Jonathan Rowe: Estate Foreman

Louise Kelly: Visitor Services Manager

Lianne Starbuck-Stephen: Ranger

Ross MacKay: Estate Manager

Gosia Szczepanska: Housekeeper

Derek McLaren: Estate Worker

David Webster: Ghillie

Pauline Mitchell: Housekeeper



In the media this year

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/birds-of-prey-breeding-success-at-mar-lodge-estate-4272918>

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/queen-victorias-picnic-cottage-near-balmoral-to-be-saved-q8jzbcc00>

<https://www.grough.co.uk/magazine/2023/01/02/new-bothy-opens-on-mar-lodge-estate-in-southern-cairngorms>

<https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/marverick-the-white-tailed-eagles-travels-around-scotland-319289/>

<https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/north-east-woodland-restoration-project-marks-100-000-trees-319043/>

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/cairngorms-national-park-estates-providing-a-boost-for-twinflower-conservation-4082971>

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/travel/outdoors/6220953/exploring-punch-bowl-deeside-queen-victoria-picnic-lodge/>

<https://www.countryfile.com/go-outdoors/walks/linn-of-dee-scotland>

<https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/trees-plants/scots-pine-facts>

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/23932362.rewilding-estates-scotland---trees-carbon-owns/>

<https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com/rewilding-stories/a-quaking-voice-sings-in-the-glens>

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This year Mar Lodge Estate and our work has also appeared in the following TV and radio shows: Clear on Deer; Countryfile; Emma, Oti & Rylan's Big Red Nose Day Challenge; Grand Tours of Scotland's Rivers; Hamza's Birds of Prey; Landward; Out of Doors; Scotland's New Wild; The Bough Breaks; Wild Isles.