

ORNITHOLOGY: GLENBURNIE

RES document: Table 9: 1-18

Key to endangered or threatened species : BOCC5: R = Red List (Endangered), A = Amber List (Threatened), G = Green List (Monitored, for possibility of upgrade to Amber or Red), WCA= Listed on Schedule 1, A1 and 1A of Wildlife and Countryside Act (i.e. high value), and EU Birds Directive Annex 1.

Whereas RES has produced a highly comprehensive and detailed report on the bird-life of the Glenburnie Estate, it would appear to be economical with the truth as to the effect this development of 12 turbines, of which 9 will be 220m to blade tip, will have on many of them. This height has never before been encountered by any bird in the south of Scotland, therefore their assessment under 9.5.13 of the likely effect on flight patterns and likely collision is guess-work.

The birds most at risk from the blades are those that arrive and, more relevantly, depart in flocks. These include gulls (4 of which **(A)** and Herring Gull **(R)**), the Whooper Swan**(A)**, Golden Plover **(WCA)** and geese, Grey-lag and Pink-foot (both **A**), the latter hardly mentioned, but while living in the lower wetlands, they breed on the higher ground here, and both species at considerable risk as will fly in fog and mist.

Additionally, the Golden Plover **(WCA)**, together with highly threatened birds such as the Lapwing **(R)** and Curlew **(R)**, both heading for extinction at a worrying rate, and more or less dismissed as only of local value. Indeed, the Curlew is thriving at Glenburnie, but is now rarely seen at lower levels including Lauder Common, where it used to be prolific, as was the Lapwing. The raven, fieldfare and starling **(R)** may also be at risk, as is the skylark **(A)** by virtue of its habit of flying vertically upwards to deliver its wonderful song.

The birds of prey, all of which (except the Buzzard and a passing Hobby) are **WCA**, and/or are on the **EU Birds Directive**, include the Kestrel, Peregrine, Merlin, Hen Harrier, Marsh Harrier, Red Kite, Goshawk, Osprey and Golden Eagle, which will have their hunting and breeding ground, where relevant, badly affected by the turbines as well as by the disruptive destruction involved in their construction. Whereas mature birds will avoid turbines – a Golden Eagle, in particular, will not be seen nearer than 500 m from them, although immature birds are known to be not so lucky, with three juveniles having been killed in Galloway last year.** This threat may include the Sea Eagle (or White tailed Eagle) **(A)**, a young bird having been present during February and March two years running to 2024 in the same location and another more recently on the edge of the neighbouring estate, as it is their habit to seek upland moorland while young.

In 2021/2 the Golden Eagle **(EU Directive Annex 1, WCA Sched.1,1A + A1)** was reintroduced to the Scottish Borders. In 2023, when RES did its last survey the birds they saw were sub adults, i.e. 2 to 3 years old, therefore not expected to breed until next year at the earliest. However, there is considerable activity with a pair of eagles have been seen this year, 2025, more than once flying over Glenburnie and the neighbouring estate with another regularly seen on South Hart Law, site for T14.***

Having received solid support from Scottish Government ministers, LEADER Scottish Borders, D&G, and the Heritage Lottery Fund, the SSGEP (South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, Charity No. SCO53663), has received 4 prestigious awards for its work, and still monitors this bird's progress. It has public support of 35,00 participants together with 56 Educational establishments engaged.

Why would the Scottish Government then even contemplate destroying any part of the Golden Eagle's natural environment, let alone that of several other endangered birds?

9.5.4

In addition to the raptors listed above, there is an impressive number of birds breeding at Glenburnie, or near enough that the latter is their hunting ground, as in the case of the Red Kite at Ditcher Law, and comprises 11 Red List species, which includes the rare and secretive Ring Ouzel, and the Cuckoo, as well as 18 Amber List birds. Others present, though not breeding on site, include 4 and 9 species respectively.

All these will be severely affected by this intrusive development with road-building, the upgrading for heavy transport of ancient and/or existing routes, loss of vegetation and upland wetland. The inadequate road in terms of large and heavy transport from A68 to Longcroft (House) will almost certainly involve "upgrading" which risks contaminating the adjacent Cleekhimin Burn, pond and marshland, which is home to many of the Glenburnie birds at certain times of the year. It should be noted that this Burn has **Special Area of Conservation** status in its capacity as an indirect tributary of the River Tweed and there appears to be no reference by the developers as to its protection. Whalplaw and Soonhope Burns, which run into Cleekhimin are rich in mosses and liverworts supporting these birds, as is the existing varied vegetation over the whole site with particular reference to the extensive covering of the **AWI *Vaccinium myrtillus*** (Bilberry/Blaeberry) beloved by many birds, and voles (and *homo sapiens*) essential in turn for the many pairs of breeding Short-eared and Barn owls.

The disruption to these birds by the construction programme would be devastating with no guarantee that those displaced would ever recover. **"At 70 species, the Red List is now longer than at any time before and almost double the first review of 1996"** (Ref. RSPB, BTO, NatureScot, JNCC etc.)

Does the Scottish Government truly wish to find itself responsible for the loss of such a biodiverse and glorious site and contribute to the possible extinction of some of these precious birds?

This would appear to be in contravention of its boast that it holds the highest level of biodiversity requirement in Europe, and at variance with NP4 Policy 3.