

Glen Dye Moor Ecological Surveys Summary

A series of **ecological surveys** were undertaken at Glen Dye Moor throughout the 2022 field season by Botanæco, Taylor Wildlife & Wildlife Consulting. This suite of surveys included:

- Habitat & vegetation surveys
- Peatland Condition Assessment
- Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems
- Ornithology
- Protected species
- Peat depth.

All of these surveys were undertaken in accordance with These field surveys were supplemented by **desk studies** to identify:

- Nature conservation designations
- Biological records held by the North East of Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC)
- Golden Eagle Topographical (GET) modelling.

The **aim** of the surveys & desk studies was to describe the habitat, peat & protected species baseline. A series of assessments is then undertaken to identify sensitivities.

The **habitat survey** identified that heath & blanket bog are extensive across Glen Dye Moor (respectively: 52 % & 41 % cover). Both habitats are highly modified from a legacy of grazing &/or muirburn, and the blanket bog additionally from a legacy of peat erosion. **Peatland Condition Assessment** identifies that 67 % (1,756 ha) of the peatland is impacted by erosion and that only 56 ha (2 %) remains in near-natural condition (the remaining 31 % is modified by grazing &/or muirburn). Otherwise, there are minor to moderate areas of: acid grassland, bracken, broadleaved woodland, flush, marshy grassland, open water, scree & swamp. Among the flush & marshy grassland habitat there are areas assessed to be Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (**GWDE**) of low species-richness.

Protected faunal species survey identified a moderate level of otter activity along the major watercourses. This activity is primarily identified by spraint that indicates repeat otter visits for short periods of time, to forage on birds or salmon. Scarcity of woodland cover predictably limits the occurrence of pine marten, badger & red squirrel, but evidence of the latter two species was located on & beyond the eastern boundary of the moor. Water vole were not recorded and habitat suitability along the small, fast-flowing watercourses is generally low. Bat habitat suitability is also low because of the scarcity of roosting opportunities in built or natural structures such as trees. The activity of wild cat is cryptic & not known but presumed to be low because of the sub-optimal habitat and general scarcity of prey.



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The ornithological survey has identified a typical upland bird assemblage for the region, including species such as black grouse, common sandpiper, curlew, golden eagle, lapwing, merlin, oystercatcher & short-eared owl. GET modelling identified that “the benefits [for eagles] ... from extensive planting of native woodland are likely to outweigh the marginal negative impact”. Locally **notable plant species** include interrupted clubmoss that is widely scattered across the heath and an assemblage of distinctive peatland species associated with the minor areas of near-natural blanket bog.

The desk study identified that the **River Dee Special Area of Conservation** is associated with the major watercourses in the east & southeast. In the Carbon & Peatland Map, extensive areas of nationally-important Class 1 & Class 2 peatland are mapped across the south & west of the moor. **Ancient Woodland** is not identified within the boundary.

Three hundred & sixty-six **biological records** were sourced from NESBReC for 17 designated &/or listed species of varied conservation importance. These records mirror & confirm the findings of the field survey.

Assessment of the **habitat conservation importance** identified that the blanket bog & heath are of Regional importance because of their extent; and because of the store of carbon within the peat of the former; and despite their modified to highly eroded condition. The other habitats are assessed to be of Local to Site importance.

Assessment of **species conservation** importance identified that the moor is of Local importance for otter; and that the plantation to the east, that crosses the boundary, is of Local importance for woodland species, especially badger & red squirrel.