



Sheriff Kevin Drummond QC, now retired, was parodied as Sheriff Woody of Toy Story. Other officers of Police and Crown have been ridiculed. One of Dr Ruth Tingay's own reports was described by the Lord Advocate as ill informed and based on flawed methodology.

It would appear RPUK consider they have the right to be involved with any enquiry and demand insight and answers. When 16 red kites and 6 buzzards (RPUK figures), died of poisoning at Conan Bridge in Ross-shire in 2014, RPUK responded in their usual style and claimed the police had done nothing; they had made no arrests, charges, or brought any prosecution.

'What on earth are Police Scotland playing at? This press statement is a disgrace. If we applied their logic to every other raptor that has been poisoned by a banned poison over the last ten years, then they've all been accidental! An unfortunate mistake by someone carrying out pest control measures! What sort of message does this police statement send to those who continue to use banned poisons to kill wildlife? 'Ah don't worry lads, we know you didn't mean to deliberately target that golden eagle/red kite/buzzard with your illegal poisoned bait'. WTF?

Somebody needs to be asking questions about this. It's pointless us trying to ask Police Scotland - we'll just get the stock response of "It's a live investigation so we can't comment". So much for police accountability, eh? All this guff about how the SSPCA shouldn't be given extra powers because they're 'unaccountable' - Jesus.

So seeing as we have no confidence in Police Scotland to be (a) accountable, (b) competent or (c) trustworthy about this case, how about we ask the partner agencies "working closely" with the police on this case, whether they agree with Police Scotland's CONFIRMATION that this incident was accidental?' (RPUK Oct 2014)

In this instance, Police Scotland complained about the media involvement with this case.

Fellow Academics

Fellow academics also come in for criticism; conservation efforts that do not fit with RPUK's objectives are heavily criticised.

The South of Scotland Eagle Project

which aims to increase the number of Golden Eagles in Southern Scotland was not met with favour. Claiming that persecution was not a threat, SNH were considered to be 'wilfully blind' and Professor Des Thompson, principal advisor for biodiversity and science at SNH, comes under criticism.

From RPUK Aug 2018:

Des Thompson: *"Down here in the south of Scotland we've been able to reassure ourselves persecution is not an issue. It's just a small fragmented population that needs this helping hand from us. We have been overwhelmed by the support we are getting from landowners and we are reassured these birds are going to be welcome".*

RPUK: *'Did he actually just say that? "We've been able to reassure ourselves persecution is not an issue". What, you mean in the same way that SNH reassured itself that the scientific justification for the Strathbraan raven cull was sound?*

You couldn't make this up. Has he switched jobs and is now representing Scottish Land & Estates? He might as well be as this is exactly the line they were trying to spin several years ago...'

Similarly, Professor Steven Redpath comes under criticism for his involvement not only with the Hawk and Owl Trust, (which Chris Packham resigned from as president, claiming the Natural England hen harrier brood management (or as RPUK refer, 'brood meddling') plan should not be permitted due to persecution), but also for a scientific study which he proposed. This statement further reveals Ruth Tingay's opinion of partnership working:

'Remember back in November 2016 when a series of FOI requests revealed that Natural England was prepared to waste £50K of tax payers money on a social science 'study' to assess attitudes towards the Hen Harrier Action Plan? The proposed 'study' was put forward by Prof Steve Redpath (Aberdeen Uni / Hawk & Owl Trust trustee / a so-called 'independent academic' (ha!) on the hen

harrier brood meddling group and Dr Freya St John, an academic who at the time worked at Kent University but has since moved to Bangor University.

Knowing that there's a difference of opinion on hen harriers between the grouse shooting and conservationists is totally irrelevant to the conservation of the hen harrier; it's illegal persecution on driven grouse moors that threatens this species' conservation status, nothing else. We don't need dialogue, conflict management, relationship building, shared solutions, brood meddling or anything else, just effective enforcement of the law. (RPUK Dec 18)

Those at the helm of Songbird Survival, a charity concerned with the demise of songbirds and which considers predation by corvids as a contributing factor, are also dismissed as 'idiots' and their scientific publications denounced. (RPUK 2011)

This persistent criticism and intolerance of those who do not conform to RPUK's beliefs is evidence of a pattern of behaviour that seeks to discredit. By assuming this dominant role, RPUK is appealing to those in power, the police and the politicians to share their norms and values and consequently impose institutional and structural discrimination on the shooting industry, a group whose cultural beliefs and behaviours are in opposition to their own. By rejecting any form of partnership working and dismissing alternative conservation initiatives, they are reinforcing the division and attempting to assert their own authority. This is a form of cultural discrimination, 'when one group exerts the power to define values for a society' which may result in institutional policy that ignores the culture heritage of the less dominant group (Dovidio et al, 2010 p,11).

Claims to Knowledge

There is recognition within the scientific community that there are different types of knowledge and within the conservation sector in particular, there is need to examine the power dynamics and ensure equity (Martin et al 2016).

However, it would appear RPUK does not acknowledge this need. Furthermore, together with Scottish Environment Link, there exists within many of the Scottish conservation organisations a hostile atmosphere that condemns all game-shooting activities, condemns moorland management practice and ignores alternative scientific findings, promulgating a political agenda with claims of supremacy to knowledge. Ruth Tingay regards herself and

colleagues as 'legitimate well-regarded researchers' (July 2020). However, when a two-part report, commissioned by Scottish Environment Link was presented to the Rural Affairs, Environment and Climate Change Committee, it was not met with approval by the Police or the Crown Office. 'Natural Injustice': Paper one: A review of the enforcement of Wildlife Protection Legislation in Scotland, was written by Ruth Tingay, (2015), the second, which contained recommendations for action was a combined effort produced by Scotlink members, 'Natural Injustice': Paper Two Eliminating wildlife crime in Scotland, Scotlink (2015).

The police and the Crown Office were critical; from the transcript on RPUK Blog (Feb 2016):

Assistant Chief Constable Graham: *'I read both volumes of the report and was horrified when I read what was in there - not because it was an accurate representation of what was happening but because it was so inaccurate. We are here today speaking about the annual wildlife crime report that the Scottish Government is required to produce. We have spoken extensively over the years about the amount of effort that has gone into ensuring the credibility, validity and quality of the data in the annual reports and how we are seeking to improve that, working collectively. A range of organisations contribute to the reports, with a governance structure, and then there is parliamentary scrutiny. None of that applies to the Scottish Environment Link report, which was done in isolation by the organisations that are part of LINK. I do not subscribe to the accuracy of either the data in the report or the assertions that are based on the data.'*

'Notwithstanding that, we work closely with the organisations that are part of LINK so, although I was grossly disappointed about the nature of LINK's approach and made that clear publicly at the time—as did a number of organisations, including SNH, which issued a strong public statement rebuking the way in which that report had been produced and indeed the quality of the data and the recommendations in it—I met the key members of LINK a short time afterwards. During that meeting, they acknowledged that how they had gone about producing the report and attempting to launch it publicly was not helpful to our collective partnership approach to tackling wildlife crime. Although we were happy to address some of the issues that they had raised through on-going work, which we continue to do, I did not feel that it was helpful to put inaccurate data into

the public domain and then expect to hold organisations to account through media reporting; indeed, that has not happened'.

Crown Office, Tom Dysart: *'At the time, the Lord Advocate issued a robust—and, I think, unprecedented – rejection of the report's findings and commented that it was ill informed and based on flawed methodology. I think that that is as much as I can say'.*

Assistant Chief Constable Graham: *'I met Eddie Palmer from Scottish Badgers and Ian Thomson from RSPB investigations, who were at the heart of producing that report... They acknowledged that the quality of evidence in the report was, at best, ad hoc and anecdotal....they understood that producing an ill-informed report was not the most effective way of doing things, and that we would not expect to see another report like that produced in the future'..*

Not only do these excerpts reveal the police regard these reports as detrimental to partnership working, but also the use of anecdotal evidence as unacceptable. Much anecdotal evidence within these reports is in the form of anonymous quotes, over 230, provided by Scottish Environment Link respondents alluding to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with prosecution or wildlife crime enforcement. It seems peculiar that Ruth Tingay has utilised this type of knowledge as previously she has questioned it:

'Anecdotal evidence can be useful, no doubt about that, but to give it the same measure of importance and usefulness as peer-reviewed science is just laughable'. (May 2013)

Conaghan, a gamekeeper's wife and co-ordinator of Speyside Moorland Group, highlighted her legitimate concerns regarding the impact of a potential licensing scheme to moorland estates. Carrieanne expressed concern that not only could this have a detrimental impact to the estates, but also on those who relied on them for employment, housing and the impact to the wider rural community.

The response from RPUK, July 2017 reveals this is not just criticism about the content, but retaliation due to criticism of Logan Steel and the Scottish Raptor Study Group. Inevitably, association with criminality is also added for maximum effect.

'Last month the Scottish Mail on Sunday published some right old tosh about how game shoot licensing would threaten the livelihood of gamekeepers and their families'

'A comment piece by gamekeeper's wife Carrieanne Conaghan (who, we've since been told, works as a sales rep in a publishing house in Grantown-on-Spey - if that's true it was a bit disingenuous to claim that her family's livelihood is reliant on game shooting), various unsubstantiated claims were made about the motivation of the estate licence petitioners (Logan Steele & the Scottish Raptor Study Group) as well as the usual denials about the unbridled criminality associated with the grouse shooting industry.'

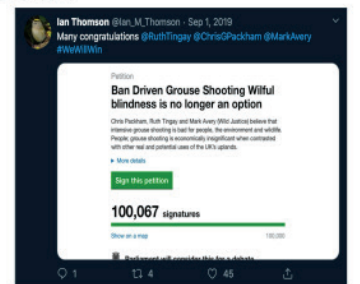
This policing to the extreme, analysis of every last word of every statement that any unwary author writes merely reflects the arrogance of a so-called academic. An academic whose writing has been severely criticised elsewhere. Carrieanne, writing legitimately in



Ian Thomson, Head of Investigations at RSPB Scotland (according to Parliamentary transcript) admitted to Police that the quality of evidence in a 2015 Environment Link report on wildlife crime (which he helped to produce) was 'at best ad hoc and anecdotal'. The report was highly critical of the Police and the Crown Office.

RSPB's investigations team receive annual payments from the public purse, from Scottish Government.

Ian Thomson's personal Twitter page would suggest that he is not neutral when it comes to grouse shooting. However, he is often a central player in investigations of alleged crimes on grouse estates.



What is not laughable, however, is the way in which anyone who challenges the general opinion or claims of RPUK and colleagues, is openly condemned and vilified.

In 2017 a letter was published in the Scottish Mail on Sunday. This heartfelt letter, written by Carrieanne

concern of the security of her family's home is discredited not only at a personal level, but also with RPUK associating the estate on which her husband worked, with wildlife crime. This is tantamount to bullying and intimidation and attempting to silence the opinions of the opposition. This