

Acha-bheinn, Kilmartin proposed woodland creation: black grouse lek survey

**ACHA-BHEINN, KILMARTIN:
PROPOSED WOODLAND
CREATION**

BLACK GROUSE LEK SURVEYS

**April 2019
V1**

A report to:
SCOTTISH WOODLANDS Ltd

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1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODS

This report presents the results of black grouse lek surveys by Lawrence Environmental Consultants in relation to the woodland proposal at Acha-bheinn, Kilmartin, Argyll (grid reference NR 850 980). This repeats the methods used in 2018 to cover a 500m buffer around the two main leks sites (Figure 1).

Surveys were undertaken during the dawn periods on 18th March & 19th April 2019 with 05:00 starts (SW F1 50-100% cloud, 4°C; wind E F1-2 11°C, 20% cloud cover respectively). Two observers were used simultaneously on each of the visits in order to maximize the chances of detecting all lekking activity to cover an area of 2.5km to the northeast and 2km to the south around the application site (Figure 1). Access to the survey area was via the forest track into Barmolloch 2 350m north of Loch Leathan and the surveyors also listened for lek sounds on arrival 150m north of Fearnoch (Figure 1). To confirm unique lek positions the surveyors recorded the time at which cocks were calling.

There were no significant disturbance effects concurrent with the surveys. The area between Beinn Bhan, Eurach and Barr Mor was not covered.

2 RESULTS

BLACK GROUSE LEKS

Two main lek sites were identified in 2019 and these confirm the 2018 surveys: There were four cocks at the Lochan Add north site ("chambered cairn lek" within the Acha Bheinn application area) in March and this increased to seven in April. There were a maximum of seven and five cocks at Stroneskar NM868009 on these respective survey dates (Figure 1). The lekking period started at 05:10 and lasted until 07:20. In addition during the March survey there were two satellite lek locations in the Barmolloch 1 plantation and one south east of Lochan Add (with a minimum of two cocks around the meteorological mast location, one cock in the northern sector and one identified at the SE Lochan Add site). This changed during the April survey with one cock lekking in the northern sector of Barmolloch 1 and the single cock at the SE Lochan Add site. There were a maximum of three greyhens recorded in the Barmolloch 1 or 2 compartments (one of which was where the track crosses the Allt an Aigid). The total number of cocks detected by LEC in 2019 was 14 to 15. (Figure 1) which matches the 2018 counts.

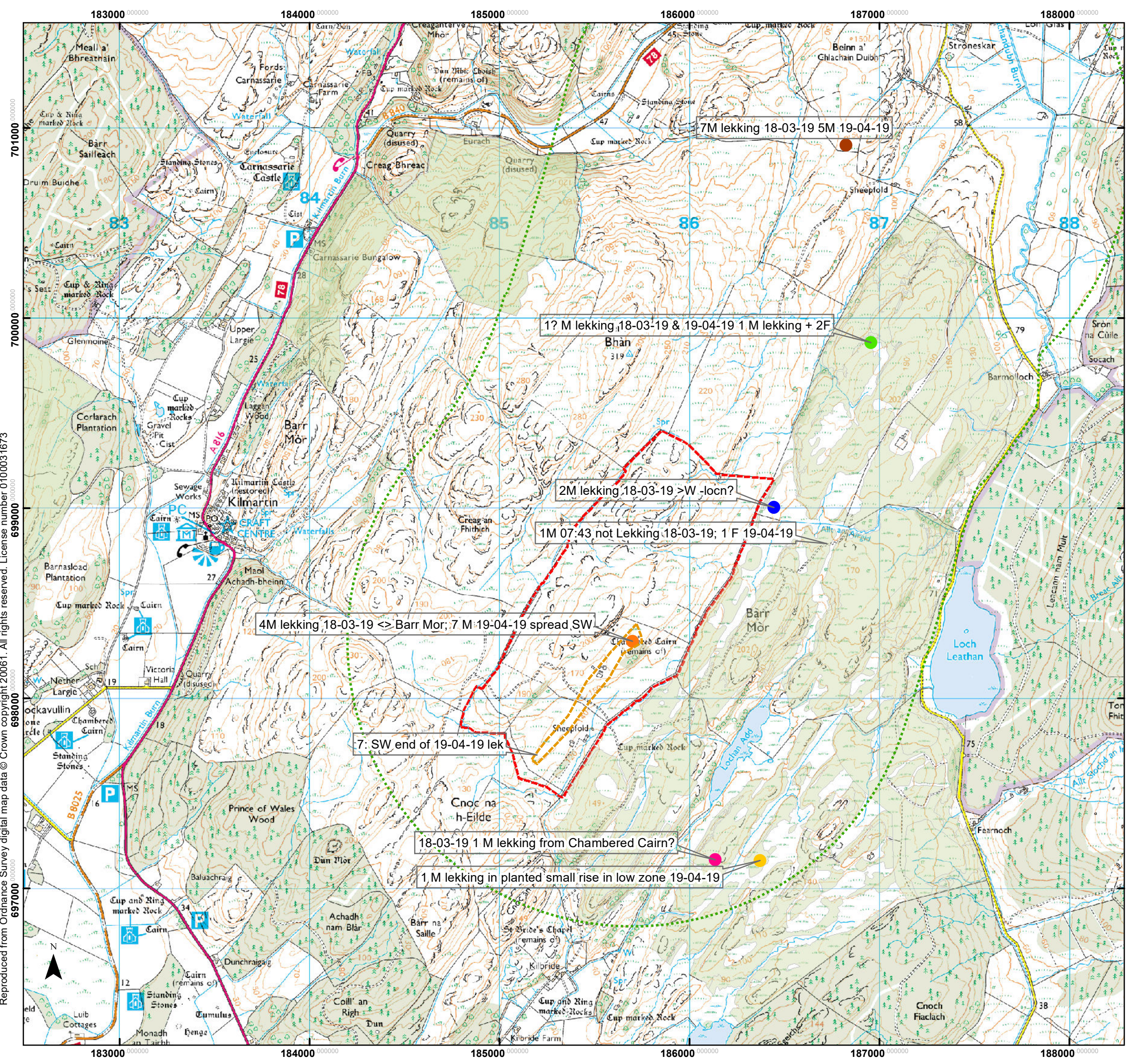
Mr D. McNair recorded two lek sites with 5 + 2 cocks in the same area at the Stroneskar lek site in the week before the April survey.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 **Population size:** The Barmolloch/Stroneskar area currently supports 14 to 15 cocks. There was evidence that the developing woodlands at Barmolloch provide one component of their preferred habitat with at least three different lek locations with single or two cocks and the presence of grey hens. This number of cocks appears to match the 2018 survey results which suggest a stable population. The local population was at approximately this size in the early 1990's.
- 3.2 **Changes to individual leks:** The sample surveys on different dates, plus observations of bird movements during these dawn periods indicates that this is likely to be one meta-population with exchanges between sites. The 2019 observations showed that the Chambered Cairn lek at Acha Bheinn extended over an elongated zone with relatively little clustering by the cocks. All of this ridge habitat supports low height ground vegetation (dominated by grasses) at the spring lek period.

References

Figure 1. The distribution of black grouse leks at and around Acha-bheinn, Kilmartin in 2019.



Achadh-bheinn woodland proposal Kilmartin, Argyll

- Approximate locations:
- BK leks**
- 2019**
- 1 M lekking in planted small rise in low zone 19-04-19
 - 18-03-19 1 M lekking from Chambered Cairn?
 - 1? M lekking 18-03-19 & 19-04-19 1 M lekking + 2F
 - 2M lekking 18-03-19 >W -locn?
 - 4M lekking 18-03-19 <=> Barr Mor; 7 M 19-04-19 spread SW
 - 7M lekking 18-03-19 5M 19-04-19
- Extent of Chambered Cairn lek
- 1.5km buffer
- Tree cover

1:18,873 Scale @ A3 (30/04/2019)

0 0.5 1 Km

Figure 1. Black grouse leks
2019

