

## ORNITHOLOGY

The Strathnairn area holds a remarkable array of habitats and is extremely rich in birdlife.

- 1) Strathnairn holds a nationally important population of Slavonian grebes - risks to this species are poorly addressed in the impact assessment

Slavonian grebes are one of the UK's rarest breeding birds. Up to 50% of the UK breeding population in a given year nest and moult within kilometres of the Carr Ban site. These birds are believed to migrate singly and at night (Handford, 2001) making the species difficult to survey and collision risks very difficult to predict. While this could represent the greatest ornithological impact of the proposed development **it receives no attention in the EIA**. The network of lochs in Strathnairn together form a large part of the **ONLY** place in the UK where this bird still breeds in aggregation.

- 2) Bird survey data presented are insufficient for risk assessment and potential impacts of Carr Ban to further protected species are inadequately addressed

The Carr Ban woods and surrounding moorland are home to Red Kites (an amber listed species), Black Grouse (a red-listed species which leks at two places adjacent to the site), breeding hen harrier (a red-listed species), curlew (an amber listed species), osprey (also amber listed) and breeding red- and black-throated divers (both amber listed). The area immediately surrounding the proposed site is further known to be visited by golden eagle, peregrine falcon, merlin, goshawk and capercaillie. **The EIA at the time of application (January 2015) provides only one year of ornithological survey data whereas two complete years are required under Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance (2014)**. The validity of the conclusions drawn in the EIA are therefore preliminary at best and not sufficient to base planning decisions upon. Because of limitations to survey methods, **surveyors should liaise closely with local experts including the Scottish Raptor Study Group** who have a good knowledge of many breeding raptors in the vicinity, but failed to do so. Both of the **vantage points used by surveyors were locations with poor visibility** due to both distance and the fact they are heavily obscured by trees, both dense mature conifer plantations and more sparse Caledonian pine and birch. This makes the single year of survey data even less reliable in supporting the strong conclusions reached in the EIA based on ornithological surveys. **The collision risk models are based on only a single year and may be inaccurate**. Construction periods for windfarms are likely to have more detrimental effects in disturbing and displacing protected moorland species (Pearce-Higgins et al. 2012). The nine month construction period for this development may have serious impact on birds but these impact are not considered. Finally, no reference is made to survey of owls having taken place as part of the surveys, yet 4 species of owl live in Carr ban wood.

### References

Handford, B. 2001. "Podiceps auritus" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed February 12, 2015 at [http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Podiceps\\_auritus/](http://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Podiceps_auritus/)

Pearce-Higgins, J. W., L. Stephen, et al. (2012). "Greater impacts of wind farms on bird populations during construction than subsequent operation: results of a multi-site and multi-species analysis." *Journal of Applied Ecology* 49(2): 386-394.

Scottish Natural Heritage (2005, revised 2014). Survey methods for use in assessing the impacts of onshore windfarms on bird communities. Scottish Natural Heritage: Edinburgh.