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AN INTEGRATED CONSERVATION POLICY FOR SCOTLAND: A RHETORIC WHICH BELIES PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

In April 1992 Scottish Natural Heritage was created, marking the introduction of a new 'integrated' conservation policy for Scotland more 'sensitive' than hitherto concerning the needs of the country and its people. It grew out of the merger of the Countryside Commission for Scotland (Countryside Commission for Scotland), with its attendant duties regarding the protection of 'natural beauty' (the landscape) and the amenity thereof, and the controversial Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland, responsible for nature conservation. Helping develop this new policy, the Government provided for two new 'conceptual' conservation tools. First, the 'sustainability' concept was to help 'change attitudes to the environment' (Scottish Office Development Department [SODD] 1990, p.1), creating the right conditions for its protection and, second, a new designation that brought together landscape and nature conservation concerns was to be devised - a designation which the former Nature Conservancy Council in Scotland or the Countryside Commission for Scotland had been able to use during their existence. It was to be called the Natural Heritage Area.

In this article I argue that rather than providing an 'integrated conservation policy' receptive to 'Scottish particularities', Scottish Natural Heritage has served to further divide nature and landscape conservation practices, because for the time being the Agency's development can be seen to be rooted in, and

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regulated by, nature conservation concerns. I conclude by arguing that the latter is able to dominate Scottish conservation practice because it is better situated to help placate the concerns of powerfully positioned Scottish landowners (see McCrone et al 1995; Cairns 1996, p.5).

I start my argument by telling of the evolution of one the new conservation tools mentioned, namely the National Heritage Area. I follow its development from its first mention by the Government, to its interpretation in the Parliamentary debates in the passage of the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill, the Bill (later Act) which gave legal substance to Scottish Natural Heritage; finally, I explain how it has come to be utilised by Scottish Natural Heritage.

A NEW DESIGNATION: NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS OR NATIONAL PARKS

The first conspicuous move by the Government regarding their commitment to a sympathetically oriented and integrated conservation approach for Scotland came in their treatment of the Countryside Commission for Scotland's idea that a number of 'national parks' should be created. The Countryside Commission for Scotland forwarded this proposal in response to a request by the Government to 'study management arrangements for popular mountain areas' (Countryside Commission for Scotland 1992, p.4). National parks had for a long time been taken by the Countryside Commission for Scotland as a designation that would bridge the gap between nature and landscape conservation concerns (Countryside Commission for Scotland 1971), but had always been disliked by the Government as a designation suitable for Scotland. (It should be noted that since the 1960s both England and Wales have had National Parks, provided for legally under different legislation.) This time it was no different; if anything the Government's rebuttal of the Countryside Commission for Scotland's idea yet again was more controversial as it came in the guise of an Amendment to the Natural Heritage (Scotland) Bill, which introduced the NHA designation, and before the publication of Countryside Commission for Scotland's final report which favoured the creation of five national parks.

The Countryside Commission for Scotland recommendations concerning the identification and management of the proposed national parks was wholly different to that envisaged by the Government regarding the NHA. In short, their recommendations conveyed an overall impression of an integrated strategy combining both nature and landscape conservation in line with the needs of Scotland (Countryside Commission for Scotland 1991, p.31). As

will be discussed below, this stood in stark contrast to the practicalities, if not the rhetoric, of the NHA designation.

Initially at least the Government argued that Scottish Natural Heritage should be given the National Heritage Area as existing designations were too 'specific'. This designation, they continued, would enable the new conservation agency to protect landscape and nature conservation interests using a single designation in a 'progressive' and 'integrated' manner compatible with Scottish exigencies. However, in a detailed analysis of a Governmental consultation paper published to ease parliamentary debate on the National Heritage Area Amendment and inform outside interests of their ideas, the Government can be seen to give a different justification for creating the National Heritage Area. This places the new designation in direct relation to Britain's most important nature conservation tool, the Site of Special Scientific Interest, and not as a designation combining both landscape and nature conservation commitments. In short, this paper implies that the National Heritage Area would serve as a designation to safeguard areas of 'nature' conservation value too large to warrant Site of Special Scientific Interest designation (SOED 1991, p.1). The point that I would wish to make, is that if the National Heritage Area is mostly of low 'natural', importance it is still of 'natural' importance - that is, National Heritage Area identification was still to rely on the practices underpinning Site of Special Scientific Interest identification, which are oriented towards protecting 'nature', not on an integrated procedure per se.

The domination of nature conservation commitments continued when Scottish Natural Heritage were given the National Heritage Area to develop. To make it work in practice, they had to create 'criteria for selecting NHAs', 'the processes leading to designation' and 'the administration of an area after designation' (SOED 1992, p.4). And after they had been developed, these 'stages', as they were named, had to be approved by the Government. In helping themselves to devise these stages, Scottish Natural Heritage entered into three separate consultation exercises. The first of these concerned the development, for approval by the Secretary of State, of the general criteria under which particular areas of outstanding natural heritage interest in Scotland would qualify for National Heritage Area designation. The agency came up with five identification criteria listed as:

Criterion 1 Areas to be designated should be of outstanding value to the natural heritage of Scotland.

Criterion 2	There should be significant benefits to be gained for the natural heritage from the integrated land use and management which will be promoted through designation as a NHA.
Criterion 3	The area should be of coherent natural heritage interest.
Criterion 4	Management of the land should raise issues of some complexity.
Criterion 5	There should be adequate support for the aims and objectives of the NHA from land and local community interests involved.

These criteria were then split into two 'strands'. The first strand consisted of three criteria denoted as 'relevant to natural heritage values', while criteria four and five were put into a strand which consisted of, 'criteria dependent on partners and the community'. All the criteria were developed, as Scottish Natural Heritage saw it, within the theme of 'resolving the management problems of the area' around an 'integrated land management strategy'. It is fair to say, I think, that their development was revolutionary for conservation policy in Scotland in that they were being connected with 'cultural' values about nature and what ought to be protected - a theme completely new to any designation process. It is one which fitted well with the desire for an integrated approach to conservation and it was in this spirit that they were passed on to the Government for their consideration and, it was hoped, their approval.

However, it was at this juncture in the NHA's development that once again the domination of nature conservation values can be witnessed. One former Countryside Commission for Scotland staff member who had recently left Scottish Natural Heritage's employ (because, he said, precisely of the dominance of nature conservation practices), put this domination into sharp focus. He explained that the initial criteria devised by Scottish Natural Heritage were seen by them as contributing to an integrated approach, but when they were given to the Government for their approval problems started to arise:

> These criteria were given to the Scottish Office and what did they do ... they threw them back in our [Scottish Natural Heritage's] face. 'Where's the protection, boys'. They wanted to see something protected you see. They told us, 'go back to the legislation have a look at what it says', 'it says NHAs must protect something'.

This demand to 'protect something' made its mark. A revised set of criteria were drawn-up and were listed as:

Criterion 1	The area should be of outstanding natural heritage value.
Criterion 2	The area should have a coherent natural heritage identity.
Criterion 3	Natural Heritage Area designation should be the most appropriate mechanism for addressing the range of issues relevant to an extensive area with a coherent natural heritage identity.
Criterion 4	There should be significant benefits for the natural heritage from the integrated land use and management strategy proposed.
Criterion 5	There should be adequate support for the NHA proposal from the community of interests involved.

Unlike the initial criteria, this reworked list was based on splitting it, not into two strands as before, but into three. The first two criteria related to the 'natural heritage of the area', while the third and fourth sought to ensure that an NHA would 'secure' benefit to the natural heritage. The fifth criterion related to the voluntary principle (see Newby 1988; Selman 1992).

The differences between these two lists of criteria are subtle, masking, I would argue, a dramatic change in emphasis. Whereas the fist list was based on the resolution of 'management problems' - a cultural theme - the second list emphasised 'the security of the natural heritage' (ibid., p.2). The implication is that Scottish Natural Heritage have been obliged to reify 'the natural heritage' accordingly, defining what is special about it so as to justify its 'security' or protection. In so doing, nature comes to the fore as an entity which can easily be 'objectified' (reified) and in consequence protected (landscape is by character much more of an 'subjective' concept and therefore harder to reify: see Countryside Commission for Scotland (1971)). This would indicate that the use of a language of 'integration' belies the practicalities of conservation, as embodied in the evolution of the NHA concept.

However, my contention that nature conservation values are dominating the genesis of Scottish Natural Heritage because they are easier to objectify than landscape values and thus 'secure' needs further clarification. I am not in fact arguing this. Rather, I contend that the so called objectively defined (Ratcliffe 1977) 'scientific' nature conservation values are ones which sit harmoniously with a system of land-tenure particular to Scotland. Specifically, there is an intimate link between a nature conservation 'science' and 'Scottish

landowners' concerns'. It is to this extent that nature conservation concerns dominate.

A SCOTTISH SCIENTIFIC NATURE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

The methodology involved in a nature conservation science was first created in the 1970s to help choose National Nature Reserves and publicly expressed as a scientific one. Here the Nature Conservancy Council set out a 'scientific classification system' in the publication, **A Nature Conservation Review** (ibid.). The **Review** is in the public realm, a part of most public library collections, and is regarded as seminal in its field. It construes the methodology involved with nature conservation as a three-fold 'scientific' exercise. First, the expert or scientist would 'record the intrinsic site features'. This would involve, the **Report** spells out, categorising and documenting the 'factual' attributes of a site. It is described as an 'objective' stage, one that involved the 'identification and recording of the primary scientific data for the site' (ibid., p.5).

Second, potential National Nature Reserves would be 'classified' by 'assessing comparative site quality'. Classification was carried out using 'criteria' set out in the **Review**. These were: size, which relates to the amount of species an area contains, which in turn can be expressed objectively; diversity, which is tied to 'species-richness' meaning the various kinds of species a site holds; naturalness, which is measured against lack of features which indicate gross or recent human modification; rarity, which is regarded as a measure of a species and ecosystem vulnerability to extinction, variously called endangerment or threat; fragility, which is also related to species and ecosystem vulnerability but measured by their 'relative' disadvantage to succession or human activities including agriculture and industrialisation; and typicality, which is connected to representation of a prime example of a site.

These are the main criteria as set out by Ratcliffe in 1977. Each one represents some 'factual' biological attribute that can be associated with some site feature - usually a species. Curiously, there is no extended mention of the play of physical factors on the environment. For example, acid rain, seen by many as a contributing factor in environmental degradation around Scotland (see Bunce and Jeffers 1977), is not considered in the designation of areas for 'nature' conservation reasons. It is a point which discredits the claim that a nature conservation science is objective as it implies that a biased choice has been made not to include physical factors in the process, or conversely that

conservationists have been compelled not to do so. In the following, the latter comes out as the predominate reason why physical factors are neglected.

SCIENCE AND LANDOWNERS

To reiterate, my argument is that a nature conservation scientific practice dominates Scottish conservation policy at the practical level - its delivery - because it is better suited to resolving problems within the confines of landowners' management of their land. In order to help substantiate this claim, I look at how and why two important 'species' have been classified as important and thus worthy of protection, namely the Scottish wildcat and the Caledonian Scottish pine tree. Specifically, I follow the 'scientific' debate that has surrounded the identification of the Caledonian Scots pine tree and the Scottish wildcat as a 'full species'. In so doing, I hope to link their 'species' classification with the landowners' concerns.

The Scots Pine as a Species

The Scots pine tree has been singled out for protection by the European Union and the Government because of its exploitation. From about the seventeenth century onwards, industry began to make its presence felt as the iron-smelting furnaces demanded more and more charcoal for fuel. This meant the exploitation of more and more woods, especially the pine woods in Scotland (Scottish Natural Heritage 1993, p.3). It was thought, however, that these woods would be able to regenerate naturally, but as the centuries passed increasing emphasis was put on manual planting. This led to the observation that particular 'seeds' were better suited to particular areas - they would grow stronger and faster. Thus, although these seeds were of the same species - morphologically at least - they behaved very differently to one another when seeded, dependent on where they came from in Scotland and where they were planted.

Studies by the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) helped confirm this variation (Giertych and Oleksyn 1992). During 1907, 1938, 1969 and 1982 the IUFRO initiated 'provenance trials' which sought to study perceived differences in the Scots pine. These trials were based on a number of different stands planted throughout Europe, and Giertych and Oleksyn, on re-analysis of the data, have concluded that the seeds belonging to one area are different and cannot be used in another. Yet further evidence that variation does exist came to light in research carried out in genealogy and cytology (see Dean 1979) on the different genealogy of stands of Scots pine in Scotland (Bunce and Jeffers 1977). It again further confirmed that the tree

did not conform to the necessary attributes that would give it species status - it was morphologically dissimilar from one area to the next (although it does interbreed).

There is an ongoing controversy within expert circles as to exactly what a species is. This revolves around those whose aim it is to organise and classify living organisms. This group identifies species in the traditional sense, as groups of living things that share common features - their morphological makeup. Others, however, dispute this identification process arguing instead that the concept of breeding groups should underpin the true nature of species. For them, reproductive compatibility is seen as the core element of species identification (see Brooks 1996, p.20, for a fuller discussion of the 'species problem'). In all, the controversy points to the contingent nature of the species concept.

Classifying the Scots pine as a species also had its problems for conserving the Caledonian forest. For example, it was put to me by landowners and managers of Abernethy Estate that there was a big problem for them in the identification of the Scots pine. In our discussions, they spoke of how at least half of their existing estate had been clear-felled and replanted with Scots pine in the thirties, while the other half was left or perhaps subjected to dysgenic selection (in which trees of high commercial value were felled). The problem was that the managers/owners did not know if the seeds used in replanting were original to the area or not. Thus, any attempt at natural restoration in the area was problematic because it could possibly lead to the destruction of the forest as a whole. The key issue was that if these replanted trees were of a different genetic strain to their immediate endemic neighbours, they could be susceptible to some disease or fungi found only in the Abernethy area with catastrophic repercussions, or conversely they could themselves be harbingers of some genetic deficiencies with the same long-term outcome. As one manager told me:

> [variation] has major implications for the conservation of the Area. I think it's fair to say that the issue of how the forest is composed of tree species and how that relates to its protection, bearing in mind that large areas of the forest have probably been felled once or twice before and replanted, is an irresolvable one.

It is irresolvable not because there is no 'knowledge' which could ascertain what trees were of a different genetic strain, but because all the trees which took on the appearance of a Scots pine were previously given the status of an 'important species' and thus legal protection under the EU and Governmental legislation. This enabled conservationists to protect the tree and thus the

forests per se. In practical terms, however, it has meant that the owners/managers have been unable to do anything detrimental to the trees as a species because it is protected as such. Moreover, their classification as an 'important species' can be interpreted as a reflection of the usefulness of the species concept for the interests of landowners. For example, Brimble in his book, **Trees in Britain** (1948), suggests that the Scots pine's identification as a full species is tied to its historical increase in its exploitation as an economic resource. As he remarks:

> Trees have been, and are, an important commercial commodity, and it is not surprising therefore that they, and the timber they yield, often have several different common names according to country, locality, trade or use. Then, sometimes, as botanical and forestry research proceeds, it becomes necessary to transfer a tree from one genus to another or one species to another, and on occasion it becomes desirable to create new genera and new species.
> (ibid., p.48)

Here, Brimble is quite clear in saying that a tree is named according to its utility, at least in the first instance, for he argues that as 'research develops' they may change their status accordingly. However, 'scientific research' is itself partly rooted in and guided by the need to reconcile inquiry with cultural contingencies (that is, the perceived utility of a tree); this can be clearly shown in the story of the Scots pine and its classification as a species. Specifically, even though there is some doubt surrounding the classification of the Scots pine as a species, it has not been reclassified. Indeed quite the contrary; in Site of Special Scientific Interest notification orders the Nature Conservancy Council (now Scottish Natural Heritage) have reiterated time and time again that the tree is a species, ignoring research that says otherwise. This is so because there has been a cultural necessity to identify the tree as a full species in Scotland. Thus Scottish Natural Heritage's practices have had to conform to cultural needs. More specifically, their practices have been conditioned by a land-tenure system unique to Scotland.

This point has recently been exemplified by the Cairngorms Working Party, created by the Secretary of State for Scotland during March of 1991 with the primary aim of recommending to him an 'integrated' management strategy for the Cairngorms area. In their report, **Common sense and Sustainability: A Partnership for the Cairngorms** (Magnusson et al 1992), they mention the 'economic' importance of the trees for landowners in the Cairngorms, stating that: 'concern has been expressed [by landowners] about the problem of mature woods where there is a perceived need to leave them un-harvested

beyond their economic life for amenity, community or conservation reasons.' (ibid. 1992, p.21). To combat this problem within the confines of the traditional conservation process (the voluntary principle), conservationists have had to compensate landowners for the revenue they would make by felling the trees. This 'compensation' payment is based on the profit lost in not selling the 'Scots pine' to timber merchants. Its value (and hence compensation) is calculated by its utility as a species.

The identification of the Scots pine as a species is, then, not based purely on the trees' objectivity, but on its commercial value as a timber. Simply put, economic value is dependent on species classification while species classification is dependent on economic value as much as on taxonomic objectivity. This is one very important reason why, in this context, the species concept remains an important dimension in conservation practice.

The Scottish Wildcat as a Species

The so-called Scottish wildcat has recently come under extended scrutiny as regards its classification as a 'species' (Cramb 1994, p.6). After 90 years of unproblematic identification, questions are being asked about the animal's status, which, as Cramb points out, 'has profound implications for the protection of an animal which in theory is subject to strict conservation measures throughout Europe' (ibid., p.6).

Scotland's wildcats appear to have been isolated in Britain 10,000 years ago when the last Ice Age ended, and the land bridge with Europe disappeared (ibid., p.6). They enjoyed some 8,000 years of genetic purity before the Romans arrived, bringing domestic cats with them. Today there are more than 16 million feral cats (domestic cats turned wild) in Britain, some of which have interbred with the 'native' wildcat. However, even though domestic cats were introduced with the Romans, it was only in 1907 that the British Museum defined and classified the Scottish wildcat. The taxonomists at the Museum chose a specimen killed near Drumnadrochit in 1904 on which to base their claims, a specimen which today is still kept at the Museum as the 'type specimen' - the specimen against which all other potential wildcats are measured when clarifying their taxonomic status. Using this type specimen, a Scottish wildcat was delimited as being more than 40 inches long tip to tip and weighing at least 14 lb, and was broad-shouldered with a black V between the eyes. Although at the time this identification was seen as 'little scientific' (ibid., p.6), it became the recognised way of identifying a wildcat; every specimen collected afterwards had to take on a similar appearance, whether it was for a museum or a zoo. Indeed, today under the same identification procedures, the Scottish wildcat - as a species - is protected

under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Berne Convention, and is listed as an endangered animal in the EU' s Habitat Directive - a formidable array of protection mechanisms. All are dependent the wildcat's classification as a species.

However, like the Scottish pine tree, the wildcat's identification as a species can also be related to the activities of Scottish landowners, rather than to the objectivity that justifies much conservation policy. For example, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wildcats were hunted and trapped for their fur, and persecuted for attacks on livestock and gamebirds (Langley and Yalden 1977), to the extent that they became extinct in the greater part of the British Isles; their last refuge is in the Highlands of Scotland.

But even here its future was not secure, as a recent television programme in the series **Wildlife on One** has graphically shown. Narrated by David Attenborough and entitled 'Tiger of the Highlands' (BBC 1995), the programme's narrative is based on the life story of a particular wildcat. There is an interesting digression from this story line during the programme, telling instead of the social and natural history of the wildcat. Through this, the wildcats' persecution by landowners is well documented. The interlude starts by making the argument that 'in the 1800s big sporting estates flourished' because of the popularity of hunting as a sport (sic). It suggests that as a part of this growth, game birds became a 'lucrative' entity for landowners and had to be protected from vermin, one of the most troublesome being the wildcat. As the narrative goes, 'wildcats became vermin ... they were shot, snared, poisoned and trapped'. It was a persecution that almost led to their extinction as a 'species'. Here, the wildcat's identification was not to do with its morphological make up, which at the time had not been decided. Rather, as the programme stipulates, 'many of the stories of the wildcat's reputation came from the gamekeepers who were hired to control them'. In other words, the wildcat was an entity known almost solely to the gamekeeper. It is an assertion which is brought into sharp focus when on the programme a gamekeeper is asked to comment on his relationship with the wildcat and estate owners. He remarks:

> A lot of estates called things like wildcats and eagles vermin; they, in fact, paid a bounty to their keepers on the numbers they killed. The more wildcats they killed the more money they made; in fact, it was a reflection on whether they were managing the place well ... to the number of predators they killed.

Here it seems that the gamekeepers' identification of the wildcat was self serving, in that the more they identified and consequently killed, the more

money they got. Indeed, the situation for the wildcat was not good. As Attenborough continues, 'believing that the wildcats were threatening their gamebirds, the Victorians were ruthless. At the end of the last century at least 80 were killed on one estate in one year alone'. Ironically, the programme argues, it was the Great War which brought the cats back from the edge of extinction as it took men (including gamekeepers) from the Highlands to serve as soldiers. Subsequently: 'the *real* value of wildlife became understood and wildcats are now protected by law' (my emphasis).

However, the boundary between wildcat persecution and the identification of 'real' nature is not so clear-cut as the programme tells it. They are intertwined in ways which still persist today. Here, the gamekeepers' experience in identifying the wildcat through having to manage it as vermin helped taxologists identify it as a species. Yet in so doing, these scientists, albeit unwittingly, helped create the need for gamekeepers to control the now 'scientifically identified' wildcat. This interrelationship is captured nicely by Cramb when interviewing a gamekeeper for a press article. As the latter states, in 1930 as a 14 year old boy living near Loch Ness,

> the only way you would get a job was if you became a rabbit trapper, a gamekeeper or did a bit of shepherding. I used to trap rabbits, but I would also get two, four or five wildcats in the traps every week. Sometimes it was possible to sell the wildcat skins to a trader. Then a new demand appeared for the big cats from the hills of Inverness-shire. The British Museum was building a collection. The cats we sent them had to be 40 in., from tip to tip and had to be at least 14 lb. They were very good specimens. The broad-shouldered cat with black stripes and a black V between the eyes. It was the real McCoy then.
> (cited by Cramb 1994, p.6)

The significance of this quote is clear; gamekeepers were heavily involved in helping identify the Scottish wildcat. As the article continues, 'there is a snobbery about identifying wildcats. It is a skill claimed by gamekeepers and by museum curators, but it is far from an exact science' (ibid., p.6). Thus the boundaries between the wildcat's persecution and the identification of 'real' nature are merged; there seems to be an interrelationship which is mutually convenient for all those concerned, except the cat itself.

Thus, the identification of the Scottish wildcat as a species is based on the financial value it embodies as a dead entity - the reward a gamekeeper got for killing it as vermin. Indeed, as late as the mid-1980s, gamekeepers' jobs in the Highlands were still linked to the amount of wildcats and other vermin killed, and it is a debatable point whether it still is on some estates. As the Game

Conservancy's vermin return for 1984-5 shows, a recorded killing of 274 wildcats on 40 shooting estates in central, eastern and north-eastern Scotland were taken (Easterbree et al 1991). Since then it has been given protected status in law.

The wildcat's authenticity as a species in law was, however, to come under some strain during a sheriff court case in Stonehaven in 1990 where a gamekeeper was charged with killing three of the 'rare' animals. In the event, no expert witness could testify that the animals were - beyond reasonable doubt - wildcats. The case was eventually dropped by the state and the 'loophole' in British conservation was exposed. Following it, the Scottish Office asked Scottish Natural Heritage to investigate whether or not the wildcat still survived in Scotland. However, at the end of the project no affirmation of the animal's existence had been established. The two experts on the project, Dave Balharry and Mike Daniels (who was to go onto Cambridge to carry out a PhD on the status of the wildcat) examined 400 live and dead cats of which 31 were treated to a thorough analysis. Their enquiries found that no two cats were identical.

The conclusions that the two Scottish Natural Heritage experts drew from these findings was that distinct groups of cats, living in different parts of the Highlands, were identifiable but not as wildcats. They believed that in certain areas of Scotland the habitat itself was selecting against feral cats and hybrids. As Balharry has commented:

> There is a type of cat that the environment is selecting in some areas, a larger type of cat and one that can survive in particular conditions. Whether that population is a remnant of the original Scottish wildcat, I don't know. Is that worth protecting, is it something that is distinct? My argument would be that it is.
> (cited by Cramb 1994, p.1)

Here, Balharry identifies the conservation problem as I see it, that in order to protect a natural entity it needs to be classified as 'distinct', thus worth protecting. But this distinctiveness, at least as regards the Scottish wildcat, cannot come from its morphological makeup which does not justify its delimitation as a species. Rather, it seems that its characterisation depends on linking its 'specialness' with its symbolic significance as 'vermin' in relation to landowners. In other words, it existence as a species - the Scottish wildcat - depends on its relation with landowners (that is, its continued existence as a pest for landowners and the associated work that this gives gamekeepers).

CONCLUSION

This article has sought to extend the discussion of the relative merits and disadvantages of integrating landscape and nature conservation practices in Scotland by considering its place in the context of landownership practices. I have tentatively argued that the 'scientific' practices of the old Nature Conservancy Council are dominating Scottish Natural Heritage because they implicitly embody landowners' concerns - that they are not the objectively delimited ones so often argued, but are in important ways culturally delimited because of the need to reconcile landowners' management of their land with the conservation interest. However, popular understandings of Scottish conservation policy seem to be based on its objective standing, which helps legitimate the vast sums of money given to landowners as recompense for acceding to the conservation interest.

This paper criticises this view by drawing a direct relationship between conservation science and landowners' concerns. The very character of conservationists' scientific practices are seen here to embody concerns which privilege landowners' interests in Scotland above all others. To this extent, it is not at all sensitive to the concerns of the vast majority of people living in the country or does not alleviate environmental degradation caused by factors outwith the management of the land by its owners- for example, acid rain. This paper, then, has highlighted the special position of landowners in Scotland, through their ability to structure scientific conservation policy around their particular interests.

My analysis of Scottish 'scientific' conservation policy suggests that it is much more than the objective enterprise it is often represented as. As long as it is assumed to be objective, then the possibilities of changing any of the things that it is connected with, including landowners' power, are slim. Because of this, I believe that the physical environmental degradation of Scotland's natural heritage will continue to be a problem.

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