

Inshriach SOL 12 October 2008 Controller's Report

Ken had planned excellent courses, and it was a joy to be his controller. Until 3 days before the event, that is. On the Thursday afternoon, just as I left the site of control 153, there was much crashing of branches and a huge male capercaillie landed about a metre from me, advanced towards me and went for my ankles. It wasn't put off my loud noises, waving arms or sticks, so I ran, and it followed me for about 500m. I informed Ken, and he had similar problems on the Friday. We both met it again on the Saturday, and it was after 5p.m. when Ken eventually managed to put out 153 and 141, which was possible only because I'd gone in 10 minutes earlier and the capercaillie was away chasing me.

Clearly we had a problem. These controls were to be used by several courses that included W16-18 and W55+ - the very people who would be most likely to be alarmed by such a creature, and possibly also less able to make a safe get-away. Safety and fairness – the two key factors that every controller has to consider – were at severe risk.

Reluctantly, we eventually decided we had no choice but to shorten some courses to avoid having people moving slowly in the main area where the aggressive bird had been. Runners on courses 12-14 would cross this area on a long leg, but they would be taking different routes, probably moving at speed, and we believed they were less likely to be bothered by an encounter with the capercaillie.

Course 6 (Red – no pre-entries) was abandoned and we shortened courses 4, 7, 8 and 11 by as little as was necessary in order to avoid serious dog-legs. We also had to make sure maps could be amended clearly. Team Interlopers set about amending the maps and control descriptions, and I printed lots of notices. It was essential to make sure everyone was aware of the bad-tempered bird, whether their course was directly affected or not.

On the day, he chose not to put in an appearance, much to the disappointment of several people who've never seen one. Thank you all for accepting the situation.

Hilary Quick