

## **All I want for Christmas is a drone!**

According to recent press reports thousands will receive drones as Christmas presents. Just a few short years ago the technology was far beyond the reach of most people, but as prices have fallen interest in these devices has increased dramatically. But the authorities face a battle to stop them being used irresponsibly - an unidentified drone came close to hitting an Airbus A320 as it landed at London's Heathrow during the summer. The British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA) is campaigning for drones to be programmed not to enter certain airspace - known as geo-fencing. The Phantom series of drones, sold by manufacturer DJI, already includes geo-fencing. This is the drone which is of interest to us for wildlife detection or crop monitoring. The GPS of the Phantom is programmed with the co-ordinates of thousands of airports around the world. It cannot enter these areas. If it tries to it will be forced to land. And within a 2km radius of a major airport its height will be capped at just 10m.

## **Hunt havoc in Devon**

A spokesman for the League Against Cruel Sports has said that Dartmoor Hunt members should be held accountable for failing to control their hounds after six were hit and killed by a train recently near Ivybridge. Hunts claim that such incidents are isolated, but SWAFH receives many reports of hunt trespass on railway lines, disruption of road traffic and killing of domestic pets.

## **Dog caught in a snare**

Peak District dog owners are being warned to be on their guard after a pet was caught in a snare near Woodhead Reservoir. The owner, who did not wish to be named, said: "while walking up the hillside, my dog disappeared so I ran up the hill to try and spot him. After emerging above the crest of a hill, I observed my dog sniffing around a large barrel set into the ground twenty yards down the hill to the left. After calling him, he set off towards me but then stopped suddenly and refused to move. After repeated demands for him to come he suddenly became distressed and started thrashing about on the ground. I ran down towards him and found him to be caught in a snare. After freeing him and investigating the surrounding area, I found a further two snares and was confronted with an horrific soup of the local wildlife in a barrel. Simon Wild, from the National Anti Snaring Campaign said: "stink pits with dead animals inside were commonly used in grouse moor areas with snares set around them". He added: "They are not so common in the Peak District though, so we want to draw people's attention to the fact this sort of thing is happening. It is an outrage". (On grouse moors snares would be set to catch mountain hares, but almost 70% of animals caught in snares are not the intended targets. SWAFH supports the campaign for a total ban on the use of all types of snare. Ed.)

## **Hare coursing in the Irish Republic**

Reported in the Irish Times recently, Minister for Agriculture Simon Coveney, in answer to a Dail question from Maureen O'Sullivan TD, dismissed the introduction of mechanical lure coursing as a humane alternative to using timid wild hares as bait for the chasing greyhounds. Aideen Yourell of the Irish Council Against Bloodsports says: "Replacing live hare coursing with a mechanical lure would find favour with the vast majority who respect and cherish our Irish hare and who would be more than happy to see the end of a despicable blood sport that brings shame on our country".

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## **Strengthening the Hunting Act 2004**

"One of my fervid hopes for strengthening is that it produces a law that does not depend on monitors. This is crucial. If members of the public report animals being chased/killed that should be enough. The hunts are so slick at making life hell for monitors, of which there are so very few, and the massive burden on the monitors must be relieved by a reformed law".

**Penny Little, Protect Our Wild Animals (POWA)**

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