

Protect the Mountain Hare!

At the time of writing our petition had 4,907 signatures.

Glenlivet Wildlife – Mountain Hare safari.

A unique off-road Land Rover tour to the Ladder Hills in the Cairngorms to see how Highland wildlife copes with winter. Mountain hare in winter white a speciality. Heading for the Hills our destination is Carn Dulack and the 10,000 acre Site of Special Scientific Interest on the Ladder Hills. Winter residents include mountain_hare, roe_deer, raven, snow bunting, waxwing and golden eagle. Discover how these hardy species search out food and survive the Cairngorms winter. Leaving the public road at Eskmullach, we pass the Forbidden College of Scalán before reaching the Ladder Hills SSSI.

For more information contact glenlivet-wildlife.co.uk

North Yorkshire hares tracked in Hull biofuel project – research results awaited

Experts from the University of Hull have been investigating the impact bio-fuel crops have on farmland and hares. The research, based in North Yorkshire monitored how planting a bio-fuel crop affects the hares' behaviour. Elephant grass was planted and the hares tracked to see whether they select or avoid the crop. Dr Phil Wheeler said: “the effects of agricultural change need to be understood to ensure it results in sustainable management of farmland.” The government is currently subsidising farmers to plant bio-fuel crops to help meet renewable energy targets. Dr Silviu Petrovan said: "It's extremely important we don't make the same mistakes as we have done in the past where land transformation has resulted in huge and profound changes and losses in our bio-diversity. There is a very good chance that if we get this right we might even get some benefit."

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

The Act states: “If, save as permitted by this Act, any person who mutilates, kicks, beats, nails or otherwise impales, stabs, burns, stones, crushes, drowns, drags or asphyxiates any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering he shall be guilty of an offence. In a case in June 2013 a golfer was convicted of beating a fox to death with his club. It was also originally proposed that the Act should include “torture” but the hunting lobby objected, no doubt realising that a court of law might view the chasing and killing of a wild mammal as “torture”. Hence, this provision had to be excluded from the legislation to enable its successful passage through Parliament. The Act applies to all wild mammals without exception and was the first legislation in history to provide them with protection from cruelty. Exemptions include “acts of mercy” where the animal is so seriously disabled that it has no reasonable chance of recovery. If you suspect an offence please contact the local police Wildlife Crime Officer.

Seasonal tips for farmers in Entry Level Stewardship

If overwintered stubbles are part of a Stewardship option they should be maintained until 15 February and can then be returned to the farm rotation. Overwintered stubble provides a winter food source for seed eating birds and essential habitat for hares. The spring grown crops that follow can provide breeding sites for ground nesting birds such as lapwing. Wild bird seed mixture areas should be retained until 1 March before re-establishing them in the spring. This should be done every year, or every other year to maintain seed production. Sowing should be done at the optimum time for the particular seed mixture and when seed bed conditions are right. Wild bird seed mixtures provide a winter and early spring food source for seed eating birds such as the yellow hammer and tree sparrow and also provide essential habitat for hares. Discs or tines can be used to create rough areas on uncropped arable land for ground nesting birds. This should be done between 1 February and 20 March to make sure they are in place before farmland birds start breeding. Cultivating in wet conditions should be avoided. These areas will provide in-field breeding and nesting sites for birds such as the skylark, but also foraging habitat for birds such as the yellow wagtail and habitat for hares.

I adore my hares and try to encourage them as much as possible **Tamara Baker - farmer**

SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk