

Early leveret handed into rescue centre.

Sadly, a perfectly healthy leveret has been handed in to Little Foxes Wildlife Rescue Centre. Founder of Little Foxes, Penny Little said: “This is the earliest I have ever had a leveret in.” Some well meaning person thought the leveret had been abandoned – not realising that the mother hare returns just once a day at dusk to feed her offspring.

Mating normally starts in late December, gestation lasts 41 to 42 days and the first young are born in January. But pregnancies from every month of the year are now on record – probably owing to global warming. So leverets can be found at any time and children, especially, need to know that on no account should leverets be touched unless they are clearly injured or in danger.

Little Foxes wildlife rescue centre, near Oxford, provides treatment and rehabilitation for wild animals and birds in need of care and attention. Penny says: “Our hope is always that they recover well enough to be released back into the wild.” Further details of Little Foxes are here:

www.littlefoxes.org.uk

Strengthening the Hunting Act

In his memoir, “A Journey,” Tony Blair said he deliberately sabotaged the Hunting Act to ensure there were enough loopholes to allow hunting to continue and described the Act as: “A masterly British compromise.” He also told then Home Office Minister Hazel Blears to steer police away from enforcing the law. This treachery by Tony Blair in abusing his power to undermine the democratic process urgently needs to be remedied, so please sign this petition and forward it to your contacts:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/campaign-to-strengthen-the-hunting-act>

Re-introduction of mountain hares to Dartmoor.

Michelle Chappell of the Duchy College, Stoke Climsland has been in touch, saying that she has read with interest our recent article in the Western Morning News. Michelle currently programme manages and delivers on a Foundation degree course studying Animal Health and management at the College in partnership with Plymouth University. Michelle said: “Your article sparked an interest as I would be most interested to learn more with regards to establishing if Dartmoor would be suitable and how it would enhance the Moor's biodiversity. Would you or a representative for SWAFH be interested in guest speaking to a group of Foundation degree students whilst also hopefully sparking potential research ideas in this area for the first years to propose for their dissertation?”

Detection of leverets with drone mounted thermal sensors

Laurent Duverge of Kestrel Imaging and Ecological Solutions near Tiverton has been in touch to say he is setting up a company to carry out surveys using a range of UAVs and sensors. Laurent confirms that if we are looking for leverets in long grass, thermal imaging is our only option, as we will be able to spot the contrast of hot bodies against the generally cooler vegetation. He says: “The key issue will be how much definition you will need. For example, if you just need to know where a hotspot (leveret) is, and will then coral and catch it, this could potentially be done with something with not much resolution (and relatively cheap too). I just read an article on such a sensor. I'll contact the makers and see what it can resolve.”

EC Habitats Directive

We have repeatedly asked the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in Scotland for details of the outcome of all prosecutions relating to the mountain hare under this legislation since its inception in 1992, but have received no response. So we have contacted Kenny MacAskill MSP who holds the justice portfolio in the Scottish Government and asked him to deal with our enquiry.

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