

## Phil the pheasant

In his editorial for the May issue of Devon Life Andy Cooper says that he is regularly entertained by a pheasant arriving outside his study window and Andy has christened him Phil. This is by no means the first time that a pheasant has sought human friendship – SWAFH member John Phelps had one called Fred regularly visit his garden in Exeter. So it is sad that 40 million like Phil and Fred are bred and released into the environment annually to be blasted out of the sky for fun by a callous minority, including royalty, who have no constructive use for their leisure time.

## Black bears in peril in Florida

Journalist Abigail Geer writes: The state of Florida is going to open the bear hunting season in October for the first time since 1994, with a planned “harvest” objective of 275 black bears. As humans we have allowed ourselves to believe that we're the most important species on the planet, rather than just one of millions, equally as important and deserving of life. Unlike other animals who kill for survival, we have taken it upon ourselves to do so for convenience, pleasure, and out of a strange idea that nature requires us to in order to maintain the right balance of animals. The proposals will allow hunters to buy a permit (\$100 for Florida residents, \$300 for non-residents) and to murder one bear per permit using crossbows, bows, revolvers, pistols, shotguns and muzzle loading guns, until the quota of 275 bears have been killed.

## Hare hotspots

Wendy Wayne has identified one near Honiton and a farmer has notified us of one near Exeter. More precise details are withheld for security reasons, but we hope to arrange visits by small parties of SWAFH members to one of these sites at some point in the future. Meanwhile, we plan to have picture galleries on our website soon, so if you have any photos taken in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset or Dorset please send them in for inclusion with a credit to you.

## Political analysis by Alan Kirby of POWA - Published 11 April

This is the average of 12 political opinion polls published last week:-

CON 32.3% [-2.1] LAB 33.9% [-2.7] L-D 8.8% [+1.0] UKIP 14.8% [+1.5] GREEN  
4.5% [-0.8]

Last week's figures showing both major parties in the mid 30s didn't feel quite right and this week's polls seem to have applied a correction. But it's been a good week for Labour, with their non-doms tax policy popular, Fallon's personal attack on Ed M. misfiring and the Tory campaign really lacklustre. The figures above, as ever without the SNP effect, would give Labour an overall majority of about 16. SNP seem to have had a post TV debate bounce, though this may be temporary. So I'm revising my guess of Lab losses to SNP up a bit. That would leave Lab about 23 seats short of an overall majority - on about 300 - with the others on roughly these figures - Tories 260, SNP 46. L-Dems 20, UKIP 3, Plaid Cymru 3. There'll be 5/6 N.Ireland MPs Lab could count on, and if they can accommodate Plaid and the L-Ds as well, that could give that combination an overall majority of 6. It's skin-of-the-teeth stuff, but Lab might not actually need to rely too much on SNP. Note my estimates, though I'm trying to be objective, are a bit more optimistic than the latest five projections published. All of these suggest a hung parliament, 2 with Lab as largest party, 2 with Tories and the other a dead heat. Still beware that common late swing back to the incumbents. An overall Lab majority now looks highly unlikely, but Ed M. being PM seems slightly more likely. ENDS

Meanwhile, we have advised Labour ppc for Central Devon, Lynne Richards, of the incumbent Tory MP Mel Stride's intention to vote for a repeal of the Hunting Act, against the wishes of around 80% of the electorate in both town and country (87% in the case of hare hunting and coursing.) Since also MPs receive more letters on animal welfare than any other issue we have suggested to Lynne that she might like to bring the hunting issue out into the open during the last stages of the election campaign

so it is fresh in he minds of voters as they enter the polling booths.

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