

## Re-introduction of mountain hares to Dartmoor

Peter Burgess, Conservation Manager with Devon Wildlife Trust, says he would be very keen to find out more about the project and has asked for further details about the current range of mountain hares, when they are thought to have become extinct on the moor and whether other re-introductions have been successful. Peter says the key element will be securing the interest of the Forest Commoners, Dutchy and Defence Estates. A meeting with Peter will be arranged sometime soon after 22 May.

## Runners injured by snares

A Peak District estate is under pressure to remove more than 100 animal snares from its land after an investigation found that several people had been injured along with scores of hares. In the past five years, four runners claimed to have suffered cuts and bruises after having been caught in the traps which are designed to catch foxes on open-access moorland at Stanage Edge near Bamford in Derbyshire. The most recent incident, involved two members of the Dark Peak Fell Runners group based in Sheffield. The League Against Cruel Sports conducted an investigation at the end of March and said it found more than 100 snares were being used in a highly concentrated area, where numerous mountain hares were found dead. It also found several stink pits, which were filled with dead animals to attract foxes to the snares.

## Election means life or death for our animals

Whether you love or loathe politics, the General Election on May 7, is a matter of life and death for many animals. The badger cull may be halted, continued in the pilot zones or rolled out across the country depending on the outcome. Similarly, the Hunting Act may be strengthened, remain as it is or be scrapped altogether. To help animal-lovers decide where to place their cross, Animal Aid has launched a new website, [www.VoteforAnimals.org.uk](http://www.VoteforAnimals.org.uk)

## Mountain hares - latest letter to Scottish Government

Thank you for your e-mail of 21 April. As we are sure you are aware, since the mountain hare is listed under Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive this places a legal obligation upon the Scottish Government to maintain the species at a "favourable conservation status". This cannot be achieved in the absence of a reliable method of assessing mountain hare populations and we welcome the long overdue research to be conducted in this respect.

Meanwhile, however, the precautionary principle should be invoked and the mountain hare afforded full protection until the research is complete. We are aware that ten wildlife organisations have called for such protection covering a period of three years and we would support that proposal.

Since some populations are already close to extinction it is totally unsatisfactory for their fate to be consigned to estate owners showing "voluntary restraint" on culling. The plight of the mountain hare has been known for at least nine years and these people have had ample opportunity to take remedial measures, but have failed to do so.

<mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk>

## Raptor persecution

We have thanked Natural England for refusing a Northumberland gamekeeper licences to shoot buzzards and sparrowhawks to protect his pheasants. In 2013, Natural England received an application for four licences to shoot 16 buzzards and three sparrowhawks. Natural England rejected the application. In 2014, Natural England refused another licence application, this time to shoot ten buzzards to prevent serious damage to pheasant poults. The gamekeeper, has received financial support from the National Gamekeepers Organisation to bring a judicial review and challenge Natural England's handling of his licence applications.

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