

World Animal Day – 4 October

This date was chosen to celebrate World Animal Day because 4 October is the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of animals. SWAFH is marking the occasion with a campaign to increase awareness in Parliament of the horror of snaring which contributes to the toll of around 12,300 animals being killed by gamekeepers per day. The plan is a hard copy letter to every MP, including Labour, since the Labour Party supports shooting. Prior to David Cameron's attempt to amend the Hunting Act we sent 395 letters to MPs – this time it will be 650.

Assessment of the political scene by Onlooker

On the subject of left wing Jeremy Corbyn I am afraid that if he becomes the new Labour Party leader then it will spell the end of Labour as an electable force in politics and at the 2020 General Election the Tories will have an even bigger overall majority, making the repeal of the 2004 Hunting Act very easy for them. The trade unions are hopeless at psychology and still living in the 1930s, the cloth cap image, instead of the 21st century. I would see the Labour Party at immediate risk of splitting down the middle and possibly a new party, similar to the SDP in the 1980s, materialising from the wreckage, just as the SDP appeared after the 1983 election when the disastrous left wing Labour leader Michael Foot let in unpopular Margaret Thatcher again for an easy victory. Tony Blair showed how to win elections by creating New Labour, which appealed to the centre ground and pulled the rug away from under the feet of the Tories. He also had charisma, which none of the present Labour leadership contenders has. What Labour needs is a counter to Cameron, who is a good actor/salesman, but there is nobody on the horizon and I predict that Cameron's successor, probably George Osborne, will have an easy time at the next General Election.

(Onlooker is quite right in suggesting that charisma is an essential attribute of a political party leader. So in the run-up to the 2010 General Election I wrote to Harriet Harman saying there was no way Labour would win under Gordon Brown and practically pleaded with her to stand for the leadership. However, I think George Osborne is totally lacking in charisma and will not have such an easy time at the next General Election as Onlooker fears. Ed.)

Hazards of lead shot

News from SWAFH Number 13 highlighted the environmental hazards of lead shot, but further information has come to light in Mark Avery's latest excellent book "Inglorious – conflict in the uplands." He states that new findings relate to the fact that small fragments of lead flake off a lead shot pellet or a lead bullet passing through the flesh of a shot bird or mammal. These small fragments are not normally visible to the human eye and cannot be removed from the carcass by butchering as they are so small and spread so widely through the flesh. The lead is therefore ingested when predators or scavengers eat the carcasses of birds or mammals shot with lead ammunition and the same happens if we eat lead-shot game. Scientists and the medical profession state there is no agreed safe level for lead intake and for adults anything over one meal of lead-shot game a week could have critical impacts such as increasing the risk of heart failure. Research by the WWT and RSPB on lead levels in game meat sold in supermarkets and game dealers in the UK showed that all species tested (eg pheasant, partridges, red grouse and rabbits) occasionally had very high lead levels. This and a wealth of further information now available refutes the shooting industry's claim that shot game is healthy food and they are showing irresponsibility in resisting the move away from lead ammunition. Alternatives are up to five or six times more expensive, but this should be no barrier to those willing to spend thousands on a few days killing and maiming sentient beings for fun.

"No Sir, I don't give 'em hell. I just tell the truth and they think it's hell."

President Harry S. Truman

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