

Advocates for hares

Our member Marian Hussenbux has made the very valid point that in the consultation process about culling the Scottish Government should include organisations which advocate for hares. At present only so-called “moorland management” groups are involved and they claim the hares harbour a virus which kills grouse chicks. This simply serves the interests of an elite minority to kill for fun whereas a far greater section of the general public would prefer a benign enjoyment of Scotland's wildlife, including the mountain hares. At the next opportunity we will convey to the Scottish Government that their consultation process is out of balance as Marian describes.

Independent enquiry

Following the scandalous failure of the Procurator Fiscal to prosecute for a snaring offence as described in newsletter number 69 we have written to MP for Central Devon, Mel Stride asking for advice on how an independent enquiry into the enforcement of wildlife law, or rather the lack of it, might be set up. The snaring incident was by no means an isolated case. With regard to the Hunting Act, in particular, the Crown Prosecution Service has often failed to act despite strong evidence of illegal hunting having been gathered by hunt monitors. Under such circumstances it is no surprise that the RSPCA or LACS have stepped in with private prosecutions and have attracted unfair criticism for doing so.

Campaign to ban snares

OneKind is gathering signatures for an open letter to the next Scottish Environment Minister, calling for a ban on snares, and would be very grateful if you would sign it and circulate to your contacts, especially if they are in Scotland. Further details can be found here:

www.onekind.org/campaigns/justice_for_the_glenogil_foxes

For more information on wildlife crime Mike Rendle draws our attention to this website:

www.wildlifecrimeaware.org

The EU and wildlife protection

Europe's natural habitats are continuing to deteriorate and an increasing number of wild species are seriously threatened. Much of this is as a result of development and agricultural intensification.

The EU plays a crucial role in developing policy and legislation to protect the environment and meet its objective for sustainable development. The EU has specific targets for biodiversity conservation with legislative protection for key habitats and species. EU legislation relates to a wide range of issues, including biodiversity, farming and forestry, fisheries, air pollution, waste and climate change. As a Member State, the UK Government provides evidence and expertise to develop policies and is responsible (together with the other Member States Governments) for agreeing and implementing EU legislation. The EU and global biodiversity targets are partly delivered through a range of legislative measures, which place obligations on Member States to protect biodiversity and the natural environment. The EU and Member States have shared legal competence - shared responsibility in forming and implementing legislation for the environment. In relation to wildlife and nature conservation, two key Directives have been adopted by the European Union, namely: Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds and Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

The main aim of the Habitats Directive is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species listed on the Annexes to the Directive at a favourable conservation status, introducing *robust protection for those habitats and species of European importance*. The mountain hare is listed in Annex V of the Directive as a “species of community interest” and we are arguing that the mass culling it has suffered for many years and highlighted in recent months is inconsistent with the level of protection it should receive under EU law.

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