

Close encounters

Following on from the one reported in newsletter 77 Gill Turner sent in the following:

“Yes, this is a regular thing with hares. I work with the sun behind me and hares rarely look up above knee level. Having your boots sniffed is a joy. The hare in the film looks very young. I have had a similar thing with foxes, they give the impression that they have something on their mind and walk round you then carry on.”

DNA evidence nails hare coursers

Several years ago we suggested it might be feasible to match DNA in dog saliva found on hare coursing victims with suspect dogs and we were in touch with Dr Rob Ogden of Wildlife DNA Services regarding this possibility. So we are now pleased to report the first conviction ever in Scotland secured by DNA evidence taken from a hunting dog. Three men, all from Aberdeen, admitted hare coursing charges at Forfar Sherriff Court recently. Colin Stewart was jailed for four and a half months which was also the first custodial sentence handed down in Scotland for hare coursing. The court was told police found the three dogs being used and took swabs for DNA analysis. Post-mortem examinations carried out on the hare they had killed revealed DNA matching one of the dogs. Police had intervened, after being contacted by a witness.

Hare coursing alert

Now that many cereal crops have been harvested this provides ideal conditions for coursing and members of the public should keep a lookout when walking in the countryside. Groups of people in two or more 4x4 vehicles with “long dogs” such as lurchers or greyhounds in attendance are a very strong indication of coursing activity. Some of these people are extremely nasty individuals and on no account should they be approached, but vehicle details passed to the police. If coursing is actually seen taking place then the police should be called on 999 not 101.

Call for National Trust not to replace grouse shooting tenant

The National Trust owns 8,000 hectares of moorland around Kinder Scout, Bleaklow and Ladybower Reservoir in the Derbyshire Peak District. It's popular for tourists, walkers and runners who love these open landscapes. You might think they are all wild, healthy habitats, rich in wildlife and untouched by human hand. The reality couldn't be further from the truth (at least, not on those moors that are managed for grouse-shooting). There it can be more like a wildlife war-zone, where only the grouse are allowed to live in peace. Nothing is allowed to exist on these moors if it conflicts with profitable grouse-shooting. This includes birds of prey like the peregrine falcon, goshawk and hen harrier, as well as the mountain hare. All on National Trust land too. Please sign the petition here:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/no-moor-management-for-grouse-shooting-on-two-national-trust-estates-in-derbyshire>

Mark Avery v Marks and Spencer

M&S says:

All M&S game products, and this would include red grouse if we took the decision to stock it, are hand inspected to minimise risk of excessive shot and any risk to our customers .

Mark says:

So, M&S tell me how inspecting a grouse carcass from the outside tells you how much lead there is on the inside? You cannot tell how much lead there is in a game carcass by looking at it and the variation in lead levels is huge and only loosely related even to the number of lead shot inside the carcass, so X-raying it wouldn't help that much either. As I have told you before, if you sell grouse meat in your stores the first customer will be me and I will get your meat, knowingly sold in your stores, independently tested in a laboratory. And then you can explain to your customers why they have very high lead levels and why you have ignored all the evidence on this subject.