

Driven grouse shooting

At the time of writing Mark Avery's petition for a ban has 118,000 signatures and qualifies for a debate in Parliament. This is an extremely important development for mountain hares which, along with raptorial birds, suffer relentless persecution to maximise the number of victims available to a wealthy elite who follow this sordid pastime. Roseanna Cunningham, the Scottish environment secretary, has ordered an enquiry after eight golden eagles vanished in an area of the Monadhliath mountains known for its grouse shooting.

Re-introduction of water voles

The National Trust will release 100 of the endangered animals, at Malham Tarn in the Yorkshire where they have not been seen for for 50 years. Having been bred in captivity, the animals will spend two days in large cages on the fringes of their new home. On the third day, the doors will be opened, with food placed on rafts in the water to encourage the voles to leave the cages and burrow in the banks. After five days, the cages will be removed altogether. This "soft release" protocol with supplementary food and initial enclosure at the release site is similar to the one we envisage for the re-introduction of mountain hares to Dartmoor. Former Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe has thanked us for our care for hares and will be kept in the loop as this project progresses.

The Fate of the Badger by Dr Richard Meyer

Subject of an updated reprint largely owing to the efforts of Mike Rendle this book will interest those of you involved in the campaign against badger culling. Aiming to break even cost-wise, this not-for-profit venture aims to get the truth about badger culling to a new and wider audience. Dominic Dyer, CEO of the Badger Trust says: "every key issue in Richard's book is as relevant today as when he put pen to paper 30 years ago. If our political leaders and the farming industry had taken note of Richard's wise insight, today we would not be seeing tens of millions of pounds wasted on killing mostly TB free badgers in a cruel culling policy which has no scientific or animal welfare justification." Further details are here:

www.fire-raven.co.uk

Humane hare trap

Hares are very susceptible to the effects of stress and can die soon after a traumatic event such as capture or pursuit or following a delay of several days. Claims by hunters and coursers that the hare is either killed or escapes unscathed are false. So a humane method of capture will be the most challenging aspect of our re-introduction to Dartmoor project and it is possible this could be solved by using a wooden trap developed in the 18th century. This was baited with food, but not set, so the hares could feed and then pass through. This was repeated several times and since the trap was made of wood the theory was that it absorbed the hares' scent in the process. The trap was then set and the hare caught with minimal stress. Again, that was the theory. But almost certainly the method was more welfare friendly than the use of netting which can cause broken limbs as the hares struggle to escape.

The other aspect of trapping which needs to be addressed is that orphaned leverets could be left behind. A reduced risk could be obtained by conducting the translocation outside the main breeding period, but the most effective measure would be to release all lactating females at the donor site. It is a fair assumption that all lactating females have dependent young, but we would be erring on the side of caution.

Sponsorship / Fundraising

Is there anyone willing to take this on? We currently await a response from Lush but there are many other companies and other sources of funding we could approach.

OneKind

We will be hosting their campaign for better protection of the mountain hare on our stand at the Animal Aid Christmas Fayre in Exeter on Saturday 19 November.

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