

From the hunt monitors:

We know Rodney worries that few hare hunts are monitored. Thought you would like to know that today (12.11.16) we monitored the Four Shires Basset Hounds on Jeremy Clarkson's land, near Chipping Norton. (No sign of the ghastly Clarkson). They did absolutely no hunting. Monitors followed their every move, along bridleways and footpaths and also watched them from the road. They seemed to be somewhat paralysed and only walked the hounds, not stopping at all. When a hound picked up a scent it was immediately whipped off the scent. They even marched the hounds through the village. Very satisfying! After striding about for a couple of hours they went home! Apparently the female whipper-in is an MP's daughter, and there is a QC amongst them. Well, we thought they looked a right motley crew! In fact a group of Berkshire sabs often, indeed mainly, look at hare hunts.

Species Champion Initiative in Scottish Parliament

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On 8 November there was a debate in the Scottish Parliament, introduced by Graeme Dey MSP. The motion of the debate was :

“ That the Parliament welcomes the re-launch of the Species Champions initiative; understands that Scottish Environment LINK is asking MSPs to become Species Champions so that they can contribute to the conservation of their species in Parliament and help support action in the wider community; welcomes at least 50 members from across all five parties in the Parliament who have already signed up to the initiative, and understands that, in order to help protect biodiversity in Angus South and across Scotland, Scottish Environment LINK hopes that those members who are yet to get involved will be able to do so.”

A series of cross-party MSPs have signed up to be Species Champions, all standing up and giving 3 minute speeches about their adopted species, their importance to Scotland's biodiversity, what significant threats they face and what action has been taken to protect them. Several MSPs used their time to highlight the threat of persecution on driven grouse moors, including Mark Ruskell MSP (white-tailed eagle Species Champion) and Mairi Evans MSP (hen harrier Species Champion). Alison Johnstone MSP, who is Species Champion for the brown hare, also referenced the large scale and routine culling of mountain hares on driven grouse moors. She urged Environment Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham to consider using her powers to introduce a Nature Conservation Order to prohibit these culls within the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park.

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Brownfield development may help the brown hare!

Loss of habitat has been the most important cause of the 75% national population decline suffered by the brown hare since the 1960s. So we are greatly encouraged by the new president of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Emma Bridgewater, calling on CPRE supporters to get behind a campaign to persuade the Government to introduce a new, national “brownfield first” approach to development. Having brought an abandoned Victorian pottery factory back to life in Stoke-on-Trent, Emma is a passionate advocate for urban regeneration as the best way to protect our precious countryside and to enhance our towns and cities. Recently, CPRE published important new research on brownfield land availability across England. Based on government data, their findings show that there are enough suitable brownfield sites to provide between 1.1 and 1.4 million new homes, a big increase on the number they previously estimated. This powerful new evidence further bolsters their calls for national planning policies that ensure brownfield development is prioritised over greenfield development.

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Scandal of subsidised grouse shooting estates

<mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk> England's vast grouse shooting estates receive millions of pounds in public subsidies according to an investigation by Friends of the Earth. Thirty of the estates received £4m of taxpayer's money between them in 2014, the year examined by the pressure group, including one owned by the Duke of Westminster, the richest landowner in Britain with land holdings estimated to be worth £9bn. The

campaigners, who argue that grouse moor management harms the environment and wildlife, found the moors cover over half a million acres, an area equivalent to all the land within the M25, Greater London and parts of the home counties. The estates are owned by a mixture of lords, dukes, earls and barons as well as bankers, businessmen and firms based in offshore tax havens.

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