



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

PROTECT

Nº 26

OCTOBER 2020

END SHOOTING OF ANIMALS FOR 'SPORT'

How reporting animal crime can boost our campaigns to shut down the shooting industry.

WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES

Despite the human pandemic, wildlife on our sanctuaries continues to flourish.

SCOTLAND SHOWCASE

Join us to celebrate the end to the mass killing of mountain hares in Scotland.



WELCOME

Last year was a superb year for us and we had hoped to bring you the good news face-to-face at our AGM. However, assuring the safety of our members – many of whom are in the most at risk group – must be our top priority. Therefore we have taken the decision to cancel the AGM this year, in line with Charity Commission guidance and with its express permission. The future is not certain and with regular changes to the pandemic rules and control measures, we wanted to bring certainty and avoid any potential wasted payments, were we forced to cancel later on.

While we are disappointed not to bring you the news of our successes in person, we have captured all we did last year in our Annual Report and Accounts and Impact Report, which can be found in the *Latest* section of our website. They tell of a League that is doing exactly what our members, supporters and the majority of the wider public expect.

Turning to 2020, the pandemic has resulted in a seismic change for many charities. The nature of our work has always required resilience, which together with our swift reactions has ensured the charity has avoided the worst effects of the pandemic. Our professional investigators are in the field, our sanctuaries protected, our output is, once again, gaining traction and hundreds of new people each month commit to supporting us. There has rarely been a time when our voice for animals is more needed.

Thanks for your support. We are in good shape and with our full staff in place, we are more determined than ever to stop cruel sports.



Dr Tim Holmes
Chair



Andy Knott MBE
Chief Executive



CONTENTS

Features

Scotland Showcase	3
The Changing Face of Campaigning	6
The Power of the Public	8
Illegal Trap Discovery	10
Ethical Gifts	12

Regulars

Sanctuaries Update	14
Poet in Residence	16
Photography Competition	18
League in Action	20
Animal Advocates	22



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END
HUNTING
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SCOTLAND SHOWCASE

Revive is a coalition of like-minded organisations, including the League, working for grouse moor reform in Scotland. This Scotland Showcase details our recent success for the animals caught in the circle of destruction that surrounds the driven grouse shooting industry.



END TO THE MASS KILLING OF MOUNTAIN HARES IN SCOTLAND

While the UK was in the midst of a freedom-restricting lockdown, the mountain hare in Scotland was awarded a new lease of life.

In June, the *Mountain Hare amendment to Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill* was passed which heralds the end of recreational killing and mass culling of this iconic species.

The intensive management of grouse moors in Scotland, it would seem, stops at nothing to maintain the land for a single species no matter what impact that has on wider ecology.

This amendment offers legal protection to one of Scotland's most iconic species and we're obviously delighted the Scottish Parliament has voted in its favour. While the government is still to consult stakeholders, like us, on a licensing system for mountain hare culls, it is clear that it should end as a cruel sport and the League will do whatever we can.

Mountain hares are subjected to the most appalling cruelty and are one of a number of species eradicated on an industrial scale to ensure grouse numbers are kept unnaturally high for 'sport' shooting.



Revive is a coalition of like-minded organisations working for grouse moor reform in Scotland. Coalition partners include the League, Common Weal, OneKind, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Raptor Persecution UK. To find out more visit www.revive.scot





CALCULATING CRUELTY

A field study of Scotland's hidden shame

The League has published the most comprehensive and robust field study of ground predator control on Scotland's shooting estates - the Calculating Cruelty report - and the results show that up to a million animals are killed each year in Scotland to ensure more grouse can be shot for 'sport'.

57,000

killing devices deployed each day in Scotland representing the equivalent of over **10,000,000** active trapping and snaring days per year.



Up to a **quarter of a million** animals are killed each year in an attempt to totally eradicate foxes, stoats, weasels and crows solely to increase the number of grouse.



Nearly half

of the animals killed are non-target species such as hedgehogs, dippers and mistle thrush.



Like us, we're sure you will find these figures shocking and appalling. The Calculating Cruelty report leaves us in absolutely no doubt that managing such large parts of Scottish moorland for an industry which makes a woefully low contribution to the economy is entirely misguided and outdated.

It must stop once and for all, starting with a complete ban on all traps and snares. Thanks to your ongoing support, we will continue to put the spotlight on the circle of destruction that surrounds Scotland's driven-grouse moors.

You can download the full Calculating Cruelty report at www.league.org.uk/calculatingcruelty

CELEBRATING SUCCESS.

New owners of the Kildrummy Estate - used as one part of the field study in the Calculating Cruelty report - have announced their plans to rewild parts of the land and end wildlife persecution. They said;

“We applaud the study done by the League Against Cruel Sports and support their mission to create greater transparency and accountability for the treatment of wildlife.”

The significant results of our campaigning efforts are only possible thanks to your support.

On behalf of the animals we serve to protect, thank you for your ongoing commitment and compassion.



END
HUNTING

THE CHANGING FACE OF CAMPAIGNING

How COVID-19 has affected our efforts to ban hunting on National Trust land and how we have refocused our campaigning goals in 2020.

This year our campaigns team has been primarily focusing on the land denial aspect of hunting, working on the premise that if hunts are not able to access public land, their activities would be severely curtailed.

To do this we asked for your help. In January, before the looming crisis of Covid-19 forced us to refocus, we asked you to use our new interactive map on our website to search for the hunts that operate in your area and use our online form to contact your councillors to urge them to ban hunting on public land.

You may also have seen our extensive campaign to persuade the National Trust to end hunting on its land.

Hundreds of you who are National Trust members pledged your support for a motion to go to the Trust's annual general meeting (AGM), originally scheduled for October this year, to ban 'trail' hunting. That motion was accepted by the National Trust, which should have meant it would be debated by its membership and, ultimately, put to a vote.

Your response to our calls to action was incredible and inspired us all to keep going despite having to work from home and deal with the personal pressures the pandemic brought.

We're determined to keep talking about all the ways in which 'trail' hunting is just a cover for illegal fox hunting. We've been issuing new videos and news stories every fortnight showing how it's just a sham.

After all, if 'trail' hunting is real, why are foxes still being killed by hounds? Why do hounds run amok on busy roads and trespass on railways? And why do we keep getting so many reports of foxes being killed by hunts?



Unfortunately the National Trust's AGM has been pushed back to next year, but we were heartened to hear the motions accepted this year will be carried over to next. Our work – and your support – has not been wasted.

Not only that, but our land denial work which we began in January will continue into the winter and beyond, as we once again urge councils to ban hunting on their land.

We have a shortlist we will be targeting, so please keep reading our communications for more information about how, once again, you can help directly protect animals from harm.

The pandemic may have changed the world, but your support throughout this turbulent time has meant our work can continue unabated. Thank you.

KEEP UP TO DATE

Register your email to receive the latest news:

www.league.org.uk

THE POWER OF THE PUBLIC

How reporting animal crime can boost our campaign to end the dark side of the shooting industry

THE GRUESOME REALITY OF THE SHOOTING INDUSTRY

One day in early July, a 16-year-old girl and her mother decided to go on a bike ride in the Suffolk countryside. The pair made a gruesome discovery.

They found a 'stink pit' – a horrific device used by gamekeepers to lure predators like foxes to their deaths. Why? To protect pheasants being reared on a 'game' estate nearby.

Pheasants that will be shot anyway.

She reported what she saw to our supporter-funded Animal Crimewatch service, and our professional investigators swooped into action, monitoring the pit for evidence of illegal activity.

Speaking to us after the evidence had been gathered, Georgia, from Bury St Edmunds, said she cried when she found the massive pit.

“We were feeling uneasy, but we went down there anyway and there were some animal cages and one of those blue pheasant feeders.

“There was this massive pit of carcasses filled with squirrels, crows, pheasants and foxes.





“It was horrible. We started to ride away but then we thought something needs to be done about this, so we took photographs.

“Even when we cycled on the main road it just stank. I cried. I want to be a conservationist or ecologist and it was just really horrible.”

WE ARE CAMPAIGNING TO SEE ALL SNARES BANNED.

We believe killing animals just to protect birds that are being reared purely to be shot for fun makes no sense at all. It's death for the sake of more death.

Stink pits are the dark side of commercial shooting that most people don't see. The one Georgia discovered had snares placed deliberately at each corner which meant no hungry animal could escape unscathed.

This stink pit shows how easily the guidelines on snares from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs are ignored; it's time these cruel traps were outlawed completely and thanks to your support our campaigning continues.



OUR ANIMAL CRIMEWATCH CONTACT NUMBER HAS CHANGED:



0300 444 1234



www.league.org.uk/animal-crimewatch



PROTECTED BY YOU; ILLEGAL TRAP SPOTTED AND REPORTED

Thanks to an eagle-eyed member of the public reporting it to us, a large shooting estate in County Durham was given a warning by police for using an illegal trap.

They got in touch with our Animal Crimewatch service after finding a dead stoat in a Fenn trap on land belonging to the Raby Estate, owned by Lord Barnard. Acting on this information our intelligence team built a case to give to Durham Police, who subsequently spoke to the landowner and had the illegal trap removed.

Gamekeepers use traps to control mammals that would naturally predate stocks of grouse or pheasant, protecting the birds only for them to be shot out of the sky once the season begins.

But this distinction will mean nothing to the many stoats that will inevitably be killed in these indiscriminate devices. The real problem is that these and many other animals are killed on a huge scale to ensure that there are more birds to be shot for entertainment.

It has been illegal to use Fenn traps to catch stoats since April 1 this year, but they can still be used legally to control squirrel and rat populations, for example.

A spokesperson for Durham Constabulary said: “**We received reports of a suspected illegal Fenn trap in the Teesdale area and on investigation, found it was illegal and the trap subsequently removed by the landowner.**”



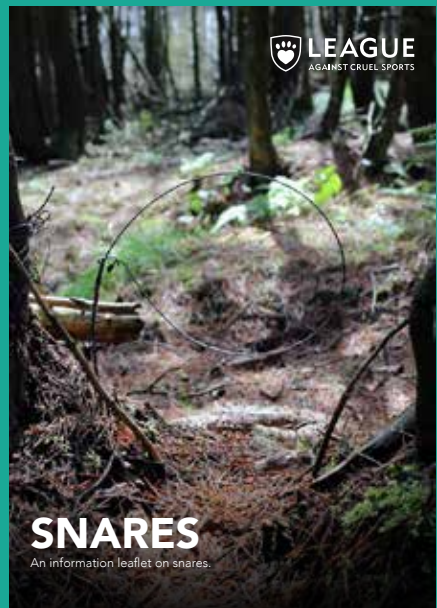
Help us help them

www.league.org.uk/useful-information

Would you know if hare coursing was happening near you? Could you identify the tell-tale signs of a dog being forced to fight, or know what action you could take if you come across an illegal snare?

Our suite of information leaflets give you access to everything you need to know to identify and report animal-related crime.

We don't like people who hurt animals, and we don't like people who break the law. You can help us uncover animal-related crime and bring justice to those persecuted in the name of 'sport'.



CONTACT ANIMAL CRIMEWATCH

 0300 444 1234

 www.league.org.uk/animal-crimewatch



**ANIMAL
CRIMEWATCH**



GIFTS AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

ETHICAL GIFTS FOR ANIMAL LOVERS

Show your love of animals this holiday season by giving one of our Gifts Against Cruel Sports.

From vegan T-shirts to organic canvas tote bags, our Gifts Against Cruel Sports range starts from just £4 and is guaranteed to please all who receive them.

What's more, we work with ethical suppliers to ensure our exclusive range of products supports more than just animals at risk of cruel sports.





Order your Gifts Against Cruel Sports now:
www.league.org.uk/shop



UK DELIVERY RATES:

Gift order value up to £25 = £3.75 delivery rate
Gift order value over £25 = £5.75 delivery rate

For delivery
before Christmas
orders need to be
placed by the 11th
December



SILVER LININGS

by Head of Conservation & Education, Paul Tillsley.

Despite the current human-made crisis, wildlife on the League's sanctuaries has continued to flourish.

This year's birdbox survey in Barlynch Wood on Baronsdown yielded some very interesting results. As usual, we are most grateful to Lucy, who makes numerous visits to get the survey completed and who gives her time and expertise for free. More than 160 young birds, mostly blue tits and pied flycatchers, successfully fledged this year. Pied flycatchers numbers have seriously declined nationally in recent years, so it is gratifying that they are doing well on Baronsdown.

Two of this year's breeding birds were first ringed in Barlynch Wood in 2016, which means they have flown four times back and forth to tropical Africa, clocking up twelve thousand air miles along the way. One female pied flycatcher that had her seven eggs predated, went on to lay four more eggs in another box, which then fledged successfully. The resilience of nature in the face of adversity is quite amazing.





Living on-site gives me a front row seat for the sights, sounds and smells that the rut brings. The primeval bellowing of stags, as they size each other up, resounds around the fields and woodlands and is accompanied by a heady cocktail of testosterone, urine and other bodily fluids that the hinds evidently find irresistible. As in any battle, individual stags have different strategies. Some get in early, take what is available and leave, like a Viking raiding party, whereas others bide their time looking for the right moment to join the fray. For all their posturing and showmanship none of the stags wants to sustain a serious injury, which could prove life-threatening.

It has generally been a good summer for wildlife on the League's sanctuaries. I cannot remember a year when I have seen more fox cubs than this one and seeing a weasel, stoat and polecat on Baronsdown was a real treat. A strong and varied predator population is a good sign of a healthy ecosystem and it is testament to the League's brand of compassionate nature conservation.

As we move into autumn, the main event is always the red deer rut. It is the time when mature stags from around the area descend on Baronsdown and some of the other League sanctuaries to vie for the opportunity to sire the next generation. After a few preliminary visits to check out the readiness of the hinds, shorter and cooler days finally signal that conditions are right for the action to commence.

One positive outcome of the restrictions on people gathering together has been a reduction in the amount of fox and deer hunting that has been going on around the League's sanctuaries. From August through to May we are usually constantly looking over our shoulders in case a hunt turns up on our doorstep and the curtailment of some of their activities has been a bonus for us, as I am sure it also has been for wildlife.

It seems that even the darkest clouds do have a silver lining.

Exmoor is well known for being a hunting and shooting hotspot. Thanks to your support, our sanctuaries offer a safe haven for persecuted wildlife.

POET IN RESIDENCE

Ronnie Goodyer, prizewinning poet and our very own Poet in Residence, has published another joint collection with his partner Dawn Bauling.



“Walking through Ronnie’s poetic landscapes is like discovering a new set of senses”

‘Forest moor or less’ is described as a love song to nature and themselves. The collection has won Book of the Month (Poetry Kit, July 2020), been described as ‘the perfect antidote to this year’s troubles’ and has received wonderful accolades and reviews:

“A great way to start the weekend” – Sir Elton John

“Wonderful poems in this gem of a collection” – Gyles Brandreth

Ronnie and Dawn are veritable animal advocates; not only does this collection raise awareness of the plight of flora and fauna but every book sale raises funds for the League. We are grateful to Ronnie and Dawn for their commitment to animals persecuted in the name of ‘sport’.

Ronnie has observed that one of the few benefits of this year’s restrictions has been the countryside developing naturally again, the birdsong louder, deer and fox more visible, living natural lives as is their right. The following poem depicts this sentiment:



Rebirth on the Mystic Moor

New birdsong in this bracken-oak
New gold upon the distant tor
And peeling back the hunters' choke
There's rebirth on the mystic moor
The dew-soaked, deer-cloaked, mystic moor

The dog-fox darting out to greet it
River's water angel-bright
Penetrating darkness underneath it
Rainbow flows of freefall light
Earth-fed, birth-red, freefall light

Running now by gorse and hawthorn
Spitting its spray at vixen yawning
Passing the buck and doe and fawn
It clicks the keys of this new dawn morning
Spray-making, day-breaking, new dawn morning

So leave the troubles of mankind
And follow me from moor to sea
Here there is a soul to find
Join the dawn and join it free
New gold upon the distant tor
There's rebirth on the mystic moor

If you would like to purchase the 'Forest moor or less' collection, please visit www.indigodreams.co.uk. £2 per book sale is donated to us to support our aims to end hunting, shooting and animal fighting.

PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION WINNERS

This year was a challenging time as restrictions were laid down on our way of life. But a bright side became clear, quite quickly - nature had flourished. In July, in celebration of this opportunity for wildlife, we launched our second photography competition. We invited you to take a snapshot of the beautiful birds, marvellous mammals and wondrous wildlife in your local area so we could preserve this era of peace and prosperity for animals.



“Photography is such a powerful story-telling tool. With an image you can get your audience to really immerse themselves in an environment wherever they may be and to hopefully sympathise or better understand the subject. I was really pleased to have been a judge for this year’s photography competition, well done to everyone who entered!”

Megan McCubbin, League Youth Ambassador

WINNER – BEAUTIFUL BIRDS CATEGORY



Bearded Tit at Sunrise - **Donna Joyce, Maidstone**



WINNER – MARVELLOUS MAMMALS



Little Vixen - **Helen Schofield, Sutton**

WINNER – WONDROUS WILDLIFE



Bee Free - **Clive Davies, Barnet**



LEAGUE IN ACTION

ANOTHER TRACK BITES THE DUST

Good news for the greyhounds of the North West as Belle Vue Greyhound Stadium in Manchester has closed its doors for the last time, and the last track to close in the North West.

Stadium owners Arena Racing Company issued a statement confirming the closure, stating there is 'no longer a business case to support the ongoing operation of the stadium'.

Belle Vue is the latest greyhound track to close in the UK, following Birmingham and Wimbledon closing for good in recent years.

Congratulations to all the individuals who have campaigned tirelessly for the stadium's closure over the years, giving up their time to raise awareness of the plight of greyhounds. Thank you for helping us close the door on greyhound racing.



RECOGNITION FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS



Organisations succeed when they put their people first. Fair pay is absolutely key to this, as are good working conditions and practices, employee well being, ethical sourcing and commitment to customers.

The League, recently recognised as one of the best charities to work for in the UK, is proud to join the Good Business Charter. Our inclusion in this excellent initiative is an essential part of our ongoing commitment to, and recognition of, our dedicated staff.

This initiative will help everyone in our charity thrive, and the animals we serve to protect survive.



LEAGUE IN ACTION

STOP DELAYING VITAL BILL

This summer we urged the Government to stand by promises it made a year ago to increase custodial sentences for animal abusers.

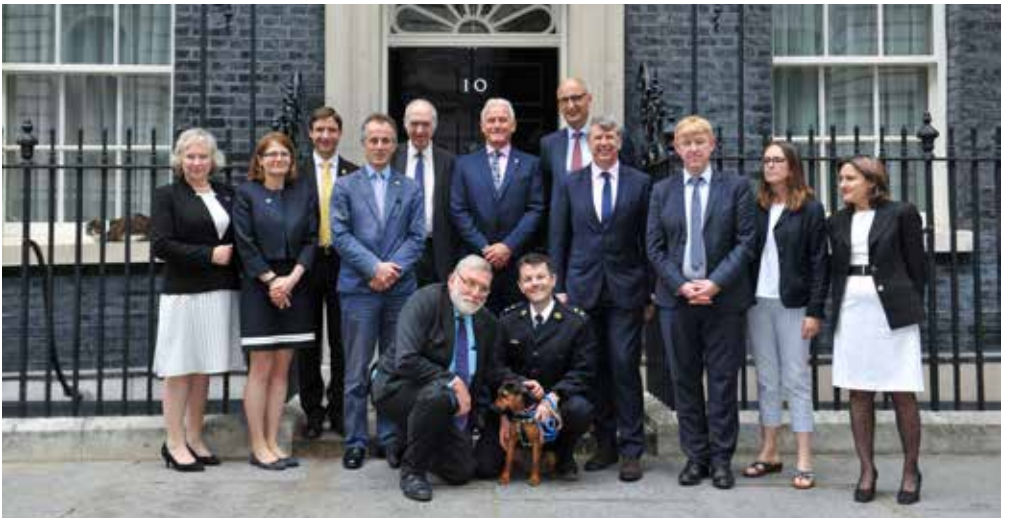
You may remember we led a delegation of animal welfare charities to Number 10 to urge the government to stand by its promise to push the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill through Parliament.

But despite then-environment secretary Michael Gove promising the Bill would be heard, a year on and animals are still being treated cruelly with next to no deterrent for the perpetrators, and the Bill is not scheduled to be heard until the end of October.

We, plus the RSPCA and nine other charities, were determined to hold the government to account and were delighted to receive the assurance that the Bill would go through parliament.

A year on and those assurances are ringing hollow. In fact, we've been waiting since September 2017 when Michael Gove first announced a change in sentencing for animal cruelty. In the meantime animals across the country are still being injured or killed at the hands of people who will not face a proper punishment for their crimes.

Until there is a proper deterrent this abuse will simply continue.





ANIMAL ADVOCATES

Even though many sporting and campaigning events are on hold due to the pandemic, there are still many ways you can demonstrate your dedication as an animal advocate. Your financial support goes a long way to help us continue to fight for animal welfare, in a climate where many other charities are facing closure. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to animals.

Sign up to stay up to date

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date on all the work you are helping us do for animals. And if you sign up for email updates at www.league.org.uk you will receive the latest news straight to your inbox.



Game for animals

www.league.org.uk/leaguelotto

From just £1 a week, you can play the League Lotto and be in with a chance of winning a weekly jackpot of £25,000! You can play for good, knowing your money will go towards protecting animals from cruel sports, to help build a kinder society towards animals.

THE LEAGUE
LOTTO 

Pay tribute to a loved one

www.league.org.uk/in-memoriam

From a lifelong friend, to a partner or a pet, a dedicated gift in memory can help you treasure their uniqueness and the special memories you have.

Each thoughtful gift in memory bequeathed to the League will go towards protecting animals who are persecuted in the name of 'sport'.

Help build a kinder society for tomorrow

www.league.org.uk/legacies

To leave a gift in your will is a meaningful and significant way of protecting animals today and long into the future. You'll be ensuring that after you're gone, you'll still be inspiring change and creating a kinder society. You will have a place in our future and the future of the wildlife and animals you love. Download our guide to gifts in wills or contact us on 01483 524 250 for a printed copy or for a conversation that will be treated with strictest confidence.



Reach for the skies

Congratulations to Karen, one of our wonderful supporters and an ardent animal advocate, for her recent sponsored sky dive. She braved a jump from 10,000 ft and her efforts raised over £1,000 for the League and Samaritans.

Thank you Karen for maintaining the momentum for animals during these challenging times!

If you would like to raise money for animals please contact fundraising@league.org.uk



GET IN TOUCH

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League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1095234) and Scotland (no. SC045533)