

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-dartmoor-national-park>

Privatisation of Dartmoor!

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Dartmoor National Park is under threat after government budget cuts of 40% enforced staff reductions of 25%. The government is also introducing the National Parks Governance Bill in Parliament which is rumoured to be a back door privatisation of the national parks. Further details and a petition to sign are here: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-dartmoor-national-park>

Snares: feedback sent to Shadow Environment Secretary, Maria Eagle:

We have read a summary of Labour's plans to protect animals and are very disappointed that Labour makes no commitment to a total ban on snares. Snares are inherently cruel because they result in terrified animals being trapped for up to 24 hours without food, water or shelter and helpless to attack by predators. The maximum legal 24 hour inspection period is already widely ignored, so reducing it to a period consistent with acceptable welfare and which gamekeepers can reasonably be expected to observe is a hopeless cause.

General Election

Alan Kirby, political expert with Protect Our Wild Animals assesses the current state of the parties as follows:

This is the average of 14 political opinion polls published recently - CON 32% LAB 33.9% L-D 7.9% UKIP 13.9% GREEN 5.3% These figures would be likely to give Labour an overall majority of around 20 seats - but for the SNP fly-in-the ointment. I'm guessing Lab are going to lose about 23 seats to the Nats, which in this scenario just deprives Lab of its overall majority, but leaves them with a choice of options to form a government. Still, quite encouraging, but remember there's normally some drift back to the governing party in the last week or two of the campaign.

Hare shooting

A recent report in the Sunday Times said that brown hares are vanishing from Britain's countryside because they are being shot for sport in the hundreds of thousands. Sporting estates are holding lucrative hare-shooting parties to generate income after the season for game birds such as pheasants ends in February, the report says. Shooters typically pay £200-£400 a day to kill hares. Last year about 350,000 were shot out of a total population of 750,000. A few decades ago there were an estimated 4m hares in Britain, so the population has already fallen by more than 80%.

In Scotland both the brown hare and mountain hare have close seasons but in England and Wales the brown hare remains the only game species without a close season to protect nursing mothers. This results in a conservative estimate of 37,000 orphaned leverets dying of starvation annually. In reply to our recent letter on the issue, Mel Stride (Con. Central Devon) said that Defra has asked the Law Commission to review wildlife legislation and this will include the question as to whether Ministers should have the power to create close seasons for animals such as hares.

A celebration of spring

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops; - on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

William Wordsworth 1780 - 1850

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