

## **Animal Aid Christmas Fayre 21 November**

We made a profit of £205.61 at this event which, as usual, was very well attended. 36 people voted in favour of the re-introduction of mountain hares to Dartmoor and none against. Our “Detect and Conserve” project using drone mounted thermal imaging to detect leverets hidden in grass fields created a great deal of interest and our drone was on display. One visitor to our stand remarked that it is heartening to see such technology utilised to save lives rather than take them, as so often reported in the press these days. Many thanks to Clare Meiklejohn for her assistance on our stand and to Keren Neal for helping to construct our display boards which otherwise would have been a total disaster! Cards were generously donated by wildlife artists Ros Farrell and Valerie Briggs who also donated a beautiful print of Moondancing Hares. It is also worth noting that, again as usual, delicious vegan food was available at this event, much of it being indistinguishable from non-vegan.

## **Drone update**

We are having problems getting the drone and controller to talk to each other and grateful to West Sandford resident Micha Schwope for sorting this out. When decided on a thermal camera to go for we will need to conduct trials on scanning fields with different topography and with simulated leverets deployed. This could perhaps be achieved using microwaveable soft toys. Having regard to the field of view of the camera we would need to establish the distance between each pass of the drone across the field and perhaps place markers along the field edge. Leverets remain our prime target and define the sensitivity parameters of our system, but if we detect other wildlife with a larger thermal signature then that would be a bonus. All this we hope to achieve in time for the next silage cutting season commencing in May 2016. If we can demonstrate that we have a viable, cost effective system then we hope it will be taken up throughout the UK and other EU countries. Ideally, we would hope that scanning fields for wildlife becomes standard practice on farms before any form of harvesting is carried out. Special thanks to our leveret re-habilitation expert in Ireland, Mike Rendle, for his enthusiastic support of the project.

## **Lead shot**

Recent news of a petition to the Government on this subject prompted the following comments:

“Absolutely bloody disgraceful that the shooting industry gets away with contaminating our environment with a toxic heavy metal that wouldn't be tolerated in any other sector.” **Mike Rendle**

“Hard to believe they still do this.” **Elaine Hollingsworth**

## **Trail of Lies exposed**

A recent investigation by IFAW has shown that 99% of hunts do not follow a trail. Apart from certain types of exempt hunting trail hunting is the only legal alternative to hunting live quarry allowed by the Hunting Act 2004. IFAW compiled evidence from 443 “trail” events monitored across the country run by 45 registered hunts and says the facts speak for themselves. Trail hunting is used as an alibi to avoid prosecution for hunting and the concept was invented (by the Blair Government – Ed.) for this very reason. IFAW believes the Hunting Act needs to be urgently amended to ensure the law no longer allows trail hunting to be used as a false alibi.

<mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk>

## **RSPCA drops hunt prosecutions**

The RSPCA has dropped its controversial policy of carrying out private prosecutions against hunts and will instead hand over evidence to the authorities. The charity will also no longer mount private prosecutions in cases of alleged cruelty by farmers. In future it will give evidence to police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) or trading standards officers. The decision to stop prosecuting hunts and farm animal cruelty cases follows recommendations last year from Stephen Wooler, a former CPS chief inspector, who was commissioned by the RSPCA to review its prosecutions policy. The RSPCA does, however, reserve the right to prosecute if the CPS or Police fail to do so without good reason (as is so often the case - Ed.)

Animal welfare activists claim just one per cent of hunts they have monitored in the past decade stick to legal guidelines when laying down a scent for hounds to follow. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) compiled evidence from 443 trail events monitored across the country run by 45 registered hunts. Trail hunting is the only legal alternative to killing foxes with bloodhounds under laws introduced in 2005. Hunters must lay down animal scent trails by dragging along a rag soaked in fox urine for dogs to pursue. But the IFAW claims it has seen just four hunts of the 443 it has monitored actually set the trails - claims that pro-hunting groups strongly deny.

The charity Trail of Lies report is the first ever comprehensive survey of hunts since the ban and uses data from all hunt monitoring organisations in England and Wales, as well as official hunt publications and local newspaper reports. Philip Mansbridge, UK Director of IFAW, said: Our Trail of Lies report, the biggest study to date on trail hunting, reveals some shocking truths. The facts speak for themselves - with investigators witnessing no genuine trail hunting on 99% of occasions monitoring hunts which claim to be doing so, we have to conclude that most hunts are not laying a trail at all. So when trail hunting is used as an alibi to avoid prosecution for illegal hunting, it is usually a false alibi and we believe the concept of trail hunting was invented for this very reason. IFAW believes the Hunting Act needs to be urgently amended to ensure the law no longer allows trail hunting to be used as a false alibi.

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The new stance will be welcomed by critics who feared the charity had become politicised in recent years and moved away from such traditional core issues as caring for neglected animals and rehoming them. The RSPCA, which disclosed the changes to MPs in a recent briefing note, has become embroiled in controversy in recent years following high-profile campaigns against hunting, the badger cull and the Grand National.

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Mike

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Elaine

Signed! Hard to believe they still do this

New wildlife laws

John Bryant

Re: Dog-fighting-decision-blow-RSPCA Another judge attacking the RSPCA for interfering with countryside matters. Last week 91 year old Justice Ousely overturned a decision by Natural England who had denied a licence for a gamekeeper in Northumbria who wanted to kill native buzzards to protect non-native, factory-farmed pheasants. This was the same Judge who refused a judicial review on the badger cull. I sincerely believe that these instances are connected with the recent 'Infrastructure Act' which deals with powers on road building and other building projects, but which was nodded by parliament into law, complete with an undebated section full of powers to destroy 'invasive, non-native wildlife'. Even more such powers are in the forthcoming 'Wildlife Law' which the Tories intend to replace the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, along

with clauses that allow the killing of protected wildlife if it is 'incidental' to a lawful activity. This presumably would allow for the killing of foxes by hounds during a lawful 'trail-hunt', or destroying a badger sett if 'incidental' to digging out a fox under the 'game-keepers exemption' in the Hunting Act. I am working on a critique of the Wildlife Bill drawn up by the Law Commission (which the government claimed was necessary to 'amalgamate' all the various wildlife legislation into one Act, but which strangely omits the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996, the Hunting Act 2004 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006 - all of which involve wildlife. I sense a 'judicial and government conspiracy' to return the countryside to the wealthy landowners, rich, large farmers and aristocracy establishment where 'oiks' like us will be totally powerless to intervene, and the National Wildlife Crime Unit will be slashed to the extent that there will rarely be any prosecutions.

An animal charity has issued a warning about illegal snares after a family cat lost its leg in East Ayrshire. The four-year-old cat, named Stripey, was found with a copper snare attached to his leg on disused land near the site of a former school in New Cumnock. A vet later had to amputate the limb to save the cat, leaving the owners with a treatment bill of about £1,000. The Scottish SPCA has asked anyone with information about this or other illegal snaring cases to contact them. A spokesman for the charity said: "Stripey's owners live opposite the playing fields and luckily a neighbour alerted them after spotting the cat in distress. "When his owner found him, he could immediately see that Stripey was very badly injured as his leg was hanging off. "The vet prepared his owners for the worst case scenario, which was that he may have to be put to sleep. This was incredibly upsetting for them as Stripey has been a much loved family pet for four years." The charity said the copper snare recovered was designed to target rabbits. However, it was untagged and non-locking, both of which constitute offences under the Snares (Scotland) Order 2010. The cat was found on land near the former site of New Cairn Primary School, which was demolished a number of years ago.

Devon Life and Dartmoor News

Are wild animals really grateful when people rescue them?

articles But, as much as we might like to believe that these wild animals are indeed showing gratitude for their rescuer, experts say that's not really the case. Since the animal that is being rescued rarely feels better immediately, it is unlikely that they understand they are being helped, Dave Zahniser, rescue manager at the Marine Mammal Center, told Discovery.com. The reason the animal becomes so calm could be due to something called capture myopathy syndrome, which is a form of shock. This is not, however, the cause of that well-known frozen deer-caught-in-headlights look, which is due to a deer's inability to see in bright light, causing it to freeze. It is also not why some animals, like possums, play dead. Scientifically referred to as thanatosis, animals use this as a defense mechanism only when escape from a predator is impossible. So what exactly is capture myopathy? According to University of California, Davis researcher Murray Fowler, it is probably an inherent mechanism that hastens the death of an animal following capture by a predator, thereby reducing pain in the prey and conserving energy for the predator a mechanism which is, in a way, beneficial to both. Karen Emanuelson, director of veterinary services at the Oakland Zoo in California, told Discovery.com the syndrome causes an animal to go into a form of shock that may fill their lungs with fluid and lead to later death, even if they are saved from an immediate threat.