

Rural crime on the increase in Scotland

As reported in Farmers Weekly 21 December:-

Hare coursing was also a hard crime to stop, but Police Scotland's wildlife officer Charlie Everitt was able to report some success. He said: We have had our first prosecution using DNA evidence. We had a report of hare coursing and after a search of the fields found a dead hare with dog saliva on it. Thanks to CCTV we had a vehicle registration number and we were able to trace the owner. We DNA tested his dogs and came up with a perfect match. Remember, if you see hare coursing you should phone 999 rather than 101. This is a crime taking place and we will react, he added.

Letter to The Independent

John Rimington had this excellent letter published in the Tuesday 27 December edition:

There is no current justification for the ongoing archaic hunting with dogs of our native hares and foxes as both species continue to decline inexorably. There are 179 fox hunts and 89 hare hunts (foot or horseback) in England and Wales. Between 1995 and 2015 the rural fox population declined nationally by 34 per cent as the remaining foxes tended to move into urban areas, largely due to the 59 per cent countrywide decrease in wild rabbits, their staple diet, over the same period.

Although the decline in the brown hare population has slowed since the drastic peak fall in their numbers of over 80 per cent from 1880 onwards, their population has decreased by a further 5 per cent since 1995. In 2011 a zoology report listed them as one of our British species most at risk of extinction by 2050. The latest variant of killer rabbit viral disease, RVHD-2, is now known to also put hares at risk. This is in addition to coccidiosis, yersiniosis and European brown hare syndrome, all existing hare survival threats, even without the addition of human harassment.

Butterfly protector who informed climate change policy gets OBE

As reported in December 31 edition of The Guardian Dr Martin Warren has saved at least three species from extinction, laying the ground for landscape-scale conservation. Most conservationists would take pride in saving one species from extinction, but fellow scientists estimate that the famously modest Warren, who recently retired as chief executive of the Butterfly Conservation charity, has rescued at least three of Britain's 59 native butterfly species from terminal decline.

Further details are here:-

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/dec/30/butterfly-protector-who-influenced-climate-change-policy-awarded-obe-dr-martin-warren?CMP=share_btn_tw

Thanks to Marian Hussenbux of Animal Interfaith Alliance for alerting us to this story. Ed.

Brown hare spotted near Tedburn St Mary

It is by no means unusual to find people who have never seen a hare, even among those who work in the countryside such as farmers and vets. Several years ago we were contacted by a lady farmer who had been out walking with two companions and they saw a hare. None of them had seen one before. This recent sighting at Tedburn was made by Cerys Blackwell who works at the Lamb Inn at Sandford and again this was the first time that she had seen a hare. Yet astonishingly, any of these people could have quite legally shot the hare, even during its main breeding season from February to September, although hare pregnancies are now on record throughout the year. Hares are classified as game and can be shot at any time except Sundays or Christmas Day.

Vets For Hunting

Now euphemistically known as the Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management. Nothing like a spot of humour to get 2017 off to a good start!

<div id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_72610">Dear Molly,</div><div id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_72647"><br clear="none"></div><div id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_73716">Thank you for your newsletter.</div><div id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_73236"><br clear="none"></div><div dir="ltr" id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_73178">I thought you would be interested to know that a PhD student at the University of Manchester, Carl Bedson, will be researching the mountain hares of the Peak District and this will be directly relevant to our proposal to re-introduce mountain hares to Dartmoor. Also, a short article about our plan to the Dartmoor newspaper "The Moorlander" brought the response: "It is a lovely piece and we are going to print it."</div><div dir="ltr" id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_74237"><br clear="none"></div><div dir="ltr" id="yiv7384484940yui_3_16_0_ym19_1_1482311750525_74242">On 17 November I travelled to Edinburgh to join the mass lobby outside the Holyrood Parliament for better protection for Scotland's mountain hares. I met Green MSP Alison Johnstone who is Species Champion at Holyrood for the brown hare and mountain hare.</div>