

PROTECT

SPRING ISSUE

2023



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

Landmark victory for foxes

Follow the road we travelled to secure a monumental piece of legislation - the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

Welcome to your spring issue of Protect



The past year has been challenging and we appreciate the cost-of-living crisis has made an impact on financial decisions. I want to pass on the thanks of everyone here at the League for standing by us and continuing to donate what you can, when you can.

We're Team League. We can only achieve our goals for animals when we join together, and as you read the following pages, we hope you feel proud of the work you are entrusting us to do.

Take care and we'll be back with more updates in the summer.

Spring this year is not just a time for celebrating new life, but also for celebrating our monumental success for animals. If you receive our emails, you'll already know that on 24 January fox hunting was banned (for good) in Scotland. If this is news to you then turn to page 4 to find out more, and don't forget to give us your email address for future updates!

The next general election is on the horizon and our message is that it's Time for Change. Whilst we lead the charge to bring about the fullest change at the fastest pace, we're driven by you, our supporters.

Emma
Editor

Jonathan
Designer

Our Goals

End hunting, shooting, animal fighting and other cruel sports and the associated practices that enable them.

Win the hearts and minds of a broader audience.



This issue at a glance



Landmark victory for foxes

'Trail' hunting is no longer legal north of the border. Read about the journey to the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

Page 4

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

Time for Change

It will be you who helps to really end hunting with dogs in England and Wales. Find out how.

Page 8



Snares in Wales

Discover how momentum has gathered to support a ban on snares.

Page 14

Wildlife Reserves

Connect with nature to improve your mental health.

Page 16



Fox Day 2023

Be part of the national day celebrating our furry fox friends.

Page 18



MoD March for Animals

Support Andy in his 2023 fundraiser.

Page 22





Robbie Marsland - Director of Scotland and Northern Ireland

Landmark victory for foxes in Scotland



We set out to really end fox hunting in Scotland. And on Tuesday 24 January we did just that.

We all thought fox hunting was banned twenty years ago, but our courageous fieldworkers continued to expose this is not the case.

From September to March every year, we captured harrowing footage of the activity of various hunts who claimed to be shooting foxes. But if that were genuinely the case, why would packs of hounds be chasing a live quarry? Why would terrier men be present? Why were foxes being torn apart in the Scottish countryside?

For over two decades hunts continued to exploit loopholes in the law.

But we've changed all that.

Thanks to our supporters, we were able to launch the investigations and obtain the footage that showed that fox hunting never stopped; we commissioned polling that showed 84 per cent of the Scottish public wanted a ban against fox hunting; we went to the Scottish Government in our tens of thousands – by signing petitions and by marching on the streets to the parliament.



Robbie Marsland handing the Environment Minister, Màiri McAllan, the 26,816 signatures collected from our 'Really Ban Fox Hunting' petition.



Because of your support we have kept this campaign going until the historic moment when, on Tuesday 24 January, the Scottish Parliament voted to pass the new Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

This Bill provides an opportunity to right the wrongs of the last two decades and close the loopholes which allowed hunters to continue with fox hunting as though the law didn't exist. Crucially, this Bill also includes a pre-emptive ban on 'trail' hunting which is often seen as 'a smokescreen', or a loophole, for hunts to continue in England and Wales.

This is BIG NEWS. It means 'trail' hunting will not be legal north of the border. Scotland will now have the most robust law anywhere in the UK.

But our work is far from over. Despite the best of intentions to ban hunting, the determination and deep-rooted defiance among those who wish to chase and kill foxes should not be underestimated.

Our first task is to work closely with Nature Scotland and other stakeholders to ensure the new licensing system (which will allow for a full pack of hounds to be used as a last resort) is robust, effective and fit for purpose. This will involve monitoring the hunts to make sure the loopholes are not exploited.

Our second task is to build on this momentum and send a wake-up message to Parliament that England and Wales must follow suit. Together, we will end fox hunting for good.



IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

There's an open secret in the British countryside – despite the hunting ban that came into force in 2005, hunts up and down the country are still brutally chasing and killing foxes.

It's common knowledge now that fox hunts are doing what they did before the ban while trying to deceive the public, police and courts that they are following trails or using loopholes in the law to legally hunt.

But 'trail' hunting has been discredited and exposed for what it is – a sham and a smokescreen for the hunts' cruel and barbaric behaviour.

That's why we're saying it's time for change. It's time to strengthen hunting laws in England and Wales and to end fox hunting once and for all.

We've just strengthened hunting laws in Scotland in a historic win for animal welfare, including a ban on 'trail' hunting, and we can do it here too.

So how will we achieve this?

Firstly, it will be you, our grass roots supporters who can play such a big part in consigning hunting to the history books.

It will be you who helps to really end hunting with dogs in England and Wales.

You can take one of the **online actions** from the comfort of your armchair which will help us put pressure on politicians in central and local government.

You can join one of our local **supporter groups** which take to the streets to hand out leaflets and encourage more members of the public to sign up to one of our actions.



You can **make a donation** to fund our campaigns that will help us win the hearts and minds of more animal-advocates.

You can also support our campaigns on the ground. The Time for Change campaign is currently focusing on the counties of Somerset and Gloucestershire where we are calling on the local authorities to ban hunting on public land. Later in the year we will be launching a national campaign.

We're also using sophisticated mapping techniques which have been developed by our intelligence team to find out where fox hunts are operating so we can put pressure on landowners to prevent hunts from accessing their land.

You'll probably be shocked to hear the government still allows trail hunting on its land. We're currently calling on the Ministry of Defence to stop this, as they risk allowing illegal activity by hunts on their hundreds of thousands of acres of land.

This is all part of our plan to end hunting on public land in identified areas and this will be done by the next general election.

You can be part of this campaign by taking an online action.

We've done it before. We've persuaded some of the country's biggest landowners to ban or suspend 'trail' hunting on millions of acres of land.



These landowners include the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales and the Lake District National Park.

You can also focus on influencing our MPs and our government. The plan with the Time for Change campaigns is to persuade the government in power, following the next general election, to pledge to introduce legislation to strengthen the ban on hunting with dogs.

We don't know exactly when the next general election will be, but it will be before January 2025. Together we can help make fox hunting a key issue for the next government.

Already we've seen a sea change in the way fox hunting has been perceived in recent years. It's now regarded as political poison. Not one mainstream political party is still calling for the hunting ban to be repealed.

No longer do we have to worry about defending the hunting ban. Instead, more and more political parties are backing our calls to strengthen hunting laws.

Boxing Day has traditionally been a big celebration for the hunts but in recent years the media coverage has focused not on their pageantry and their red coats but on their cruelty.





‘...It will be you
who helps to really
end hunting with dogs
in England and Wales...’



The changing narrative that the media uses now to describe fox hunting shows the hunts being increasingly pushed onto the back foot in a public relations war they are losing. Nobody really likes them. Not in the media and not among the public. Killing animals for ‘sport’ sickens us all.

We produce figures showing the scale of suspected illegal killing across the country and also the havoc hunts are wreaking on rural communities.

A report entitled **Hunt Havoc: The Human Cost of Hunting with Hounds** revealed hundreds of incidents of hunts chasing and killing foxes, intimidating individuals and communities, marauding on private and public land, hunting on railway lines and roads, and killing livestock and even people’s pets.

Alongside this damning report, we’ve created a supporter pack which offers advice for ordinary people on how to deal with the behaviour of the hunts.

So, what do the public think about hunts? Polling commissioned by us and conducted by Find Out Now and Electoral Calculus showed that voters across Britain backed moves to strengthen the Hunting Act by a wide margin (78 per cent).

But it’s not just in town and cities that people are opposed to fox hunting as the hunts claim. More than three quarters (76 per cent) of rural voters across Britain were also in favour of strengthening the Hunting Act 2004.

The tide is turning against hunting. One of the most shocking incidents recently involved the Avon Vale Hunt, when sickening footage emerged of them digging up foxes and setting their bloodthirsty hounds on them.

The incident outraged the public and drew condemnation from celebrities like musician Sir Brian May and broadcaster and naturalist Chris Packham along with senior politicians.

It drove more than five thousand of you to take action and email or tweet Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey to express your dismay.

Chief Superintendent Matt Longman, who is the National Police Chiefs’ Lead on Fox Hunting, described the illegal hunting of foxes with a pack of hounds as “prolific”.

The Avon Vale Hunt has now been kicked out by the hunts’ governing body and is thankfully likely to go out of business, but its behaviour is being mirrored across the country by other hunts who employ terrier men to dig up foxes to be killed.

It was yet another example of why it’s time for change and time for hunting laws to be strengthened.

You can be part of this important and inspirational campaign. Please join us and together we will end fox hunting for good.

Visit: League.org.uk for more information



A wire snare trap is set in a forest. The trap consists of a circular wire loop on the ground, with a trigger mechanism made of sticks and twigs. The background shows a dense forest with many thin tree trunks and some green foliage.

Snares in Wales to be consigned to the history book

After many years of campaigning, Wales is on the verge of introducing a landmark ban on snares. The use of these cruel wire nooses – set in their thousands by gamekeepers to trap animals and support the shooting of birds for ‘sport’ – could finally be consigned to history this year.



Momentum has gathered since you helped convince the Welsh Government to support a ban on snares in 2021. The relevant legislation is currently passing through the crucial stages needed before it can become law.

In January, we launched a new supporter action enabling animal lovers who live in Wales to call on their Members of Senedd (MSs) to support a ban on all snares. We've been overwhelmed with the support shown so far in the best way possible. More than 3,000 emails, and counting, have been sent and we've heard first hand from politicians about the impact they've had.

In November, we took your calls for a ban on all snares directly to the Senedd's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee when we were invited to speak at a key evidence session. In an important victory for our campaign, a clear majority of the committee's members confirmed their support for the snaring ban in January, paving the way to press ahead with this crucial new law.

The responses you've sent to the various consultations that have been held were quoted directly in the committee's final report, showing the true impact your voices have had.

February then saw MSs from all parties agree on the general principles of the bill which contains the ban on the use of snares, which means that it will now be debated further at a later date. Keep an eye out on our social media channels to find out how you can best support us when the time comes.

To help us take your calls for a comprehensive snaring ban to as many MSs as possible and fight off attempts to weaken the legislation, we held stalls at Plaid Cymru's spring conference in Llanelli and Welsh Labour's conference in Llandudno.

Support for a ban on snares is strong among the MSs we spoke to, with many also keen to hear more about our campaign to secure a ban on the use of breeding cages for game birds. We'll be turning our attention to achieving this once the ban on snares hopefully makes it over the line before summer recess in June.

It goes without saying that we couldn't have made it so far without your support. We're now closer than ever to ridding Wales of snares once and for all, but we still need your support to make sure this definitely happens.

Please take our action if you've haven't already and also share it far and wide so that others can take part too: league.org.uk/bansnares



A photograph of two deer grazing in a lush green field. The deer are in the middle ground, facing each other. The background is filled with dense green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through, creating a soft, dappled light effect. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

Spring is here

Paul Tillsley - Head of Conservation and Education

As the first shafts of sunlight raced across the landscape, the dew-soaked fields suddenly sparkled like a bejewelled carpet. The unfolding scene took my breath away and at that moment I couldn't think of anywhere else I would rather be.

I had left the house before dawn to make my way to where I knew there was a good chance of seeing some of the harbingers of spring, and there they were, a pair of brown hares grazing peacefully just fifty metres away. There was none of the high jinks associated with mad march hares, but that didn't matter to me. The hares clearly knew I was there and they were allowing me to share their world for a short while. It was a real privilege to be alongside wild creatures that accepted my presence and I could feel the stresses of everyday life melting away. Connecting with nature in this way is proven to help our mental and physical health, even if you can only spare a few minutes a day.

‘...Connecting with nature in this way is proven to help our mental and physical health, even if you can only spare a few minutes a day.’

Brown hares aren't indigenous to Britain, having replaced the native mountain hare as it retreated north, but they have gained a firm hold in our folklore, mythology, and hearts. The hare's ability to apparently disappear when being pursued has seen it attributed magical powers, with some people associating hares with witches and others linking hares to the goddess Eostre, after whom Easter was named. Unfortunately, the hare's legendary turn of speed means that some people still view hares as nothing more than a convenient object to test the hunting ability of their dogs, and illegal hare coursing and hunting still continues across the country.

On the League's **wildlife reserves**, hares are few and far between, but the wildlife we do see regularly is all gearing up for the summer ahead. Deer are shedding their drab winter coats in favour of russet replacements, leaving lumps of hair around that are eagerly snapped up by birds looking to line their nests. Rabbits seem to be sporting rather extravagant moustaches, as they gather bunches of dry grass to take down to their nests, and outside badger setts, balls of dry grasses and leaves are clear signs of spring cleaning below ground. Meanwhile, remains of food items are starting to appear on the spoil heaps outside fox earths on the reserves, as adult foxes bring back their catches to share with the cubs that are too small yet to venture far from home.

One thing that many animals and their human relatives have in common is a love of the sunshine. As the days start to warm up, it is not unusual to see deer or foxes dozing in a sunny spot on the reserves, butterflies and other insects bathing in the sun's rays, or snakes and lizards basking in a sheltered sun trap. You have to have some pity for the nocturnal animals, like bats and badgers, that rarely get to see the sun and feel the warmth on their backs.

It's a great time of year to get outside and enjoy the benefits that nature has to offer. Wherever you live, there will be a green space somewhere not too far away, so make the most of nature's free therapy.





FOX Day

Save the date
Fox Day 2023 is
happening on **26 May**

Do you remember Fox Day 2022, when the nation shared their love and support of foxes?

Our staff and supporters proudly wore orange, our ambassadors and influencers spread our message on their social channels and thousands of you joined us online to celebrate our iconic red fox.

Will you join us again this year and be part of the national day celebrating our furry fox friends?





TAKE ACTION FOR FOX DAY 2023

1. Sign the official record for foxes

Last year, more than 3,000 people signed their name to declare they believe in making the world a better place for foxes.

This year, we want to welcome even more people to the fox community so please sign the official record and inspire others to do the same by sharing on your social channels.

Help us spread the Fox Day movement by creating awareness and empathy for these beautiful creatures.

2. Visit the Fox Day Hub

There's so many ways you can be a part of Fox Day 2023. You can get involved, take action, learn about our campaigns, shop, donate and more.

Simply visit the Fox Day hub and share it with your fellow animal advocates.

League.org.uk/foxday

Fox Day special offer

Award-winning photographers Neil Aldridge, Matt Maran and Andy Parkinson have been documenting the British red fox for over 20 years. Their photographs, together with a series of informative essays, shed new light on this enigmatic and misunderstood animal. As a special offer to League supporters, you can receive £5 discount on this stunning book by using code **FOX5** at Matthewmaranshop.com



Help us beat animal crime



Supporters across the UK use our supporter-funded Animal Crimewatch service to expose animal cruelty and suspected illegal hunting. Reports are leading to widespread media coverage and reaching a wider audience.

It's easy to report any incidents you see:



league.org.uk/animal-crimewatch/report



crimewatch@league.org.uk



0300 444 1234

In Devon, two tourists had their holiday ruined after they witnessed a mile-long chase of a fox by a hunt across Dartmoor.

They reported the incident to both the police and Animal Crimewatch and it's now been widely covered in the media across South West England, highlighting that illegal hunting still takes place and the only way to stop it is to strengthen the law.

Karen Pracy and Pauline Roberts from Cornwall, saw between 15 and 20 hounds chasing the fox across a busy B-road, causing traffic to grind to a halt. The hounds got caught up in a barbed wire fence and it's believed the fox escaped with its life on this occasion.

Karen spoke about the shocking incident: "It looked so horrendous and cruel and made me see Dartmoor in a whole new light. The incident opened my eyes to how hunts are still chasing and killing foxes despite the ban. I love the countryside but this hunt looked so brutal and unnecessary. It really makes me think twice about returning to Dartmoor."

Emma Judd, our head of campaigns and communications, said: "This shocking incident goes against everything Dartmoor National Park stands for in terms of conserving and enhancing wildlife. It's time for change and for hunting to end on our national parks."

This type of exposé is only possible thanks to supporters contacting Animal Crimewatch and reporting information on animal cruelty. We're grateful to have you all on our team.

Animal Crimewatch



2022 Overview

We've shared **376** reports across over **50** law enforcement partners. This includes **10** different NGOs, councils and over **40** police force areas.

7 key law enforcement partners

each received **over 10** reports



65%

was related to hunting with dogs



10%

related to shooting



5%

related to animal fighting



254 outcomes in the last six months of 2022

65%

involved sharing data with external partners to aid further work to stop cruel sports



8 intelligence developments

2 cases at Court

4 others reported as a crime with updates awaited



161 Visits to our main **Animal Crimewatch** website page. **500%** increase from 2021

1,500

Visits to "report an animal crime" page. **500%** increase from 2021



60  

Visits to our **bookshelf of useful information**. **93%** increase from 2021

8,063

Visits to our **Map of Cruel Sports**. **117%** increase from 2021



My 'MoD March for Animals' fundraiser

This year I will swap my office for the Salisbury Plain Military Training Area, where I will attempt to march for 10km carrying 25kg on my back. That's the weight of my rescue dog, Buddy, similar to over 5,000 hunting hounds that are languishing in hunt kennels across the UK.

Why am I doing this? To bring attention to the decision by our pro-hunt Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace MP, to remove our longstanding right to monitor hunts on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land.

For our multi award winning registered charity, highly respected by police forces across the country, to be thrown off public land so hunts can go about their business without the necessary monitoring afforded under the Hunting Act, must be challenged.

Hunts continue to go unchecked on MOD land and hunt hounds endure often cruel treatment and miserable conditions, just so they can be used to kill other creatures for the entertainment of their masters. I wish I could put every one of them on my back and march them away to safety.

So, this is my personal stand against hunting, and I need your help raising funds to protect animals.

Thank you for your support, I couldn't take on this challenge without it.



www.justgiving.com/page/andy-modmarch



Every Animal. Forever Free.



Give the gift of freedom to animals threatened by cruel sports.

It's our dream to create a safer world for animals to live in, forever free from persecution and fear. No creature should be chased, maimed or killed in the pursuit of so-called 'sport'.

If you can make a small gift in your will to the League, it would mean we can move closer towards permanent protection for all animals.

As a thank you for your support and compassion for animals, you can write your will for free with our partners The Goodwill Partnership, who can help you make your will online, over the phone or in person. It's simple and easy to use and all wills are checked thoroughly by a solicitor.

There's no obligation to leave a gift to the League – the most important thing is that your affairs are in order, giving you peace of mind – but as gifts in wills play a huge part in all the League achieves, we would be grateful if you would consider a gift.



Wills made easy

We have arranged for a limited number of free wills. If you'd like to take advantage of this, please contact The Goodwill Partnership:



0844 669 6148



league.org.uk/foreverfree
and give the code
FOREVERFREE.

Thank you for your commitment and compassion.

This issue, we are remembering Irene Williams, an incredible woman who has supported us since the 1960s. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to persecuted animals.

Get in touch

01483 524 250

supportercare@league.org.uk

league.org.uk

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