

**Still Blood  
on the  
wire**

A report into snaring  
in Scotland  
August 2010

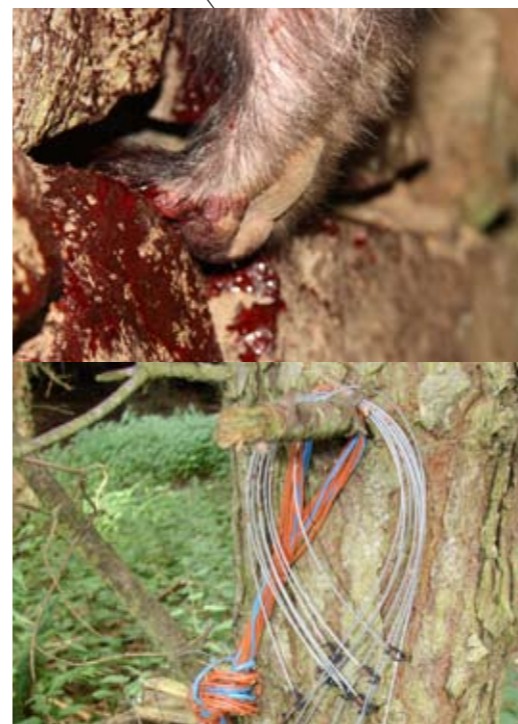
# Blood still on the. Wire



Scottish wildlife faces persistent persecution at the hands of gamekeepers using a variety of cruel and primitive snares and traps despite new legislation that promised to improve welfare and minimise animal suffering.

77% of people in Scotland oppose the use of snares.

# Introduction



Scottish wildlife faces persistent persecution at the hands of gamekeepers using a variety of cruel and primitive snares and traps despite new legislation that promised to improve welfare and minimise animal suffering.

The Scottish Government recently introduced the Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 which it claimed would better regulate the use of snares and help prevent cruelty on the country's hundreds of sporting estates rearing pheasants, partridges and grouse for commercial shooting.

But undercover investigations carried out by the League Against Cruel Sports between May and July 2010 have revealed how the new legislation has done nothing to halt cruelty and suffering as

gamekeepers embark on their annual programme of predator control targeting wildlife – including foxes, badgers, deer, rabbits and hares, amongst other species – deemed to pose a risk to valuable game bird stocks.

The findings powerfully illustrate why only a complete ban on the manufacture, sale and use of snares will prevent thousands of animals each year suffering a potentially slow and painful death – and that Scottish government regulations have been wholly inadequate in preventing this. The evidence further exposes the farce of the shooting industry's repeated claims that it is concerned with conservation and good countryside management.

Nestling alongside the picturesque River Teviot near the Borders town of Kelso, the Duke of Roxburghe's estate includes the luxurious Roxburghe Country House Hotel, which offers visitors the ultimate rural break – luxury accommodation, first-class dining, unspoilt countryside and a host of activities including mountain biking, balloon rides, archery and golf<sup>2</sup>.

But across the river, in a less public part of the Estate, there's a very different scene: in a large wooded covert, densely packed with trees and scrub, lies one of several game bird release pens designed to house pheasants reared for sport shooting. Surrounding the enclosure, League investigators discovered numerous wire snares attached to trees or poles – or hanging up ready to be set.

Attracted by the sound of repeated rustling, investigators discovered a live badger caught in one of the devices. Struggling and bleeding, the exhausted animal had hauled itself up onto a nearby wall – the wire noose, attached to a wooden pole staked into the ground, clearly visible around the creature's back<sup>3</sup>. The snare had cut into the animal's flesh, presumably aided by the badgers' frantic struggle to free itself.

Alerted by investigators, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SSPCA) were later able to rescue the animal which was subsequently released back into the wild at a secret location following veterinary treatment<sup>4</sup>.

# .caught in the act

The incident highlights the cruel and indiscriminate nature of snares (even when they are not actually set) and reveals typically poor practice on the part of the gamekeeper responsible – badgers are a protected species and snares are not supposed to be sited where there is badger activity or in the vicinity of badger setts (investigators later located a sett in a small patch of woodland to the north of the covert containing the release pens)<sup>5</sup>.

Badgers are clearly not the only species at risk here – dumped on the ground near to the release pen, investigators discovered the rotten carcass of a fox, its cause of death uncertain<sup>6</sup>.

The Roxburghe Estate offers paying clients the opportunity to shoot pheasants in woodland and parkland around the prestigious Floors Castle, as well as grouse on one of its two dedicated grouse moors at Rawburn and Byreclough, near Duns<sup>7</sup>. Shooting parties are frequently accommodated in the Roxburghe Country House Hotel<sup>8</sup>.

The woodland where the badger was discovered – south of the main area used for shooting at Roxburghe – is understood to be leased by the estate to a third party who operates a self-contained pheasant rearing and shooting operation on the surrounding land.

The badger snaring incident – and the usage of snares, albeit legal snares – will prove embarrassing however to the estate and its owner, the Duke of Roxburghe, who is keen to promote its apparent interest in conservation<sup>9</sup>.

# Death. pits

Further north, at the southern tip of the Lammermuir Hills, near Duns, League investigations have also uncovered a systematic predator control programme centred around Kettelshiel. Secret filming on the surrounding grouse moors between May and July 2010 revealed how gamekeepers are using a network of secret "death pits" – specially designed dumps containing the carcasses of numerous dead animals – to lure wildlife into strategically placed snares and traps<sup>10</sup>.

At sites situated in woodland at Blacklea Plantation, Henlaw Wood and Durrington Hill, graphic footage obtained by the League shows dead foxes, deer, rabbits, birds (including ducks and racing pigeons) amongst other, unidentifiable carcasses, dumped and strewn around on the ground, surrounded by snares<sup>11</sup>.

Throughout the area, further snares, as well as dozens of metal fenn traps – frequently set on wooden planks designed to act as bridges for small mammals – and live bird cage traps were filmed by investigators, some containing the bodies of dead animals including rabbits and small birds<sup>12</sup>.

The gruesome findings shine a rare light on the side of game shooting

its advocates would prefer remained hidden from public view, and vividly undermine claims that shooting is concerned with wildlife conservation and good countryside management. Shockingly, while none of these practices are actually illegal, it highlights just how ineffective the regulations are at halting the disgusting cruelty linked with some forms of predator control.

The League has established that two of the three areas containing snares and "death pits" around Kettelshiel – Blacklea Plantation and woodland near Durrington Hill – are now owned by Marchmont Farms Ltd<sup>13</sup>. Marchmont Farms operates the adjacent Marchmont estate, situated to the south of Kettelshiel, and includes amongst its directors Oliver and Hugo Burge<sup>14</sup>. Hugo Burge is Executive Chairman of travel comparison website Cheapflights.co.uk<sup>15</sup>; Oliver Burge has also previously worked with the company<sup>16</sup>. Both have been featured in the Sunday Times Rich List<sup>17</sup>.



Those involved in managing some of the grouse moors around Kettelshiel and nearby Bedshiel recently received a Purdy "Game and Conservation Award" for their efforts<sup>18</sup>. The awards, administered by the leading gun making company Purdy, are supposedly designed to encourage imaginative conservation projects, improve habitats and enhance biodiversity of shoots and the wider countryside.

Richard Vainer – a shooting tenant and co-director of the company Kettelshiel Sporting Ltd<sup>19</sup> – was presented with the award in 2009 "in recognition of his keeping team for their enormous enthusiasm, determination and success in restoring viable grouse populations to both moors"<sup>20</sup>. The judges noted that gamekeepers around Kettelshiel place a "high priority" on vermin control which, along with their wider management approach, "is exemplary"<sup>21</sup>.

The League assumes this vermin control is not in any way connected to its own investigative findings in the area, which can hardly be described as "exemplary".

2: <http://www.roxburghe-hotel.com/>, 3: Footage obtained by League, July 2010, 4: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10552280>  
5: League onsite investigations, July 2010, 6: Footage obtained by League, July 2010, 7 and 8: [http://www.roxburghe.net/sportingestate\\_shooting.html](http://www.roxburghe.net/sportingestate_shooting.html), 9: [http://www.roxburghe.net/whatson\\_news.html](http://www.roxburghe.net/whatson_news.html)

10, 11 and 12: Footage obtained by League, May and July 2010, 13: Land registry search documents, August 2010, 14: Companies House records, 2010, 15: <http://www.cheapflights.co.uk/about-us/biographies/hugo-burge/>, 16: [http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/markets/article.html?in\\_article\\_id=420677&in\\_page\\_id=3](http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/markets/article.html?in_article_id=420677&in_page_id=3), 17: [http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/specials/rich\\_list/article3805658.ece](http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/specials/rich_list/article3805658.ece), 18: <http://www.purdey.com/news-and-events/news/>, 19: Companies House records, 2010, 20 and 21: <http://www.purdey.com/news-and-events/news/>

77% said they supported a ban on snares.

At nearby Manderston House, a popular tourist attraction and film shoot location that is home to Lord Palmer<sup>22</sup>, investigators discovered that legal snares have continued to be set in 2010, despite previous controversy over their usage on the estate.

Between 2006 and 2008 secret filming at Manderston revealed legal snares positioned around pheasant release pens and near to a flight pond; in one covert used for shooting, graphic footage showed the grisly remains of a number of hares, a squirrel and other unidentifiable mammals dumped near to release pens, presumably the victims of snares or fenn traps littered around the area<sup>23</sup>.

One nearby trap, set in a wide tunnel-like covering, and baited

have been removed, in July 2010 investigators filmed a number of legal snares positioned around the same release pen – the devices had been anchored to the ground, some having previously been set on wooden drag poles<sup>25</sup>. Any fox or other animal passing through would still face a potentially cruel and lingering death.

A similarly grim picture was uncovered across the Borders region during the recent investigations – a variety of snares were found on shooting estates at Horseupcleugh, Cranshaws, Crailinghall and near Jedburgh, amongst other locations<sup>26</sup>. In woodland adjacent to Whiteadder Water, near Hutton, a dead badger was discovered not far from game bird release pens, a legal snare filmed positioned nearby<sup>27</sup>.

75% of vets said they supported a ban on snares.



The Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 introduced a number of measures which the Scottish government claimed would better regulate the use of snares and minimise suffering, including making it compulsory for snares to be fitted with adequate “stops” to prevent the noose tightening beyond a certain circumference, and demanding the use of appropriate “anchors” to stop a captured animal dragging the snare away from its original location, preventing a gamekeeper from pinpointing and killing the creature<sup>28</sup>.

The League believes that the decision to bring in legislation short of a ban is entirely unacceptable and completely ineffective: as the shocking new evidence reveals, wildlife is still being persecuted on an appalling scale on shooting estates in Scotland, with clear up-to-date examples of cruelty and suffering, and the apparently systematic targeting of all manner of wildlife.

Nothing has changed. Virtually identical scenes of killing and abuse were repeatedly documented at shooting locations across Scotland prior to the new legislation becoming law.

If any snares remain legal, then it is harder to enforce the law against illegal snares or against illegal use of legal snares; there is also concerns over the number of wildlife crime officers to currently police the already complex regulations of snaring.

The new measures are simply a way of regulating cruelty because as

long as snares are legal animals will be caught in them and will suffer horrific injuries, often resulting in a slow painful death. There is no way to make snares truly target-selective and enforcing regulations regarding frequency of checking is impossible.

The Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 is to be replaced by the new Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) (WANE) Bill which has provisions to legislate on snaring. The League believes

the wording in the draft bill, laid before Parliament in June 2010 has actually weakened some of the regulations currently in place<sup>29</sup>.

The League will be seeking an amendment to the WANE Bill for a complete ban on all snaring in Scotland as it progresses through Parliament.

Public opinion among Scottish people is strongly in favour of a ban. A Scottish Executive consultation in 2006 generated a 2:1 majority favouring prohibition of the devices<sup>30</sup> while recent opinion polling has shown as many as 77% of people in Scotland are against the use of snares<sup>31</sup>. In a survey of Scottish vets 75% said they supported a ban on snares and 68% think regulation would not eliminate animal welfare problems<sup>32</sup>. The League believes this has been totally ignored by ministers more interested in propping up the financially lucrative and “traditionally

Scottish” game shooting industry.

Game bird shooting in Scotland is without doubt big business, being claimed to be worth an estimated £240 million annually to the Scottish economy, and providing the equivalent of 11,000 full time jobs<sup>33</sup>. But the ultimate cost to wildlife from extensive and unacceptably cruel predator control programmes, including widespread snaring, remains much bigger.

# Ban it

The evidence presented in this report will now be used to press for a complete ban on the manufacture, sale and use of snares across Scotland – and beyond...

# Controversy

with a rabbit carcass, was found to be smeared with blood. Although primarily designed to catch small mammals such as rats and weasels, the manner in which this fenn trap had been set could see a small fox (or hare) poke its head into the opening – potentially resulting in horrific injuries<sup>24</sup>.


Although the fenn traps appear to

Again this snaring is not illegal but acts as a stark reminder of the threat these traps pose and that the Scottish government’s Snares Order is not a workable solution to the problem.



22: <http://www.manderston.co.uk/rent.asp>  
23 and 24: Blood on the Wire, League Against Cruel Sports, 2008  
25, 26 and 27: Footage obtained by League, July 2010

28: <http://cruelsports.wordpress.com/2010/03/11/scottish-governments-snare-whitewash-is-now-law/>, 29: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/52-WildNatEnv/b52s3-introd.pdf>, 30: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/08/23111220/0>, 31: Opinion poll by TNS System Three on behalf of Advocates for Animals, March 2010, 32: Survey carried out by League Against Cruel Sports and Advocates for Animals in conjunction with Vetfile, September 2008, 33: [http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/pdf/paccec\\_glossy1.pdf](http://www.shootingfacts.co.uk/pdf/paccec_glossy1.pdf)

The background features a white surface with a dense, chaotic pattern of red splatters and ink-like blotches of various sizes. Several thin, black, curved lines crisscross the entire page, creating a sense of movement and tension. The overall aesthetic is graphic and impactful.

League Against Cruel Sports  
PO Box 29138,  
Dunfermline,  
Fife KY11 3WB  
Telephone: 01483 524278

Registered charity number: 1095234  
© 2010 League Against Cruel Sports

[www.league.org.uk](http://www.league.org.uk)