

HARE PRESERVATION TRUST

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More about King hares

In Bulletin 82 we mentioned black hares - possibly known as "King hares" and member Marion O'Neil has confirmed this, along with other information - some of it interesting and some of it sad. Replying to an enquiry from a member of the public in 2006 Marion said: "Re. Last week's very rare sighting of a black hare in Lincolnshire - hare colour variations include grey, piebald, white (a pure white hare was killed in Lincolnshire in 1894, for example) and black. Of these the rarest is full black. Old records state that one black hare was caught as a tiny leveret in Epping Forest in 1865: this was kept as a pet. Another black hare used to perambulate the north of England at one time, as a distinguished performer in a so-called "happy family". More recently, the Wiltshire & Swindon Records Centre asked for brown hare sightings last April. One submitted record was of a "huge" black hare grazing on a road verge. The correspondent added that such hares are known as "King hares", that one was born roughly every ten years and that this signified a good year for hares. Incidentally, colour variations in mountain hares include a black population in Caithness, Scotland reported in 1991."

Encouraging news from Scotland

Regarding the possibility of a Bill being introduced to the Scottish Parliament for protected species status for hares Elaine Murray MSP e-mailed us recently: "Many thanks for your letter of 8th February. Unfortunately, as there are only around 13 months of the current term of the Scottish Parliament remaining, it is unlikely that a Member's Bill introduced at this stage would pass through Parliament before the next election. However, I am interested in the issues you raised in your letter and on the Hare Preservation Trust Website and will consider what might be able to be progressed during this term of Parliament. We are anticipating that the Scottish Government may introduce a Wildlife and Environment Bill later this year which may provide an opportunity to improve the protection of hares."

Animal welfare campaigners blast bloodsports funding

Animal welfare campaigners including Animal Concern and Advocates for Animals are angered that government money is being used to promote bloodsports in Scotland, it emerged recently. A Scottish organisation has received funding to challenge the tweedy image of field sports and encourage ordinary people to take up grouse shooting and deerstalking. Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group (SCSTG) is offering half-day "taster" courses in shooting, stalking, and fishing, backed by European and local authority funding. By coincidence we recently wrote to Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham asking what measures the Government is taking to replace Scotland's shameful killing-for-fun industry by, for example, increased eco-tourism, so it will be most interesting to see how she replies.

Warwickshire Beagles condemn themselves out of their own mouths

This passage relates to a New Years Day hare hunt sometime between 1995 and 2000: "The Beagles worked very hard that day, and pushed the last hare for well over an hour but it was too dark to finish the hunt, so they were reluctantly called off".

Natural chases by foxes, are very short and never last an hour. But beagles are bred for stamina rather than speed to contrive a long chase and increase the fun for the hunters. They would claim this hare escaped unharmed, but she may well have died later from stress myopathy. If pregnant she would almost certainly have aborted. As poet William Cowper said: "Detested sport that owes its pleasures to another's pain."

HPT PO Box 70 Crediton EX17 4ZQ brownharepreservation@btopenworld.com