



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

PROTECT

Nº 27

FEBRUARY 2021

END SHOOTING OF ANIMALS FOR 'SPORT'

Important updates on
grouse shooting breakthrough
in Scotland.

WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES

Was 2020 the trigger for a
renewed connection with nature?

END HUNTING

Discover the link between
the hunting lobby
and an ongoing police
investigation.



WELCOME | *A letter from Andy Knott, CEO*



2020 was an extraordinary year for animals. Restrictions on human activity gave our wildlife a chance to recover; there were

fewer hunts and shoots about to kill and injure, and people tuned in to nature. Meanwhile, new supporters joined us in their thousands, enabling us to do more.

An ITV exposé lifted the smokescreen on ‘trail’ hunting just before Christmas, with the League playing a major part in the suspension of hunting on nearly 2.5 million acres of land immediately after. This included some of the largest landowners, such as the National Trust.

Whilst this is not the end, together we can make it the trend. We must consolidate these gains and build further momentum, continuing to seek major changes in hunting and shooting practices and legislation across the UK.

We will also continue to protect those creatures caught up in other cruel sports such as animal fighting. With your help, in 2021 the League will seek to open more eyes and hearts, and to change more minds and outcomes, than ever before.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Knott'.

Andy Knott MBE
Chief Executive

CONTENTS

Hunt Land Denial	3
‘Trail’ Hunting Land Denial	8
Calling Time On The Shooting Season	10
Caught In The Act	12
Sanctuaries Update	14
Supporters In Action	16
Ambassadors In Action	20
Animal Advocates	22



END
HUNTING

HUNT LAND DENIAL

More than **100,000** emails, five major landowners suspending 'trail' hunt licences, three major news broadcasts, two hunting webinars and one bad week for fox hunters...

PAGES 3 - 7

HUNT LAND DENIAL

LIKE WATCHING DOMINOES TOPPLE

Emma Judd, Deputy Director of Policy, Campaigns and Communications



At the end of 2020, ITV News broadcast a groundbreaking exposé into the inner workings of the hunting lobby. The showcase featured a recording of a training webinar, obtained by the Hunt Saboteurs Association, and the footage seems to finally be an admission from the hunting lobby that they've been ignoring the law for the past 15 years. In it, senior figures within the fox hunting lobby seemed to admit that 'trail' hunting is a "smokescreen" for the chasing and killing of foxes.

The use of the term smokescreen was used by hunt figures twice in the training meeting and various speakers offered incriminating 'advice'; these webinars are now part of an ongoing police investigation.

Phil Davies, the Countryside Alliance police liaison officer, said:

"Now you know more about hunting than the saboteurs or courts will know but what it will do is create that smokescreen or that element of doubt that we haven't deliberately hunted a fox, so if nothing else you need to record that and it will help us provide a defence to huntsman."

Mark Hankinson, MFHA director, said:

"It's a lot easier to create a smokescreen if you've got more than one trail layer operating, and that is what it's all about, trying to portray to the people watching that you're going about your legitimate business."





Since these explosive statements were broadcast on ITV, business has not gone very well for the hunters. Just like a fox, our reflexes are incredibly quick and we created a campaign and launched a web page where you, and the general public could use your voice for animals and add your name to the list of animal advocates calling for major landowners to ban ‘trail’ hunting, and all other hunting activities from their land.

Thanks to your quick response, in just over a week more than **110,000** emails were sent to the biggest hunt ‘offenders’: National Trust, Forestry England, Ministry of Defence (MoD), United Utilities, Defra, The Crown Estate, Church of England, Duchy of Cornwall, Duke of Beaufort, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Lake District National Park.



We saw success within mere days. Forestry England, United Utilities and Lake District National Park had all suspended ‘trail’ licences pending the result of the police investigation. The National Trust has paused trail hunting, will not be granting any new licences for the remainder of the season and does not currently have a date when this will be reviewed.

We’ve also seen ‘trail’ hunting banned on Peterborough City Council’s land, and a police pledge to clamp down on the practice on Cheshire West and Chester Council’s land. The League worked on your behalf with both councils to secure these important motions.

For this much land – nearly 2.5 million acres – to be taken away from the hunts is unprecedented. This shows there really is no match for our campaigning expertise coupled with your voice and actions for animals.

But not all landowners seem to be taking this as seriously as they should. Exmoor National Park has stated, “we don’t feel it’s appropriate to stop trail hunting on our land”, while the MoD has fallen back on the age old excuse of “those found guilty under the act are subject to the full force of the law.”

Do they not understand that the content of these webinars helps the hunts to not have to face the full force of the law?



Any landowner who allows so-called ‘trail’ hunting to take place after these “smokescreen” revelations could be making themselves complicit in illegal hunting.

And how have the hunters responded? Deafening silence. The most we have heard from the Countryside Alliance (CA) is Tim Bonner saying, “this is not a crisis”. Well he would say that given that the CA’s police liaison officer is recorded on a training call saying: “I hope the police aren’t listening.”

To keep up to date with the toppling of land access for hunts across the country, please visit league.org.uk/news

‘...for nearly 2.5 million acres - to be taken away from the hunts is unprecedented..’





STANDING TOGETHER

Five suspensions does not make a ban so we must keep pushing.

For years the evidence has been piling up against 'trail' hunting. Foxes are still being hunted, foxes are still being torn to pieces, foxes are still being brutally persecuted in the name of 'sport'.

We are asking you, Team League, to please make every effort to lobby your local landowners, MPs, councillors and lawmakers.

This story cannot be allowed to die until hunting with dogs is relegated to the past.

TAKE ACTION

Raise your voice for animals and visit league.org.uk/contact-your-council to deny the hunt access to land. Thank you for your ongoing commitment.

'TRAIL' HUNTING LAND DENIAL

To date, nearly 2.5 million acres of land have been taken away from hunts; major landowners have suspended hunting licences, local councils have banned the 'sport' altogether and police pledges have been raised to clamp down on the bloodsport.

This map highlights the land now denied to the hunts; a truly inspirational start to 2021 and a huge sigh of relief for animals persecuted in the name of 'sport'.

**Total acres of land
denied across the UK:
2,338,179**

TEAM LEAGUE

Thank you to all of our supporters for taking action and sending emails to the biggest hunt 'offenders'. Your voice has once again created real momentum and effected true change.

**For the time being, foxes
living on nearly 2.5 million
acres of land across the UK
are safe from being hunted.**

Lake District National Park

583,650 acres

United Utilities

138,376 acres*

Across the North West

Forestry England

617,750 acres*

Natural Resources Wales

358,653 acres*

Malvern Hills

3,000 acres

Ramsbury Estates (H&M)

19,000 acres

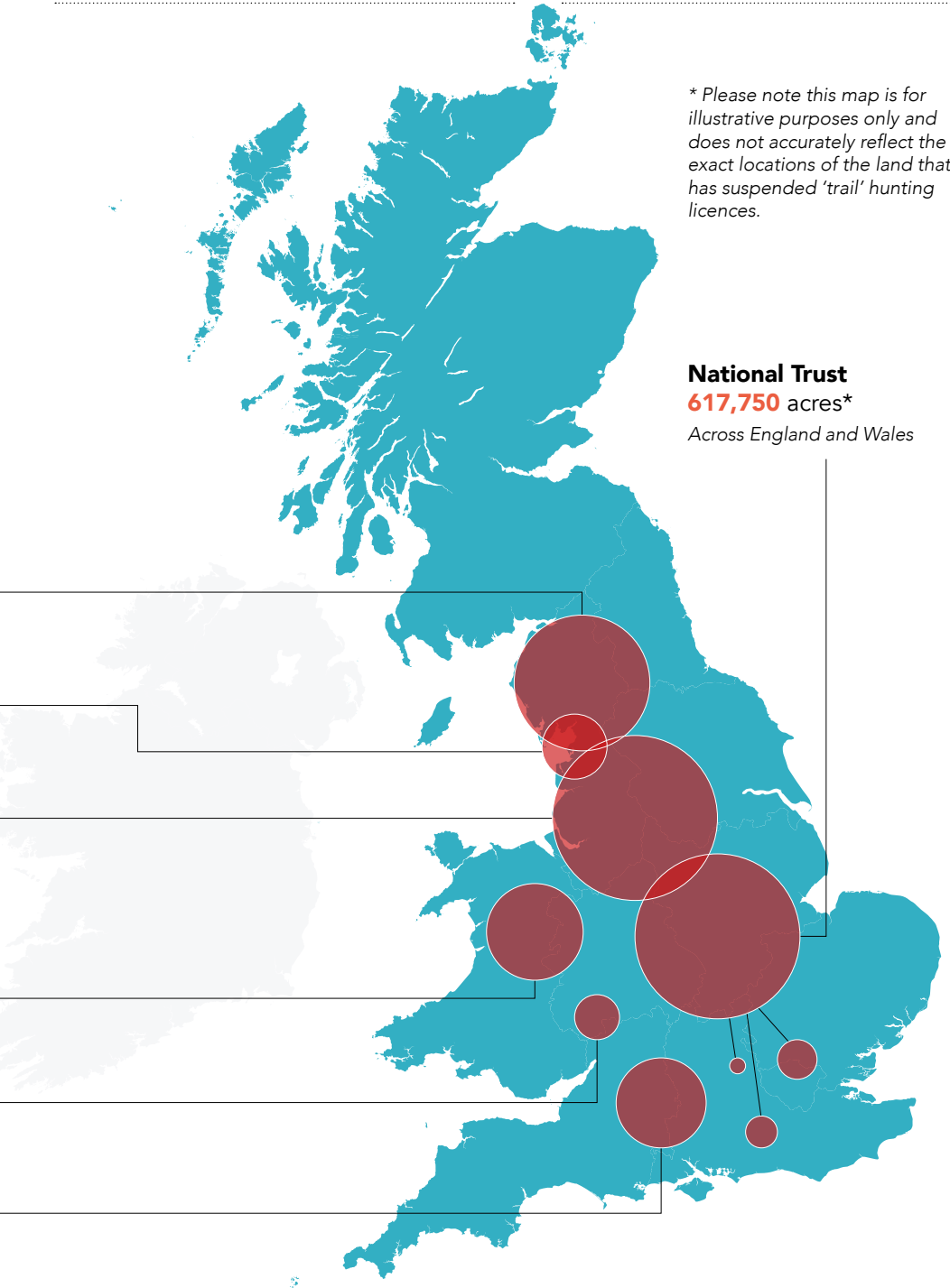


** Please note this map is for illustrative purposes only and does not accurately reflect the exact locations of the land that has suspended 'trail' hunting licences.*

National Trust

617,750 acres*

Across England and Wales



CALLING TIME ON THE SHOOTING SEASON

WILL WALES BECOME A CAGE FREE NATION?

Nick Weston - Head of Campaigns

This year, ahead of the Wales Assembly elections, we are launching a campaign calling for a ban on cage breeding of 'game' birds and snaring in Wales. 74% of the Welsh public supports making 'game' bird shooting illegal; banning the use of caged breeding and snaring in Wales would be a major step in that direction.

In the UK up to 62 million non-native pheasant and partridge are released to be shot; many in Wales, which is home to the largest breeding site in Europe, Bettws Hall in Powys.

Caged breeding is a form of factory farming commonly used to breed 'game' birds for 'sport'. Millions of pheasants and partridges are estimated to be factory farmed in Wales each year and breeding means tens of thousands of parent birds are confined to cages, often for much of their breeding lives.

The Welsh government has previously stated they would like Wales to be a cage-free nation. As this is a devolved issue, the Welsh government can ban caged breeding; we are calling on them to act now to end this cruel practice.





HOW WOULD YOU CAST YOUR VOTE IN SCOTLAND?

Max Wiszniewski - Senior Campaigner - Scotland

Imagine a world where grouse shooting doesn't exist. You are a Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP) being asked to release huge swathes of Scotland's land for use as managed grouse moors in return for 0.02% contribution to the economy. Would you legalise predator control to systematically wipe out all species that pose a threat to grouse, to enable the cultivation of tens of thousands of game birds to be shot for entertainment?

This is the exact scenario portrayed late last year in a spoof *Dragon's Den* film, ridiculing the grouse shooting industry and highlighting the weakness of the arguments in favour of the managed grouse moors in Scotland.

The campaigning film - which is available on league.org.uk/dragonsden - is the brainchild of the Revive coalition campaign for grouse moor reform, of which the League was a founder member. The video is intended to be taken tongue in cheek, but behind the humour is a very serious issue. Driven grouse shooting is an intensively managed bloodsport which depends on turning vast swathes of Scotland into barren monocultures.

The circle of destruction which surrounds grouse moors causes untold suffering to hundreds of thousands of animals, depletes peat reserves and causes environmental damage on an industrial scale.

Seven in ten people in Scotland are **opposed to grouse shooting**.

A report we published last year, **Calculating Cruelty**, estimated that up to a **quarter of a million animals are killed each year to sustain the grouse shooting industry**.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

This video, alongside the ongoing lobbying of the Revive campaign, has seen the Scottish government announce a series of measures to address the complex and controversial issues surrounding grouse moors. These include licensing grouse moors, and addressing issues such as muirburn, the use of medicated grit and hare culling. This is an important step towards the grouse moor reform we all want to see.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT: APPEAL UPDATE

Mark Collings, Head of Field Operations



Your donations are making a difference.

Last year I asked you to help us catch law breakers in the act, by equipping our professional investigators with the kit they need to secure compelling evidence of suspected illegal crimes against wildlife.

I am pleased to say your support has enabled us to invest in large professional drone models that allow for high quality videos and images to be taken. Drones can capture top-down shots of hunting and shooting routes, which is very helpful when comparing against claimed 'prepared trails'.

Compiling drone evidence adds a new dimension to evidence capture.

What's more, thanks to your donations, we have now trained, certified and insured drone pilots within our Investigations team. Armed with the best equipment and the right training, we're now able to competently monitor suspected illegal animal welfare activity across the UK from a safe and covert distance.



None of this would be possible without your generous donations. Thank you for protecting our professional investigators, persecuted animals and evidence of wildlife crime.

“ I don't know what the future has in store for us, but if we work together, we can create a society that is kind to every kind, not just mankind. ”

Animal activist

Anthony Douglas Williams

THANK YOU

Thank you to the 2,094 supporters who donated to our Caught in the Act appeal. Many of you are already members or regular donors and for you to provide the League with additional donations in these challenging times humbles and inspires us all. We, and more importantly the animals we protect, are honoured to have you by our side.





FLOURISHING FLORA AND FAUNA

Paul Tillsley - Head of Conservation & Education

Spring is on its way and the long, dark nights of winter are fading rapidly into the memory. Last year is one most people would like to forget, but for some it triggered a renewed connection with nature that gives hope for the future if we all stand together.

From the isolation of the League's Baronsdown wildlife sanctuary, 2020 unfurled like a terrible tragedy being played out on a distant stage. We are used to social distancing on Exmoor and the day-to-day running of the sanctuaries was largely unaffected by the awful events, but it was impossible not to be touched by the news elsewhere.

The wildlife that makes its home on the sanctuaries wasn't aware of the human problems outside. The enforced lockdowns did give us a break from hunting and shooting for a while, but it was so sad not to be able to welcome supporters and colleagues to share in the sanctuaries' delights.





Last year was generally a good year for wildlife sightings on the sanctuaries. During spring and early summer, we saw more fox cubs on the sanctuaries than ever, and we are still regularly seeing foxes, either when we are patrolling the sanctuaries or captured on the trail cameras we have scattered around. Cameras also revealed that badgers successfully bred on the sanctuaries and we managed to vaccinate five out of the six badgers against TB that were turning up to bait points on Baronsdown.

The breeding success of other species was undoubtedly affected by the erratic weather, with some winners and some losers. Hazel dormice and swallows had a poor year, but pied flycatchers and other small birds that use the nest boxes on Baronsdown did very well. Red deer and roe deer seemed unaffected and there were plenty of calves and kids around on various sanctuaries. We didn't have the cold spell of weather that usually greets the start of the red deer rut, but good numbers of stags turned up in the end and we can expect to see the results in June.

Now 2021 is already racing away, with snowdrops in flower and daffodils well on their way. Warmer days bring out bumblebee queens in search of a nest site and overwintering butterflies looking for early sources of nectar. We can all help our declining insect populations by planting a succession of flowers that bloom throughout the year.

By this summer we hope to be able to start hosting events on the League's sanctuaries once again, so our supporters and others can share the magic of these special places too. We now have heating in the old kennels building on Baronsdown that we use as a meeting room, which will be a relief to anyone who has sat in there shivering in their coats and hats in the past. This will enable us to plan a variety of different gatherings, from education to arts and wellbeing.

Nature is a great healer if we show her due respect and on the League's wildlife sanctuaries we do what we can to give nature a helping hand.





GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Only a true animal advocate would face the prospect of a fundraising run through muddy trails on a freezing cold December morning, and our supporter Neil does this every single year. His Hare and Hounds run, which he dubs “the only Hare and Hounds run that should be legal” brings runners together to raise money for various animal charities, and the League is proud to be one of them.

“It was brilliant fun with lots of mud and water during the seven-plus miles of rough cross country running”.

Neil and his fellow runners raised an impressive sum to help protect animals. Knowing our supporters are willing to literally go the extra mile to help keep our work going is a real boost, thank you Neil!



WOULD YOU LIKE TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE LEAGUE?

We would love to hear about your fundraising efforts. Please get in touch with us at fundraising@league.org.uk and we'll provide you with support, advice and friendly encouragement!



THE PEN, OUR MIGHTY WEAPON

Spreading the word is a key element to our campaigns. How can the general public understand the plight of hunted animals if they are unaware of the true horrors that go on? One of our supporters has written a short story to raise awareness that animals are sentient beings just like us and to show the barbaric behaviour of the hunts.

Hunted - By Julie Ann Rees

I remember running in the snow with my brother, playing and rolling about careless to the cold. It was mid winter's eve and we had everything to live for. Then they came. My brother and I ran home, we told mother and she told us to stay out of sight, that she'd lead them away from our home and double back. She'd done it before, she told us confidently. We had nothing to fear, as long as we didn't get seen, and then she was gone. I never saw my mother again.

They came for us just before dark. We tried to make a run for it but they netted us. We were plunged into a soggy blackness, a sack or something strong that wouldn't tear even though we struggled to get out. I could hear an engine starting and knew we were being taken somewhere. My brother was crying. I'd never seen him cry and I could smell the sharp stench of ammonia and knew we had both soiled ourselves. I could smell others too and hear them, whimpering. So we were not the only ones.

They threw us onto a cold floor still in the sack; it was hard and smelt of death. Rough hands wrenched open the top. Sharp eyes peered and a flash of white teeth grinned. I turned my face into the coarse material not wanting to see. Moments later a heavy door closed and I heard footsteps receding.

Cautiously my brother wriggled out of the sack, and frantic to stay close I followed. We were in a box of some sort with barely enough room for the two of us. Claw marks gouged deep in the wood foretold of previous occupants that had suffered our fate. There were similar boxes next to us and I could hear others moving and crying. My brother and I hadn't spoken, only shared anxious glances. I suppose it was shock. In the corner was a heavy ceramic bowl of water. It was filthy and tasted sour but we both drank a little.



Not knowing what would happen we curled up together. I hid my face in my brother's shoulder. I could smell fear on him. He curled around me, and we lay there, our breaths shallow as we awaited the fate our captors had planned. We were not stupid, we knew it was just sport for them, our suffering only made it better.

We'd heard the stories, tales told at the time of the winter solstice. We had listened trembling, snuggling up together nice and cosy, hoping it would never happen to us. Mother would shush the others, telling us not to listen to such evil things. Just old fairy tales, she'd say.

Our internal body clock was used to being awake at dawn so we were ready when they came. We huddled in the back of the box. A man cursed as he reached in to grab one of us. My brother pushed me behind him and stood his ground. His breath snarled through his lips but they put something around his neck and dragged him out. He kicked and I tried to grab hold of him but something hit me in the face. I heard him cry out as the door slammed shut. I screamed for him, we'd never been separated before.

There were lots of vehicles arriving, their engines rough and hoarse. Then I heard the dogs, slaving howls and frantic barking. My brother, my poor beautiful brother, was out there with them. I scabbled in the box. I scratched and fought against the splinters, adding my own gashes in the wood alongside my predecessor's futile attempts. A horn sounded and I knew what they were going to do. Run little brother, I prayed. Run. Rocking back and forth I cried my heart open and raw as I realised what had happened to my mother - and was now happening to my brother.



AMBASSADORS IN ACTION

MEGAN MCCUBBIN – A VOICE FOR WILDLIFE



Earlier this year we caught up with zoologist, author and wildlife TV presenter, Megan McCubbin – the League’s Youth Ambassador.

Megan is passionate about connecting young people with their environment; to ignite a spark of interest in wildlife that leads to a lifelong love. She wants to be part of the solution, to raise awareness and try to get the big change for animals we all so desperately want.

And she is certainly putting those words into action. Megan has already campaigned with us on the 2019 General Election roadshow and via social media. We filmed short videos to raise awareness of hunting and shooting issues and she supported our Big Give Christmas Challenge, which raised over £15,000 for the League.

During lockdown, she co-launched the Self Isolating Bird Club. Together with Chris Packham, they built an incredible community of people who were isolated but came together with their mutual love of wildlife.

Through an hourly broadcast each morning on YouTube, they brought the sounds of nature and a feeling of hope into thousands of living rooms across the globe. They have since written ‘Back to Nature’ encouraging people to connect with the wildlife on their doorstep.





Thank you to Josh Tarr and Alice Callow for providing expert filming and lighting support for the League.

Megan was an instant hit on BBC Springwatch. Having to present live on air would worry most people but there is little that appears to faze this self-confessed animal activist. She is very much aware of how much wildlife “does for us, for our mental health and our own wellbeing” and wants to “get on with the solutions to stop species from suffering.”

The future looks bright for Megan and for wildlife too. We feel very fortunate to have her as our League Youth Ambassador.

“To see images of a fox being torn apart or a hare chased across the countryside is absolutely devastating and heart breaking. We are going to turn that feeling into motivation, into something productive and powerful because as a unified group we do have the abilities to make a difference to those animals. So, don’t lose hope, keep on fighting and we will get there in the end.”

Megan McCubbin

FREE GIVEAWAY

We have one signed copy of ‘Back to Nature’ to give away. Just email your name and address to supportercare@league.org.uk (with Back to Nature in the subject line) and a winner will be picked at random after the entry deadline of 5pm on Friday 20th February.



ANIMAL ADVOCATES

Despite the ongoing pandemic, you have shown us your ardent support for animals. Sporting and campaigning events are on hold but you continue to demonstrate your dedication to ending hunting, shooting of animals for 'sport' and animal fighting. Thank you for your ongoing commitment, your time and your donations; they go a long way to help us fight for animal welfare.

Sign up to stay up to date

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date on all the work you are helping us do for animals. And if you sign up for email updates at league.org.uk you will receive all the latest news.



Game for animals

league.org.uk/leaguelotto

From just £1 a week you can support the animals across our nation, protecting them from cruelty and have a chance of winning a weekly £25,000 jackpot. Whether you play once or five times every week, your donation will safeguard animals from harm.

THE LEAGUE
LOTTO 

Pay tribute

league.org.uk/in-memoriam

From a lifelong friend, to a partner or a pet, a dedicated gift in memory can help you treasure their uniqueness and the special memories you have. Each thoughtful gift in memory bequeathed to the League will go towards protecting animals who are persecuted in the name of 'sport'.



Help build a kinder society

league.org.uk/legacies

To leave a gift in your will is a meaningful and significant way of protecting animals long into the future. You'll be ensuring that after you're gone, you'll still be inspiring change and creating a kinder society. You will have a place in our future and the future of the wildlife and animals you love. Download our Guide to Gifts in Wills or contact us on 01483 524 250 for a printed copy or for a conversation that will be treated with strictest confidence.



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

LET'S BUILD A BETTER PLACE FOR WILDLIFE

A guide to leaving a gift in your will for animals

Stay At Home Activities

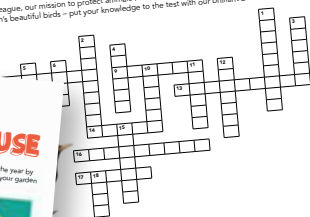
league.org.uk/stay-at-home-activities

Have you tried out our great range of online activities? From wordsearches to wildlife quizzes, bug hotels to mindfulness colouring sheets, check them out and banish the lockdown blues. And please feel free to share these free resources with your friends and family.



BRITISH BIRD CROSSWORD

At the League, our mission to protect animals from cruelty in the name of 'sport' encompasses all of Britain's beautiful birds - put your knowledge to the test with our brilliant bird crossword!



ACROSS

- Although a common site in the British countryside, this colourful bird is noted to look like a young man.
- The term given to a small aerial bird that do not usually visit the UK in large numbers.
- A nest built high up in trees or on mountains by a large bird, such as an eagle.
- This small bird is rarely recognized by its distinct spotted face and bright yellow wing patch.
- A small bird with a distinctive bright red crest.



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS
www.league.org.uk

ACTIVITIES FOR ANIMAL ADVOCATES

GET IN TOUCH

League Against Cruel Sports

New Sparling House

Holloway Hill

Godalming

GU7 1QZ

01483 524 250

supportercare@league.org.uk

league.org.uk

League Against Cruel Sports is a registered charity in England and Wales (no. 1095234) and Scotland (no. SC045533)