

PROTECT

SPRING ISSUE

2024



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS



Time for Change

A general election beckons and we're calling for a strengthening of fox hunting laws.

Welcome to your spring issue of Protect



As the cold, dark days of winter start to fade into memory, we emerge into spring and a season in which we see the natural world revive and a time of hope.

This has many parallels with our work in protecting animals from the horrors of the brutal, archaic world of blood sports and our recent inspirational big wins for wildlife will be covered in depth in this edition of Protect.

We'll be looking at what 2024 holds for us all – a year almost inevitably dominated by a general election.

Our role will be to advocate for animals and we'll be saying "it's time for change", time to strengthen hunting laws and consign barbaric fox hunting to the history books once and for all.

In the year of our centenary, Protect will take you on a journey through everything we have achieved over the past 100 years and the ways in which we can help animals now.

Whether through your generous donations or involvement in our campaigns, we have achieved so much together, and we are creating a better world for wildlife.

Mike Nicholas
Editor



Jonathan Shortt
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.



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IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

A general election beckons and we're calling for a strengthening of fox hunting laws.



This year we're almost certain to see a general election being held which presents a wonderful opportunity for us to help the wildlife in our countryside by shaping the policies of the main political parties.

Our number one priority must be to strengthen hunting laws as foxes are still being brutally chased and killed by hunts and their hounds, just as they were before the ban.

‘We’ll be saying “It’s time for change” and your help will be hugely important.’

Week in week out we receive eyewitness reports of suspected illegal fox hunting and hunts wreaking havoc or engaged in anti-social behaviour in our countryside. This amounted to nearly 1,000 incidents during the last hunting season and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

But together we can stop this sordid and ruthless behaviour by the fox hunts by putting pressure on politicians.

We’ll be saying “it’s time for change” and your help will be hugely important. We’ll be calling on the next government to strengthen the Hunting Act 2004 which came in to force nearly 20 years ago.

At the time the ban was greeted with great fanfare and we spent many years defending it from repeal. But it needs to be strengthened and the loopholes closed down.

The good news is that fox hunting has become political poison. At the last general election in 2019, and for the first time since the ban, no political party called for a vote which could have led to fox hunting being made legal again.



In 2024 we want to go one step further. We want to ensure all the parties recognise the need to actually strengthen hunting laws.

The Labour Party has recently announced they'll close the loopholes in the Hunting Act, and ban 'trail' hunting, in their first five years of government if they win the election – a move which delighted us all.

Fox hunts have been using the excuse they are trail hunting, a deception they invented after the ban, to fool the police, courts, politicians and public about what they are really up to – targeting and killing foxes.

However, trail hunting has become increasingly discredited in recent years, and the tide is turning.

Only last year, the government in Scotland, which has different legislation on fox hunting to England and Wales, banned trail hunting and toughened its hunting laws.

‘We want to go one step further. We want to ensure all the parties recognise the need to actually strengthen hunting laws.’

And in the summer of 2023, England's most senior police figure on fox hunting crime, Chief Superintendent Matt Longman, highlighted that hunts claiming to be trail hunting are instead using the practice as a "smokescreen" for the continued illegal persecution of animals.

He described illegal fox hunting as "prolific" and said the law needed "revisiting".

The developments so far have been positive but we'll be pressing all the main political parties to include a manifesto commitment or indicate their policy position to strengthen

the Hunting Act and ban trail hunting in England and Wales.

The year we'll be holding a rally in Westminster which we'll be inviting you to attend.

We'll be making sure your voice is heard by politicians – in parliament, behind the scenes and at party conferences.

We already have backing from the Time for Change Coalition Against Hunting consisting of 35 animal welfare charities, launched last summer, as part of the drive to consign fox hunting to the history books.





We used polling in 2022 to find out what the public thought about fox hunting and this confirmed that there's overwhelming public support across the country in every single constituency for the strengthening of hunting laws.

We have now approached the highly regarded Find Out Now and Electoral Calculus again to conduct new polling in election year in the new parliamentary constituencies that have been created. The results will once more help us to show the massive unpopularity of fox hunting with the public, not only in towns and cities but in rural areas as well.

People living in the countryside are fed up of fox hunts and their anti-social behaviour in which they trespass on people's properties, hunt over roads and railway lines, and intimidate anyone brave enough to stand up to them.

It's worth looking at an example of the shocking behaviour of hunts to bring home to you just what they are really up to.

In January, a helper at an animal sanctuary near Loughborough, watched in horror as the Quorn Hunt rampaged through neighbouring fields with several

foxes – which had been nursed back to health and released locally – running for their lives.

Sadly, at one point the hounds gathered in a crazed scrum, yelping frenziedly, indicating they had caught one of the poor animals and were tearing it apart.

This is the tragic reality of what we're facing.

But together we can stop the barbaric activity of fox hunting for good. You can be part of a sea change in the way wildlife is treated in this country.

You can be part of this by taking our simple action which will enable you to email your MP and candidates when they are announced, to call for hunting laws to be toughened up. All you need to do is visit the link below:

league.org.uk/strengthen-hunting-act

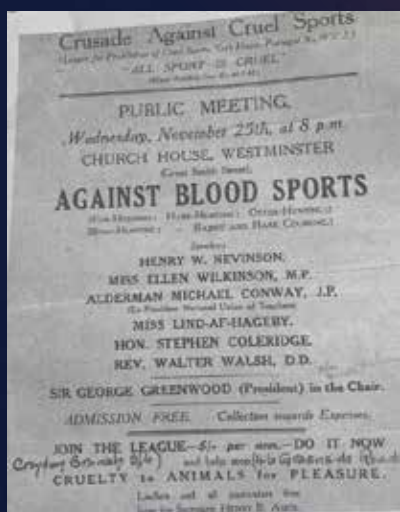


100 years of compassion and campaigning for animals



This year we celebrate our centenary marking 100 years of compassionate campaigning on behalf of animals.







On 19 November 1924, our inaugural meeting took place, organised by our courageous and visionary founders who wanted to end the persecution of wildlife.

We've achieved so much together since then as we pursued our vision, based on compassion, that animals deserve to live a life free of cruel sports.

The much-loved otter was sadly once the quarry for hunts but after many years of campaigning, we

were successful in persuading the government to ban the barbaric practice of otter hunting in 1978.

We helped achieve the fox hunting ban which came into force in 2005, and though flawed, has helped set the stage for our current campaign for the next government to introduce stronger and more effective hunting laws.

In recent years, we've prevented hunts from accessing millions of acres of land as we drove the



message home to landowners that ‘trail’ hunting was a sham and smokescreen. This culminated in the National Trust banning trail hunting on its land in late 2021.

Last year we were behind the Scottish government introducing new, tougher and more effective fox hunting laws.

In Wales, we worked with the Welsh government to introduce a ban on the use of brutal traps called snares

and ended the pain and suffering so many animals experienced.

And only last month, we helped achieve a ban on snares in Scotland.

Together we’ll take the next steps of our journey as we battle to end cruel blood sports for good.

To find out more about our past 100 years you can visit the centenary section of our website:

league.org.uk/league-centenary



We’re offering a lucky reader a unique collection of League magazines from 1978 to 2009.

Please email **info@league.org.uk** if you’re interested in this collection.



Paul Tillsley - Head of Conservation and Education

Wildlife reserves – providing sanctuary for animals

When Ernest Bell and Henry Amos founded the League 100 years ago, their concern for the welfare of hunted animals was groundbreaking and at the forefront of ethical thinking.

Likewise, when Joseph Sharp and Edward Hemingway, the then secretary and chairman of the League, bought the lease to Slowley and Side Woods in West Somerset in 1958 to protect deer, foxes and hares from hunting, it was an innovative move leading to the purchase of more land and has subsequently saved the lives of countless hunted animals.

Now, we control over 3,000 acres of land which hunts are prohibited from entering.

Our wildlife reserves, which our pioneering predecessors initiated all those years ago, continue to

carry out the vital role of protecting animals from persecution to this day, as despite the Hunting Act 2004 being in force for more than 19 years, hunts continue to chase and kill animals for sport.

Unfortunately, during the intervening years, wildlife populations in the wider countryside, from insects to birds, and from reptiles to mammals, have crashed due to a combination of pollution, habitat loss and climate change.

Our wildlife reserves are not immune to all these changes, but thanks to sensitive management over the years they have developed into reservoirs of biodiversity, which are ready to repopulate the surrounding countryside when government policy finally recognises the drastic need for change.

Spring is really a wonderful time to be on the reserves, as new life bursts out all around.

Bluebells and primroses carpet steeply sloping ground and attract all sorts of interesting invertebrates, which in turn entice migratory birds, such as pied flycatchers, redstarts and swallows that have returned to take advantage of the bonanza of food.

Young foxes and badgers are venturing above ground to explore their surroundings, while tawny owlets leave the nest early and can be seen waiting patiently for food to be delivered.

Soon we will see red deer calves born on the reserves and once again our year will have gone full circle.



TIME FOR CHANGE



National Parks

Ending fox hunting on our national parks

Our 13 beautiful national parks across England and Wales are there to protect wildlife and preserve nature. And yet three of the national park authorities which manage them hide a dirty secret – fox hunts are still marauding across their land despite the hunting ban.

The roll call of shame consists of Dartmoor, Exmoor and the Peak District national park authorities.

Dartmoor licenses hunting with dogs on the national park, while Exmoor licenses a 'trail' hunt on its land. This despite trail hunting becoming increasingly discredited with both senior figures in the police force and investigative journalists on national TV news programmes questioning it.

On Channel 4 News, Chief Superintendent Matt Longman, recently said: “The Hunting Act 2004 is vague and badly framed and without doubt is being used as a smokescreen by some to allow them to continue hunting as they did 20 years ago. Everybody knows this.”

Many of the major landowners in the country have now banned trail hunting on their land, including the National Trust, after we campaigned together to stop it.

We’ve also had some big wins among the majority of the national parks with ten national park authorities writing to us to confirm they don’t allow trail or fox hunts on land they own or manage.

We’ve now launched the next step of our national parks campaign to pressure the three rogue national park authorities to end trail or fox hunting on their land this year.

You can support this campaign to end animal cruelty. We’ve created an online tool for you to contact the national park authorities directly, demonstrating your concerns about foxes being chased and killed on their land:

league.org.uk/nationalparks



Late last year a letter signed by thousands of wildlife and nature lovers was handed over to the associations of national park authorities in England and Wales urging them to stop trail hunting.



Report animal crime and blood sports



Your support is vital in helping us tackle the cruelty inflicted on animals by the heartless people involved in cruel blood sports.

Our supporter-funded Animal Crimewatch service gives you the chance to report animal crime confidentially to a trained team who can use the information to help bring wildlife criminals to justice.



We'd like to put out a special appeal to find incidents occurring on our national parks where we're campaigning to end fox hunting – like you we find it shocking fox hunts can still access the most beautiful parts of our countryside set up to protect nature and wildlife. We're interested in hearing from you, whether you see a hunt chasing and killing foxes or a hunt wreaking havoc on a rural community.

In recent months we've been informed of a number of appalling incidents and this information has been used to inform news stories exposing this animal abuse.

We all know fox hunting is still going on but to hear the first-hand reports of those who see it brings to life the true nature of the savagery and helps us with our moves to strengthen hunting laws.

Late last year in Wales, we helped a Powys resident get her story into the Welsh media, after she saw a fox being torn apart by hunt hounds in a neighbour's garden and filmed it and reported the incident to our Animal Crimewatch service.

The resident said: "There was nothing left of the fox after the attack." She also feared for the safety of her own dog and neighbours' cats "who would surely

have had no chance if they had been unlucky enough to be caught up in the path of the pack of hounds."

Elsewhere, a report came into Animal Crimewatch that Chesterfield Football Club was going to be hosting a hunt ball at their ground.

This story however has a much more uplifting ending.

Hundreds of you got behind our online campaign requesting the club cancel the ball and within 48 hours we were all delighted when they agreed to do so.

It just goes to show what we can achieve together and it wouldn't have happened without the report into our Animal Crimewatch service.

Together we're taking on the hunts and winning.

You can get in touch with Animal Crimewatch on **0300 444 1234**, by emailing **crimewatch@league.org.uk** or by visiting:

League.org.uk/animal-crimewatch/report/

Shop with businesses supporting a kinder future for animals



Last year we launched Business Without Blood Sports which enabled ethical businesses to sign up to a pledge that they would avoid any association with brutal blood sports such as fox hunting, the shooting of ‘game’ birds or animal fighting.

The pledge now has more than 160 companies signed up to it including Forest Green Rovers football club and the green power company Ecotricity.

We’ve now created a business directory which gives you the chance to shop with confidence knowing you’re making ethical choices.

You’ll be shopping with companies that have made a commitment to a kinder future for animals, free from the persecution that much of our wildlife currently faces.

And there’s a lot of choice: from food and drink to beauty and cosmetics, from clothing and accessories to travel companies.



Multi award-winning rewilding and conservation organisation Make it Wild - makeitwild.co.uk



Do you fancy a rural cottage escape in the Peak District? Then Curlew Cottage and Leaping Hare Barn might be just the break you're looking for.

As the owner Jane says, it's perfect for singles or couples looking to "chill, walk, and cycle", and "explore nature, unwind and get away from it all".

You'll even get to share the surrounding green space with the owner's companion rescue hens and sheep.

Or maybe you or your partner would like an animal themed cruelty-free vegan friendly bag? The ideal gift for an animal lover with over 100 designs to choose from and handmade by Wild at Heart.



Wild at Heart offers handmade, cruelty-free bags and gifts, all with an animal theme.
wildatheart.online

Some of the companies that have joined the pledge are:



Curlew Cottage/
Leaping Hare Barn



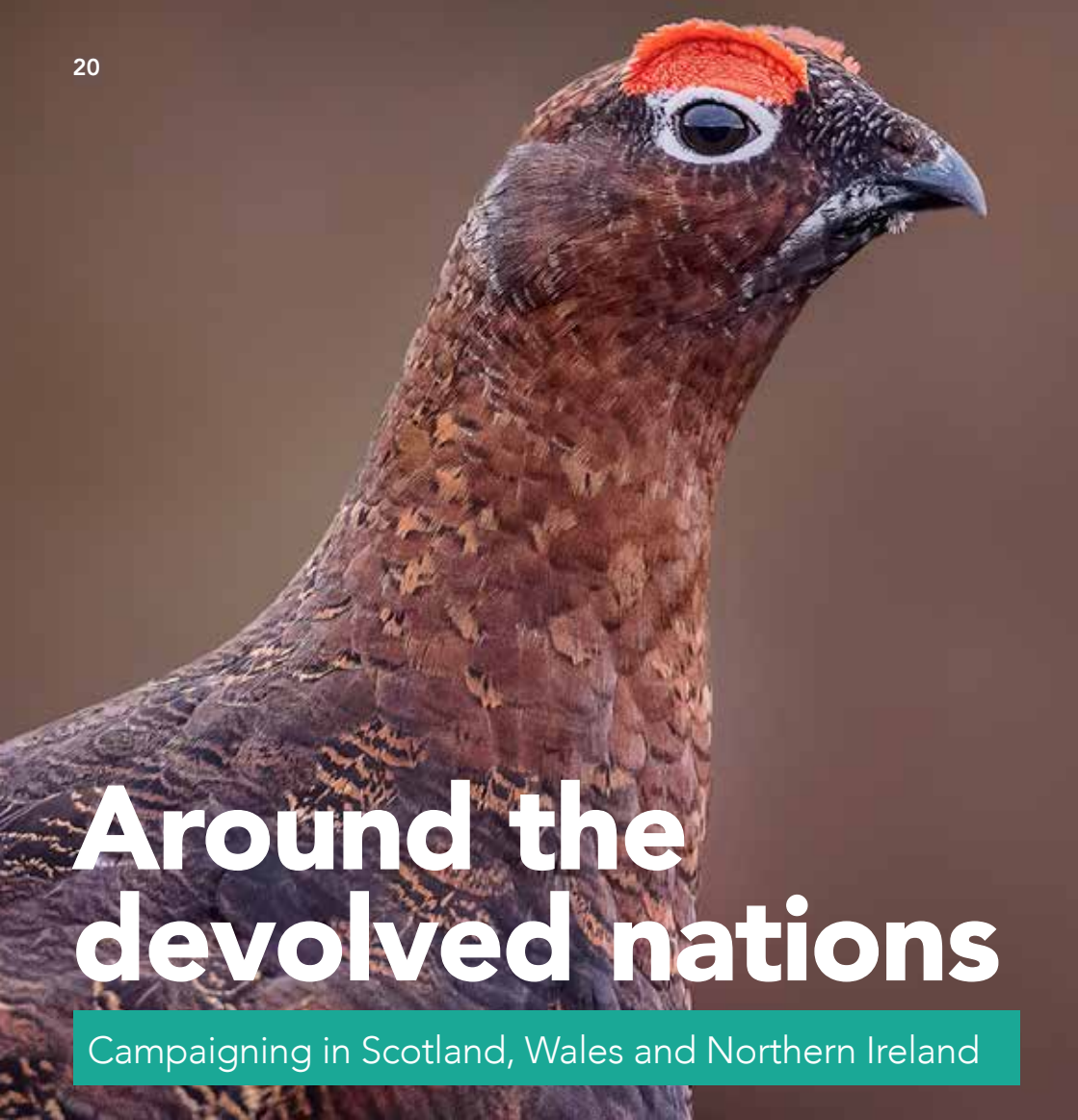
Enjoy a rural escape at
Curlew Cottage/ Leaping Hare Barn

Check out the new business directory committed to a future free from blood sports which we've created for you:

league.org.uk/pledge-directory

If you own a company and want to join our community of ethical and compassionate businesses you can sign up here:

league.org.uk/join-the-pledge



Around the devolved nations

Campaigning in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

We achieved another huge victory for animals in Scotland last month when the Scottish government voted to ban snares, a barbaric trap used by gamekeepers to kill wildlife.

It comes hot on the heels of the historic ban on snares we secured in Wales last year.

The Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill which banned the use of snares was passed by the Scottish Parliament in late March and is expected to come into force later this year.

This legislation will also mean shooting estates will be licensed and if they are caught killing majestic birds of prey – a savage practice used to build up stocks of grouse simply so they can be shot – they can have those licences revoked.

It will also license and restrict the damaging practice of muirburn, the burning of heather by the grouse shooting industry which can have devastating consequences on the environment.

Meanwhile, more than 120 academics worldwide, including Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee, have backed a report we commissioned that calls for an end to the killing of wildlife on Scottish moors simply to create the artificial conditions for more grouse to breed.

Titled ‘Killing to Kill’, the independent report by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, indicated that up to 260,000 animals are killed as a result of legal ‘predator control’ practices such as snaring, trapping and poisoning in Scotland every year.

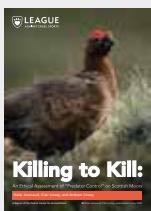
It outlined how these brutal control methods cause so much suffering to wildlife and it’s opening the eyes of Scottish politicians to the enormity of this important ethical issue.

We’re also behind moves to put pressure on the Scottish parliament to suspend the use of an unregulated and potentially dangerous chemical being used by the grouse shooting industry.

The chemical Flubendazole is being used in medicated grit, tonnes of which are dumped on Scottish moorland to treat parasites in grouse, despite its impact on the environment and human health, specifically people’s reproductive health.

Teaming up with nature conservation legal specialists Wild Justice, we commissioned an independent laboratory investigation which showed the chemical was being used at up to twice the recommended levels.

We’ve called for a moratorium on its use and are now meeting the new Scottish environment minister to discuss our concerns.



You can learn more about the devastating effects of the grouse shooting industry: league.org.uk/killingtokillreport

In both Scotland and Wales, pressure is growing to ban greyhound racing.

We've helped a Scottish Green MSP Mark Ruskell with a Bill he is bringing before the Scottish parliament which could potentially outlaw the activity.

In Wales, we launched a supporter action which helped supporters respond easily to a consultation by the Welsh government which included a potential option to ban greyhound racing.

Greyhound racing around oval tracks at speeds over 40mph is inherently dangerous and tragically over 2,000 racing dogs died and 22,000 were injured between 2018 and 2022 across Britain.

We're also running an important campaign in which we're urging the Welsh government to end the caged breeding of 'game' birds.

Pheasants and partridges are kept in small battery cages with metal walls and wire mesh floors and roofs, causing serious distress to these semi-wild birds.

Wales is home to Europe's largest game bird breeder which at its peak produces 800,000 eggs a week and which confines 90,000 pheasants and partridges to these battery-style cages.

We want this animal cruelty to end and this year will be a crucial battleground for us in Wales.



In Northern Ireland, a power-sharing government has returned to Stormont and we'll be campaigning to end fox hunting – which shockingly is still legal there.

However, it feels like the tide is turning. We welcome the appointment of Alliance MLA Andrew Muir as Environment Minister – we were heartened by his first official visit being to the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (USPCA), our partner in the bid to consign fox hunting to the history books in Northern Ireland.

Centenary Collection

To celebrate a century of campaigning for animals we've created a special collection of ethical clothing and accessories, especially for you.

This Centenary Collection features T-shirts, hoodies, sweaters, mugs and tote bags in both contemporary designs and those inspired by the vintage fashions of the decades through which we battled to end animal cruelty – from the 1920s when we were founded through to a range of unique 1980s influenced products.

The collection features designs for men, women and children. You can look stylish and also help protect animals from blood sports by shopping the collection here:

league.org.uk/clothing



LEAGUE
AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

Team League



Thank you

From all of us here at Team League, thank you for your wonderful support.

We simply couldn't achieve our goals for animals without you and last year we had some big successes.

Thanks to your support, we created the Time for Change Coalition Against Hunting, one of the largest single-issue coalitions ever created in this country, bringing together 35 charities dedicated to ending fox hunting once and for all.

With your help, we were behind the historic Scottish government moves to bring in new laws to really ban fox hunting in the country for good.

Together, we worked with the Welsh and Scottish governments to introduce a ban on barbaric snares, a cruel trap used by the shooting industry which kills wildlife indiscriminately and painfully. Now



thankfully gone in Wales and about to be consigned to the history books in Scotland.

These were big wins for wildlife and with your ongoing support, we can achieve more. We appreciate times are tough, but if you're able to make a small donation today, it will help us achieve a future free from fear for persecuted animals.

We've enclosed a donation form in the pack or you can visit the following link:

league.org.uk/protect

Thank you.

Leaving a legacy

Much of our work is funded by generous supporters leaving us a gift in their will, and creating a lasting legacy which will help us protect wildlife.

It's our dream to create a safer world for animals to live in, forever free from persecution and fear. Make your mark and end cruel sports forever.

Together we can build a brighter future for animals.

If you want to talk in confidence about considering a gift in your will, you can contact us on **01483 524250** or email **legacies@league.org.uk**



Running for wildlife

We bring you the story of two passionate supporters who are taking on a mammoth task this year to raise money for the League.

Meet Claire and Chris Owen – who in their own words tell us what they want to achieve: “We’ve decided to devote 2024 to fundraising for the League by reaching a joint running target of 3,000 km by the end of December.

“We’ve supported the League for a number of years but wanted to do more to show our commitment to animal welfare and the incredible work carried out by the charity.

“We’d love it if League supporters could help us to reach, or even exceed, our target.”

Bravo. You can support these dedicated animal advocates here:

league.org.uk/claire-and-chris



We use green and environmentally friendly paper, both biodegradable and recyclable.

We're here for both the animals and the planet.

Get in touch

01483 524 250

supportercare@league.org.uk

league.org.uk

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