

John F. Robins, Secretary and Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern,
Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel. 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521.
E-MAIL: animals@jfrobin.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/>
Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company
(Co. No. SC109126) established in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.
It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

**To supporters of Animal Concern, Animal Concern Advice Line and the
Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society.**

Dear Friends,

I'm in a bit of a dilemma here. I intended sending you this email three weeks ago but I have come to realise that what I was going to ask you to do just didn't make much sense. In my last "Robins Rant" I decried the forked-tongue approach of the Scottish Government which gave mountain hare "special protection" while at the same time agreeing to issue licences to kill those "specially protected" animals.

The hare shooting season started on August 1st and, as the Licensing Scheme is not yet up and running, indications are that, as predicted, grouse moor "managers" may be killing as many hares as possible before they need to go through the red tape of applying for licences.

I was going to ask you to lobby the Scottish Government to bring licencing in immediately to stop any mass slaughter. However as I explained in my last email the licences will not make much difference as Cabinet Secretary Roseanna Cunningham made it clear that restrictions on killing hare will only be used if culling threatens their conservation status.

Instead of calling for fast tracking of licencing of hare shooting I think we should call for a total ban on hare shooting. However mass killing of mountain hares is only a small part of the animal cruelty and environmental damage caused by driven grouse shooting.

I believe we should go much further than just banning hare culling. Earlier this year a dead white-tailed sea eagle was found on a Scottish grouse moor. A couple of weeks ago police confirmed that bird had been poisoned. It joins a very long line of protected raptors found poisoned, shot or trapped on or near driven grouse moors. Victims found are only a small percentage of those killed. Most are not found. Carcasses are either lost in the wilderness or collected by the people doing the killing. Some of those carcasses are put in "stink pits" surrounded by cruel, Scottish Government approved, snares which trap and kill foxes, cats and other animals attracted by the smell.

If you are rightly angered by the hundreds of raptors illegally killed on or near grouse moors over the last few years you should be shocked and horrified by the literally millions of other native wild animals and birds legally killed to artificially increase the number of grouse available to be shot by sporting guns.

Anything which might eat a grouse egg or chick is classed as vermin by the human parasites who seek to eradicate them. These people do not manage the environment. They severely damage it by adhering to the ignorant ways of their Victorian ancestors who, in return for an estate cottage and a meagre wage, did what they were told by their equally ignorant land-owning masters.

Up until recently I supported calls for licensing of Grouse Moors. The idea being that if illegal wildlife persecution was proved an estate could lose their licence and the income from the paying guns. I now realise that just as hare shooting licences and General Licences (for unlimited culling of birds) are worthless, so too would be Grouse Moor Licences. If fully policed licences might reduce raptor persecution but they would not stop the legal persecution and destruction of huge numbers of native animals and birds.

However if a licensing scheme allowed for confiscation of the land owned by those found guilty of wildlife crimes I would be in support!

It is time to send driven grouse shooting into the history books along with the Victorian attitude to wildlife which is at its heart. It is time for a complete ban instead of licensing.

Later today I will send you a draft of or suggestions for an email which I would like you to use to lobby politicians and write a letter to local and national newspapers. Full details in a couple of hours.

Meanwhile I've a few other things I'd like you to do.

As you know I'm a bit dubious about some of the mega petition sites which ask you to sign petitions for just about anything and then rush you off to a donations page. I signed one of those petitions yesterday and then watched as small sums totalling £94 were donated in less than three minutes. These petitions can run for weeks. I often wonder how much of the money donated goes to those organisations and individuals actively campaigning on the issue concerned.

The best petitions to sign are those on Government websites. These can result in a full Parliament debate on the issue concerned and/or referring it to a Parliamentary Committee for further consideration and perhaps Government action.

I've three of those petitions which you may want to sign.

As you know the "protection" granted to beavers by the Scottish Government last year was about as protective as a two-hole condom. As the Minister responsible for animal welfare was signing the protection order for beavers, another Government Minister was giving SNH permission to issue Government Licences to kill those same animals. At least 87 beavers, around a third of the Tayside population, have already been killed under Government "protection".

Steve Micklewright of Trees for Life has raised a petition asking the Scottish Government to replace licenses to kill with licences to live trap “problem” beavers and relocate them to areas where they will be welcomed and protected instead of persecuted and killed. Closing Date is the 27th of this month. Sign here!

<http://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/beaver>

Here’s one to the Westminster Government calling for a law to protect hedges, which are a very valuable habitat for numerous animals and birds. It closes on 11th September.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/300407>

Another important one for Westminster is this petition calling for restriction of sale and use of fireworks to licensed professional displays only, something we have been requesting for the last thirty years. The petition was placed by Julie Doorne of the excellent group Firework Abatement (FAB). Please sign it and encourage others to do so too. It needs 100,000 signatures by 21st January 2021 to ensure another Westminster Parliament debate on this non-devolved issue.

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/319891?fbclid=IwAR3TmqzAadkUMy2BHsOYggP0813XqXgMMeEvJYpHXDQ_Glc-NEjZ2oe1u0

If you are a member/supporter of other animal protection groups please ask them to promote these petitions to their supporters.

It’s been a while since I wrote to you as I’ve been having computer problems. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe them as Microsoft problems.

I’ve had several super-duper upgrades to my Microsoft software, all delivered and installed automatically. I didn’t even have to ask for them and they didn’t bother asking if I wanted them. Following the first upgrade my computer stopped communicating with my main printer. The second upgrade was magic – after that one my media email contact lists disappeared!

I’ve now got my printer running again and I’m slowly rebuilding my email media contact lists from back-up lists which were a bit out of date.

It’s not just my own computer which has been causing me problems. Bank of Scotland seems to have bought a shiny new Sayno computer. That’s not another of my typos. It’s not a Sanyo, it’s a Sayno, as in “Computer Says No”.

Earlier this year Bank of Scotland (BoS) made a small ex gratia payment to ACAL by way of an apology for problems they caused us which took months to rectify. Indeed they thanked me for my advice on how to deal with certain routine matters without causing confusion and offence to their customers.

Sadly BoS have not acted on my advice. ACAL currently has more problems with them which may affect some of you. For 19 years BoS happily accepted cheques made out to ACAL. In June, apparently without warning, they started refusing cheques to ACAL and sent me another badly written and confusing letter. After deciphering it I realised they would now

only accept cheques made out to Animal Concern Advice Line. BoS has also lost at least one of our cheques.

I have not banked any cheques for Animal Concern or ACAL for over two months as I was waiting for confirmation of what address I should send them to during the Covid crisis (my wife is at high risk so we have been isolating).

If it was not taking up so much of my valuable time I'd be enjoying my game of "Guess Where?" with BoS. Every time I send them a letter or email I get a reply from a different person at a different location. So far I've dealt with Edinburgh, Glasgow, Andover and Leeds.

Until I get clarification from BoS on where to send our pay-ins I'll hang on to your cheques so please don't be surprised if they are not cashed for several weeks. My apologies for any delays in replying to you or dealing with your subscriptions or donations. Much of it is due to reasons outwith my control.

Here are another couple of things you may find interesting. Did you know that it is not only Spain that allows bulls to suffer a slow, cruel death in the name of public entertainment? Check this out but be aware of distressing images:

<https://one-voice.fr/en/blog/six-taureaux-tortures-jusqua-la-mort-la-corrida-reprend.html>

Here's a reminder of the cruelty and risks involved in genetic modification of animals:

<https://gmwatch.org/en/news/latest-news/19492>

Take Care, Stay Safe and keep speaking up for those with no voice of their own.

Cheers4now,

John

PS It looks as though a few of our old "Freepost" envelopes were accidentally sent out with our last postal mailing. If you have any of these please tear them in half and put them in your recycling bin.