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What's wrong with Scotland's woods?

The Woodland Trust charity has launched an on-line survey to find out what support there is for various options aimed at increasing the amount of native woodland in Scotland.

As you probably know we have been campaigning for several years to put an end to the practise of killing wildlife to encourage tree growth. Rabbits and deer graze and browse on new tree shoots and saplings and it is far cheaper to poison, to gas or trap the rabbits and to shoot the deer than it is to physically protect the young trees from grazing and browsing animals. It is also important to remember that we have had rabbits in this country for circa 2,000 years and deer for tens of thousands of years yet native trees have not been browsed to extinction.

Two statements on the Woodland Trust website worry me. I have highlighted the worrying words.

The first statement is: "Degraded woods should be restored and natural regeneration should be encouraged, and **kept safe from hungry mouths**" and the second reads: "We need to build up landowners' capacity and skills in order **to promote best management** practice".

I wonder what they intend to do to keep trees "safe from hungry mouths" and what do they mean by "best management practice"? When landowners indulge in "best management" they often do so with a shotgun or a rifle. Does the Woodland Trust intend keeping trees "safe from hungry mouths" by shutting those hungry mouths permanently?

The survey asks you to give your preference from several options for each of nine questions.

The question I'd like you to consider very carefully is the third one: "Halt the loss of irreplaceable ancient and semi-natural native woodlands caused by herbivores, fragmentation and development." I marked that as "low priority" and, in the further comments box at the end of the survey, I stated: "If trees and saplings are to be protected from grazing or browsing by wild or farm animals that should be achieved through the use of appropriate fencing and tree guards and not by killing wildlife."

You can access the survey via this link [Woodland Trust Survey](#) Please fill in the survey and let The Woodland Trust know that while you support increasing native woodlands in Scotland you do not want that achieved through the killing of wild animals.

Cheers 4 now,

John
ACAL

PS I'll be getting in touch again soon with some e-mails for you to send on the hunting with hounds debacle at Westminster.