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Welcome

Margaret Thatcher famously stated that she was “not for turning”: well apparently Mr Cameron is.

In 2012, the media headlines were dominated by the many U-turns and backtracks made by the Coalition Government. For those of us in the pro-animal welfare corner, there were some scares and disappointments, but also some victories. Buzzards arguably benefitted the most from the Government’s vacillations, being granted reprieve from unnecessary persecution. Other species were not so lucky. The Government failed to act to protect circus animals, despite overwhelming public support for a ban, and of course, our badgers remain on death row ahead of the potential cull in June this year.

So, where does all that leave us for the year ahead?

Well, firstly, it would be naïve of us not to observe with concern the attitudes of some Defra ministers. On Boxing Day, Owen Paterson essentially ruled out a Parliamentary vote on the repeal of the Hunting Act this year. However, the Secretary of State made it clear that his reason for the decision was based on statistics, not morality. If the Government called the vote now, they know they would lose it. The League is going to be working harder than ever, including with all political parties, to make sure that this remains the case.

As yet, of course, we cannot know what 2013 will bring. With plans for the badger cull currently going ahead; the threat to the Hunting Act remaining; and concerns over the direction the Law Commission Consultation on Wildlife Law might be taking, the months ahead may be tough, but we’re prepared to fight for our wildlife as we always have and always will.

Looking back at last year, one resounding point stands out: people power has won out time and time again, forcing politicians to listen and act on public opinion and, above all, helping to protect countless animals from abuse, harm and death. This is a remarkable achievement and a real credit to those who took action.

We would like to thank all our supporters for your wonderful efforts: from badger boat rides down the Thames; to voluntary monitoring of illegal hunts; to those of you who donate to allow us to work on your behalf, and much more, thank you.

Without your help and support we simply would not be able to carry out our vital work to protect vulnerable animals.

Rebecca Taylor
Editor / Head of Campaigns



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From Criminology to cruelty



Peter Squires, Professor of Criminology and Public Policy at the University of Brighton, considers the misuse of firearms and the mass animal cruelty caused by shooting.

It may seem something of a stretch for a criminologist to be addressing sports shooting and animal cruelty, but the connections are there to be found. In the first place, the very characteristics popularly associated with crime and criminals: a propensity for violence, cruel indifference to suffering, arrogance, greed and a delight in killing, might appear in abundance amongst the 'shooting fraternity'. Game shooters are clearly quite sensitive to these identifications and complain of being 'misunderstood,' but at the same time a gruesome tendency to pose for photographs amongst the carcasses of dead animals whilst celebrating 'slaughter' for its own sake is bound to raise a question or two.

In the second place, for me, the whole issue of firearm misuse - crime - first opened up as an animal cruelty issue. My colleagues and I were undertaking a crime victimisation survey on a local housing estate. Many residents pointed to air gun pellet holes in their doors and window frames and complained of their pets having been shot by air weapons. In other houses, we saw air rifles propped against cupboards, plainly available to members of the household. This pointed to a simple truth of firearm ownership (and another area of denial for shooters) that, the world over, all other things being equal, where firearms are plentiful they will be frequently misused.

A parliamentary inquiry following the Dunblane murders referred to the 'petty vandalism and casual cruelty' that widespread firearm availability facilitated - precisely. A quick glance at the Gun Control Network website's log of 'shooting incidents' will also reveal the combinations of carelessness, incompetence and malice to which shooting, like any human activity, is subject, but which, when guns are involved, becomes simply dangerous.

Even in relatively safe Britain where we have, by international comparisons, pretty strong gun laws and rigorous firearm licensing, we are not immune to tragedy. The awful killing sprees of Hungerford (1987), Dunblane (1996) and Cumbria (2010) were all perpetrated by licensed shooters with legally owned firearms. Yet such tragedies are not the exceptions they may appear. Evidence I presented to the Home Affairs Select Committee investigation into gun controls in 2010 pointed to the significant numbers of licensed weapons misused in domestic homicides (some of them referred to as 'family annihilations') and violence. As many as one in three firearms (typically shotguns) used in 'domestic' homicides were legally held (Home Affairs Select Committee: Evidence, 2010).

Continued on next page



Feature continued



So called 'Country Sports' families often claim that their love of such pursuits as hunting and shooting are "in the blood". This may well be true, but it isn't their blood that is spilt. It is the blood of the creatures they are deliberately targeting, or those that are shot or injured accidentally. Another popular and insidious motto is "start 'em young", a creed that is supported by such rituals as bleeding children after a fox hunt, or celebrating a youngster bagging his - or her - first rabbit, hare, pheasant or partridge. Just as "erotic" magazines are banished to the top shelf, so too should shooting magazines - at the very least - carry warnings such as: "not suitable for children" or "not to be sold to anyone under 18". Better still, the publishers could practice a degree of self censorship. In my view, the pointless slaughter and the horrific cruelty involved in the shooting industry is indeed tantamount to pornography.

Bill Oddie

Finally - and this reflects changes of emphasis in contemporary criminology (my area of study) - it may not be a large step from criminology to cruelty. Many commentators are now emphasising what is called the 'harm agenda': drawing attention to the need to focus resources upon addressing and preventing those actions and behaviours which are socially and environmentally harmful. Here, game shooting certainly has a few questions to answer.

To begin with, the RSPB (and allied organisations) have long protested the gratuitous slaughter of increasingly scarce migrating song birds - for 'sport' - in large parts of Mediterranean Europe, a practice they describe as a 'disgraceful abuse of nature' and in 'blatant contravention of EU bird protection guidelines'. Closer to home, game shooters typically shroud their activities with an implausible veneer of 'culture' or 'tradition' while hiding their activities, wherever and whenever possible, behind the fig leaves of 'nature conservation' or the sustainability of the rural economy.

There can be few organisational labels more oxymoronic than that of BASC: an association for shooting and conservation. And this is inevitably a rather selective 'conservation', as evidenced by the numbers of other species - foxes and birds of prey especially - frequently killed (often illegally) by gamekeepers and estate wardens, seeking to preserve pheasant stocks for their employers' and clients' guns.

Nor is there much that is especially traditional about modern game shooting, beyond arrogance, elitism and privilege; those old social virtues lately regaining a currency as, over recent decades, British society has become increasingly more unequal. Game shooting in the UK, like the slaughter of song birds in mainland Europe, is manifestly not about food production, but rather about enjoyment in killing. One only has to read the magazines and shooting journalism for a glimpse of the looking glass world such people inhabit. A particularly telling recent article explored the social etiquette of following a shoot, with participants accepting a brace of dead birds to take home to pluck, cook and eat. Apparently it was not the 'done thing' to refuse your pair, although the article left a distinct impression of a practice more honoured in the breach. Even when the dead birds were accepted by a rather nonplussed shooter (after all, this was manifestly not why he or she was there), one suspects that a significant number of birds ended up as landfill, in the nearest bin or convenient ditch, a practice highlighted in the League film "Gunsmoke and Mirrors."

Nevertheless, the article continued to explain how 'at one time dressing a bird was second nature to guns'. Well maybe, but now, obviously, this is no longer the case. Shooting is, above all, about killing for fun - anything else gets in the way of the champagne. The residual purpose to these post-shooting 'dressing' activities seems to be that 'plucking is a great way to eradicate fear of blood and guts'. The ironies multiply: today's shooters seem bold enough to pull the trigger, but rather too squeamish to cope with the consequences. A second rather revealing insight to the shooting mind-set might be found in a blog on a shooting society website. A recently inducted member of a 'Sloane Ranger' shooting set wittered on about her rising anxieties as the day of her first shoot approached; just how would she feel about 'actually killing something'. Afterwards she reassuringly reflected, 'you know, it didn't bother me a bit'. Lack of remorse, as any offender manager might tell you, is not always such an 'endearing' quality.

What is the League doing?

The League is continuing to campaign to get better welfare protection for game birds. We recently responded to a government consultation in which we called for the classification of game birds to be changed. The current classification as wild does not take into account the level of human interference into their populations. This results in terrible acts of cruelty being permitted. This cruelty was highlighted in the recent League exposé film, Gunsmoke and Mirrors. The League is also working to end the needless annual slaughter of birds in Malta. We work alongside BirdLife Malta and our investigators and trustees have visited the charity out in the field to assist with their campaigns.

What can you do?

- Watch our film Gunsmoke and Mirrors www.league.org.uk/shooting
- Help organise a screening - contact head office if you'd like us to send you a copy
- Ask your MP to sign EDM311, which calls on the Government to ensure that animals are protected from the kind of senseless destruction illustrated in the film www.league.org.uk/gameshooting
- The League is supporting Animal Aid's campaign to ask leading newsagents to ban the sale of gun magazines to anyone under the age of 18. Help the campaign: www.league.org.uk/AnimalAid



As I noted at the beginning of this piece, I came to be interested in the misuse of firearms from an almost entirely criminological point of view, so a final 'crime related' note takes us full circle. Sports shooting covers a wide social spectrum, but at its core lies a self-styled rural elite who believe they have a special claim on rural tradition, encapsulating the 'glorious twelfth' and stewardship of the British countryside. It was precisely this elite ruralist exclusivity that the Ramblers' mass trespass in 1932 (the 80th anniversary of which was celebrated earlier last year) sought to challenge and which - eventually - culminated in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act of 2000. However, amongst today's field sports reactionaries, there are around 700,000 rifle and shotgun licence-holders (covering nearly 1.8 million firearms) whose grip on their firearms of choice is underpinned by an unshakeable belief in their right to 'their' countryside and their lifestyle privileges.

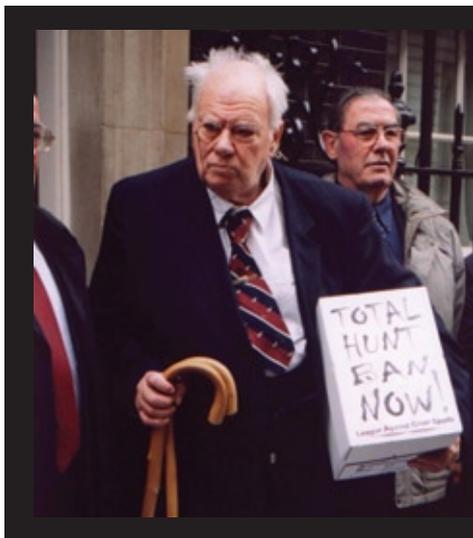
As a criminologist, it especially concerns me that the current Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, has given this self-styled gun-owning elite a green light to employ their sporting firearms to shoot 'intruders' under some, no doubt US inspired, neoconservative 'my home is my castle' doctrine. And likewise, I've never been particularly keen on the gun lobby's attempt to induct children, through its school and youth outreach activity, into the world of shooting and killing for fun: to me these are incompatible, irresponsible and profoundly anti-social ideas. And it was this that led me to support Animal Aid's recent 'Gunning for Children' Campaign.

Peter Squires is a Professor of Criminology & Public Policy at the University of Brighton. He is a member of the UK Gun Control Network. He has researched gun crime and control and public safety policies since around 1994.

His book, comparing British and American reactions to the Dunblane and Columbine school shootings [Gun Culture or Gun Control?] was published in 2000; Gun Crime : A Review of Evidence and Policy was published in 2008; and his research on police armed response policy [Shooting to Kill?] was published in 2010.

He is currently working on another book, Gun Crime in Global Context, to be published in 2013.

This article is based upon a talk originally given at the Animal Aid Xmas Fayre on 2nd December 2012. Peter would like to thank Animal Aid for their kind invitation to speak at their event.



Gone but not forgotten.

Former League patron Sir Patrick Moore dies, aged 89

The League Against Cruel Sports was saddened to hear that eminent astronomer, former League patron and dedicated anti hunt supporter, Sir Patrick Moore CBE, has died. Sir Patrick passed away peacefully at his West Sussex home in December.

While Sir Patrick was, of course, best known for being an astronomer, musician and British icon, he was also a passionate animal lover. He abhorred all kinds of hunting and took every opportunity he could to speak out and campaign against the 'sport'.

In 1960, as patron of the League, he introduced an anti-hunting motion to the RSPCA's AGM, but it was defeated. In 2001, he also delivered a League petition signed by 82,251 individuals, demanding that the Government ensured that hunting with dogs was banned as quickly as possible, which it of course was three years later, in 2004.

Sir Patrick was an inspiration to many people, and we would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to him, on behalf of the League Against Cruel Sports and the animals that he was so dedicated to protect. He will be sorely missed.

Operations team



Join the debate:
magazine@league.org.uk

The League has committed an extra £1 million pounds of funding for our Operations Team to make sure that those criminals who continue to flout the law will be caught and brought to justice. Here are some of the latest reports from the field and the courtroom.



Law Commission's review of wildlife crime

Director of Operations and League Solicitor, Rachel Newman, considers the potential impact of the review

The Law Commission has recently commenced a review of wildlife law in England and Wales. Whilst we see this as an exciting opportunity, it also raises the possibility of a reduction of protection in certain areas.

In principle, the League welcomes the review, as it can only be a good thing that old complex laws will be simplified and made easier to understand. If the law is confusing then it's easier for criminals to escape conviction.

One of our concerns is that the Law Commission is unable to extend legislation and can merely consolidate existing laws. This seems to us to be a missed opportunity. The protection given to wildlife falls far short of that given to domestic or farmed animals and we have long campaigned for a general protection from cruelty to be legislated for all animals, including those in the wild.

Unfortunately this is not going to be an outcome of this review; as such a change would need to be a parliamentary one.

An equally big, if not greater concern, is that in the ethos of consolidation, some established offences are under review, such as entering a dog into a badger sett and the element of reckless behaviour under the Protection of Badgers Act. These are matters the League sees as pivotal. The issue arises as badger protection is what can best be described as gold standard legislation - it goes above and beyond that required by European Law.

The League has strongly argued that, if the issue is consistency, protection levels for all wild animals should be increased. However, the counter argument expresses that more stringent legislation would be too burdensome. This is something we have stressed as being non-negotiable in our response to the review, as well as in private meetings. Removing such offences would send an untenable signal to wild animal offenders.

There is also a suggestion that the criminal law should make way for a civil sanction approach. The League is utterly opposed to this as there is no evidence to suggest that civil sanctions would have any deterrent effect.

Those who commit wildlife crime offences are criminals and must be treated in the same way as all other criminals and not merely sent a warning letter and told not to do it again. Effective criminal sanctions are the only way forward and we are calling on greater police enforcement and more prosecutions, not less.

The real impact will be in the parliamentary process when any draft Bill is amended and debated by MPs. This is when we and our supporters need to be ready to remind MPs that they must support the League and protect wild animals properly. The Hunting Act 2004 is not a part of the Commission's review but we are alert to the risk that amendments may be made to change or even repeal the Act in this process. It is not acceptable to allow hard fought legislation to be abandoned through a desire to reduce regulation or to save money by reducing the number of wildlife cases taken to court. The League will be campaigning vigorously to defend the protection that we have and ensure that the draft legislation is robust enough to allow for future improvements to animal welfare.



Tel: 01483 361 108

What is the League doing?

- Our team of professional investigators work tirelessly, often in dangerous situations, to tackle wildlife crime
- We have pledged to invest over £1million into our operations team over the next three years to help stamp out wildlife crime
- We process and investigate public reports of wildlife crime
- We work with the police and other enforcement agencies to help catch wildlife criminals and lobby Police and Crime Commissioners to ensure wildlife crime is a priority

What can you do?

- Sign up for regular updates from our Investigations team where we will supply a monthly crime guide to highlight various cruel activities: www.league.org.uk/register
- Contact us if you would like to become a volunteer investigator
- If you have any information on wildlife crime please call our crimewatch number on 01483 361 108. Or you can use our online reporting form: www.league.org.uk/crimewatch
- Donate to our investigations online: www.league.org.uk/donate

Special Case Report: Social media – 21st century wildlife crime?

Increasingly, social networks are being used to facilitate and showcase Wildlife Crime. Sadly, a vehicle that can be used to show your friends your latest holiday pictures is also being abused by those committing acts of cruelty.

The League receives regular reports from people seeing disturbing images of animal cruelty on Facebook and other sites. We take these reports very seriously, and where possible, escalate these to the police.

On one occasion, a League supporter went directly to the police with some particularly upsetting images of fox and dog fighting, which were being displayed online. Unfortunately, the police showed little enthusiasm and did not take the matter further. The same League member then contacted us through our Wildlife Crimewatch line. We agreed that some action should be taken and prepared a case to bring to the police, using law enforcement methods that they recognised.

The police were persuaded to carry out a number of search warrants across different constabulary areas and the group of people displaying the images were arrested. Many images on their computers and other equipment were seized; dogs with injuries were seen; and dog fighting materials were uncovered.

The images that have been the subject of the investigation have been described as some of the worst ever seen; and the evidence seized, as one of the most complete catalogues of a gang committing systematic cruelty to foxes, badgers and domestic animals.

Through Protect, we will keep our supporters updated on the progress of this investigation, as we see the gang charged and taken through the court process.

We fully recognise that without the alertness and persistence of our supporter, the gang would have still been carrying on their acts of cruelty mercilessly and would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for your help in bringing their barbaric practices to an end.

Undercover League Investigator (identity protected) speaks first hand about his experiences of dealing with the heinous crime of badger baiting

There can be few activities as sadistic as the crime of badger baiting. However, sadly, badger baiting is as prevalent today as it ever was.

Many of those involved are regularly linked to crimes such as burglary, illegal drugs and violence. Badger baiters show no compassion for badgers, or their own dogs, whose horrific injuries often go untreated through their owners' fear of being detected.

One afternoon, I was presented with the rare opportunity of apprehending some badger baiters in action. At the time, I was in the company of a member of the local badger group, only intending to monitor a badger sett which had been subject to regular attacks.

When we arrived, we found a suspicious vehicle, parked out of sight of the road, adjacent to the wood which housed the badger sett. We didn't know how many people might be in the woods, or what they had in mind, so, knowing how these situations can turn out, I advised my companion to stay at a safe distance.

I called for reinforcements, but, while I was waiting for them, two men and four dogs emerged from the woodland and joined me by their vehicle. One of the dogs bore a fresh injury to its lower jaw, adding to my concern that they had just been attacking the badger sett.

Would they take matters into their own hands or simply try the usual excuses of "walking the dog" or "rabbiting", hoping to be let off with a warning? Luckily it was the latter, and when help arrived, they were soon taken off to the police station.

From that point on, it was a matter of getting everything right, as I knew getting a second chance in these circumstances was minimal.

The badger sett was examined by the badger group and found to be active. A spade was found abandoned in an entrance, and was later identified as belonging to one of the men. Some six hours later, I interviewed the suspects myself, before I headed home, tired but happy they'd been caught.

Many more hours of work were needed to secure the convictions. Including examination of excretion from the seized dogs. This was found to contain badger hair, indicating that the dogs had been in contact with badgers. Mobile phones seized from the men also revealed graphic videos of related crimes.

After 16 months of investigation and legal wrangling, both men pleaded guilty in a prosecution for offences under the Badgers Act 1992. Their dogs were successfully rehomed.



In my view...

“Team work and modern campaigning methods are essential in the badger campaign”



Ian Beaumont, the League's Director of Communications and Public Affairs, talks about the recent success in the planned badger cull being delayed.

For a modern campaign to be effective, it needs to work on many levels, especially in the fast-moving, restless and multi-faceted communications world we live in.

The recent campaign against the proposed badger cull was successful because it achieved this. It also captured the imagination of many diverse organisations and individuals, who pulled together around a common cause - to save our badgers from a barbaric and cruel cull that was scientifically proven to be ineffective in tackling bovine TB in a significant way.

The League has been closely involved in this campaign from the very beginning and over the last two years we've seen at close quarters how it's developed and grown. Prior to last summer's activity, we submitted a response to the Government's consultation; handed in 70,000 signatures to DEFRA; carried out polling; and asked our supporters to email the Prime Minister, their MPs and DEFRA. The first thing that struck us when the campaign began to gather momentum last summer was the strength of feeling against the cull in the proposed pilot areas of West Gloucestershire and West Somerset at the public meetings we organised in Taunton and Tewkesbury.

At those very well attended meetings, the case against the cull was made very persuasively by a range of speakers, on scientific, practical and above all humanitarian grounds. The response from those who attended both meetings was overwhelmingly supportive. If anyone present supported the cull, they kept their views to themselves.

The formation of 'Team Badger' - a coalition of like-minded organisations, including the League, RSPCA, Brian May's charity Save Me, HSI, IFAW and many others - around the time of the public meeting in Bristol in September, helped give the campaign further focus, with each organisation playing its part.

Activity included the development of a Stop The Cull and Team Badger website; the setting up of a Government e-petition; concerted, high profile, media activity; and a co-ordinated campaign to raise awareness of the issue amongst MPs, Peers and others and to gain their support.

The independent, third party support of over 30 leading scientists helped to make the scientific case against the cull and the popularity of the Government e-petition, which generated the required 100,000 signatures in a week and 160,000 in a month, showed the depth of public support for the campaign and led directly to a parliamentary debate and vote against the cull that helped postpone it. Just prior to this, the League organised a "Badger" boat ride on the Thames and a lobby of Parliament, with around 100 of our supporters and others joining in and meeting their MPs.

As our Chief Executive, Joe Duckworth has said, badgers have been reprieved but not pardoned. Therefore, we need to continue our efforts to ensure the cull isn't just postponed, but abandoned for good, in favour of vaccinating badgers and developing an effective bovine TB vaccine. Through teamwork and effective campaigning, we will hopefully succeed.



Join the debate:
magazine@league.org.uk

"The thought of any animal being shot, killed or left wounded to die a slow, agonising death when there is an alternative more effective and humane solution to bovine TB available, breaks my heart."



Gemma Atkinson, Actor

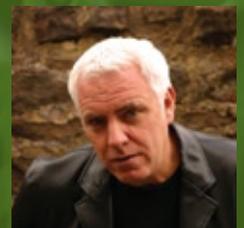
"We are a country of animal lovers, the sheer volume of people standing up in opposition at the badger cull lobby and signing the Team Badger petition demonstrated the strength of support there is against a cull."

"There are better options than this barbarism."

Maxine Peake, Actor



"So the Government has given badgers a 9 month reprieve? Simply not good enough! We need a full pardon for the little stripy fellas, and repeal the death sentence NOW. The cull has never made any sense, so can we put a stop to it once and for all? Please."



Dave Spikey, Comedian/Writer

Real life victims of hunt havoc

Head of Intelligence, Mark Randell, talks about cases of hunt havoc that have been reported to him so far during the 2012 - 2013 hunting season.



One of the surprising things for me, since starting at the League, has been the frequency and breadth of hunt havoc reporting. These people, their pets, and livestock are often the forgotten victims of hunting. Last year I heard horror stories about people being forced to move from their homes; businesses and property being damaged; pets being killed; and families being bullied and intimidated.

This season seems to have started very much in the same vein.

One family living in the West Country got in touch with us, worried about the forthcoming hunting season. They had moved to a property in the country to aid the recovery of their sick child. Unfortunately the property was situated on a strategically important piece of hunting land, and consequently they found themselves the victims of hunt havoc last year. The family had re-homed a number of animals at their property specifically to help the recovery of their child, only to find these very same animals being terrified and chased by the hunt. On the most recent occasion, the noise of the marauding hunt sent one of the family's new ponies into severe stress that necessitated lengthy veterinary treatment and a hospital drip for 5 days.

Real life stories such as these are reported to the League almost daily.

In another such instance, in a neighbouring area, a man establishing an educational centre for children with behavioural difficulties had also become exasperated with the hunt frequently riding across his property without permission. The consequences of these trespasses have not been trivial for the man; his dog's ears were shredded by the hounds; one of his pregnant cows aborted her unborn calf; and disgracefully, the area where his late wife's body lay was rampaged over one Boxing Day.

Sadly, fear of retribution from these rural gangs stops people from reporting such incidents and allows these criminals to continue unabated. Hunt havoc is not restricted just to the deepest countryside areas either. In a road near to a transport hub that sees over 35 million passengers a year, a group of out of control hounds forced a van into a ditch. At least one of the hounds was seriously injured. The driver of the car, reported to us that she was then subjected to bullying tactics used by the illegal hunters, who forcibly tried to lay the blame for the accident with her.

Out of control hounds are unfortunately a common event. Domestic and farm animals are stressed and injured; wildfowl are killed; tourists are left in shock; and crops are destroyed year on year.

All of these incidents are just a snapshot into the real life stories of hunting that have been reported to the League this season.



If you, or someone you know, has been a victim of hunt havoc, please give us a call on our specialist wildlife crime reporting number: 01483 361 108

2013 Year Planner ... and highlights from 2012

January

1st Brown and mountain hare shooting begins

The year was off to a good start in 2012 for the League, when after years of campaigning, bull fighting was formally banned in Catalonia, Spain.



February

18th Hunting Act Anniversary

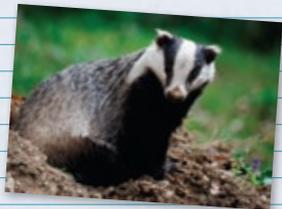
Stories of hunt havoc came flooding in throughout the hunting season last year. Sadly, these cases sometimes involve people's pets. In one case last February, Sophie, an eight year old cat was attacked and killed by hunt hounds. Her distraught owner told us:

"All the dogs rounded on her. I waded amongst them - it was horrible. I tried everything but by the time I got her away from the dogs it was too late."

March

1st Spring stag hunting begins 29th Fox hunting season ends

In March 2012 the Welsh Government called off plans to cull badgers. The League had been lobbying against the controversial plans for many months and described the announcement as "a real victory for common sense and compassion"



April

1st Bullfighting begins 1st Mink hunting begins 4-6th Grand National race meeting, Aintree 25th 25th League shooting symposium

Tragically, two horses, Synchronised and According-To-Pete, were killed running the Grand National last year. The League is calling for the race to be abandoned in 2013 unless drastic changes are implemented which will guarantee that horse welfare is put first.



May

League Hunting Report published 2012/13 season

On 16th May 2012 the Government called off controversial plans to destroy buzzard nests in order to protect pheasant shoots. The divisive proposals involved spending £375,000 of public money on controlling birds of prey. Fingers crossed that the Government will continue to listen in 2013 and announce a similar U-turn on badger cull plans.



June

Badger cull to commence 'Running of the bulls' - Collado Villalba (Madrid) and Torrejon de Ardoz (near Madrid)

Our special undercover team often receive calls about dog fighting. In June last year, we were able to use information given to us by the public to launch a special investigation into a dog fighting ring, which we passed to the police who are currently taking action against the accused perpetrators.

July

7-14th 'Running of the Bulls' - Pamplona

Our film 'Gunsmoke and Mirrors' was launched last July, revealing the murky truth behind the UK's shooting industry. The film examines the cruelty of battery farming, killing of protected and predator species and the hideous waste and pollution caused by the shooting industry - all issues the League will be working hard to address throughout 2013.



August

1st Stag hunting begins (England, Northern Ireland)

1st Mountain hare shooting begins (Scotland)

4th Cub hunting begins (England, Wales, Scotland)

12th Brown hare shooting begins (NI)

12th Glorious 12th - Grouse shooting begins

In August, we welcomed the guilty verdict of two members of the Meynell and South Staffordshire Hunt in the first ever conviction for illegally hunting fox cubs with hounds. The League is appealing to members of the public to send us any information on possible cub hunting so that we can help secure further convictions in 2013. For more information on identifying cub hunting, please see our wildlife crime guides at; www.league.org.uk/wildlifecrimewatch.

September

1st Partridge, duck and goose shooting begins

Shockingly, in September 2012, two of our undercover investigators were attacked by hunt supporters, but this action only made us more determined to catch wildlife criminals. A League Investigator said: "This kind of behaviour comes as no surprise to our team. Pro-hunt groups increasingly seem to resort to intimidation tactics and even violence. Perhaps we have them rattled, they should be! Our recently enlarged operations team combines the knowledge and skills of experienced investigators, legal experts and ex police officers to make sure that these wildlife criminals are brought to justice."

October

1st Brown Hare shooting begins (Scotland)

1st Pheasant shooting season begins (UK)

1st Partridge shooting season begins

October 2012 was all about the fight to stop the proposed badger cull in England. Our supporters and partners really pushed the boat out to prevent the cull going ahead, quite literally in one case, when the League sailed an all singing, all dancing 'badger boat' up and down the Thames past Parliament! We were extremely relieved on the 23rd when the Government revealed that it would be postponing the cull, however, the announcement did not go far enough. Today, badgers are on death row, with plans to commence with the cull in June 2013.

November

1st Fox hunting begins

In November, we launched 'Hunting - the reality' the first in a new series of short films. Throughout 2013 we will be releasing further films in this series, using footage shot by our undercover investigators to expose the hidden cruelty behind hunting.



December

26th Boxing Day hunts

Christmas came a little early for us in 2012 when members of the Oxfordshire-based Heythrop Hunt, which Prime Minister David Cameron has ridden with, pleaded guilty to four charges of intentionally hunting a fox with dogs. The League congratulated independent hunt monitors and the RSPCA for helping to secure the first ever successful prosecution where a hunt has faced corporate charges.



Update from Parliament

Senior Public Affairs Officer, Ian Pendlington, talks us through the recent happenings in Parliament

The League's work last year

Last year was a very busy one for the public affairs team at the League. We were instrumental in a number of successful campaigns that took us into the heart of Westminster, forming important new alliances and working relationships with campaigning partners along the way. We also built on our existing relationships with Members of Parliament and made vital new contacts with MPs and Peers that we hadn't met before.



Joe Duckworth meets Willie Bain MP

Defending the Hunting Act with public support

As an organisation dedicated to the ban on hunting, we are very much aware that the next few years are going to be crucial to the defence of the Hunting Act. The Coalition Government has committed itself to giving MPs a free vote on the possibility of repealing the Act within the lifetime of this Parliament. If they do so, our public affairs team will be ready to take the case for protecting the Act to Parliament and into the constituencies of the MPs who threaten its existence.

2013 sees the Act enter its eighth year on the statute books. Not only has it proven itself to be one of the most successful pieces of wildlife legislation ever put through by Parliament, with hundreds of successful prosecutions; it is also supported by a large section of the population. An opinion poll conducted by Ipsos MORI, which we released on Boxing Day along with our campaign partners at IFAW and the RSPCA, showed that three in four people in Great Britain, 76 per cent think that fox hunting should remain illegal. 81 per cent think deer hunting should not be made legal again and 83 per cent think hare coursing should also remain illegal. So, the message from the public to our politicians and the Government is clear. Keep Cruelty History.

**KEEP
CRUELTY
HISTORY**

Working with Police and Crime Commissioners to combat wildlife crime

It is not just politicians in Parliament that the League is in touch with. We have also contacted all the recently elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), who have been given a democratic mandate to respond to public concerns and set their local police forces' policing priorities. We are urging them to give wildlife crime, which has a profound impact on the lives of people in both rural and urban areas, the priority that it deserves and that the public want to see.

Our developing good working relationships with the new PCCs builds upon the League's excellent track record in working with police forces across the country, alongside our own intelligence led investigation and operations team. We already co-operate with organisations such as the National Wildlife Crime Unit, who have been successful in securing prosecutions across the country. In addition, we also have a dedicated wildlife crimewatch number (01483 361108) so suspected illegal acts can be reported by the public in confidence.

We know from our own evidence that wildlife crime is often linked to other criminal activities, such as burglary and drug trafficking. We also know from our investigators that illegal hunting with dogs still takes place across the country. This often results in other criminal and anti-social incidents. For example, hunt hounds trespassing onto roads, railway lines and private land can cause danger to livestock and domestic pets (known as Hunt Havoc).

The public believe that, where there is evidence of these kinds of illegal acts taking place, the perpetrators should be prosecuted. We will continue to ensure that the PCCs are aware of these issues and concerns. There should be no hiding place for those guilty of these barbaric crimes.



Team Badger lobby Parliament over proposed badger cull

Friends of the League

This year we are launching the Friends of the League. This will bring our Parliamentary supporters, from all sides of the political spectrum, together as one group and will incorporate a series of events, policy dinners and receptions throughout the year that will focus on our key aims and objectives. The Friends of the League will ensure that our voice is being heard throughout the corridors of power in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Europe over the next vital few years, as we prepare the groundwork for the General Election due to be held in 2015.

The next few years leading up to that election will be crucial to animal welfare. Protection of the Hunting Act is at the heart of all we do. However, there are a whole range of other issues we need to raise awareness of, such as snaring, shooting, bullfighting, dog fighting and the treatment of racing animals like greyhounds and horses.

Our ongoing commitment

There is growing concern about cruelty to animals in the name of sport. Whether it is the possibility of the Government repealing the Hunting Act, the suffering and damage to our wildlife caused by the practices of the shooting industry or the potential of an unnecessary and ineffectual badger cull, our job is to ensure those concerns are reflected throughout the parliaments of England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Europe.

Our commitment to defending existing legislation that protects wildlife, along with our passion and determination to continue to raise animal welfare issues reflect the kind of society that we want to shape. This is a modern, tolerant and inclusive society and one in which cruelty has no place.

Team Badger

We are also continuing with our campaign to save badgers from the planned cull in England, which was postponed in October 2012 but is still scheduled to go ahead in the summer of 2013. If the Government persists in pursuing this policy, which has been proven to be fundamentally flawed on scientific and humane grounds, the League, along with our campaign partners in "Team Badger," will be ready to take the case against the cull back to Parliament again.

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated' (Ghandi). Using this criterion, the pain which will undoubtedly be visited upon badgers during a cull, puts us in danger of becoming desensitised and brutalised, and those who deal in such a way with animals will tend to deal likewise with humans. Until we stop harming other creatures we cannot call ourselves civilised. There must be another way. There is - vaccination. 'The best prospect for control of TB in the British herd is to develop a cattle vaccine' (Krebs, 1997). This remains the case."

**Penny Morgan,
Author and Vice President of the League**

Friends of the League

If you want to know more about joining Friends of the League, please contact Ian Pendlington at ianpendlington@league.org.uk



Get active

Your local League

Di Lamont, our new Support Group Officer, tells us about the plans for local groups in 2013

After a successful year of campaigning and fundraising on behalf of the League, we at Head Office want to make sure that our amazing local groups are as best looked after as possible. In order to do this, we have pulled together a brand new strategy - both to improve our communications with current groups and to better equip those supporters who wish to start their own.

With a whole new range of 'How To' guides - ranging from 'How to hold a successful meeting' to 'How to lobby your MP', carrying out basic group activities will now be easier than ever. In addition, we have redesigned and updated our entire range of campaigning materials, ready soon, to send out to our groups and supporters to kick-start a great New Year of campaigning.

Perhaps our most exciting new development is a monthly e-communication (also available as hard copies) to be sent exclusively to members of local groups and active campaigners, the first being launched this month. These include stories and highlights from existing groups, as well as news of any newly started groups. We now supply our groups with monthly 'focuses' - mini campaigns chosen by us, specifically for local groups. Along with these focuses will be a series of top tips and exciting ideas on how to get started!

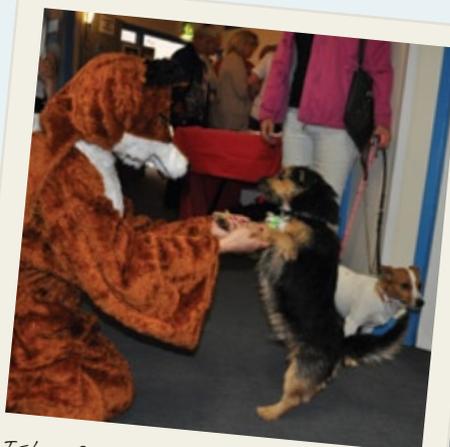
This month, our groups will be organising screenings of our shooting exposé, 'Gunsmoke and Mirrors'

Keep your eyes peeled for a screening near you and please support the groups who so kindly represent us throughout the country. If you are interested in getting involved with the group local to you, this would be a great chance to meet the members face-to-face.

If there is not a group in your region, (www.league.org.uk/localgroups) and you are interested in starting one, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Organising and running a local group can be extremely rewarding and we would love to hear from you! Contact Di Lamont on 01483 524250.



Bill Oddie joins local group volunteers at the Bird Fair



Isle of Wight Wildlife Day 2012 - attended by Brian May



Animal Aid Christmas Without Cruelty Fair

Fundraising for the League

As you know, the League is a registered charity, and, as such, our campaigns rely on fundraising. The more we raise, the more we can do! So we wanted to start the New Year by saying a huge thank you to all of our wonderful fundraisers. Here is just a snapshot of your recent support.

Those who like to get active:

Our supporters have been hosting League stalls at events and undertaking fundraising challenges such as sponsored runs and zip wire trials, through 'Just Giving', a website that allows you to set up your own fundraising page. Just Giving makes it easy for your friends and family to sponsor you. You can find some more ideas and inspiring tips on how to manage your own fundraising event on our website: www.league.org.uk/fundraisingideas.

'Easier' ways to fundraise:

There are many more ways you can raise funds for the League for FREE and some involve nothing more than sitting on your sofa and surfing the net! We have linked up with a number of online donation sites including 'Give As You Live' (donate while you shop) and 'Give A Car' (you can even scrap your car and raise money for us at the same time!) Visit this link for more details: www.league.org.uk/freegiving.

Could you or your business support us via commission or sales? Please contact us now to discuss how you can help, and maybe you could feature on this page in the next issue of Protect... Call Helen on 01483 524 250.



Fundraising with the League is a real high!



Musician, Martin Rossiter, supports the League through sales of his latest album

Interview with celebrity supporter, Martin Rossiter

A musical donation...

We recently received very generous support from musician Martin Rossiter, former front man of 1990s Britpop band 'Gene', who has pledged us a percentage of royalties from the sale of his new solo album. Here he tells us a little bit about himself and his support of the League.

Tell us about Pledge Music...

"Pledge offer a system that allows artists to donate a percentage of income from their music sales to the charity of their choice."

Why did you decide upon the League as your charity of choice?

"I'm a vegan and have always supported anything that improves the lives of animals. I support the League's ethos and methods completely. I would never be personally able to give a large donation so when the opportunity arose through Pledge, it seemed the obvious choice."

How long have you supported the League and what prompted your interest in the first place?

"I've been aware of the League since I was a teenager and the one thing that seemed most abhorrent was that people created pain for fun. My children now have the same reaction and cannot understand why people would do that."

Do you have any personal experience of hunting or any of the issues that the League works on?

"I grew up in farming country and was aware from a young age that my attitudes to animals differed from the norm. I have nothing but admiration for people who give up their time and risk their safety and liberty to protect the voiceless. They are selfless and heroic."

Tell us about your latest album

'The Defenestration of St Martin'

"It's a lovely record. I will say that if you are not afraid of emotion and darkness in music you might take some comfort in it. It can be bought in any of the normal places; let Google do the work!"

To find out more about Martin, and to see what Pledge Music is all about, go to www.pledgemusic.com/projects/martinrossiter

Joe Blogs...

My Dad took me to see the Grand National when I was a kid.



It must have been when the meeting was on its uppers as I remember a run down place with punters shivering in shiny suits, copies of the Racing Times sticking out of their pockets. I remember my emotions too. Have you ever stood next to Bechers Brook? It's huge, tall and very wide. I remember thinking "how can any horse jump over that?!" I was afraid for the jockeys and horses. This was hours before the race, and as it drew closer, my sense of foreboding grew stronger.

The second emotion I remember was the infectious anticipation and excitement amongst the crowd as the race drew near. It was palpable. Everybody knew the huge risks jockeys and horses faced and it fuelled their nervous anticipation. Punters did not differentiate between jockey and horse. We should. A jockey has a choice. Exercising that choice is either brave or stupid, depending on your point of view. A horse doesn't. And far too many horses over the years have ridden to their deaths.

Herein lies the dilemma for the Grand National. The race supporters, many of whom gain great financial reward from the event, emphasise that it is the very riskiness of the race that gives it its unique character. They are sensitive to the animal welfare issues largely because they are worried about it damaging the brand of the Grand National and horse racing in general. But they will never truly address the horse welfare issues properly whilst they rely on the current "unique character" of the race.

Each year we mourn the deaths of beautiful horses; each year we see more tokenistic changes in the name of animal welfare. Last year we had seen enough. The League is not opposed in principle to horse racing, but now we want to see the Grand National stopped. We believe that the organisers think the priority is the "unique character" of the race, not animal welfare, and we have no faith they will make the necessary changes to the race.

More tinkering to the course has been made for the 2013 race. I fear they are not enough to stop the tragedy. Maybe the current sponsors don't either. John Smith's are ending their sponsorship of the race. It is also been switched from the BBC to C4. We should also all be making our views known, not as killjoys, but as people who don't think horses should pay with their lives for a bit of human fun.

Grand National, prove us wrong! Shift your brand so we can all be proud to host the world's best "every horse comes first" race; not be ashamed to allow an equine killing field.

Joe Duckworth
Chief Executive



You can follow Joe on Twitter
@LeagueJoe





Help us to continue to protect animals long into the future

We have many passionate and caring supporters who want the work we do to continue after they're gone. Leaving a gift in your Will is the best way of ensuring this can happen. You don't need to have large sums of money to support the League in this way - any gift we receive from you is invaluable to us.

One of our supporters, **Keith Hill**, has kindly shared with us his reasons for choosing to leave a gift to us in his Will.

How long have you supported the League?

"I've been a supporter for 10 years. I hate the idea of cruelty to animals and I can't understand how anyone gains pleasure by causing pain and suffering to wild animals. I think it's fantastic that organisations like the League exist to publicise and challenge this unacceptable behaviour."

Why did you choose to leave a gift in your Will?

"My mother passed away recently and this had prompted me to make a Will. I wanted to ensure that my family were provided for, but I also wanted the charitable work that I currently support to continue after I'm gone. I feel very happy knowing that my legacy to the League will help support their work and safeguard animals in the future."

How does your family feel about you including us in your Will?

"My family are aware of the legacy I'm leaving and they think it's a great idea. They know that I share the values of the League, and that making arrangements for the charity to benefit when I pass away is important to me."

How easy was it to leave a gift?

"The process could not have been simpler. A quick initial email to the League to let them know my intentions, resulted in a very supportive response with useful information and an invitation for me to make further contact if I had any further questions. It's clear that my long-term gift is very important to the League."

Why do you think it's important to remember a charity in your Will?

"Charities are an essential part of British life and are often the only organisations addressing particular issues and meeting needs. Campaigning charities like the League can challenge practices, prick the national conscience and promote debate. Ultimately they make us a better society."

Remembering a charity in your Will safeguards the future work of the charity and, in the case of the League, will help protect animals from cruelty in the years to come. As an added bonus, leaving a legacy is also tax-efficient, so makes the most of your hard earned cash. I strongly recommend one considers it."

Without people like Keith our work to protect animals against cruel and vicious blood sports could not continue. Thank you.

If you would like more information on Gifts in Wills, please contact Kim Johannsen on 01483 524 250 or kimjohannsen@league.org.uk

Media update:

BOXING DAY NOT FOXING DAY

Boxing Day marks the most high profile date in the hunting season. Year after year the pro-hunting lobby boast about how popular hunting is and call for the cruel illegal act of hunting wild animals with dogs to be legalised.

The League was delighted to see great support from the national media on the issue, reflecting our recent polling confirming that the majority of the Great British public are against fox, deer and hare hunting being made legal again*.

Here's just a small selection of the national newspaper headlines and articles, the League featured in this Christmas.

THE LEAGUE HITS HEADLINES

Hunters are hunted: Campaigners claim three hunts still kill foxes with hounds despite ban

League Against Cruel Sports claim some are simply ignoring the ban and continuing the barbaric act of allowing hounds to savage the helpless animals. (Sourced from www.mirror.co.uk 26.12.12)

Most Britons support fox hunting ban, survey finds

Poll before Boxing Day meets shows 76% are against moves to make fox hunting legal, rising to 81% for deer hunting (Sourced from www.guardian.co.uk 25.12.12)

Former police officers monitoring Boxing Day fox hunts

The League Against Cruel Sports said it has spent more than £1million on professional investigators and former officers to police Boxing Day hunts.

It comes after a senior Conservative cabinet minister told The Daily Telegraph that David Cameron cannot repeal Labour's ban on fox hunting. (Sourced from www.telegraph.co.uk 26.12.12)

Keep Fox Hunt Ban

The majority of Brits are opposed to fox hunting being made legal again, a survey found. (Sourced from The Sun 26.12.12)

£1m charity team finds 'evidence to prosecute three hunts'

Former police officers recruited by a charity to investigate illegal fox hunting have found evidence enough to prosecute three hunts since the start of the season last month, it was claimed last night. (Sourced from www.thetimes.co.uk 26.12.12)

* Recent polling carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the League, RSPCA and IFAW, showed that the majority of Great British public are still opposed to hunting with dogs. Only 15 per cent of the 1,943 adults surveyed, aged 15+, think that fox hunting should be legalised again; only 9 per cent think hare hunting and coursing should be made legal; and only 11 per cent think deer hunting should be legalised. - Ipsos MORI

Follow the League:



[@LeagueACS](http://www.facebook.com/LeagueAgainstCruelSports)
www.youtube.com/lacs1924

Media coverage is vital to the success of our campaign. If you would like to help us work with the media in your local area, please get in contact with Emma Thomas, Senior Media Relations Officer, emmathomas@league.org.uk

Because we really can't do any of this without **YOU**

The League is a registered charity, and all our funds come from supporters just like you. We don't get any Government funding, nor do we receive anything from the National Lottery.

Our campaigns work within the law to protect wildlife from harm, and consistent opinion polls show the majority of the public are with us on this. But there is much to do. If you can help with an additional donation, or by becoming a regular donor, we can do even more. Or perhaps encourage someone else to join our campaigns by passing your copy of 'Protect' on. **Whatever you can do, please do it. The more of us there are, the more we can do.**

Help Protect animals with a regular gift - and get a FREE cuddly keyring!

Get one these cute and cuddly keyrings and help protect animals from cruelty from just £3 per month!

One of the most effective ways of supporting the League Against Cruel Sports is by setting up a monthly direct debit. A regular gift will help us to continue our fight against cruelty to animals for sport by allowing us to plan ahead for our future projects.

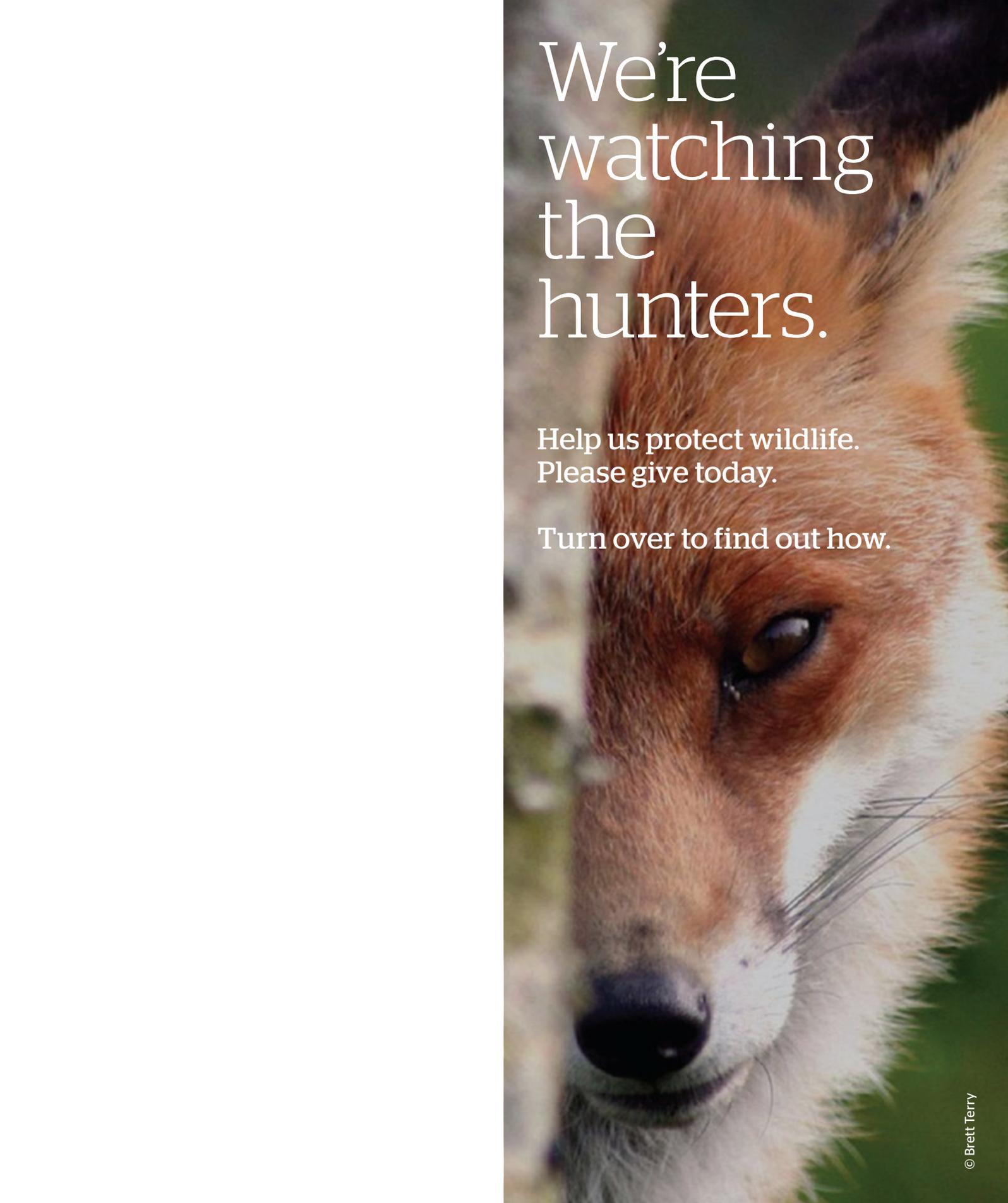
Set up a monthly direct debit today and you can choose one of five cute, cuddly animal keyrings for you or for a friend. We will also send you a Welcome booklet and keep you updated on our campaigns. Sign up at:
www.league.org.uk/protect
or call us now on **01483 524 250**

Gift Aid - Government rule change

Gift Aid is a scheme run by the Government whereby a UK taxpayer who makes a donation can allow the charity to claim back an additional 25% - making a £10 donation worth £12.50. The Government have asked us to remind donors that when allowing us to claim back Gift Aid on your donations you must have paid at least as much UK income tax as you are allowing the charities you support to claim back. Payment of other taxes, such as Council Tax and VAT, do not qualify.

If your circumstances have changed and you need to advise us please get in touch via the usual channels. If you are not yet signed up, please do contact us so we can turn your fabulous donations into even more campaigning cash.



A close-up photograph of a fox's face, showing its brown and white fur, dark eye, and black nose. The fox is looking slightly to the left. The background is blurred green foliage.

We're
watching
the
hunters.

Help us protect wildlife.
Please give today.

Turn over to find out how.

League Against Cruel Sports

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