

Hedgehog Cull Decision “flies in face” of Scientific Evidence

Photo: G. Bradley



IFAW's study of over 100 hedgehogs found them ideal candidates for translocation

Scottish Natural Heritage have come under renewed criticism from leading animal welfare groups and mammal experts over their hedgehog cull on the island of Uist. New scientific findings show that the Uist hedgehogs can be successfully translocated to the mainland.

Research published in Biological Conservation last month showed that hedgehogs were ideal candidates for translocation, providing they spent a short period of time in captivity and care.

Despite assurances they would consider the new scientific evidence “quite seriously”, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have decided to continue with their lethal culling programme beginning this April.

The study, funded by Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), used radio monitoring to compare the survival

of hedgehogs translocated from the Uists with those released from wildlife hospitals, wild hedgehogs at the release sites and wild hedgehogs at a nearby site where no releases took place.

Les Stocker MBE at St Tiggywinkles said: “It is unbelievable that the Scottish Government have failed to show common sense. They have chosen to ignore Bristol University’s irrefutable evidence that the hedgehogs of Uist can be safely relocated on the mainland. After all, most of Britain is crying out for hedgehogs.”

Despite repeated attempts to engage in constructive dialogue with SNH over the past 9 months, the researchers are dismayed their offers were ignored. This resulted in a misleading report, which questioned the validity of translocation research findings, being presented to the SNH Board. The Board subsequently rejected the use of non-lethal methods.

Environmental Scientist Professor Stephen Harris, who coordinated the Bristol University study said: “The research has been peer-reviewed by four independent, international experts who concluded it was well-designed and the findings were sound and their conclusions justified. The panel who dismissed the research clearly lack an understanding of sound science.”

What's Going Wild?

See if you can find the flower of the ‘Lords and Ladies’ plant this week. Sometimes called the ‘Cuckoo Pint’ it has an ingenious method of pollination which involves taking insect prisoners!

The clever design of the flower consists of a lime-green hood which surrounds a red-brown coloured, club-shaped spadix.

Being a dark colour, the spadix absorbs more sunlight, and often feels warm to the touch. It also gives off a scent which attracts insects. To reach the nectar an insect needs to walk down the spadix and brush past a ring of downward pointing hairs. Once it passes these hairs it is unable to go back up until the flower has been pollinated. In trying to escape the insect usually blows enough pollen about to ensure this happens. When it does, the hairs shrivel, and the insect can escape.

For more info visit:
www.uksafari.com/lordsandladies.htm



Cuckoo Pint (*Arum maculatum*)

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Green Light given to Red Alert! Wildlife Trust wins £1 Million Grant

Photo: Barrie Harwood



Red Squirrel - Lottery Winner

The Heritage Lottery Fund has just announced funding to help a major new initiative aimed at raising awareness about the plight of native red squirrels, which are extinct in most parts of mainland England, and to promote new conservation measures to save this threatened species.

The "Save Our Squirrels" project has been awarded £626,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of a £1.1 Million initiative to be managed and co-ordinated by Northumberland Wildlife

Trust on behalf of the Red Alert North England (RANEng) partnership. The grant is one of the largest ever made for species conservation.

With funding now in place, a team of 6 full time and 1 part time Red Squirrel Officers will be deployed from the Mersey to the Tyne and beyond to implement this project and deliver the nationally important red squirrel conservation strategy launched last November.

Welcoming the announcement, on behalf of the RANEng Steering Group, Northumberland Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive, Mike Pratt commented:

"This is great news for all concerned with the conservation of this iconic animal from England's woodlands. Thanks to this project many more people will get closer to this magical creature, possibly for the first time, through the Trusts' 'People and Wildlife programmes'. We also believe the project will fuel nature tourism opportunities in the North, helping rural communities to thrive."

Jobs of the Week

WWT Senior Horticultural + Grounds Warden

Location: West London

Salary: £16,241 - £17,093

Closing Date: 12th April 2006

RSPCA Animal Collection Officer

Location: Cheshire area

Salary: £12,213.17 +

Closing date: 14th April 2006

BTCV Healthy Walking Project Asst

Location: Leeds

Salary: £15,483 per annum Pro Rata

Closing Date: 18th April 2006

RSPB Birds Project Officer

Location: Marshside, Merseyside

Salary: £15,000-£17,000 pa pro rata

Closing Date: 21st April 2006

SNH Area Officer

Location: Lochgilphead

Salary: £18,219

Closing Date: 21st April 2006

For details on all these vacancies visit the UK Safari Members Area:

www.uksafari.com/members

More Scientists Reject Badger Cull

The Badger Trust welcomed today's press statement from the Royal Society, confirming that there is no scientific evidence to justify killing badgers to control bovine tuberculosis in cattle. Professor David Read, Vice President of the Royal Society, said:

"The case for badger culling is not clear cut. The introduction of culling could result in an increase or a decrease of bTB. Which of these will predominate is likely to depend upon the details of the culling regime adopted.

"There is some evidence to suggest that culling would need to occur over at least 300km² to result in a net decrease in badger to cattle TB transmission rates. Culling badgers over such a large area

would require serious consideration of the impact on the conservation status of badgers."

The Society suggests that there are other viable methods to reduce bTB transmission. The introduction of 'biosecurity' measures for example, aimed at reducing badger and cattle contact and cattle to cattle contact, is one option.

Trevor Lawson, spokesman for the Badger Trust, commented: "When the badger culling trial was initiated in 1997, politicians from all parties promised that bovine TB strategy would be based on the outcomes of sound scientific research. The science is now as sound as we are likely to get."

And Finally...

This little rarity was spotted by Dean Eades at Pyes hall in Lincolnshire this week. It's a Ring Ouzel, slightly smaller than a blackbird, and easily distinguished by its striking white bib. They're only seen in the UK between March and September. These birds are on the red list because their population has fallen dramatically in recent years.



Ring Ouzel

Photo: Dean Eades