



2023 IMPACT REPORT





PROTECT THE WILD

Founded in 2015, Protect the Wild is a non-profit organisation working to empower people to protect British wildlife.

We do so by using multimedia to campaign on key issues, inform the public about wildlife matters, and support activists taking direct action in the field.

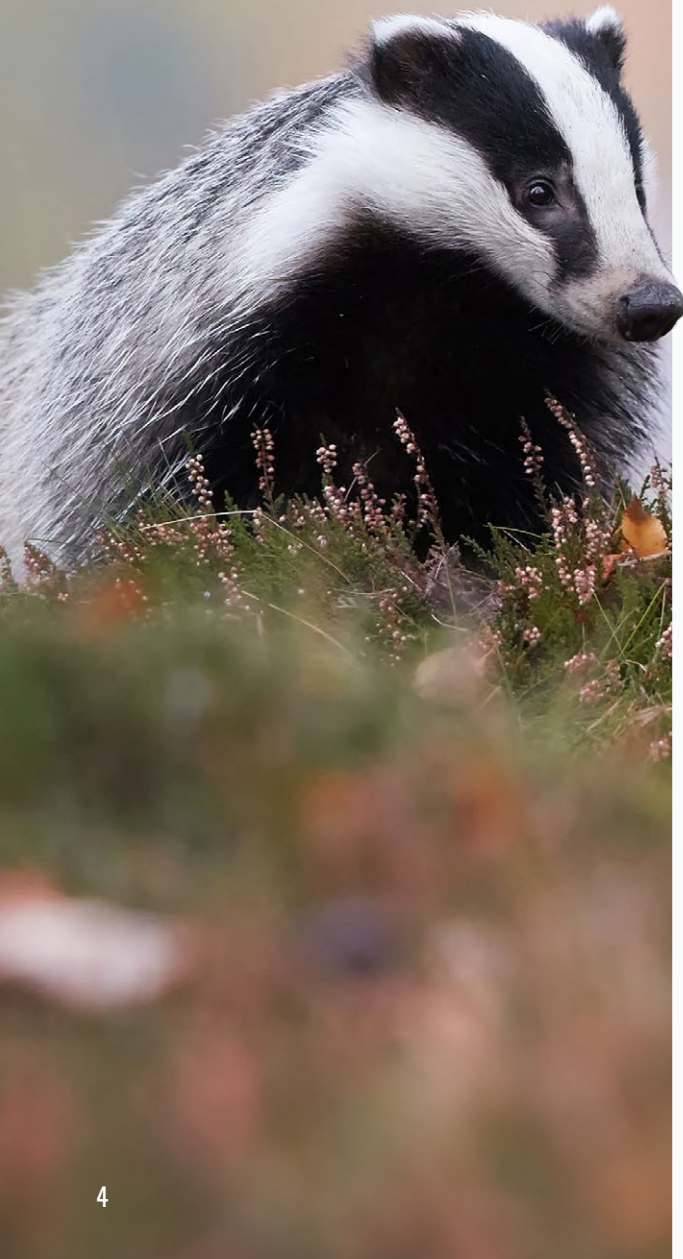
That's why we say we:

CAMPAIGN | INFORM | SUPPORT

We do things differently because 'same old same old' just isn't cutting it. Whether it's through hard-hitting animations, working to change key pieces of legislation, or reporting events in a powerful and truthful way, we understand the importance of dynamism and of innovation in tackling the persecution that British wildlife faces.

We mean it when we say we aspire to be so much more than just a campaigning organisation. We aspire to be a winning one too.

WHAT WE DO



OUR POLICY WORK AIMS TO 'CHANGE THE NARRATIVE'

and progress the way we think about and treat wildlife. We're a forward thinking animal rights organisation and an equal appreciation for all animals underpins the work that we do.

We tackle terms such as 'game bird' head on and we don't compromise on our values and beliefs when it comes to calling for a complete end to all hunting and shooting of animals in the UK.

Our campaigns push key issues onto the mainstream agenda and initiate important conversations. From localised pressure campaigns to nationally focused ones, we ensure decision makers understand why wildlife matters.

We took two of our campaigns to Parliament in 2023 as well as playing a major role in persuading the National Trust and other landowners to ban 'trail' hunting on their land.

Our grants fund activists on the frontline defending wildlife and support rescue and rehabilitation work. We have an ever-growing equipment fund powered by our incredible supporters and we are continuously improving how we support the courageous individuals in the field.

Our specially-created content reaches millions of people every year and we are strong believers in innovation and dynamism to reach new audiences. In 2023, we released 5 animations that have been viewed over 6 million times, focusing on core issues from stag hunting and the licensing of hunting on MoD land to the shooting of foxhounds.

HOW WE WORK

Protect the Wild is funded entirely thanks to the generosity of the public. We have no major donors or backers and do not receive any Government funding.

We're proudly independent and free to use every legal means to empower people to protect British wildlife.

Key campaigns/aims:

END ALL HUNTING

END THE SHOOTING INDUSTRY

END THE BADGER CULL



2023 IN OVERVIEW

IN MANY WAYS 2023 WAS A BREAKTHROUGH YEAR FOR PROTECT THE WILD.

We established ourselves as a leading voice for British wildlife and solidified our identity as working to empower people to protect British wildlife.



OUR KEY WORK THIS YEAR

Page 08

Snares animation

We published a short animation on snares and the shooting industry that has now been viewed more than a million times

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Undercover hound investigation

We supported the Hunt Investigation Team with an exposé of conditions at the Border Hunt kennels

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MoD campaign

We launched a petition and information campaign to end 'trail hunting' on Ministry of Defence land

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The Hunting of Mammals Bill

We commissioned and published proposed legislation ('The Hunting of Mammals Bill') that would see a Proper Ban on Hunting

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Stag hunting animation

We published an animation voiced by Dr Amir Khan on stag hunting to support our Proper Ban on Hunting campaign

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A 'proper ban' animation

Our short animation succinctly summarised the loopholes and exemptions in the Hunting Act 2004 that have enabled hunts to get away with killing wildlife for almost 20 years

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Protectors of the Wild

We launched Protectors of the Wild, a free resource packed with over 400 FAQs, to help us all recognise wildlife crime

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Launching our Substack

In July we started publishing on Substack: our newsletters are now viewed over 900k times a month!

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Supporting activists

We also launched our 'Protecting the Wild equipment fund' to support activists on the frontline of wildlife protection

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Saving Badgers

In September we helped a community appeal in Saltdean, East Sussex, to buy land for badgers

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The Secret Monitor

In September we launched a series of posts from inside hunting and shooting: The Secret Monitor

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The Forgotten Foxhounds

We published an animation 'The Forgotten Foxhounds' on the deliberate killing of hounds by hunts: almost two million people have watched it

THE SHOOTING INDUSTRY: IT'S NOT JUST HUNTS THAT KILL FOXES

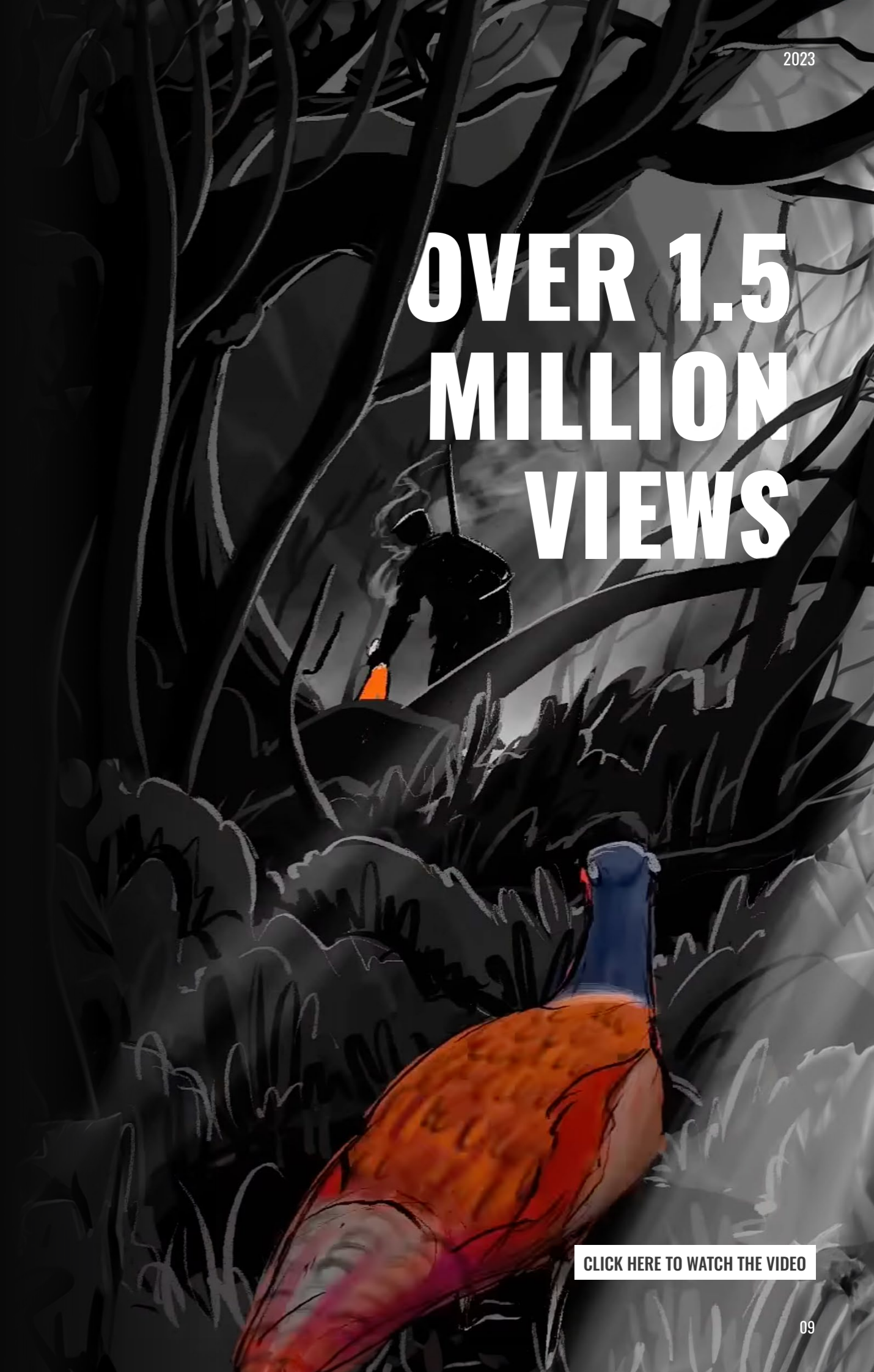


Our mission to end the bird shooting industry is an integral part of Protect the Wild and something we will be increasingly looking at in 2024.

That isn't as odd as it might sound, because the reality is that the shooting industry kills thousands of foxes in snares every year. It kills far more foxes than hunts do, and it kills them just to 'protect' the pheasants, partridges, and grouse that are then shot dead for fun.

We've now written species accounts, numerous articles on both pheasant and grouse shooting, and produced a nuanced and well-thought-out policy position, but that first animation, narrated by the brilliant Sam Carter of the band Architects, brilliantly exposed this sickening underbelly of the shooting industry for all to see. In fact, when it came to 'all to see' this description wasn't far off as over 1.5 million people saw our animation over the course of 2023.

OVER 1.5 MILLION VIEWS



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)



UNDERCOVER INVESTIGATION INTO THE BORDER HUNT

Over the winter of 2022/2023 the Hunt Investigation Team and Northumberland Hunt Watch, supported by Protect the Wild, recorded conditions at one of the Border Hunt's 'kennels' at Redesmouth Farm in Northumberland.

What they found proved yet again that despite their claims on social media, as far as hunts are concerned 'their' dogs are not 'loved' or 'looked after' – they are little more than tools to chase and kill wildlife.

Away from the main pack HIT found eight hounds kept at the hunt master's property, along with terriers and sheepdogs.

These dogs were kept in a combination of DIY pens constructed from flimsy, insecure metal fencing and sparse concrete kennels where dogs had only old wooden crates to sleep on. The dogs were given filthy drinking water provided in roughly hacked up old containers. Excrement and urine covered the cold hard ground. There was no provision for warmth during the winter months, and no stimulation or enrichment. Several of the dogs appeared fearful, underweight, withdrawn and unhappy.

Reflections from the investigations team:

“It was very distressing to see that, even after a visit from the RSPCA, the hunt master had done so little to make these dogs' lives less miserable. A few shavings of sawdust on the floor and a single blanket in a wooden crate – during February's cold weather – are barely “improvements.”

Two dogs stayed curled in the corner of their pens, still too afraid or sick to interact. Others barked for our attention, clearly seeking more stimulation than the bare pens could ever offer.

Leaving these dogs behind in these supposedly “improved” conditions was heart-wrenching.

Any animal lover can see that these kennels are inadequate and that the dogs lives are made miserable as a result. This is another unseen reality of the hunting industry.

Thank you to Protect the Wild – and their amazing supporters – for helping us to give these forgotten dogs a voice. It is time to end hunting for good.”

This exposé was a stark reminder of the sometimes forgotten victims of fox hunting.

There have been far too many reports of hounds being kept in terrible conditions like these. And what happens to these 'beloved' animals when they become too old or too slow to keep up with the rest of the pack? As we proved in a previous undercover investigation they get a bullet to the head.

The only solution is to take these animals out of the hands of hunts and ban hunting with hounds for good. And this undercover footage will prove invaluable in the fight to end fox hunting for good as we campaign for our 'proper ban'.

[Click here to find out more about the exposé](#)



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

25,000

people sent our open letter to the MoD and DIO

OVER 500,000

people viewed our video

In the Spring of 2023 we launched our campaign calling on the Ministry of Defence to stop allowing so-called ‘trail hunts’ to use their (our) land.

Towards the end of 2021, many major landowners including the National Trust and Forestry England stopped issuing ‘trail hunting’ licences, effectively banning hunting on their land. So naturally we turned to the MoD because they were one of the only major bodies still holding out.

Indeed, at the time of writing this report, the MoD is still licencing so-called ‘trail hunts’ on huge areas of land including Salisbury Plain, hunting ground of the notorious Royal Artillery Hunt (RAH).

The Plain is one of the most important grasslands in Europe with many parts of it covered by SSSIs and SACs. Yet, the MoD still allow hunts to illegally chase wildlife here.

Monitors and sabs routinely see the likes of the Royal Artillery Hunt hunting illegally on MoD land using MoD issued trail hunting licences. And so we decided to ramp up the pressure as the year went on, culminating in our explosive animation showing a scene all too familiar to those monitoring and sabbing hunts on MoD land, an illegal fox hunt.



The video, narrated by Chris Packham, slammed the Ministry of Defence for being complicit in the illegal hunting of wildlife that continues to take place on their land.

And it was seen by over half a million people with a whopping 25,000 sending our open letter to the MoD and DIO calling on all ‘trail hunt’ licences to be ended with immediate effect.

The MoD continues to push out the standard stock reply about not condoning illegal hunting on their land.

We will continue to call on the MoD to do the right thing along with campaigning for all landowners no matter how big or small to ban all hunting from their land.

25,000 sending our open letter to the MoD and DIO calling on all ‘trail hunt’ licences to be ended with immediate effect.

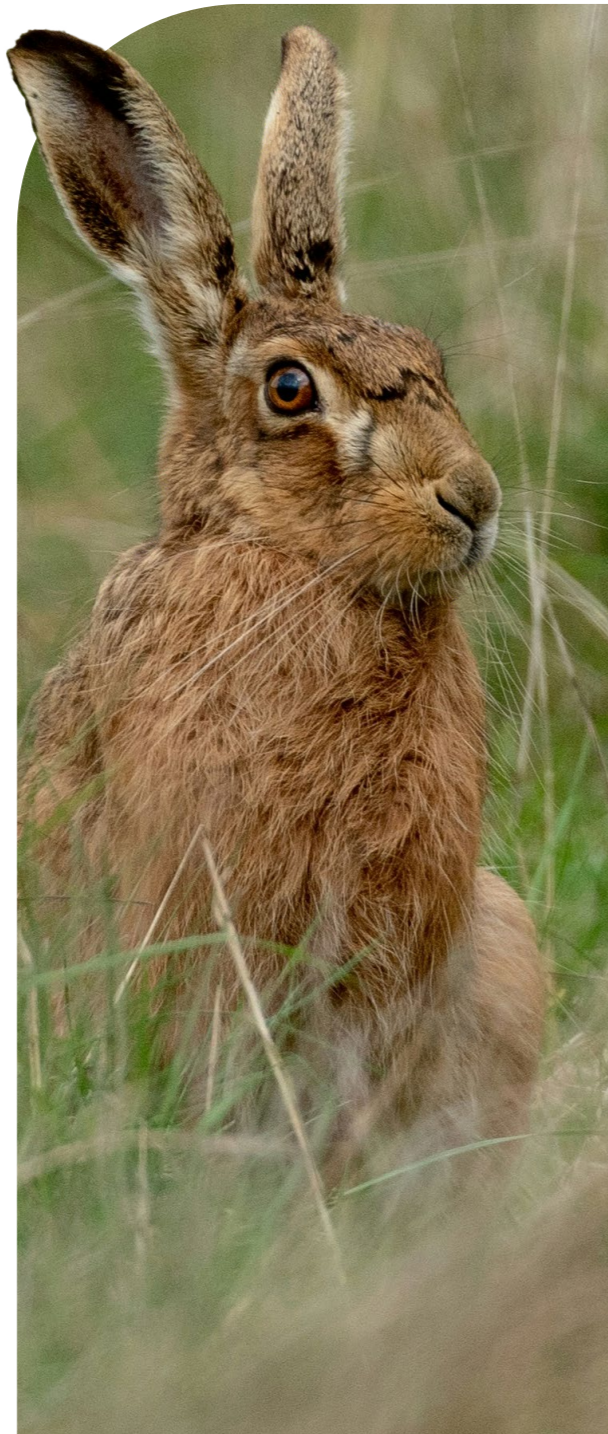


[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

THE HUNTING OF MAMMALS BILL

We need a proper ban on hunting, which is why in 2023 Protect the Wild commissioned Advocates for Animals to help us develop new legislation – The Hunting of Mammals Bill.

Our new Bill is far more than just an update of the Hunting Act 2004. It is based on years of campaigning against hunting and the understanding that until the loopholes and exemptions inserted into the Hunting Act are removed and legislation banning hunting is absolutely clear, wildlife will never be safe from the hundreds of packs that still go out thousands of times a year.

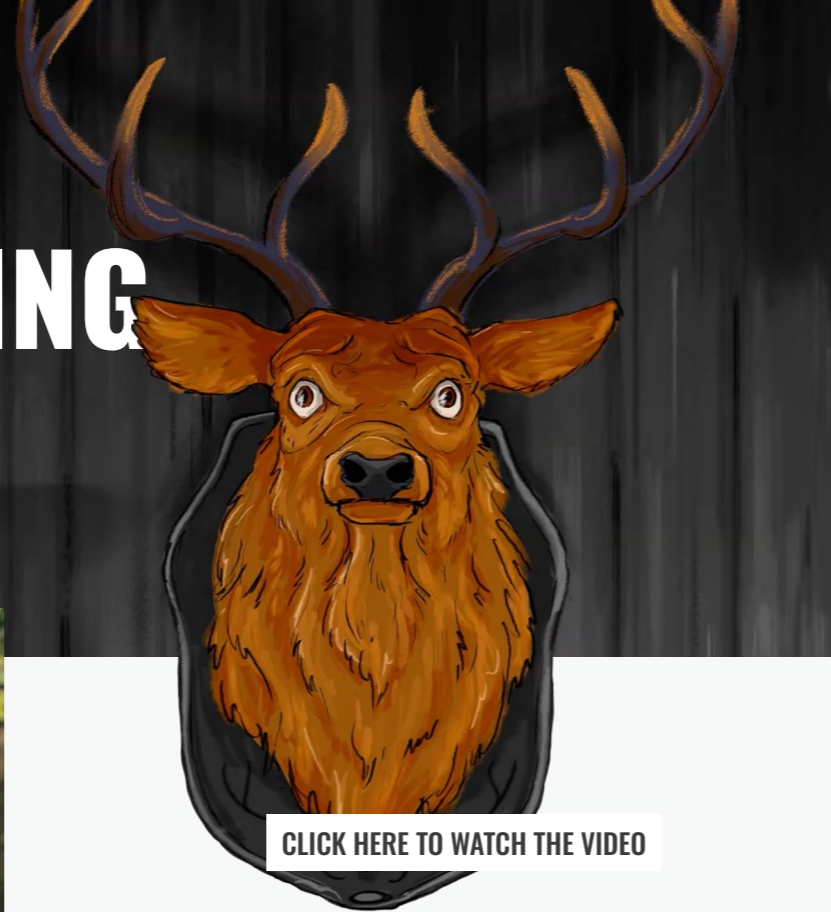


ARRANGED IN TWENTY DETAILED AND CAREFULLY-WORDED SECTIONS, THE HUNTING OF MAMMALS BILL:

- Provides clarity and simplicity, making it easier for the police and the courts to prosecute lawbreakers.
- Criminalises the smokescreen that is ‘trail hunting’.
- Provides a comprehensive ban on hunting with hounds, with no exemptions or loopholes, and spells the end of fox hunting, deer hunting, hare coursing and hare hunting in England and Wales.
- Will at last add a ‘reckless’ hunting clause by making it a crime to ‘intentionally or recklessly’ hunt a wild mammal with a dog.
- Will finally ban so-called ‘trail hunting’ by making it a crime to hunt any mammal with a dog using any animal-based scent (so hunts will no longer be able to claim it is a ‘legal activity’).
- Will make it a crime for a landowner to ‘assist’ a hunt by ‘knowingly causing or permitting’ a hunting crime to take place on their land.
- Will increase ‘search and seizure’ powers meaning that police will have the power to take vehicles and mobile phones from hunts in the field.
- Will make relevant ‘organisations and bodies corporate’ (such as registered hunts) and officers within those organisations liable for crimes committed by hunts.
- Will give courts the powers to ‘deprive’ hunts of any horses or dogs used to commit hunting crimes (with provisions to ensure the welfare of any animal taken).
- Will allow the ‘forfeiture’ of any ‘hunting article’ used to commit a hunting crime.
- Will enable courts to ‘disqualify’ individuals committing hunting crimes from owning or transporting animals used in hunting or making any arrangements in connection with hunting.
- Will at last include ‘searching’ for an animal in the definition of hunting.
- Will tighten legal definitions, for example, of who is responsible for any dog used in hunting, who owns or is responsible for land used by hunts, and removes any ‘Royal Clause’ loophole by stating that when passed the new Act will apply to ‘anything done on or in respect of land irrespective of whether it belongs to or is used for the purposes of the Crown or a Duchy’.
- The Hunting of Mammals Bill will stop hunting in its tracks, and finally give wildlife much-needed protection from illegal hunting.

[Click here to download the Hunting of Mammals Bill](#)

STAG HUNTING ANIMATION



In Spring, Protect the Wild launched a short animation slamming illegal stag hunting which featured the voice of broadcaster, wildlife campaigner and full-time NHS GP Dr Amir Khan.

In our animation Dr Khan explained how deer hunts can last up to six hours and are 'exempt' under the Hunting Act 2004 because hunts claim they are undertaking 'observation and research'. No hunt ever backs these ridiculous assertions up with peer-reviewed reports or ever submits data to relevant scientific bodies.

It has been almost two decades since the passing of the Hunting Act 2004, banning the hunting of wild mammals with dogs in England and Wales.

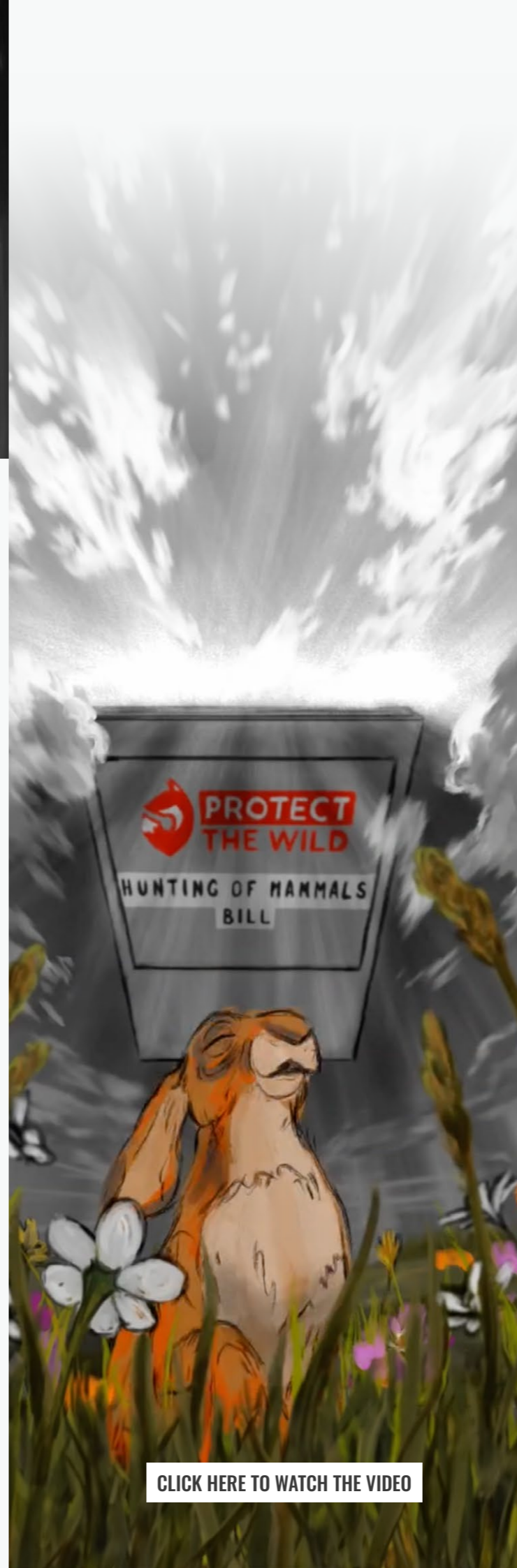
But hunts like the Quantock Staghounds continue to operate, creating havoc and breaking the law by chasing and killing wild mammals under the guise of 'trail hunting' or using loopholes and exemptions in the

Hunting Act to evade prosecution. Until all mammal hunting is made unlawful and more effective legislation is in place, hunts will continue chasing and killing wildlife for many years to come.

We need to do more than allow hunts to continue in a slightly different form - we need to get rid of them altogether.

The 60-second film was part of our campaign for a 'Proper Ban on Hunting' which aims to pass new legislation into law, The Hunting of Mammals Bill, which will end fox, hare and deer hunting for good. It came just a week after harrowing footage emerged from hunt sabs which showed a stag that had been chased to the point of exhaustion by the notorious Quantock Staghounds.

Over 1/3 of a million people viewed our stag hunting animation, exposing the vile pastime of stag hunting to huge numbers of people and encouraging the public to back our calls for legislative action.



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

A 'PROPER BAN' ON HUNTING ANIMATION

For our 'proper ban on hunting' animation we teamed up with animal rights activist Seb Alex to portray what our Hunting of Mammals Bill could achieve for wildlife were it to be enacted.

Our short piece succinctly summarised the loopholes and exemptions in the Hunting Act 2004 that have enabled hunts to get away with killing wildlife for almost 20 years.

It then went on to explain how our proposed legislation would ensure these loopholes and exemptions could no longer be used by hunts to get away with hunting wildlife for kicks.

Over 400,000 people viewed the animation.

Whether it be hare coursing/hunting, fox hunting or stag hunting, the madness needs to end, and we will continue to use varying forms of multimedia to push for better protections for wild animals.

PROTECTORS OF THE WILD

Many organisations - from wildlife charities to the police - ask us to 'report a wildlife crime' when we see one taking place. The idea is that all of us can become 'eyes in the field', watching for crime or illegal persecution and helping stop it.



It's a simple and potentially very empowering concept. The problem is putting it into practice. While we might have a rough idea, few of us really know what a wildlife crime is. Laws are often extremely complex, and can be different across the UK. On top of everything else, the information we need can be very difficult to find - and online searching often takes us to shooting or hunting websites.

We wanted to change that. So in 2023 we started to develop 'Protectors of the Wild'. We envisaged a unique resource which would put all the information we need in one, animal-friendly place. 'Protectors' would give us all the confidence we need to Recognise, Record, and ultimately Report wildlife crime and wildlife persecution. What began by asking and answering one question - 'What is a wildlife crime' - led to asking literally hundreds more.

Over the months we've been writing 'Protectors of the Wild' we've tried to imagine being in the field, finding ourselves in an unfamiliar situation and wanting to know, for example, what UK law really says about hunting with hounds, using firearms, or destroying bird nests. What legal protection do foxes, badgers, bats, and birds of prey actually have? What does the Hunting Act 2004 or the CRow Act 2000 say? How would I tell if the snare or cage trap I've just found is being used within the law or not?

We've also looked at practical issues like the use of drones and mobile phones, the laws on driving quad bikes, what harassment or assault is, and what rights someone has if they're arrested.

We've written forty pages now, grouped under ten headings. Each page contains a brief overview followed by FAQs - over 400 of them so far, with more being added every week!

Protectors of the Wild has been a massive but hugely enjoyable undertaking.

We should stress here that we're not legal professionals - think of 'Protectors of the Wild' as a 'first stop' before seeking legal advice - but we are sure that this is the most comprehensive and accurate resource of its kind on the internet.

And we want to make sure 'Protectors of the Wild' stays that way. We are always updating and improving our information, filling gaps where they are pointed out, and listening to feedback. As an organisation everything we do is aimed at 'Empowering people to protect British wildlife'. We are confident that 'Protectors of the Wild' does exactly that, and its impact will be felt for many years to come.

[Click here to find out more about Protectors of the Wild](#)

SUBSTACK & JOURNALISM

Since the early days of Protect the Wild (Keep the Ban as we were known back then) we have utilised social media platforms to raise awareness about the work that we do. But as time has progressed it has become harder and harder to be seen amongst the ever-growing amount of content being posted and the ever-changing algorithms.

And so naturally Substack presented itself as an ideal way to reach our existing audience and be seen by new people too. It's why in the Summer of 2023 we turned to the blogging site/newsletter platform, and so far it's been a huge success. We now have over 60,000 people signed up to receive our newsletters and around 40,000 people regularly read our daily posts.

These numbers are so important because it is vital that the public has access to consistent and well written articles and opinion pieces covering everything from fox hunting to the badger cull. And we will continue to ensure that our journalism remains an integral part of what we do here at Protect the Wild because without showing how British wildlife is being persecuted and targeted, we cannot run our campaigns, support activists or convince decision makers that change is needed.

[Click here to read Protect the Wild on Substack](#)

60,000

people signed up

40,000

regular readers

PROTECTING THE WILD EQUIPMENT FUND

Since 2015 we have helped activists in the field, whether it be giving donations to hunt saboteur groups or quietly giving out small equipment grants, usually for video cameras or body cams in the last year or so. We've also funded undercover investigations (7 in fact).

But in 2023 we launched a new way of doing things via the 'Protecting the Wild Equipment Fund' and we think it is a better model. One that combines 'getting out there' with 'investigating', utilises the work we've put into Protectors, puts 'eyes in the field' and really does justify our claim of 'empowering people to protect British wildlife'.

And we've done all that through a sort of 'virtuous circle'. While all our content will always be free on Substack we ringfenced all paid subscriptions into our equipment fund. And over the course of 2023 our supporters have helped us provide 12 grants to activists on the frontline protecting wildlife.

[Click here to find out more about our equipment fund](#)



HERE'S WHAT SOME OF THE GROUPS WE'VE HELPED IN 2023 SAID

“We are extremely grateful to Protect the Wild for helping us to buy six new radios, which have a greater range than our existing ones. This is important to us as our local hunt often covers a large area and these new radios will help us co-ordinate our teams more effectively.”

HULL WILDLIFE PROTECTORS

“We are extremely grateful to Protect the Wild for helping us to buy two new trail cameras. This is the most important piece of equipment our volunteers use to try and stop badger crime. Unused setts aren't given the same legal protection as active setts, so for us to be able fully protect a sett we have to gather evidence that it is active. These cameras will do just that. Thank you for supporting our work”

MID DERBYSHIRE BADGER GROUP

“Thank you so much Protect the Wild for your generous donation towards the cost of our camera monitoring equipment. This is going to be so amazing. Every year we take in orphaned fox cubs and help them learn how to cope with life in the wild. An essential part of the training is to ensure they do not become familiar with us or dependent on us or other humans, and so we stay out of sight, sound and smell as much as possible. Of course, we still need to see how they're getting on to ensure they are all learning how to live independently of us, and this is why we need these cameras so much.”

REN'S WILDLIFE HOSPITAL

The more we can work with the groups we fund the more we will be able to demonstrate the impact our equipment has on putting 'eyes in the field' and 'empowering people to protect British wildlife', and (we hope) the more that readers and supporters will want to join in.

It's really pretty simple, but then good ideas usually are. And we here at Protect the Wild really do think this is a good idea that has huge potential to help so many brilliant wildlife protectors for years to come.

SAVING WILDLIFE IN SALTDEAN



In the autumn of 2023 a community in Saltdean, East Sussex, approached Protect the Wild asking if we could help save a badger sett from being destroyed by developers. For four and a half years, the Saltdean community has been working together to purchase a plot which sits between their houses. In August we published an article and called upon our supporters to help their urgent struggle to protect the land from being auctioned off to developers. And after an incredible response which saw over £10,000 raised in just a few days, the neighbours announced that their non-profit Ausbert Valley Community Interest Company (CIC) was the proud new owner of the land. It meant the badgers who lived there will now have a home forever.

Protect the Wild spoke with community member Debbie Julians about their victory.

“It's not all sinking in quite yet! The badgers have got a forever home. It's been a long journey. But we've signed the contract and the land is ours! It was horrendous to get there; we bought the land by the skin of our teeth, really.”



Debbie continued:

“Every morning I go outside with a smile on my face. The badgers are very cheeky and the landscape changes each day.”

From supporting community buy-outs to signing petitions and helping us donate equipment to monitor groups, we are incredibly grateful to the many thousands of you who are helping make Protect the Wild such a force for good. Every day you prove that we are stronger together, more effective when we are united, and can achieve so much more when we work as a team.

[Click here to read more on our Substack](#)

THE SECRET MONITOR

Following our launch on Substack we released a new series of posts titled 'The Secret Monitor'.

Damaging stories from inside hunting, shooting, and the badger cull have been circulating for years. Everything from breaking the law to assaults or harassment of monitors and the public and a police force seemingly happy to 'look the other way'. But there is always someone watching, always someone listening. The Secret Monitor.

At the time of writing this report we've published six posts focused on stag hunting in the west of England and one post on the Curre and Llangibby hunt. From activists'

experiences of the police and the realities of hind hunting to who is enabling the cruelty of stag hunting. We're able to give the secret monitor a platform to share the realities of what is really happening in the field and it is fair to say it has left the hunts fairly rattled. In fact, to date the seven posts have been seen over 235,000 times and we have helped expose this vile pastime like never before.

The Secret Monitor will continue into 2024 and beyond as we look to reveal more damaging stories from inside hunting, shooting and the badger cull.

[Click here to read The Secret Monitor on our Substack](#)



THE FORGOTTEN FOXHOUNDS

Towards the end of the year we released a poignant 90-second animation to shed light on the tragic fate of a foxhound named 'Scamp,' revealing the distressing reality of hound abuse by hunts across the UK.

The animation, based on the true story of 'Scamp' witnessed by undercover investigators, illustrated the heart-wrenching incident where Scamp was fatally shot by the Beaufort Hunt. His only crime? Merely displaying an eagerness to play and no longer being deemed useful by the hunt.

Our aim with 'The Forgotten Foxhounds' was to expose the disturbingly common practice of hound abuse and killing by hunts throughout the UK. And at the time of writing this over 4 million people have viewed the animation across the Protect the Wild social media channels.



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

