



ANIMAL CONCERN

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21st August 2006

Rt. Hon. Ross Finnie MSP,
Minister for Environment & Rural Development,
The Scottish Parliament.

Dear Minister,

Writing in yesterday's Sunday Herald newspaper Rob Edwards revealed that already this year there have been 28 cases of illegal wildlife poisoning in Scotland. The dead creatures include many of the bird species illegally targeted by gamekeepers on shooting estates: 1 tawny owl, 2 golden eagles, 4 red kites and 14 buzzards. It is likely that by the end of this year there will have been more illegal poisoning incidents than even the 33 cases recorded in 2003.

It must be remembered that it is very likely that far more incidents occur than those which are recorded as this type of crime takes place in very remote areas and the poisoned birds may die in places which are totally inaccessible.

I have been doing this job for over 25 years and year after year from one end of Scotland to the other there have been numerous cases of birds of prey being killed, usually by poisoning but also by shooting and trapping. This persecution of raptors is conducted in the belief that it will help increase numbers of game birds such as grouse.

Each year usually sees only two or three cases brought to court with the guilty keepers fined a few hundred pounds at most. I have little doubt that in many cases the keeper will have his or her fine paid by their boss.

Can you tell me if you have any plans to tackle this problem of raptor persecution or will we still be reading reports like the one in yesterday's Sunday Herald in 25 years time?

I have always advocated changing the law to make land owners legally responsible for the actions of their employees. I think the practise would cease immediately if owners of estates knew they could be jailed for allowing their employees to illegally kill birds of prey.

I look forward to your reply in due course.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,

For Animal Concern

NOTE: If you have not seen the article referred to you can find it here:

<http://www.sundayherald.com/57449>