



6 February 2017

## Mountain hares

Thank you for your letter of 24 January asking about mountain hares and their control in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

Whilst mountain hares occur in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, they do not appear to be an abundant species here. We have not carried out any surveys of the species but the experience and ad-hoc sightings from long serving members of staff would broadly correlate with the relatively few records on the NBN Gateway. The mountain hare population here is not comparable to that in the eastern highlands and there are no currently active driven grouse moors in the Park so moorland management here is different to that in the eastern highlands. This corresponds with the findings in the Scottish Mountain Hare Survey 2006/07 undertaken by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, in partnership with the Macaulay Institute and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), along with the support of the Scottish Gamekeeper's Association. It highlighted a strong correlation between intensity of management of moorland for grouse and mountain hare numbers.

You referred to species protection. This is normally addressed at the national level through the Wildlife & Countryside Act and it would be for Scottish Government to decide if species protection should be approached on a geographical basis. It would be practical to approach such questions on the basis of the ecology and distribution of the species concerned, rather on the basis of administrative boundaries that are drawn up using other criteria.

In answer to your specific questions

1. We do not think that any large scale culls have occurred in the National Park. As the species is not abundant here and its management is not one of the issues that typically comes up in discussion with land owners in the Park.
2. With small numbers and no evidence of large scale mountain hare culling taking place we do not monitor culling or sport shooting of hares in the National Park. Landowners

### **LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

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would however be legally entitled to shoot mountain hares on their own land, outside the closed season, if they wished to do so. There would therefore be no basis for us to require information such as bag numbers.

3. Whilst ticks are certainly abundant in the National Park, we have not had any reports or suggestions of this being associated with mountain hares. Hill sheep and wild deer would in all likelihood be far more significant tick hosts here.
4. As we do not think that large scale mountain hare culls occur here, nor sport shooting of them on any significant level, this is not a matter the Park Authority has discussed or taken a view on. However, we would not advocate the large-scale culling of any quarry species unless there was clear evidence to demonstrate that this was necessary, proportionate and sustainable in terms of population levels.
5. As mountain hares are not believed to be abundant here and control of them is not perceived as being an issue in the National Park, we have no plans to investigate or consider this question.
6. We do not think that culling or concealment of culls occurs in the National Park and there is no clear reason why such activity should be concealed when carried out lawfully.

I hope that this clarifies the National Park Authority's position on this matter.

Yours sincerely

**Gordon Watson**  
**Chief Executive**

**Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park**

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