

John F. Robins, Secretary, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL), c/o Animal Concern,  
Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel 01389-841111. Mobile: 07721-605521.  
Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982.  
Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal  
Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.  
E-MAIL: [acal@jfrobins.force9.co.uk](mailto:acal@jfrobins.force9.co.uk) Website: <http://www.adviceaboutanimals.info>

Larysa Switlyk may have done animals a favour. By publishing photographs of a goat, sheep and stag killed legally and, as far as we know, humanely during her tour of Scotland, she exposed the hypocrisy at the heart of Scottish Government wildlife policy. American gun enthusiast Switlyk didn't just shoot animals while she was in Scotland. She set a trap and caught another two trophies for her collection.

Those trophies were none other than First Minister Nicola Sturgeon and Cabinet Secretary and Islay MSP Mike Russell. Their knee-jerk response to the social media posts of Switlyk posing, in full camo gear and full make-up, with the animals she killed, played right into the hands of the huntress.

Russell said; "If this is actually happening on Islay, and laid on by some sort of tour company I would want to see it stopped immediately,". If he didn't know about the long-standing trophy hunting industry on Islay and throughout Scotland, Mike Russell MSP, former Environment Minister and current Cabinet Secretary, should be ashamed of himself.

Sturgeon came out with this on Twitter; "Totally understandable why the images from Islay of dead animals being held up as trophies is so upsetting and offensive to people. @scotgov will review the current situation and consider whether changes to the law are required."

Cabinet Secretary for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham issued a statement saying; "We fully understand why so many people find these images of hunted animals being held up as trophies so upsetting. Responsible and appropriate culling of animals is a necessary part of sustainable land management and the culling of some wild animals, including deer and goats, is not illegal.

However, we understand the concerns raised by these images and, in light of them, the Environment Secretary will review the situation and consider whether any clarification of or changes to the law might be required."

Florida born Switlyk revels in such international headlines which boost her popularity amongst her fellow trophy hunters, ensuring good ratings for her Canadian TV show and increasing sales of the hunting equipment she endorses.

Like thousands of other foreign visitors to Scotland Switlyk paid to kill two animals on Islay. Every year the Scottish public pay people to shoot several thousand geese on Islay, leaving hundreds to die a slow, cruel death from their injuries. Government even has a term for the cruelty involved. They call it "crippling". An article published last month in scientific journal British Wildlife throws great doubt on the validity of this extremely cruel and expensive publicly funded cull.

For decades I have called for a cull on culling and trophy hunting in Scotland. Mike Russell MSP, who condemned Switlyk for her activities, failed to do anything about it when Minister for Environment from 2007 to 2009.

Since the 1980s I have been urging people to swap their shotgun or rifle for a Cannon or a Pentax. Some estates have taken this on board realising that people will part with good

money to go on photographic safaris. With a camera hundreds of paying clients can shoot the same Royal Stag or Golden Eagle.

Few people, including politicians, know about the General Licensing culling system. Under this, just by reading and following on-line instructions, anyone can kill unlimited numbers of around 22 species of native birds. Using traps and guns farmers and gamekeepers kill tens of thousands of native birds every year. Much of this killing is to artificially increase numbers of non-native pheasant so they can be shot for fun by paying shooters.

General Licenses allow domestic householders to set magpie traps in their gardens, killing them by bashing their brains out against a wall.

The Scottish Government allows, and sometimes encourages and pays for, the killing of dozens of species of birds, grey squirrels, harbour and grey seals, rabbits, hares, numerous species of deer, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, goats, beavers and even wallabies. Scottish Government allows the killing of seals, beavers and other animals without any close season thereby leaving baby animals to slowly starve to death.

Donors to some major conservation charities would be horrified to learn they are paying for the killing of deer, squirrels, birds and other animals. One charity left dozens of shot deer to rot on a Scottish hillside. Few RSPCA contributors realise RSPCA Assured salmon farmers shoot seals.

Unlike Larysa Switlyk the Scottish Government is not open and honest about its part in the killing of huge numbers of wild animals in Scotland. Perhaps now we will get the long overdue open and public full review of the General License culling scheme, the lack of regulation of shooting estates and the culling culture embedded in several Scottish Government agencies.

A few years ago I was at a meeting in Inverness where an "expert", flown first class from Australia (currently £5,443 return), addressed a room full of seal shooters. His speech was short. He thanked the Scottish Government for treating him to his first first class travel experience and he advised seal shooters to shoot seals when there were no other people around and to get rid of the bodies before members of the public found them.

The money might have been better spent flying Switlyk from America to teach SNH cullers and their political masters about the concept of a "clean" kill.

Photographs of Sturgeon and Russell may soon be hanging in Switlyk's trophy room between the goat and the ram she shot on Islay.

What's hanging on my wall are the press clippings in which Russell, Sturgeon and Cunningham promised to review the hunting and culling situation in Scotland. I will be pushing them to give us what I have been calling for since the 1980s. A full overhaul of culling, hunting and shooting in Scotland.

Politicians should not just be twittering on about this but must take it seriously and act to stop the cruel and unnecessary annual slaughter of tens of thousands of wild animals and birds. They must root out the culling culture which pervades SNH and other Government Departments like the stench of a Victorian corpse.

It is time to license and control shooting estates, put a real end to fox hunting, ban the use of lead shot, stop disguising mass slaughter of native animals and birds as "land management" and get rid of the culling culture within SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland and Marine Scotland.

I urge you to visit The Ferret website to read the excellent article on the Islay goose cull and see the pictures of Switlyk and her “trophies”. Switlyk eats her victims and sticks their heads on a wall. Sturgeon throws her victims into landfill sites by the thousand while hundreds more die slowly from festering wounds and rot where they fall. Welcome to the Scotland our Government doesn't want you to see.

Links: The Ferret on the Islay Goose Cull: <https://theferret.scot/geese-shooting-islay-scientists/>

The Ferret re Ms Switlyk: <https://theferret.scot/scottish-government-urged-to-act-after-animal-killings-by-celebrity-hunter/>

Please Note: Viewing the links to The Ferret will constitute two of the three free views of articles the site allows each month. You might want to consider subscribing to The Ferret to support investigative journalism into many of the issues which are important to you and our planet.