

HARE RAISING

"Natural enemies of the young hare are so numerous that, as soon as her litter is born, the doe distributes her young individually away from the nest."

by HENRY TEGNER

YOUNG hares are particularly vulnerable to vermin of all sorts and the doe always separates her litter, after birth, and hides them individually in separate forms, or couches, in the grass, so that when a leveret is discovered it appears as if it were the only offspring. It is this practice that has given rise to the belief that the hare has only one young at birth, when in actual fact a doe hare normally gives birth to five leverets. Hares are said to transport their young as a cat will carry her kittens—by holding the infant with her mouth by the scruff of its neck. This post-birth transport operation has scarcely ever been witnessed, and it is believed to take place mainly at night.

Leverets are born fully furred and with their eyes open. They are active as soon as they are born. The young rabbit, on the other hand, is born hairless and blind.

Natural Enemies

Hares have numerous enemies besides men and dogs, who are probably the two most terrible of all. Foxes and eagles must come close behind, but there are others such as stoats and weasels. Leverets, because of their diminutive size and utter defencelessness, are nearly every predator's game—from the rat and carrion crow right up to the fox.

The hare can belie his reputation for timidity and be a very pugnacious creature. This happens, particularly in February and March, during the peak of the rutting season, when buck hares will fight over their does even to the death. The hare, of course, has earned his reputation for madness as a result of his antics during March. Hares have been known to stand up and fight sheep and cattle that have disturbed them. They fight not only with the powerful legs but with their teeth as well.

The best known voice of the hare is his scream of pain, but he makes other sounds as well. In the past his speech was frequently imitated by poachers. The commonest sound is rather like the word "don't" without the "d"—a sort of "oont" or even "aunt".

Arthur White who at one time was a keeper at Milton Abbas in Dorset, used to imitate the hare's voice, not to attract others of the same species, but vermin such as the fox and stoat. His mimicry was very successful and he enticed many victims.

It is not generally known that both the hare and the rabbit eat their own dung. This habit is not dissimilar to that of cattle and sheep who chew their cud. In chewing the cud the animal regurgitates partially digested food from the stomach back into the mouth where it is re-masticated. Food passes straight through the hare and rabbit before it is re-consumed.

Many ecologists believe that hares have increased considerably since the advent of myxomatosis to Britain. There is undoubted evidence that this is so.

Tribal Dances

The hare occasionally engages in what can best be described as a tribal dance. Both the blue, or mountain hare, *Lepus timidus*, and the common brown hare, *Lepus europaeus*, participate.

The first time I saw hares dancing the performance reminded me of group dances at a children's party. It was on the links behind Beadnell bay in Northumberland in March. I first noticed one or two hares coming over the ridge of some dunes into a great central cup. They kept coming until I counted 13 of them. The leader then started circling and weaving in what

Continued on page 16

about possible damage through playing on half frozen greens than either the Committee, the Secretary, or the Greenkeeper. Once the "anything for a quiet life" school takes over the running of a club, or lets itself weaken with the years into that attitude, then hope dies.

Never recovers

Worse still than indecision is the failure to provide, year by year, decent sites for frost holes, where the grass is evened and looked after well enough to make some substitute for normal putting. If the frost hole is just stuck in an uneven bit of fairway or approach, you can't blame the members for grumbling at being expected to use them. Even this, though, may not be so bad as the weakest way out of all—compromise. Under this system the holes are merely placed near the front of the green throughout the winter, frost or no frost, and left there—throughout the dressing period, and throughout any foul weather that may come. The result, of course, is progressively fouler and more uneven putting throughout the winter, and the whole front part of the green knocked so badly to hell between November and March that it never really recovers from year to year.

It is really a libel on the greenkeeping profession to suggest that such a thing could ever happen. But it does. The only laugh I ever had out of the whole business was when one impatient member solemnly asked: "What's all the fuss? It never *really* freezes in this country anyway!"

Next Month—Why is a Weed?

appeared to be a set pattern around the grassy arena.

Now and then she—for I believe the leader was an old doe—would take her troop out of sight over the dunes to reappear again in the ring with her entourage complete. I do not know how long this performance would have lasted for it was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a shepherd and his collie. The hares quite unhurriedly, and in single file, evacuated their dance floor and disappeared.

Again, in May, 1959, I saw a similar performance by 14 hares in a grass field, near Grantown on Spey and in October, 1958 I saw a party of eight mountain hares perform in the deer forest of Clova, in Angus.

With grateful acknowledgments to the "Farmers' Weekly", 24th November, 1961.

OF SOILS AND SPECIES—continued.

or early August with 6 lb. dalapon to the acre and top dressed with 2 tons of ground limestone. 10 cwt of basic slag, sown in the following spring, given 3 cwt. of a compound fertiliser and not grazed until autumn.

The object in chemical ploughing is to change sward composition completely, but there may be advantages in selectively changing the composition of natural hill pasture.

With grateful acknowledgments to the "Farmers' Weekly", 8th December, 1961.

AGENTS FOR
CROYDEX

PLASTIC
HOSE &
SPRINKLER
HOSE

GOODENOUGH
PUMPS

Pumping under
all conditions

CLYDE BUILT TRACTOR CABS

A. C. BANKS & CO.

(LATE OF ALLAN TAYLOR (ENGINEERS) LTD.)
149 COPSE HILL, WIMBLEDON, S.W.20
TELEPHONE: WIMBLEDON 1768

TRACTORS FOR GOLF COURSES, SPORTS GROUNDS,
PARKS, ETC., and ALL EQUIPMENT FOR MAINTENANCE

ALL MAKES OF
MOWERS
SUPPLIED AND
REPAIRED

SAWS
CIRCULAR
CROSS CUTS
SHEARS

Repairs and
Grinding