

Villagers fear deer cull poses a risk to people

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DEER culling could put people at risk, villagers fear.

Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) plans to shoot muntjac deer in Holwell Nature Reserve, to protect saplings.

Holwell resident Simon Wilkinson-Blake said it was unacceptable for the trust to be "running the risk of running a shooting range that close to people".

He said: "We're really concerned about it in the village because one of the high seats is very close to a road that I and many others use every day to walk our dogs, ride our horses, go to work or just have a bit of a ramble."

"The trust is not telling us when their deer manager is going to be out there shooting at the deer. So we're concerned about safety."

A trust spokesman said the cull would "only take place on parts of the nature reserve where there is no public access".

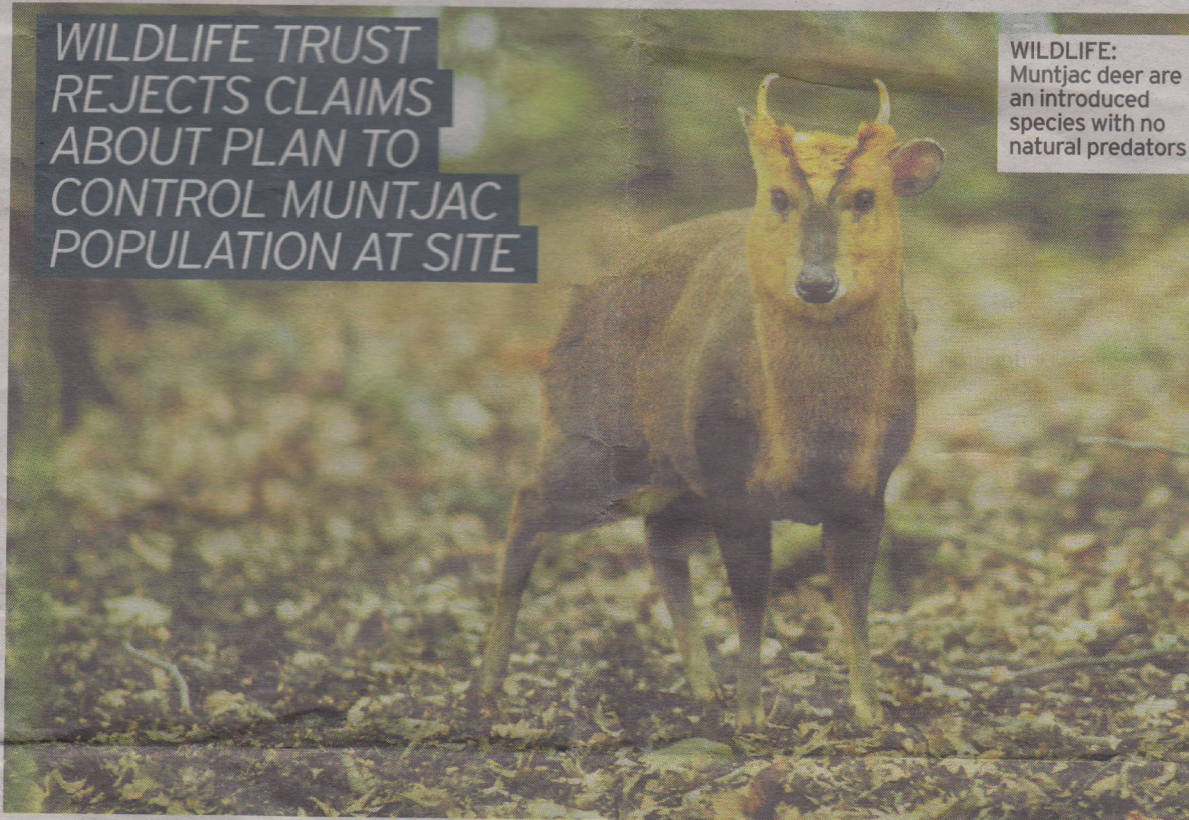
He said the trust did not reveal the dates of the shooting because "could encourage people to enter parts of the site without public access and create safety risks".

Mr Wilkinson-Blake said: "Bullets and rifles have an enormous range, and I know that they'll say 'well they're qualified and they'll only point at deer et cetera', but all it takes is some sort of accident."

"There is a Scouts camp just a short walk away. Why can't the trust see the danger involved and call off the cull?"

Villager Colin Green, said: "The trust says it is committed to this cull to protect tree saplings in the new

WILDLIFE TRUST
REJECTS CLAIMS
ABOUT PLAN TO
CONTROL MUNTJAC
POPULATION AT SITE



WILDLIFE:
Muntjac deer are
an introduced
species with no
natural predators

Holwell Wood, but there are other ways to control deer, such as fencing."

He said the trust has not given any evidence the deer are causing damage to the saplings.

The trust spokesman said: "Management of all our sites is done solely for the benefit of nature. We do this based on the best conservation management techniques, knowledge, and experience."

"We try to minimise our interventions, but we do manage our sites to maximise their benefit for wildlife."

"Deer are an important species

that contribute positively to our biodiversity."

"However, in the absence of natural predation, it falls to people who manage land to also manage growing deer populations."

"Deer management usually means managing their numbers to replicate a similar impact to that of natural predation."

"Before considering any deer management, the trust undertakes a formal assessment following the methodology developed by the Forestry Commission and used widely."

"This is a robust approach under-

taken by individuals experienced in conservation management."

"There is no safety risk for local residents."

"Any management of deer numbers would only take place on parts of the nature reserve where there is no public access."

"Deer management would only ever be undertaken by a fully qualified professional abiding by a clear code of practice and method statement."

"We have provided a full and detailed response to concerns raised by Mr Wilkinson-Blake."