

This was, however, not the case in group B, where two individuals that had been raised together and who obviously had a strong bond spent most of their active time harassing the third group-member. The fact that the conflicts never escalated may be due to the big enclosure they were kept in (6x6x6 m), allowing them to avoid each other.

Previous failures of reintroducing gibbons into a (semi-) natural environment were partly due to the fact that the quality of the relationships of the to be released gibbons had only been poorly assessed. To reduce the number of these failures two steps are therefore necessary.

Step 1: assessing the quality of relationships objectively, ie searching for objective, reliable measures which indicate pair-bonding in adults and stable relationships in juveniles.

Step 2: assessing whether this pair-bonding status or stability in relationships can indeed predict failure or success of reintroduction.

This research has exclusively focused on the first step. Future releases will show whether this way of selecting gibbons for release produces false positives.

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Welfare implications of culling red deer (*Cervus elaphus*)

Sir,

In your February issue, a paper by E L Bradshaw and P Bateson claims that on 29 August 1995 a deer was attacked by hounds belonging to the Quantock Staghounds. It was not. The video footage shown on television, and upon which this claim is based, was stopped at the point the hounds were apparently on top of the deer. The tape went on to show hounds over running the deer without attacking it. I would be grateful if you would set the record straight on this.

Nigel Muers Raby
Chairman
Quantock Staghounds

Dr Bradshaw and Professor Bateson reply:

We replayed slowly the video of the hounds catching up with the stag which fell during a hunt on 29 August 1995. After many viewings we were convinced that the hounds did bite the stag, although we have stated repeatedly that the control of hounds is generally impressive. Since we submitted our paper to *Animal Welfare*, a much clearer case of hounds biting a stag has

been videoed. This was at Marsh Bridge on 3 April 1999. We doubt very much if this case can be denied or explained away. We do not think this matter of biting is central in the debate about the welfare of the hunted deer, but if it is to be settled, both videos should be analysed by independent experts nominated by the stag-hunts and ourselves.

E L Bradshaw and P Bateson