

Should we be afraid of the 'big, bad' wolves?

THERE have been several schemes to reintroduce wolves to Britain over the past 15 years, writes Alan Shaw. Some have the backing of environmentalists who argue they would help animal and plant species that have been devastated by deer, numbers of which have soared since their natural predators were removed. But perhaps we should pay some attention to the recent experiences of our French cousins.

Wolves were eradicated in France in the 1930s, but they've returned to the country, savaging sheep and showing little fear of humans.

A single pair of wolves crossed the border from Italy in the 1990s, and the animals have now expanded their territory, just 100 miles from Paris.

And that's costing big bucks with the Government having to spend £10m last year on wolf



■ Wolves may return to the UK.

attack prevention measures and compensation.

French farmers are claiming huge subsidies for electric fences and

huge Pyrenean sheepdogs who wear spiked metal collars for protection.

The number of wolves has soared by 20% in the past year and will hit 700 by 2020. Hunters are allowed to kill 24 a year, but only 11 have been shot so far.

Don't miss next week's

WEEKLY NEWS



What will life be like for Royal Baby No 2?

From ballet school reject to World's Sexiest Woman



Celery is the new Champagne!

On Sale Wednesday

Alan loves climbing mountains by moonlight

■ Winter sunshine on icy Loch Mullardoch.

■ Sunrise at Beinn a'Ghlo, Perthshire.

■ Stags form a roadblock near Kinloch Hourn.

■ Alan Rowan in front of a frozen Loch Brandy, Angus, Glens.

■ Red sky in the morning at Loch Erich.

■ Icy mist and sunshine, Bac an Eich, Strathconon.

INSTEAD of driving home when he finished his office shift at midnight, Alan Rowan set off on a road trip.

The keen hill walker would pick one of Scotland's Munros — mountains with a height over 3,000ft — and climb to its peak, alone and under cover of darkness.

By Murray Scougall

Twenty years on, the 60-year-old is just about to complete his third round of midnight Munros, and has also done the Corbetts (peaks between 2,500ft and 3,000ft) and is finishing the Grahams (peaks between 2,000ft and 2,499ft).

Few would disagree that some of the most beautiful sights on these isles can be seen from the peak of a Munro.

But there aren't many people who would climb rough terrain in the dark in order to experience those views at their most beautiful.

According to Alan, that time is at sunrise, when a glorious orange hue drifts over the blanket of clouds and brings the peaks alive in magnificent colour.

"I had done a bit of walking as a kid, but when I started working nights, I took it up again," explained Alan, from Carnoustie.

"I would start work at 5pm, so I'd go out during the day with a couple of colleagues and climb a hill.

"By the time I was up to 40 Munros, it was becoming hard to find the time to do the more far-flung ones.

"So I decided when I finished work at midnight that I would drive to a Munro and begin climbing at first light.

"My two friends weren't keen on doing it, so I went by myself.

"When I got there around 2am, I realised it was already quite light due to the Moon, so I decided to just start walking.

"For the next 15 years, I did a walk around 10 or 15 times a year.

"It's not a bad place to enjoy breakfast, but the point of it all was to be up top and see the sun rising," he added.

"I remember on one occasion it was raining heavily when I started off, but when I burst through the clouds it was beautiful.

"When I went into work the next day, my workmates couldn't believe I had a tan."

The university lecturer says safety is always at the forefront of his mind and he never takes chances.

"I always leave notes or a route with someone and call by a certain time," said Alan.

"I carry a headtorch, too.

"I didn't actually tell my wife, Alison, what I was doing. She thought I was travelling to the hills and then walking them in the morning.

"There was no point in worrying her — she would never get to sleep!"

Alan has written a book about his experiences of exploring Scotland's hills under the stars, called *Moonwalker: Adventures of a Midnight Mountaineer*.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Girl hitches ride in Dad's boot!

A DRIVER sparked a police kidnap alert after putting his daughter in the boot of his car in Birmingham. Passers-by alerted the authorities when they spotted the "victim" — in her 20s — in the back. But she was in the boot because her dad had a fireplace in the front seat and had dropped the back seats, so his daughter could lie in the boot. He was cautioned for traffic offences.



Leash's rescue of diabetic patient

APPRENTICE winner Leash Totton saved a commuter at a train station. Leash (26) won the backing of Lord Sugar for her Botox and cosmetic surgery firm, but she's a qualified doctor and realised the man was diabetic and suffering from dangerously low blood sugar before he passed out. She managed to get some sugar into him before paramedics arrived.

Doggy hunters taking time off

ONE in five dog owners have taken time off work to search for their missing pooch. A survey carried out by the Dogs Trust discovered people hunting for a pet took an average of four days off. They also found a rise in dogs being reunited with their owners thanks to being microchipped. Three-quarters of owners don't realise they only have seven days to reclaim their dog before it's rehomed or potentially put to sleep.

Looking good in the playground

IT'S not just pupils who want to look their best for school — yummy mummies, too. According to a new poll, almost six in 10 mums spruce up for the school run and the same number judge their children's teachers on their looks. "The mum who makes a special effort always attracts attention," says beauty clinic Lovell & Co, which carried out the survey.