



End Wildlife Crime: An appeal to Police and Crime Commissioner candidates

Will you help end wildlife crime?

Across England and Wales, a shocking array of wildlife crimes are committed every year. We are asking for your support as a Police and Crime Commissioner candidate to help protect our wildlife and support local communities.

In the year when we have all come to [appreciate](#) our wildlife and green spaces more than ever before, it is time to bring the criminals who hurt or damage them to book - and provide greater support to hard working wildlife policing teams.

The latest [figures](#) collected by Wildlife and Countryside Link suggest that at least 3,800 wildlife crimes were reported to police forces in 2019. This is just a snapshot of the number of animals being illegally hurt and killed every single day, sometimes for 'fun', sometimes for profit, sometimes in sheer callousness.

It isn't just our birds, badgers, hares and deer who suffer – those who hurt or damage wildlife are frequently involved in other serious criminal activities that impact on the lives and livelihoods of local communities.

Wildlife police teams are working hard to combat the tide of wildlife crimes, but officers need more support. Constrained resources, limited training opportunities and missing data all hold back the successful capture and prosecution of wildlife criminals. Despite hundreds of offences being committed each month, just 10 people were convicted of wildlife crimes in 2019.

Police and Crime Commissioners have a crucial role to play. By increasing support for wildlife crime policing within the police plans and budgets they control, giving their officers increased access to wildlife crime training and by adding their influential voices to calls to national policing action, PCCs can help turn the tide on wildlife crime.

Ahead of the elections on 6 May, Link and supporters are asking PCC candidates to commit to [#EndWildlifeCrime](#).

If elected as Police and Crime Commissioner, I commit to:

- Make tackling wildlife crime a key priority within my first police and crime plan, and to make budget provision to support this prioritisation.
- Increase wildlife crime training opportunities for officers in my force and liaise with the National Wildlife Crime Unit on best wildlife policing practice.
- Encourage the Home Secretary to make wildlife crimes notifiable, so that data on these crimes can be collected and used to inform policing.

PCC candidates can email matt@wcl.org.uk to register their support.



FAQS

What are wildlife crimes?

Any action that contravenes current legislation governing the protection of wild animals and plants constitutes a [wildlife crime](#). This covers the unlicensed killing of animals for fun and profit, including activities such as:

- Badger baiting - setting dogs on badger setts to dig out and kill badgers
- Hare coursing - racing dogs against hares, usually resulting in caught hares being mauled to death.
- Raptor persecution - killing birds of prey without a license.

Other wildlife crimes concern the deliberate disturbance of animals in the wild (including marine mammals), the destruction of habitats they rely on and the illegal trade in wildlife goods. These crimes can be just as damaging to wildlife populations as killing for sport, and can include crimes against protected invertebrates, wildflowers and fungi.

How is wildlife crime linked to other crimes?

Those who hurt animals often hurt people as well – a twenty year [study](#) by the North-eastern University in the USA found that 70% of all animal abusers committed at least one other criminal offence. Identifying and successfully prosecuting animal abusers can take criminals off the streets who pose a danger to people as well as animals.

In many parts of England and Wales, the same gangs that organise wildlife crime also organise other crimes. The National Farmers Union have [reported](#) a pattern of crimes associated with hare coursing. Gang members trespass on farms to kill hares with their dogs and use the opportunity to scout for other criminal opportunities on the farm, with thefts of farm machinery and other valuables often occurring a few weeks later.

What is happening at national level?

The National Wildlife Crime Unit and local wildlife crime and rural crime teams are working hard to tackle wildlife crime. There are however considerable disparities between forces as to number of wildlife crime teams in place, and the support they receive.

All wildlife crime policing is also hampered by a major gap at a national level – data. We can't say precisely how much wildlife crime actually takes place within England and Wales, as wildlife crime offences are not notifiable and as such are not recorded by the Home Office. Environmental organisations belonging to the Wildlife and Countryside Link coalition have tried to fill the gap by producing annual wildlife crime reports, based on the numbers of incidents and prosecutions member



organisations are aware of. These [annual reports](#) provide a best estimate of the prevalence of wildlife crime, in the absence of official data.

Along with pledging increased support for tackling wildlife crime within their force and increasing training opportunities, we are asking PCC candidates to join in the call to make wildlife crimes notifiable at a national level. More information about wildlife crime will help police forces to reduce it.

Who are Wildlife and Countryside Link?

Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) is the largest environment and wildlife coalition in England, bringing together 58 organisations to use their strong joint voice for the protection of nature and animals. Link's [Wildlife Crime Working Group](#) works to improve the conservation and protection of wild flora and fauna threatened by domestic wildlife crime and international trade.

This briefing is supported by the following Link members:



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