

Wildlife Crime in Scotland

Annual Report 2021

A report published by the Scottish Ministers, on wildlife crime in Scotland.

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers under Section 26B of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
Scottish Government Environment and Forestry Directorate

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With thanks for contributions, comments and data provided by members of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland.

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Ministerial Foreword



This is the tenth Scottish Government annual wildlife crime report and my first as Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands. It covers the 2021 calendar year, using recorded statistical data from the 2020-2021 financial year. The aim of this report is to highlight trends by building on the data provided by previous reports and encourage discussion on how best to further reduce wildlife crime.

It is frustrating to see a 55% increase in the 2020-21 recorded wildlife crime incidents when compared to the 2019-20 calendar year. It is likely that the increased public presence in the countryside as Covid-19 restrictions have relaxed has allowed for an increase in crimes being witnessed and recorded. However, there is no doubt that the number of crimes recorded even with more of them being discovered by the public will still not represent the full picture. Wildlife crime has no place in Scotland and the Scottish Government continues to be committed to building on previous measures brought in to tackle selfish crimes against Scotland's magnificent wildlife.

There has been a sharp rise in the poaching of our fresh water fish in this reporting year. Salmon and other fresh water fish not only support a wide variety of human activities but are a vital part of our ecosystem by bringing essential nutrients inland from the sea to allow our landscapes to thrive. This underlines the continued essential work carried out through the partnership of Police Scotland, Fisheries Management Scotland and District Salmon Fisheries Boards. In January 2022, the Scottish Government published the [Scottish Wild Salmon Strategy](#). This set out five priority themes for action which form a framework of coordinated action to protect wild salmon, including the effectiveness of deterrents to poachers. The accompanying Strategy [Implementation Plan](#) was published in February 2023 which will guide collective action for wild Atlantic salmon across government, business and charitable sectors.

This year has also seen a large increase in the number of crimes involving hunting with dogs. I am hopeful that through the passage of the Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill, we will see a greater deterrent effect in this area, as we have clarified the law and made prosecution more straightforward, as well as through the impact of the closing of loopholes exploited by those who aimed to evade the previous legislation in this area. The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill has been passed by the Scottish Parliament and will soon be implemented to become another important tool in the fight against wildlife crime.

While there has been a reduction in the number of recorded crimes against raptor species, we must acknowledge the likelihood that not all cases of raptor persecution will have been witnessed or recorded. As we set out in our 2022-23 programme for government we will implement the recommendations of the "Werritty Review" and introduce licensing for grouse moors and muirburn, to

ensure that the management of driven grouse moors and related activities are undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner. Our Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament on the 21 March 2023 and includes the recommendations of the “Werritty Review”.

Alongside the negative impacts caused by wildlife crime, our iconic species are also struggling due to the damage done to our land by centuries of human activity.

That is why the Scottish Government have developed a £65 million package of support specifically for projects that benefit nature. The Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) is designed to deliver landscape scale, multi-partner, multi-year projects that restore and protect habitats, safeguard wildlife and tackle causes of biodiversity loss. These projects will help to meet the vision we have set out in our new, draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and reverse declines by 2045. The NRF forms only a small part of our £500 million investment in Scotland’s natural habitat, with additional plans to increase peatland restoration, forestry planting, protect 30% of our land and introduce nature networks.

Our diverse wildlife brings so many benefits, not only via its contributions to the ecosystems we need to survive, but also by supporting our wellbeing and enriching our lives. I hope the actions I have outlined not only on wildlife crime but also on nature restoration demonstrates the commitment of the Scottish Government to allow wildlife to thrive in a modern Scotland.

I’d like to give thanks to our key partners in law enforcement and those involved in the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime Scotland for continuing their dedicated work to combat wildlife crime.



Mairi Gougeon MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands

1. Introduction

Legislative requirement of annual report

This report is a requirement of Section 20 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011, which inserted a new Section 26B into the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The section prescribes that Ministers must lay a report following the end of every calendar year on offences which relate to wildlife, to include information on incidence and prosecutions during the year to which the report relates, and on research and advice relevant to those offences.

Wildlife crime

The report uses the following definition of wildlife crime, as agreed by the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland in 2010.

“Wildlife crime is any unlawful act or omission, which affects any wild creature, plant or habitat, in Scotland.”

A summary of the legislation which contains offences highlighted in this report is available in Appendix 1.

Outline of report

The report is divided into two main parts:

- Chapters 2-4 contain evidence on the level and nature of wildlife crime and prosecutions, supported by additional detail where it is available and relevant. This information covers the financial year 2020-21, the latest period for which a complete set of data is available.
- Chapters 5-8 include information on activities and projects related to wildlife crime policy and enforcement throughout 2021 and beyond.

Summary of data sources used for this Wildlife Crime Report

Organisation/ data source	Information used in this report
Recorded Crime statistics: Scottish Government statistical output derived from Police Scotland's recorded crime database	Numbers of crimes recorded
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) system	Number of cases reported to COPFS and associated case outcomes
Criminal Proceedings Statistics, Scottish Government	Number of people proceeded against and those with a conviction Types of punishment issued in courts
Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)	Wildlife DNA forensic cases Pesticide abuse incidents including bird of prey poisoning data
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)	Wildlife cases examined by SRUC Veterinary Services which were suspected to have been the result of criminal activity
NatureScot (formerly known as Scottish National Heritage)	Freshwater pearl mussel (FWPM) incidents Health of the species General licence restrictions
Police Scotland	Disaggregated recorded crime data by species, type of wildlife crime Firearms restrictions
National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU)	Wildlife crime intelligence logs summary
Scottish Society for Protection of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA)	Summary of Scottish SPCA investigations

2. Headline trends

This chapter outlines the main trends in wildlife crime recorded by the police, reports of those charged by the police and processed by COPFS and numbers of people proceeded against in court.

Recorded crime

Table 1 provides a summary of the different types of wildlife crime recorded by the police over the five year period to 2020-21. These recorded crime statistics are Scottish Government statistical output derived from Police Scotland's recorded crime database.

In 2020-21 there were 305 offences relating to wildlife recorded by the police. This is an increase of 55% in comparison with 2019-20 (196 recorded offences).

While overall recorded wildlife offences increased, Cruelty to wild animals offences dropped by 54% from the previous years. Fish Poaching was the most commonly recorded type of crime in 2020-21 with 107 offences. Hunting with dogs is the other most commonly recorded type of crime and has increased by 136% from the 2019-20 year.

Table 1: Wildlife crime recorded by Police Scotland, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Offences relating to:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Badgers*	6	14	15	6	13
Birds	50	45	46	36	37
Conservation (protected sites)	1	5	3	5	9
Cruelty to wild animals	24	32	31	35	16
Deer	14	18	17	23	20
Fish poaching	68	45	24	27	107
Hunting with dogs	22	41	22	36	85
Poaching and game laws	6	3	2	2	1
Other wildlife offences	40	33	11	24	17
Total	231	236	171	196	305

Source: Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2020-21

*Labelled as 'Other Conservation Offences' in 2020-21 set

Table 2 presents the distribution of the types of wildlife crime between different Police Scotland divisions in 2020-21.

Table 2: Wildlife crime recorded, by Police Scotland Division, 2020-21

Offences relating to:	North East	Argyll & West Dunbartonshire	Ayrshire	Dumfries & Galloway	Edinburgh	Fife	Forth Valley	Greater Glasgow	Highland & Islands	Lanarkshire	Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	Tayside	The Lothians & Scottish Borders	Total
Badgers	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	2	0	13
Birds	7	0	1	1	2	0	5	4	5	3	1	4	4	37
Conservation (protected sites)	0	0	6	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	9
Cruelty to wild animals	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	5	16
Deer	6	2	1	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	0	3	20
Fish poaching	21	3	3	0	1	3	22	4	29	11	0	2	8	107
Hunting with dogs	25	0	2	1	0	10	10	0	1	0	1	17	18	85
Poaching and game laws	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other wildlife offences	1	0	0	2	0	1	4	0	2	0	0	7	0	17
Total	65	5	14	9	3	15	44	9	47	20	3	33	38	305

Source: Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2020-21

The highest number of wildlife offences in 2020-21 was recorded in the North East (65), followed by the Highland & Islands (47) and Forth Valley (44). Table 2 also shows that the majority of all fish poaching offences were recorded in the North East (21), Forth Valley (22) and the Highlands and Islands (29) divisions.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service Statistics

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service's (COPFS) dedicated Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit (WECU) has been in operation since 15 August 2011. WECU investigates and manages the prosecution of all cases involving crimes against wildlife.

Case work of the Wildlife & Environmental Crime Unit in 2020-21

Table 3 shows the breakdown of wildlife cases received by COPFS in each of the financial years 2016-17 to 2020-21, following the standard categories used elsewhere in this report. Notes and Definitions on the COPFS data are available in Appendix 2 – Notes and Definitions for COPFS Data.

Table 3: Wildlife cases received by COPFS in 2016-17 to 2020-21

Offence relating to:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Badgers	*	*	*	3	2
Birds	24(*)	13	12	1	10
Cruelty to wild animals	8(*)	0	*(*)	0	2(2)
Deer	*	*	*	3	2
Fish poaching	35	18	15(*)	17	55(1)
Hunting with dogs	7	22	7	13	25
Other wildlife offences	14(*)	*	11	11	5
Other conservation offences	*	0	0	1	4
Total	94(5)	67	54(*)	49	105(3)

Source: Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

*= data suppressed. See Appendix 2.

The figures in brackets in Table 3 indicate the number of reports submitted by a specialist reporting agency: in the case of fish poaching offences, by the River Tweed Commissioners and in the remaining categories, by the Scottish SPCA.

The outcomes of these cases are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Outcomes of all wildlife cases reported to COPFS in 2016-17 to 2020-21

All reports	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	27	30	19(*)	23	31(1)
Alternative to prosecution	35	23	18(*)	14	55
Prosecuted	32	14	17	12	19
of which convicted	25	*	11	5	10(2)
of which pending trial	-	-	-	6(2)	7
No. of reports received	94(5)	67	54(*)	49	105(3)

Source: Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

*= data suppressed. See Appendix 2.

The figures in brackets in Table 4 indicate the number of reports submitted by a specialist reporting agency: in the case of fish poaching offences, by the River Tweed Commissioners and in the remaining categories, by the Scottish SPCA.

The following information relates to cases reported in 2020-21:

Prosecution in court was undertaken in 19 cases (18% of cases received):

- 10 cases resulted in a conviction (53% of cases prosecuted).
- 2 cases resulted in acquittal (10% of cases prosecuted). In some cases this reflects the verdict following trial and in others, the result of a plea adjustment.
- 7 cases are pending trial at the time of writing (37% of cases).

55 cases were dealt with by an alternative to prosecution (52% of cases received). Fiscal fines were issued in the majority of those cases. Warning letters were issued in others.

No action was taken in 31 cases (30% of cases received). In the majority of those cases, no action was taken for legal reasons.

The legal reasons included:

- circumstances that did not constitute a crime; and
- instances where there was insufficient evidence to permit proceedings.

Further information about cases received in 2020-21 is as follows:

- A total of 23 reports (22% of cases received) involved activity targeting hares or rabbits.
- 2 reports (2% of cases received) related to circumstances involving badgers.
- 25 cases (24% of cases received) involved dogs.
- 5 cases (5% of cases received) involved the use of traps and snares.
- The cases in the "Hunting with dogs" category related to allegations of hare coursing or deer coursing.

"Other wildlife offences" included alleged contraventions of regulation 39(1)(d) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 namely damaging or destroying the breeding site or resting place of a European protected species.

Other reported cases included circumstances involving bats and dolphins.

Further details of case outcomes in the individual categories are provided in Appendix 2A – Further Information on COPFS Case Outcomes.

Notable cases

Fish Poaching

- An individual was found guilty of fishing for salmon without legal right or written permission contrary to the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003, Sections 6(1) and (2) and was fined £300.

Hare Coursing

- An individual pled guilty to deliberately hunting hares and rabbits with dogs contrary to the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2022, Section 1(1) and was made the subject of a Community Payback Order for 80 hours.
- An individual pled guilty to interfering with a badger sett by arranging clearance of land and damaging the badger sett contrary to the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, Section 3(1)(a) and was fined £9000.

Cruelty to Wild Animals

- An individual pled guilty to keeping dogs for an animal fight involving badgers and foxes contrary to the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, Section 23(1)(a). The individual was made the subject of a Community Payback Order of 160 hours and disqualified from owning, being in charge of or being in possession of dogs for a period of 5 years. A deprivation order was made in respect of the dogs involved.
- A further individual pled guilty to keeping and training dogs for an animal fight involving badgers and foxes contrary to the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, Section 23(1)(a). The individual was made the subject of a Community Payback Order of 270 hours and disqualified from owning or keeping dogs for a period of 4 years. A deprivation order was made in respect of the dogs involved.

Other Wildlife offences

- An individual pled guilty to recklessly killing an owl and a goshawk by catching the birds in a multi crow cage trap and failing to release them. Consequently they perished from exposure and lack of food and water contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(a). The individual was sentenced to a £300 fine.

Other Conservation Offences

- An individual was fined £2000 after intentionally or recklessly damaging a natural feature specified in a site of scientific interest contrary to the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, Section 19(3).

Criminal proceedings statistics

Table 5 shows the number of people proceeded against in Scottish courts and the relevant conviction rates for wildlife offences between 2016-17 and 2020-21. Please note that this table is a summary and a breakdown of proceedings for specific offences is provided at Appendix 3 - Court proceedings and penalties data by specific offence.

Table 5: People proceeded against in Scottish Courts for wildlife crimes¹, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Offences relating to:	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Last five financial years	
						Total proceedings	Conviction rate
Badgers	-	2	-	-	-	2	50%
Birds	4	3	2	4	-	13	100%
Cruelty to wild animals	2	5	-	3	-	10	90%
Deer	1	1	-	-	-	2	100%
Hunting with dogs	8	4	6	-	1	19	79%
Fish poaching	5	5	3	5	-	18	94%
Other wildlife offences	3	9	4	-	1	17	71%
Total proceeded against	23	27	15	12	2	81	85%
Total guilty	22	24	10	11	1		
% guilty	96%	89%	67%	92%	50%		
Total number of offences proceeded against ²	59	52	43	33	8		
Total number of offences found guilty ²	32	25	15	24	3		
% guilty ²	54%	48%	35%	73%	38%		

Source: Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings Database

¹ Where main charge, excluding where stated

² All charges

³ Data from 2020-21 are affected by the pandemic and subsequent court closures and should not be considered indicative of long term trends.

It is important to note that data from 2020-21 are affected by the pandemic and subsequent court closures and should not be considered indicative of long term trends. There were 2 people proceeded against for wildlife related offences in 2020-21, a 20% decrease from 2018-19 (15 people). The largest decrease for specific categories was in 'hunting with dogs' (with no persons proceeded against compared to six in 2017-18). There was, however, an increase in the number of proceedings for 'Cruelty to wild animals' and 'Fish poaching', up to three and five respectively in 2019-20 from zero and three in 2018-19.

Conviction rates for individual wildlife crime categories have been presented as a five year average due to the small numbers of proceedings for some categories. This shows that conviction rates vary among these categories, from 50% to 100%.

Although a single court proceeding can involve a number of different offences, it should be noted that Criminal Proceedings statistics only report on the ‘main charge’. Unless otherwise stated, proceedings and convictions for wildlife crimes referred to in this section are for when the wildlife crime was the main charge in a single court proceeding. For example, if a shotgun offence receives a higher penalty than a wildlife offence in the same proceeding, the shotgun offence would be counted, not the wildlife offence. To illustrate the difference, the total number of individual wildlife offence convictions in each year, regardless of whether the wildlife offence was the main charge or not, are presented at the bottom of Table 5.

In 2020-21 court proceedings were held covering a total of 8 wildlife crime offences, in comparison to the 3 proceedings where wildlife crime was the main charge in a case.

Tables 6 and 7 present information on penalties issued for wildlife crime convictions and have been presented as aggregate figures due to the small numbers of proceedings for some crime categories in individual years.

Table 6: People with a charge* proved for wildlife crimes in Scottish Courts, by main penalty, 2016-17 to 2020-21

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
People proceeded against	23	29	15	12	2
People with a charge proved	22	25	10	11	1
Of which received:					
Custody	1	2	-	-	-
Community sentence	5	3	1	4	1
Monetary	15	17	7	7	-
Other	1	3	2	-	-

Source: Criminal Proceedings Statistics

* Where main charge

1. Data from 2020-21 are affected by the pandemic and subsequent court closures and should not be considered indicative of long term trends.

In Table 7, aggregate totals for the five years from 2016-17 to 2020-21 show that monetary punishments are mostly likely to be given for all wildlife crime types. Only 4% of all wildlife crime convictions resulted in a custodial sentence.

Average fines and custodial sentences are also presented in Table 7. It is not possible to establish the average number of Community Payback Order (CPO) hours as this information is not held in the Criminal Proceedings database nor is it available for other types of crime.

Table 7: People with a charge* proved for wildlife crimes in Scottish Courts, by main penalty and wildlife crime, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Offences relating to:	2016-17 to 2020-21 totals					Average	
	Total with a charge proved	Custody	Community sentence	Monetary	Other	Custodial sentence length (days)	Monetary fine (£)
Badgers	1	-	-	1	-	-	300
Birds	13	-	2	9	2	-	840
Cruelty to wild animals	9	1	1	6	1	126	475
Deer	2	-	-	2	-	-	413
Hunting with dogs	15	2	4	9	-	142	1,074
Fish poaching	17	-	4	10	3	-	248
Other wildlife offences	12	-	3	9	-	-	856
Totals	69	3	14	46	6	137	682

Source: Criminal Proceedings Statistics

* Where main charge

1. Data from 2020-21 are affected by the pandemic and subsequent court closures and should not be considered indicative of long term trends.

Comparing data sources

While the criminal justice IT systems represented in Tables 1 to 7 have common standards in terms of classifying crimes and penalties, care should be taken when comparing the different sets of statistics:

- Prosecutions may not happen or be concluded in the same year as a crime was recorded by Police Scotland. Timing is also an issue when comparing COPFS figures (which refer to prosecutions brought in respect of cases reported to COPFS in each financial year) and Criminal Proceedings statistics (which represent only prosecutions commenced and, of those, prosecutions concluded to the point of conviction, in each financial year)
- In the Police Scotland recorded crime statistics, a single crime or offence recorded by the police may have more than one perpetrator. By comparison the court statistics measure individuals who are proceeded against, which may be for more than one crime. As outlined above, only the main charge in a prosecution is presented for criminal proceeding statistics
- There is the possibility that the crime or offence recorded by Police Scotland may be altered e.g. when Police Scotland submit a report of alleged offending to COPFS, and COPFS may alter the charges during their case marking process, which makes it difficult to track crimes through the criminal justice process
- Additionally, crimes and offences alleged to have been committed by children less than 16 years old are not included in the criminal proceedings statistics as these are representative of activity in the adult courts. Young people are generally processed through the children's hearings system
- There may be discontinuity when comparing between the National Statistics data and Police Scotland data as any information provided by Police Scotland is taken from a 'live' system which is continually being updated as investigations progress. Whereas, the data provided by Police Scotland for the production of the National Statistics on Recorded Crime is extracted at the same time each year and is not back-revised. As a result, a reduction of in the number of crimes and offences recorded is expected due to two main scenarios:
 1. Crimes and offences can be reclassified to a different crime or offence type i.e. from a wildlife crime to a different kind of crime, or
 2. they can be re-designated as not being a crime following additional investigations.

3. Additional data sources

Chapters three and four include commentary and data provided by other bodies involved in the investigation of wildlife crime in Scotland including government departments, agencies and non-Government organisations. The data provides additional detail on incidents or investigative work to complement the data presented in Chapter two and to help fill in gaps where disaggregation of that data is not possible.

Some of these data sources include incidents that have been reported to stakeholders or detected using their specific expertise.

Police Scotland operate to the Scottish Crime Recording Standard which sets criteria for recording an incident as a crime. There is no requirement for other stakeholders to adhere to the Scottish Crime Recording Standard, therefore there may be variability in the way in which crimes are recorded between the various organisations.

It is possible that, if reported to the Police, some of these incidents would not have been recorded as a crime, or would have been recorded as environmental offences or firearms/shotgun offences depending on the nature of the crime.

Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)

SASA is a Scottish Government department based in Edinburgh, which as part of its remit, provides several services for wildlife crime investigation.

Wildlife DNA Forensic Unit

The Wildlife DNA Forensic unit at SASA specialises in analysing animal DNA recovered during wildlife crime investigations. We answer questions such as “What species does this blood smear come from?” or “Can we link the suspect to the crime scene using DNA evidence from their dog?”. Answering these questions can be crucial to determine whether a wildlife crime has been committed and can also provide powerful evidence to link a suspect to the crime. We carry out animal DNA analysis for investigations across the UK, and table 8 provides a summary of the range of Scottish casework received over five financial years ending 31st March 2021, divided into the UK wildlife crime priorities.

Table 8: Scottish wildlife DNA Forensic Unit cases, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Category	Scottish cases				
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Badger persecution	0	1	5	2	2
Bat persecution	0	0	0	0	0
CITES	1	1	1	0	0
Freshwater pearl mussels	0	0	0	0	0
Poaching and coursing	3	3	2	1	5
Raptor persecution	4	5	8	5	3
Other wildlife crime	4	1	2	0	0
Other (e.g. animal cruelty)	2	0	3	2	5
Total	14	11	21	10	15

Source: SASA

The spread of cases over the 2020-21 period differs from previous years, with Poaching and Coursing overtaking Raptor persecution as the most common wildlife crime category for submission. Of the five cases in the Poaching and Coursing category, four were hare coursing and one was a salmon poaching investigation, but these cases have not yet been concluded.

For one case over this period which has concluded, investigated by the Scottish SPCA, the accused pled guilty to charges relating to animal fighting – specifically his dogs with badgers and foxes. DNA analysis on samples taken from clothing, equipment and a vehicle confirmed the presence of traces from badger and fox. The accused received a four-year ban on keeping dogs and a community payback order.

Within the “Other” category, we have been increasingly involved in cases where identifying the predator DNA from victim livestock is required. Sometimes these are sheep attacks by dogs, but ongoing work is looking to establish whether other possible predators – foxes, badgers and even eagles – may be involved in specific situations.

Chemistry Branch

The Chemistry Branch at SASA investigates suspected animal poisoning incidents, as part of the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme. Table 9 provides details of suspected pesticide incidents investigated in Scotland between 2016-17 to 2020-21 and summarises those incidents, categorised as abuse†, that are considered to be wildlife crimes because of the species or pesticide involved. Annually, the branch investigates in the region of 170-230 incidents.

The number of poisoning abuse incidents in 2019-2020 has decreased by 14 from 2018-19.

Table 9 also includes the numbers of abuse incidents involving suspicious baits or other substances, even if no creature was actually poisoned. Over the five year period, the highest number of recorded abuse incidents involved birds of prey (24) followed by incidents involving suspicious baits/substances (12). Bird of prey poisoning incidents are covered further in the Raptor Persecution section of this report.

Table 9: Pesticide incidents in Scotland 2016-17 to 2020-21

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Number of incidents investigated during financial year *	205	184	175	217	204
Number of incidents attributed to pesticides	20	17	14	28	14
Category – Abuse	10	10	8	20	6
% abuse	5	5	5	9	3
No. of abuse incidents involving birds of prey	3	4	5	9	3
No. of abuse incidents involving other birds **	0	1	0	5	1
No. of abuse incidents involving suspicious baits/substances	3	3	3	3	2
No. of abuse incidents involving companion animals	7	3	3	3	0
No. of abuse incidents involving wild mammals	0	0	0	0	0

Source: SASA

* Excludes honeybees and incidents where no analyses were undertaken

** No birds of prey associated with these incidents

†**Abuse:** An investigation into the circumstances of the case concluded that the pesticide(s) involved had been used in breach of their authorisation conditions and that this has been done with the deliberate intent of harming or attempting to harm wildlife or other animals. Where an animal is involved the cause of death has been established as pesticide poisoning.

SRUC Veterinary Services

SRUC Veterinary Services is a division of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). While not a government agency, the work of the Veterinary Services team includes post mortem examinations on wild birds (under the Wild Bird Disease Surveillance budget) and on wild mammals (under the Animal Welfare budget). These budgets are funded by Advisory Activity grants-in-aid from the Scottish Government.

Carcases may be submitted for examination due to the suspicion of a potential wildlife crime. These come predominantly from Police Scotland, with substantial contributions from the RSPB and the SSPCA. Small numbers of carcasses come from other conservation or wildlife organisations, or from members of the public. Where a wildlife crime is suspected following examination of a carcass submitted by non-law-enforcement agencies, the police are notified, to allow investigation to proceed.

In addition to the gathering of evidence related to an investigation, wild bird carcass submissions are used for disease surveillance, notably exotic zoonotic diseases such as avian influenza or West Nile virus.

In 2020-21, there were a total of 162 cases where a suspicion of potential criminality was present upon submission, of which 50 involved mammals and 112 involved birds. These are shown in Table 10 below: please note that the table shows the numbers of post mortem cases. A "case" is usually the submission of a carcass, or of multiple carcasses which are closely associated by proximity and timing; the table does not enumerate the carcasses or individual police investigations involved.

Table 10: Wildlife cases examined by SRUC Veterinary Services under advisory activity funding, 2016-17 to 2020-21

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total wildlife cases examined as possible wildlife crimes	172	135*	195	125	162
Total mammal cases	49	31*	53	40	50
Total mammal cases identified by post-mortem as crime related	11	13*	21	17	21
% of mammal cases identified by post mortem as crime related	22%	42%	40%	42.5%	42%
Total bird cases	123	104	142	85	112
Total bird cases identified by post mortem as crime related	13	18	22	27	18
% of bird cases identified by post mortem as crime related	11%	17%	15%	32%	16%

Source: SRUC Veterinary Services

Every year, there are some avian and mammalian cases in which the degradation of the submitted carcass precludes the chance of a diagnosis; but in the majority of cases, a diagnosis is achieved. With regard to the causes of death or injury in mammalian cases where potential criminality was still suspected after

post-mortem examination, attack by a dog or dogs was the most common cause. Shooting, injury caused by snaring, poisoning and injuries consistent with attack by a person were also reported. Mammalian submissions covered a wide range of species including squirrels, hares, otters, beavers, badgers, smaller mustelids, foxes, and deer.

In avian cases, the range of species submitted included buzzards, kites, owls, hawks, eagles, osprey, songbirds, martins, pigeons and doves, swans, geese and ducks, herons, corvids and capercaillie. Causes of death or injury were most commonly due to a failure to thrive/starvation, or to trauma not suspected to be criminal in nature, such as collisions with road traffic, electricity pylons, wind turbines, and other objects. Infection and parasitism were also prominent causes of mortality. Shooting (usually by firearm, but in one case with a metal bolt and in another with ball bearings), poisoning, and trapping in circumstances considered worthy of investigation by the submitting officer, were the most commonly recorded causes of death or injury where potential criminality was still suspected after post-mortem examination. Poison abuse incidents are confirmed by testing at SASA, and so the same cases referred to in this table also appear in Table 9.

Please note, the effects of the outbreaks of avian influenza in 2020-2021 and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns on the numbers and types of submissions received have not been fully evaluated. Any wild bird which tests positive for avian influenza (screening which is done before full post-mortem examination is carried out) cannot currently be further examined. In addition, the provision of a DEFRA helpline for members of the public to report dead wild birds found during the period of heightened avian influenza screening can mean that carcasses enter the examination system through the avian influenza screening system, and not via the Police, SSPCA or RSPB.

NatureScot – General Licence Restrictions and protected species licensing

As part of a package of anti-wildlife crime measures announced by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, NatureScot announced in 2014 that they would prevent the use of general licences to trap or shoot wild birds on land where there is evidence of wildlife crime against birds. Police Scotland will share information with NatureScot where it may prove to be of assistance in deciding on the use of these restrictions.

NatureScot published their framework for implementing restrictions on the use of General Licences in October 2014, which was part of a package of measures aimed at tackling raptor persecution. The rationale behind the restriction process was that the light-touch approach to regulation offered by General Licences (where there is no application process, and no significant registration or reporting requirements) would not be appropriate where there has been a loss of confidence, usually in situations where there has been evidence to show that crimes against wild birds have taken place.

NatureScot meet with Police Scotland and the National Wildlife Crime Unit every three months to review new information on bird crimes in Scotland and to identify any possible cases for future restrictions. Possible cases are reviewed against the criteria set out in the framework document and must be based upon clear evidence of crimes being committed. No new General Licence Restrictions were implemented during the period covered by this report, however in December 2021 the existing General Licence Restriction on Leadhills estate was extended due to further crimes against birds being recorded on the estate. Details of these can be found on the [NatureScot website](#);

Following concerns about local population declines and the conservation status of mountain hare Scottish Ministers added them to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (“the 1981 Act”) with effect from 1st March 2021. Their protected status changed from some protection during the breeding season to full protection all year round. This means that anyone who intentionally or recklessly kills, injures or takes mountain hare without a licence will be acting unlawfully. NatureScot has worked with stakeholders in developing a new licensing approach for mountain hare to reflect this change in protected status. The new protection and licensing arrangements apply from 1st August 2021.

NatureScot have developed online systems to streamline the application process for low-risk, high-volume licences. An online registration system for crow cage trap operators was launched in March 2020, bringing time benefits for operators and enabling improved reporting and scrutiny by NatureScot. Similarly an online licensing system for Standard Forestry Operations Licences (those for works affecting badgers) went live in July 2020, with plans underway to deliver an online gull licensing system in early 2022.

Police Scotland – firearms licensing

Police Scotland may revoke or refuse the renewal of a shotgun or firearm certificate in circumstances that demonstrate that the holder is no longer deemed to be suitable.

If a firearm certificate holder commits an offence, the Firearms and Explosives Licensing department for the relevant division in which they reside is notified of this and thereafter a report is initiated to examine the person's continued suitability to possess a shotgun or firearm. If a person subsequently has their shotgun or firearm certificate revoked, this would be in terms of the Firearms Act 1968 and not the original offence(s), regardless of the outcome at Court, as they would still have to be assessed on their suitability to possess firearms.

Accordingly revocations and refusals are currently recorded under the Firearms Act 1968 and it is not possible therefore to determine whether wildlife crime offences form part of the suitability consideration process.

Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA) and their Special Investigations Unit (SIU) can lead or support certain wildlife crime investigations in Scotland. Powers are granted to suitably trained staff by Scottish Ministers under the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006.

Scottish SPCA inspectors deal with routine domestic and wildlife welfare cases. The SIU has a slightly different remit dealing with cases which are linked to illegal activities often involving serious and organised crime groups. The SIU deals with both wildlife incidents and incidents involving domestic animals such as dogfighting and the puppy trade. Some of the SIU's work involves incidents where there is both a domestic animal and wildlife element such as badger baiting. The SIU consists of five inspectors and one intelligence manager.

The SIU receives information (and complaints) from two main sources – the Scottish SPCA animal helpline will alert the SIU to any information that may be of interest, and some information is fed directly to the unit from intelligence sources and other agencies through intelligence logs and reports.

The Scottish SPCA's animal helpline received over 224,000 calls between April 2020 and March 2021. This fiscal year has seen an increase of 69% in calls from the public compared to the previous fiscal year. The overall increase in calls can be attributed to the low welfare puppy trade that escalated sharply throughout the covid pandemic and resulting restrictions.

The SIU estimate that between April 2020 and March 2021 they received:

- 645 pieces of information for consideration from the Scottish SPCA helpline
- 414 pieces of information from other sources. Some pieces of information may relate to incidents that after investigation are found to not be the result of crime, may not actually involve wildlife, or are duplicate pieces of information relating to the same incident

Table 11 provides a further breakdown of incidents where the SIU identified a crime had taken place, including those reported to COPFS, listed under the six UK wildlife crime priority areas. These incidents were for cases investigated solely by the SIU.

Table 11: Wildlife incidents identified by SIU as crimes from April 2020 to March 2021

Type of wildlife crime	Pieces of information identified as crime	Reported to COPFS
Badger persecution	34	7
Illegal trade (CITES)	1	1
Raptor Persecution	14	2
Bat Persecution	0	0
Poaching and coursing	11	0
Freshwater pearl mussels	0	0
Other	35	2
TOTAL	95	12

Source: Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The statistics in Table 11 regarding reports submitted to COPFS reflect the number of reports that were submitted following investigations carried out within the year (April 2020 – March 2021) although these case reports may have been submitted to the fiscal after 31st March 2021. The incidents in Table 11 also included 15 relating to trapping or snaring offences.

A significant case investigated by SIU in 2020-21 included an individual who had been reportedly involved in animal fighting and badger baiting. This individual was responsible for training his dogs for the purpose of animal fighting and had captured videos and photographs of his dogs attacking foxes and badgers under his supervision. The level of cruelty seen in these videos was said to be the worst levels of cruelty witnessed by the reporting inspector. This case has since come to a positive conclusion with the reported individual receiving a custodial sentence as well as a ban on owning or keeping animals. Although the SIU was disappointed that following the recent change to sentencing for animal cruelty offences, a harsher sentence was not given by the courts.

The SIU report cases directly to COPFS. As a result, any crimes or suspected crimes investigated solely by the Scottish SPCA will not appear in the Police recorded crime statistics shown in Table 1 of this report. If reported for prosecution however, they will be included in the COPFS figures and those cases will have been given a Scottish Criminal Records Office number.

Not all incidents identified as crimes will provide sufficient evidence for a prosecution to be progressed to COPFS. Table 12 below shows a five-year summary of wildlife related investigations led by the SIU, including those reported to COPFS. Table 12 also shows the number of investigations where the SIU supported investigations led by Police Scotland.

Table 12: Wildlife crime investigations dealt with by SIU, 2016-17 to 2020-21

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Incidents investigated solely by SIU	73	88	112	103	102
Number of cases reported to COPFS	4	0	9	9	7
% reported to COPFS	5%	0%	8%	9%	7%
Police Scotland-led investigations assisted by SIU	42	37	42	44	38
Total	115	125	154	147	140

Source: Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU)

The National Wildlife Crime Unit has a dedicated intelligence function. All intelligence relating to wildlife crime in Scotland is gathered by the NWCU and researched on a weekly basis to identify emerging trends and to prepare tactical and strategic analysis. In addition, for the 2020-21 year, the following bespoke intelligence analysis was provided for Scotland:

- Intelligence research carried out to assist Police Scotland with Operation WINGSPAN.
- Analysis of top Hare Coursing nominals to direct targeting of resources.
- Update of the Operation Easter target list – to support and direct proactive targeting across Scotland
- Crime Pattern analysis for Operation EASTER was updated – including Scottish locations.
- Intelligence database checks carried out on behalf of Police Scotland wildlife crime officers.
- Consultation on the use of illegal wildlife trade seizure data that NWCU supply to the EU-TWIX¹ network on behalf of all UK police forces
- Quarterly submission of reports to the Acquisitive Crime Threat Group which includes all links to Scottish investigations
- Wildlife Crime cases for each priority area continue to be added to the NWCU website ensuring it acts as a 'one stop shop' for all wildlife crime information in the UK.

Over and above the NWCU's intelligence and analytical support, the NWCU's Scottish Investigative Support Officer (SISO) provides advice and 'on the ground' support for wildlife crime investigations.

In 2020-21, the NWCU ISO was involved in casework as well as the strategic development of wildlife crime enforcement and intelligence sharing. The SISO gave advice and assistance to Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Liaison Officers and other organisations on numerous occasions and on a variety of subjects including crimes against raptors, bats, non-native species, freshwater pearl mussels, traps, snares, wildlife disturbance, coastal crime, hare coursing, venison dealing and trade in endangered species (CITES).

Throughout the year, contributions were provided to several operations involving raptor crime and the annual delivery of Operation Easter to target egg thieves and nest disturbance during the bird breeding season. Crime prevention measures to mitigate the risks that persecution posed to the South of Scotland Golden Eagle project on both sides of the border continued and similar measures were taken in partnership with the Cairngorm National Park Authority to safeguard satellite tagged eagles in the Cairngorms.

The SISO gave presentations at several events throughout the year including local and national Police training, Sharing Good Practice events, PAW Scotland partners and the UK Wildlife Crime Enforcer's Conference. An on-going element of the role continues to include participation in several PAW Scotland groups

¹ EU trade in wildlife information exchange' group facilitated by TRAFFIC

(Poaching & Coursing, Media, Freshwater Pearl Mussel and Raptor), Heads up for Harriers project and General Licence restrictions.

Police Constable Charlie Everitt retired in 2020 and in November 2020 was replaced by Police Constable Gavin Ross as the NWCU SISO. Constable Ross concentrated on partnership working in his initial months in the role and between December 2020 and April 2021 had introductory meetings with 16 different organisations.

The NWCU works with Police Scotland to produce intelligence products which are based upon analysis of intelligence. Table 13 provides a summary of wildlife crime intelligence logs, broken down by relevant keyword. This table has been included to provide a clearer picture of the spread of wildlife crime intelligence dealt with by Police Scotland and the NWCU and reflects the kind of information which is being reported to the Police.

Table 13: Scottish wildlife crime intelligence logs 2020-21

Keyword	Intelligence logs	% of total
Hare	120	23.35%
Fish	102	19.841%
Deer	65	12.65%
Raptor/Bird of Prey	20	3.89%
Badger	18	3.5%
CITES	2	0.39%
FWPM/Pearl Mussel	2	0.39%
Bat	0	0.0%
All 'other' wildlife	185	35.99%
Total	514	

Source: Scottish Intelligence Database/NWCU (used with permission of Police Scotland)

It should be noted that an intelligence log is not a detected crime but a tool for Police to use to establish a bigger picture of what is happening in a given area. A single incident may generate a number of pieces of intelligence. Intelligence logs cannot be used to (a) directly compare year on year or (b) comment on long term trends, as they are reviewed on a yearly basis and deleted if grounds for inclusion for policing purposes no longer exist. As a result, the number of intelligence logs for any given year decreases over time.

Table 14 provides a summary of the three most common types of priority intelligence log (i.e. not including the 'Other' category) held in the database for 2016-17 to 2020-21.

Table 14: Most common priority NWCU intelligence logs 2016-17 to 2020-21

Year	Three most common priority intelligence types (as a percentage of the total number of intelligence logs)
2016-17	Hare (23%), fish (18%) and deer (17%)
2017-18	Hare (29%), deer (15%) and fish (13%)
2018-19	Hare (25%), deer (21%) and fish (11%)
2019-20	Hare (25%), deer (15%) and fish (14%)
2020-21	Hare (23%), fish (20%) and deer (13%)

Source: Scottish Intelligence Database/NWCU (used with permission of Police Scotland)

4. Wildlife crime priority areas

Wildlife crime priorities are set at UK level by the Wildlife Crime Tasking and Co-ordinating Group. The group's membership includes the Police, the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW), National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU), and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

The priorities remained unchanged in 2020-21:

- Badger persecution;
- Bat persecution;
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- Freshwater pearl mussels;
- Poaching (including deer poaching, hare coursing, fish poaching);
- Raptor persecution.

Priority groups on poaching and coursing, and freshwater pearl mussel crime, continue to operate in Scotland, as well as the PAW Scotland Raptor Group (formerly the Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group).

The following sections provide more detail on each of these priority areas, along with the relevant data. The additional sections from the 2014 report on the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 and Trapping and Snaring continue to be included.

NatureScot have provided a 'Health of Species' appraisal in Appendix 4, for those priority species that fall within NatureScots remit: badger, bats, freshwater pearl mussels, deer, brown hare and key raptors. This appraisal is intended to give an overview of current population trends, factors affecting the health of the species and the relative impact of wildlife crime on the conservation status and is in response to an Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee request for this contextual information.

Police Scotland disaggregated data

The data shown in Figure 1, table 15 and table 16 has been presented by Police Scotland. Data in Table 1 is sourced from the Scottish Government Recorded Crime figures and care should be taken in comparing those figures with the disaggregated figures provided in this section.

Table 15: Police Scotland offence data from 2016-17 to 2020-21

Type of crime	Number of offences				
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Badger persecution	6	15	16	11	14
Bat persecution	0	1	0	4	8
CITES	6	2	1	0	1
Freshwater pearl mussels	2	1	1	2	0
Poaching and coursing	115	127	69	109	212
Raptor persecution	11	24	17	25	11
Not related to Priority Area	91	63	59	45	59
No crime recorded	0	2	0	0	0
Total	231	235	163	196	305
<i>Additional breakdowns</i>					
Trapping/snaring (all species)*	15	15	28	28	22
Fox hunting	2	6	2	2	0
Hunting with dogs (all Protection Wild Mammals Act offences)	22	41	22	38	85
Total	39	62	52	68	107

Source: Police Scotland

*These offences may be duplicated elsewhere, e.g. illegal killing of a badger by snaring would be recorded in 'Badger persecution' and 'Trapping/snaring'

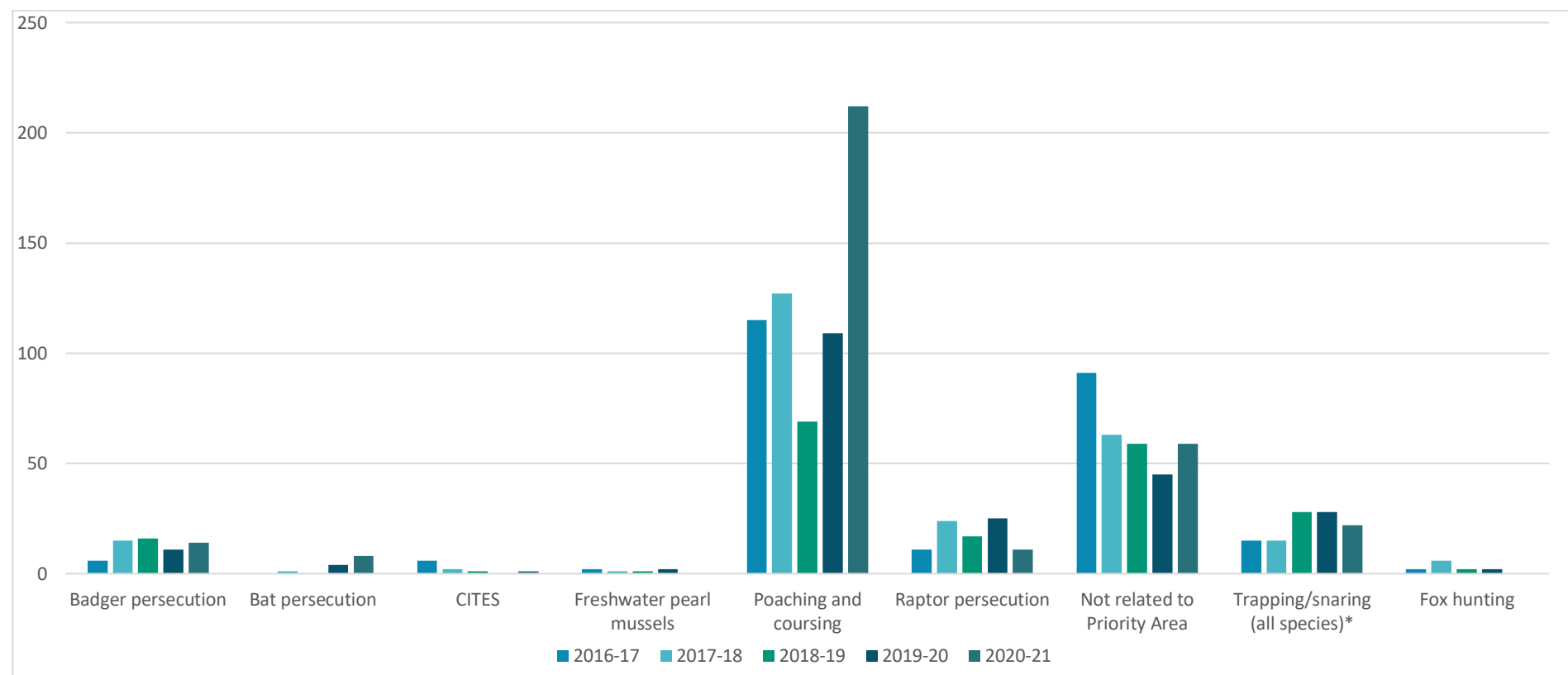
Table 16: Quarterly Police Scotland data for 2020-2021

Type of crime	Number of offences			
	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar
Badger persecution	7	3	1	3
Bat persecution	2	2	4	0
CITES	0	0	1	0
Freshwater pearl mussels	0	0	0	0
Poaching and coursing	95	46	49	22
Raptor persecution	0	5	4	2
Not related to Priority Area	25	19	6	9
Total	129	75	65	36
<i>Additional breakdowns</i>				
Trapping/snaring (all species)*	10	5	3	4
Fox hunting	0	0	0	0
Hunting with dogs (all Protection Wild Mammals Act offences)	35	13	21	16
Total	45	18	24	20

Source: Police Scotland

*These offences may be duplicated elsewhere, e.g. illegal killing of a badger by snaring would be recorded in 'Badger persecution' and 'Trapping/snaring'

Figure 1: Police Scotland offence data from 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

*These offences may be duplicated elsewhere, e.g. illegal killing of a badger by snaring would be recorded in 'Badger persecution' and 'Trapping/snaring'

Badger persecution

All badgers in Scotland are protected by law, but they are sometimes still illegally targeted by those who see them as a pest or for the purposes of illegal animal fights.

Reckless or intentional damage, destruction and interference to badger setts (including sett blocking) is an offence which may arise from unlicensed forestry, agricultural or construction works.

Recorded crimes

Table 17 and figure 2 show that there were 14 offences relating to badger persecution recorded by Police Scotland in 2020-21, compared to 11 in 2019-20. Table 18 provides a quarterly breakdown of offences.

Table 17: Badger offences 2020-21 by Police Scotland Division

Police Division	Type of offence	Number of offences
North East	Digging, damage and obstruction to sett	4
Tayside	Digging, damage and obstruction to sett	1
	Cruelty/Shooting	1
Highlands and Islands	Cruelty/Shooting	4
	Digging, damage and obstruction to sett	2
Lanarkshire	Killing*	3
	Digging, damage and obstruction to sett	1
Dumfries and Galloway	Cruelty/Shooting	1
Total		14

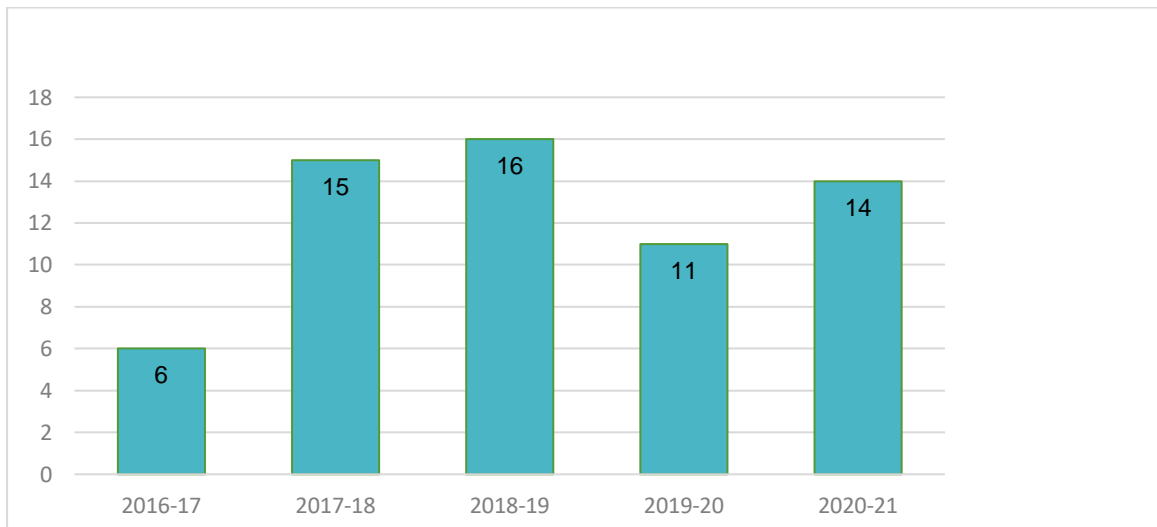
Source: Police Scotland
*includes sett trap

Table 18: Badger offences 2020-21 by species and quarterly breakdown

Type of Crime	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Digging, damage and obstruction to sett	5	1	0	2	8
Killing	1	2	0	0	3
Disturbance	1	0	1	1	3
Total	7	3	1	3	14

Source: Police Scotland

Figure 2: Police Scotland offence data for badger persecution 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Bat persecution

Bats and their roosts are protected by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, which gives strict legal protection to all species listed under Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive – known as European Protected Species (EPS). Scotland's bat population is relatively small compared to other parts of the UK.

Bats, their breeding sites and resting places are at particular risk from development works and evidencing the presence of bats in these cases can be very challenging. Police Scotland work closely with NatureScot bat specialists in the investigation of any alleged offences.

Recorded crimes

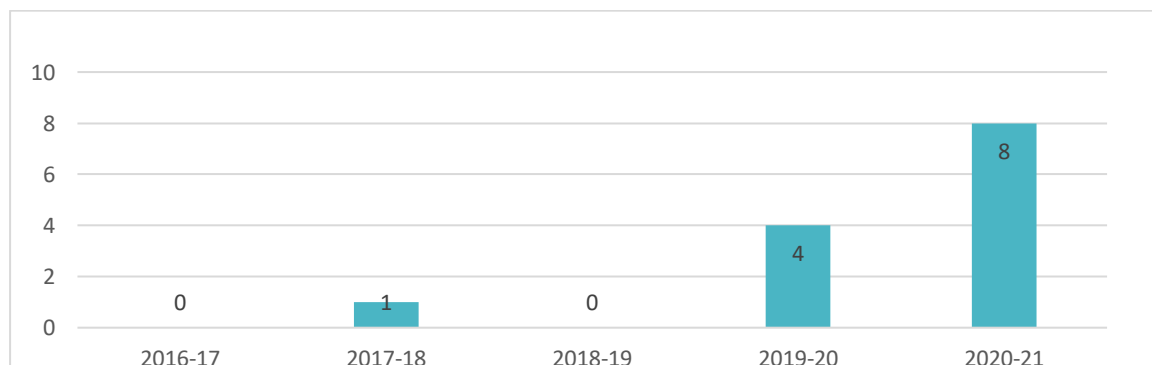
Table 19 and figure 3 show there were eight offences involving bat persecution recorded by Police Scotland in 2020-21.

Table 19: Summary of 2020-21 bat persecution offences

Police Division	Type of Offence	Date
Tayside	Killing Bat	Dec-20
Highlands and Islands	Damage and obstruction to roost (2)	Sep-20
Forth Valley	Damage and obstruction to roost (2)	Jun-20
Forth Valley	Damage and obstruction to roost (3)	Oct-20

Source: Police Scotland

Figure 3: Police Scotland offence data for bat persecution 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

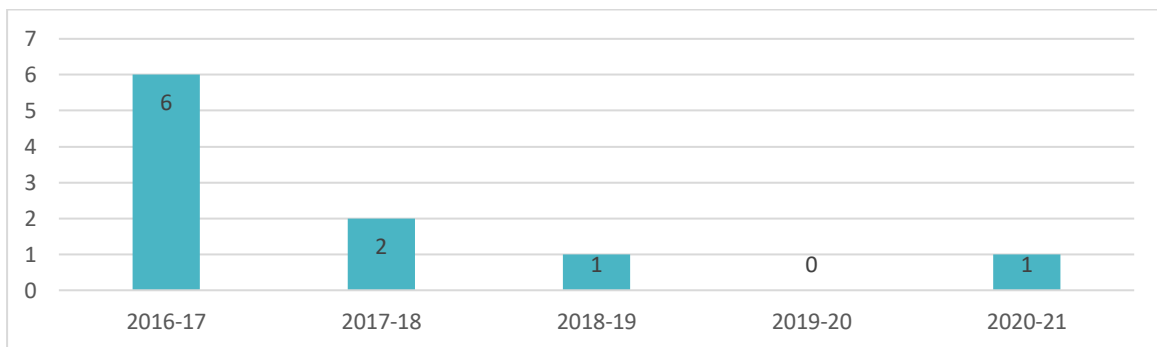
CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. It is an international agreement between governments, which aims to protect certain animal and plant species from over-exploitation by trade.

In Scotland and the rest of the UK, this agreement is given legal authority by the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997, known as COTES.

Recorded crimes

There was one CITES-related offence recorded by Police Scotland in 2020-21. This involved the selling of a leopard skin handbag in Tayside.

Figure 4: Police Scotland offence data for CITES 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Freshwater Pearl Mussels

Scotland supports several of the largest remaining populations of freshwater pearl mussels (FWPM) in the world some of which continue to be damaged by criminal activity. Pearl fishing continues in Scotland, almost uniquely within Europe. FWPM are also threatened by unlawful river engineering and pollution.

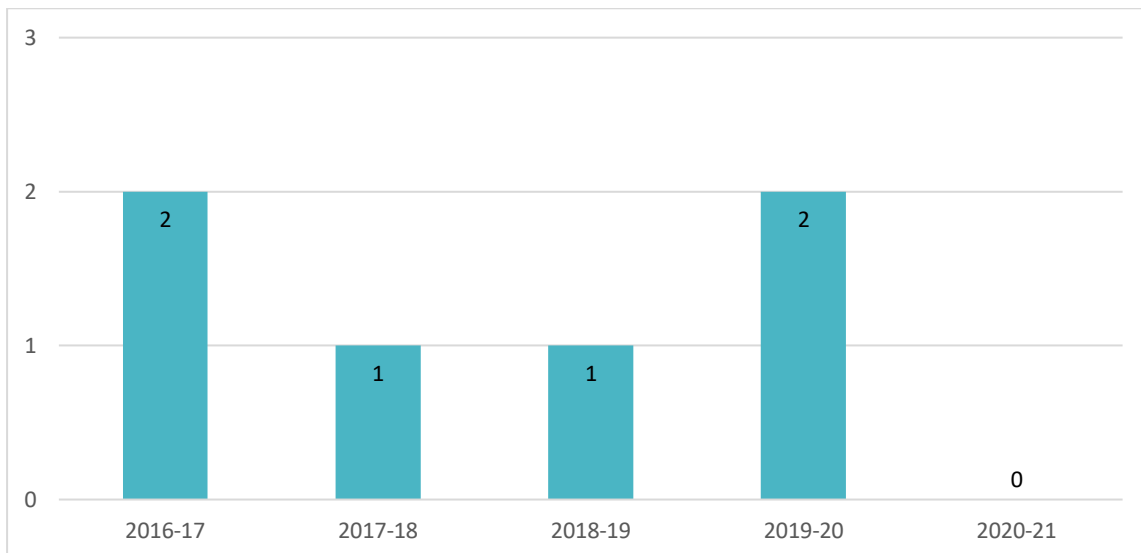
Recorded crimes

There were no recorded offences in relation to FWPM during 2020-21.

Table 19: Summary of 2020-21 FWPM offences

Police Division	Type of Offence	Date
N/A – no recorded offences in 2020-21		

Figure 5: Police Scotland offence data for freshwater pearl mussels for 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Poaching and coursing

Poaching involves the taking of deer, fish or other game without permission, or using unlawful methods. Coursing is the hunting of animals with dogs. This section sets out the new Police Scotland disaggregated data in addition to providing an overview on the work of the Poaching & Coursing Priority Delivery Group.

Recorded crimes

During 2020-21, 212 poaching and coursing offences were recorded by Police Scotland, compared to 190 offences in 2019-20. Table 20 shows the North East Division has the highest number of recorded hare coursing offences at 26.

Table 21 shows that fish poaching offences are the most commonly recorded at 107 offences, while hare coursing accounted for a further 77 offences.

Table 20: Poaching and coursing offences 2019-20 by Police Scotland Division

Police Division	Target Species	Number of offences
Argyll and West Dunbartonshire	Fish	3
	Deer	2
Ayrshire	Fish	3
	Deer	1
	Hare	1
Dumfries and Galloway	Rabbit	1
	Deer	2
Edinburgh	Hare	1
	Fish	1
Fife	Fish	4
	Hare	6
	Deer	3
	Hare/Roe Deer	1
Forth Valley	Fish	22
	Hare	10
	Deer	1
Glasgow	Fish	4
	Deer	1
Highlands and Islands	Deer	1
	Fish	29
	Hare/Rabbit	1
Lanarkshire	Fish	10
	Deer	2
North East	Deer	6
	Fish	21
	Hare	26
Renfrewshire	Fish	1
	Deer	1
Tayside	Hare	15
	Deer	1
	Fish	2

	Rabbit	1
Lothians and Scottish Borders	Deer	3
	Fish	8
	Hare	17
Total		212

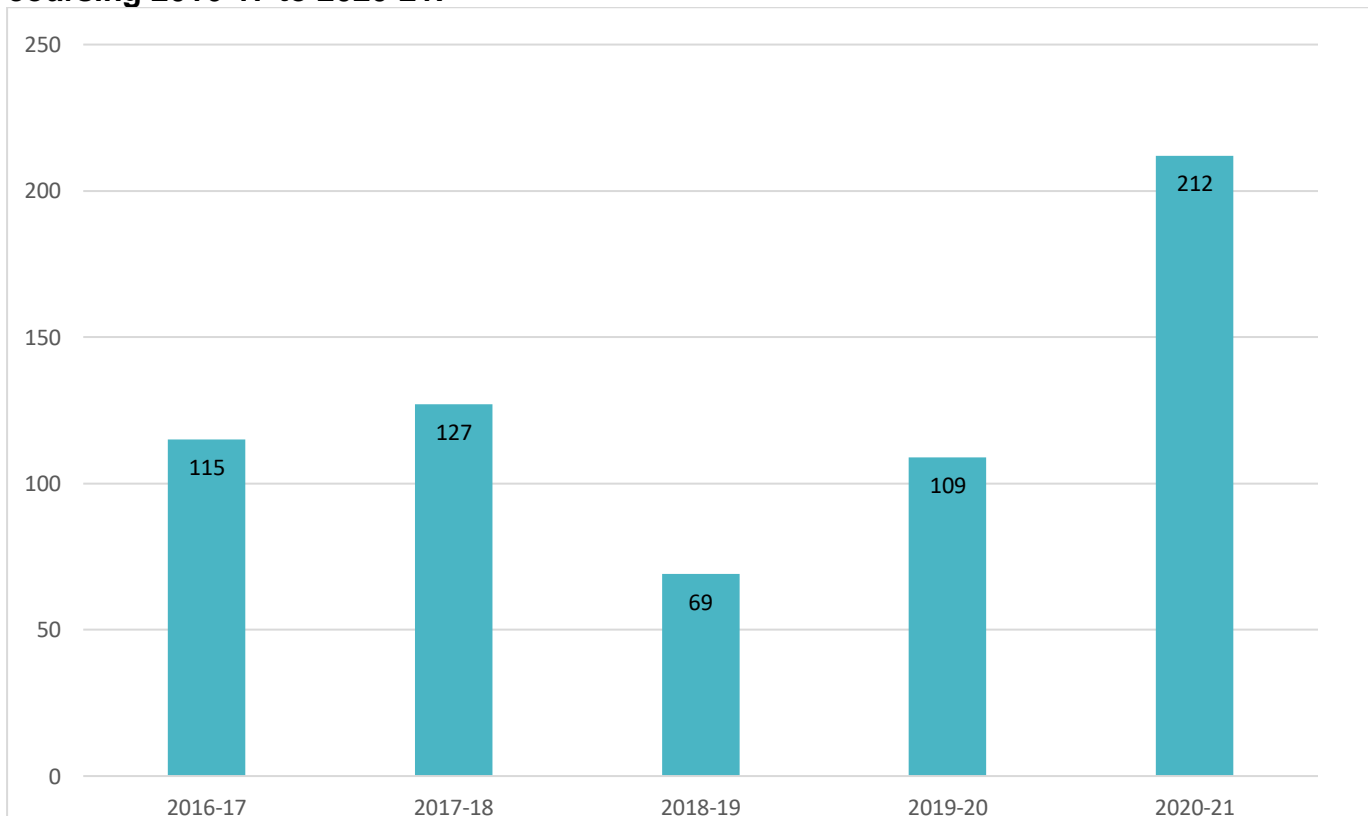
Source: Police Scotland

Table 21: Poaching offences 2020-21 by species and quarterly breakdown

Target Species	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Fish	54	29	22	2	107
Deer	8	3	8	5	24
Hare	33	14	17	13	77
Rabbit	0	0	2	0	2
Unknown	0	0	0	2	2
Total	95	46	49	22	212

Source: Police Scotland

Figure 6: Police Scotland disaggregated offence data for poaching and coursing 2016-17 to 2020-21.



Source: Police Scotland

Raptor persecution

The persecution of raptors, or birds of prey, is the most high-profile type of wildlife crime in Scotland and it can have a serious impact on the populations of some raptor species at local, regional or (if carried out more widely) national level.

This section presents Police Scotland disaggregated data and SASA poisoning figures in relation to raptor offences.

Poisonings and other recorded crimes

Table 23 and figure 7 show the numbers of birds of prey confirmed by SASA as illegally poisoned between 2016-17 and 2020-21, alongside the number of incidents which resulted in these poisonings. The figures show that red kites remain (15) the most commonly recorded victim of illegal poisoning over the five year period.

Table 22: Bird of prey poisonings, Scotland, 2016-17 to 2020-21

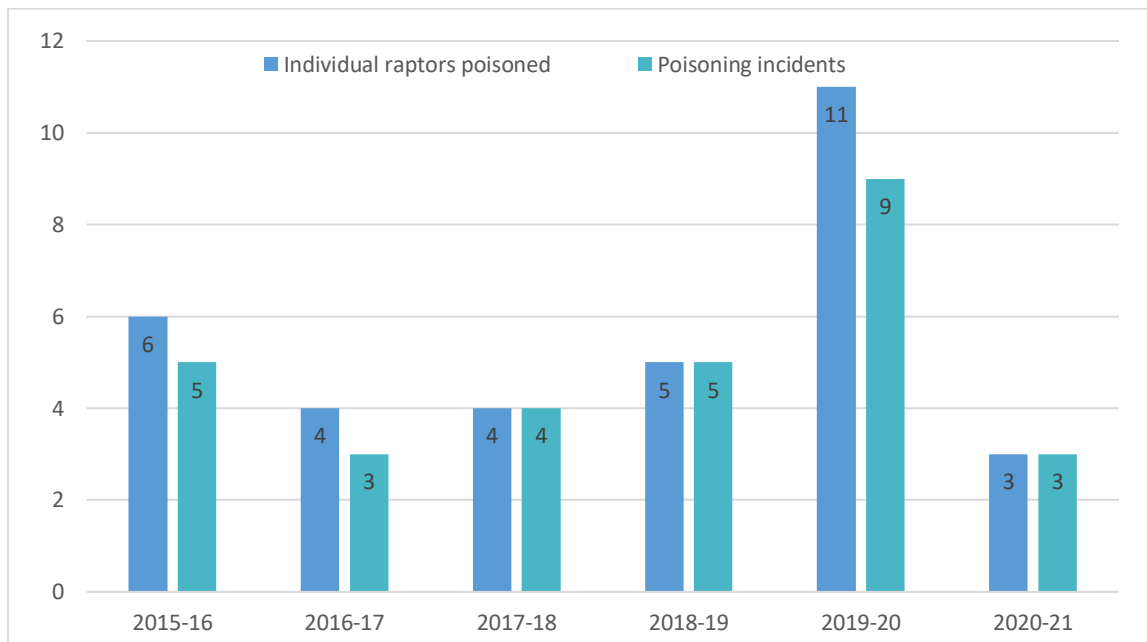
Year	Number of Birds of Prey Poisoned (By Species)					Number of Incidents
	Buzzard	Red kite	Peregrine falcon	Eagle	All	
2016-17	3	1	-	-	4	3
2017-18	3	1	-	-	4	4
2018-19	1	3	1	-	5	5
2019-20	2	9	-	-	11	9
2020-21	-	1	-	2*	3	3
Total	9	15	1	2	27	26

Source: Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA)

1. One incident may involve more than one bird

*1 Golden Eagle and 1 Sea Eagle in 2021 data

Figure 7: Bird of prey poisonings 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: SASA

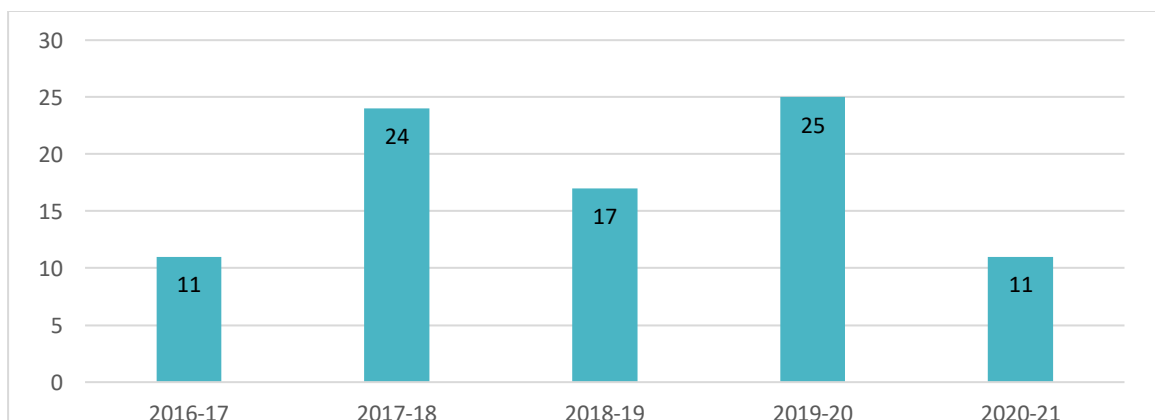
Recorded crimes

Raptor persecution offences decreased from 25 in 2019-20 to 11 in 2020-21.

Figure 8, table 24 and table 25 show a summary of bird of prey offences and offences recorded by Police Scotland between 2016-17 and 2020-21. A direct comparison between the datasets is not possible as incidents may involve multiple offences. These figures show that the buzzard (involved in 24 of the 83 cases) was the species most commonly affected over the five year period.

Shooting is the highest recorded crime type for the period (5).

Figure 8: Recorded Bird of prey offences 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Table 23: Recorded bird of prey cases in Scotland, 2016-17 to 2020-21 by species involved

	Number of Cases (by species involved)																		
	Buzzard	Hen Harrier	Peregrine	Red Kite	Eagle	Sea Eagle	Golden Eagle	Goshawk	Merlin	Osprey	Buzzard	Red Kite & Buzzard	Barn Owl	Short Eared Owl	Tawny Owl	Unknown	Sparrowhawk	Various Raptors	Total
2016-17	4	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
2017-18	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	1	-	1	2	-	-	24
2018-19	9	-	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	17
2019-20	8	3	-	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	-	30*
2020-21	2	1	2	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	1*	12
Total	24	6	5	14	4	1	3	2	1	5	1	1	2	1	9	4	1	83	

Source: Police Scotland

*One buzzard offence was linked to an incident involving six buzzards.

**Tawny Owl and Buzzard in same offence

Table 24: Recorded bird of prey cases in Scotland, 2016-17 to 2020-21 by type of crime

	Number of Cases (by type of crime)						Total
	Disturbance	Egg Theft	Other	Poisoning	Shooting	Trapping	
2016-17	4	1	-	3	2	1	11
2017-18	3	1	11	2	5	2	24
2018-19	-	1	3	6	2	5	17
2019-20	1	-	-	13	7	4	25
2020-21	-	-	2	3	5	1	11
Total	8	3	16	27	21	13	88

Source: Police Scotland

Table 25: Summary of recorded bird of prey offences in Scotland 2020-21 by Police Scotland Division

Police Division	Target Species	Number of offences
Dumfries and Galloway	Short Eared Owl	1
Highland and Islands	Buzzard	1
	Red Kite	1
North East	Eagle	2
	Sparrowhawk	1
Renfrewshire	Peregrine Falcon	1
Lanarkshire	Hen Harrier	1
	Various Raptors	1
Lothian and Scottish Borders	Various Raptors	1
Tayside	Peregrine Falcon	2
Total		11

Source: Police Scotland

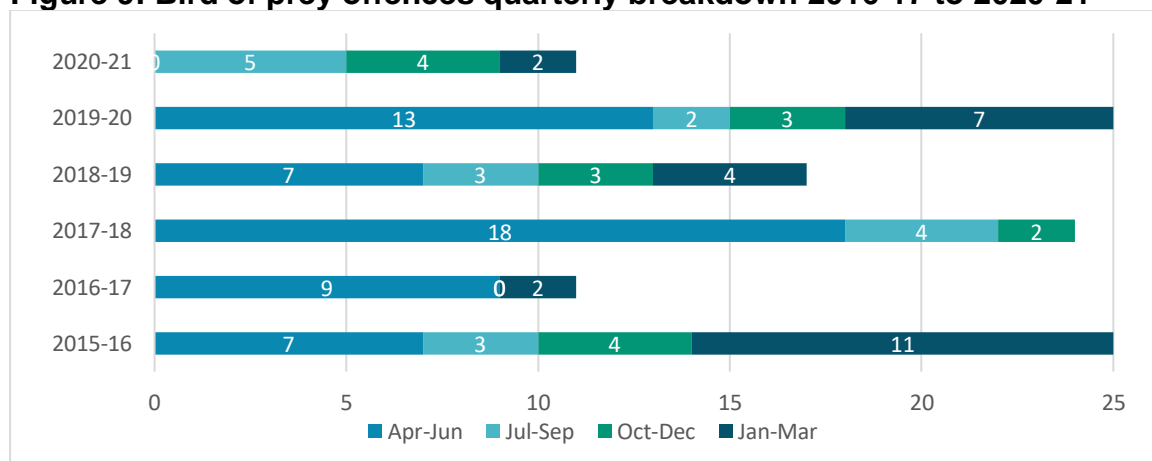
Table 26 and Figure 9 shows a majority of recorded bird of prey offences occurring during July to September, with 5 of the 11 total offences.

Table 26: Bird of prey offences 2020-21 by species and quarterly breakdown

Target species	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Eagle	-	1	-	1	2
Buzzard	-	1	-	-	1
Hen Harrier	-	1	-	-	1
Red Kite	-	-	1	-	1
Sparrowhawk	-	1	-	-	1
Peregrine Falcon	-	-	1	1	2
Various Raptors	-	-	2	-	2
Short Eared Owl	-	1	-	-	1
Total	0	5	4	2	11

Source: Police Scotland

Figure 9: Bird of prey offences quarterly breakdown 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Table 27 provides a detailed breakdown of bird of prey incidents for the year 2020-21. One incident may involve more than one bird.

Table 27: Details of recorded bird of prey incidents in Scotland 2020-21

Species targeted	Police Division	Type of offence	Month and year
Buzzard	Highlands and Islands	Shooting	Aug 2020
	Lothians and Scottish Borders	Trapping	Oct 2020
Eagle	North East	Poisoning	Mar 2021
	North East	Poisoning	Jul 2020
Hen Harrier	Lanarkshire	Shooting	Jul 2020
Red Kite	Highlands and Islands	Poisoning	Nov 2020
Sparrowhawk	North East	Trapping	Aug 2020
Peregrine Falcon	Tayside	Shooting	Feb 2021
	Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	Shooting	Oct 2020
Tawny Owl	Lothian and Scottish Borders	Trapping	Oct 2020
Short Eared Owl	Dumfries and Galloway	Shooting	Aug 2020
Various Raptors	Lanarkshire	Registration	Nov 2020

Source: Police Scotland

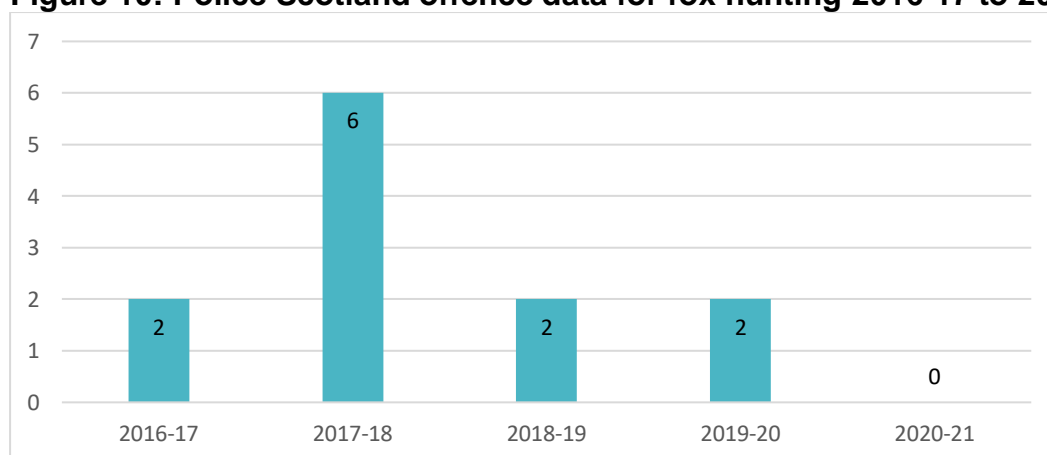
Fox Hunting and the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002

This section highlights offences under the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. Section 1 of the 2002 Act prohibits the deliberate hunting of a wild mammal with a dog (subject to certain exceptions). The Act is most commonly used in connection with hare coursing, although it has also been used for incidents relating to foxes, deer and badgers. It does not prohibit the hunting of rabbits or rats by dogs.

Recorded crime

Table 29 and figure 10 shows from the disaggregated data from Police Scotland, The total number of “hunting with dogs offences” recorded in 2020-21 (85) increased from 2019-20 (38). Hare coursing makes up the majority of these offences (76).

Figure 10: Police Scotland offence data for fox hunting 2016-17 to 2020-21



Source: Police Scotland

Table 28*: Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 ‘hunting with dogs’ offences 2020-21 by Police Scotland Division

Police Division	Target species	Number of offences
Ayrshire	Rabbit	1
	Hare	1
Dumfries and Galloway	Hare	1
Fife	Hare	6
	Roe Deer	3
	Unknown	1
Forth Valley	Hare	10
Highlands and Islands	Unknown	1
North East	Hare	25
Renfrewshire & Inverclyde	Hare	1
Tayside	Hare	15
	Deer	1
	Rabbit	1
Total		85

Source: Police Scotland

*The table does not show offences under Section 18(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act for attempts to commit an offence in relation to killing or taking a wild mammal.

Table 29: Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 ‘hunting with dogs’ offences 2020-21 by species and quarterly breakdown

Target species	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Rabbit			2		2
Hare	33	13	17	13	76
Unknown				2	2
Roe Deer	2		1		3
Deer			1	1	2
Total	35	13	21	16	85

Source: Police Scotland

Prosecutions

For the period 2020-2021, one case was reported to COPFS containing a charge under Section 1 of the 2002 Act specifically in connection with the allegation of hunting foxes with dogs.

Trapping and Snaring

Trapping and snaring are methods which can be legitimately used for the control of some types of wildlife such as corvids, rodents or foxes. This may be for conservation purposes, to protect agricultural or sporting interests or for human health and safety reasons. However, the use of traps and snares is subject to legal restrictions designed to prevent harm to non-target species or unnecessary cruelty.

Recorded crimes

Trapping and snaring figures are not shown as part of the recorded crime statistics in Table 1 as the offence data cannot be broken down to that level. The Police Scotland disaggregated offence data in Table 15 shows that 22 offences were recorded for 2020-21, a decrease in the figures from 2019-20 (28).

Table 31 shows that the vast majority (10) of the recorded trapping and snaring offences in 2020-21 occurred between the Highlands and Islands and the Lothians and Scottish Borders divisions.

Table 30: Trapping and snaring offences 2020-21 by Police Scotland Division

Police Division	Type of offence	Target Species	Number of offences
Ayrshire	Snare	Unknown	1
Dumfries and Galloway	Snare	Rabbit	1
	Otter Trap	Otter	1
	Crayfish Trap	Crayfish	1
Forth Valley	Snare	Deer	2
Highland and Islands	Larsen Trap	Unknown	1
	Fen Trap	Stoat	1
	Snare	Rabbit/Hare	2
	Snare	Stoat	1
Lanarkshire	Snare	Badger	3
The Lothians and Scottish Borders	Snare	Unknown	2
	Snare	Fox	1
	Cage Trap	Owl/Buzzard	1
	Snare/Trap	Rabbit	1
Tayside	Snare	Rabbit	1
	Trap	Small Birds	1
	Spring Trap	Unknown/Otter	1
Total			22

Source: Police Scotland

Table 31 shows offences are occurring most frequently in April – June.

Table 31: Trapping and snaring offences 2020-21 by quarterly breakdown

Type of crime	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Total
Snare	6	5	-	4	15
Fen Trap	1	-	-	-	1
Larsen Trap	1	-	-	-	1
Spring Trap	1	-	-	-	1
Glue trap	1	-	-	-	1
Crayfish Trap	-	-	1	-	1
Cage Trap	-	-	2	-	2
Total	10	5	3	4	22

Source: Police Scotland

Prosecutions

In 2020-21, 5 cases related to trapping and 0 cases relating to snaring were reported to COPFS.

5. PAW Scotland

The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland consists of law enforcement bodies, wildlife and animal welfare charities, land management organisations and government agencies, working together to fight wildlife crime.



The partnership is supported by the Scottish Government. Its work is overseen by an Executive Group, comprising representatives of selected stakeholders and the chairs of PAW Scotland sub-groups and wildlife crime priority groups based in Scotland. A wider Plenary Group, made up of representatives of all PAW Scotland member organisations, meets to give an opportunity to all members to comment on PAW projects and raise any wildlife crime issues.

The progression of the PAW Scotland meetings schedule was one of a number of areas of work that was placed on hold during the Covid-19 emergency. Meetings of the sub-groups detailed below, resumed in 2021.

Legislation, Regulation and Guidance

The PAW Scotland Legislation, Regulation and Guidance Sub-group was created to review the operation in practice of wildlife legislation and regulations; identify areas for improvement and make recommendations. To produce guidance for wildlife crime law enforcement practitioners, land managers and other countryside users.

Media

The PAW Scotland Media Sub-group was created to oversee the publicising of the work of PAW Scotland, development of the PAW Scotland brand and the co-ordination of events.

Training and Awareness

The PAW Scotland Training and Awareness Sub-group was created to ensure that training relating to, and awareness of, wildlife crime is maintained at an appropriately high level across Scotland.

Scientific

The PAW Scotland Scientific group was created to;

- advise on priorities for analysis & research and act as a review panel for grant applications relating to research into scientific aspects of wildlife crime
- review and advise on presentation of scientific data
- increase the profile, among the enforcement community, of scientific techniques & methods that can be used for wildlife crime investigations, carry out case
- reviews, from a scientific and/or forensic perspective, of completed wildlife crime investigations

- increase the profile of the application of science in handling wildlife crime by publishing group minutes and links to appropriate peer-reviewed scientific papers

Raptor

The PAW Scotland Raptor Group was established to develop a programme of work to improve prevention, awareness raising, enforcement and intelligence gathering in Scotland related to crimes against birds of prey.

- develop methods to assist in reducing raptor persecution
- devise strategies to raise awareness of raptor persecution
- devise strategies to foster trust and relations with PAW partners to maximise intelligence and crime prevention opportunities
- encourage data sharing between both government and non-government organisations.
- bring a robust evidence led approach to prevention and enforcement activity to support policing
- examine and implement innovative approaches to preventative action to reduce raptor persecution
- encourage appropriate enforcement action in all incidents of raptor persecution

Freshwater Pearl Mussel Priority Delivery Group

The Freshwater Pearl Mussel Priority Delivery Group aims to raise awareness of criminality affecting freshwater pearl mussels in order to facilitate intelligence and incident reporting, leading to increased prevention and enforcement action

Badger Persecution Priority Delivery Group

The aims of the group are broadly covered by three headings. These are intelligence gathering, enforcement and crime prevention which are carried out via the U.K. wide initiative “Operation Badger”. Intelligence gathering and enforcement rest largely with Police Scotland, NWCU and the SSPCA. Scottish Badgers, NatureScot and NFUS are primarily concerned with crime prevention, in particular via the provision of publicity, education and specialist advice.

- Reduce the instances of sett interference during otherwise lawful operations.
- Increase successful detection and prosecution of badger baiters and the seizure of their dogs.

Poaching & coursing Priority Delivery Group

The group aims to build a greater level of public awareness of poaching and coursing as serious wildlife crime, to continue to build working relations, communications and information sharing between all agencies and organisations and rural communities in order to increase prevention activity and enforcement in Scotland.

Funding

The PAW Scotland Funding Sub-group was created to consider, reject or approve applications to the PAW Scotland Fund. Applications are managed by NatureScot on behalf of Scottish Government and PAW Scotland.

The PAW Funding group did not meet during 2020/21 but communicated electronically. The group continues to accept funding proposals from non-PAW signatories from public, private and voluntary sectors both within and outwith PAW Scotland. Projects which encourage public engagement with wildlife crime issues while retaining a focus on the key activities of crime prevention, intelligence or enforcement remain the priority.

The group funded a number of projects in 2020/21, including:

- RSPB Investigations Team, a specialist team delivering awareness raising, crime prevention and detection functions and assisting Police Scotland in criminal investigations.
- Funding of the year-long Police Scotland Operation Wingspan, delivering prevention, intelligence and enforcement objectives across the national wildlife crime priority areas
- Funding of the Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Investigators Course to deliver specialist training to new Wildlife Crime Officers
- A project to reduce the threat of wildlife crime to a key freshwater pearl mussel populations, in partnership with the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust
- Training of Wildlife Crime Officers across Scotland in badger related issues, delivered by Scottish Badgers.

6. Police Scotland



The Wildlife Crime Investigators Course returned to full capacity seeing 18 officers from all divisions undertake a week long course within the Police College. The course is designed to equip officers with the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively conduct these types of enquiries, which are often complex and multi-faceted. It is aimed to enhance officers professional knowledge of key issues involved in wildlife crime incidents and to develop appropriate investigative strategies. The course includes inputs from partner agencies as well as inputs from a variety of Police Departments and is held twice a year fully equipping 36 officers to deal with all

manner of wildlife crime.

In addition to the Wildlife Crime Investigators Course, the Wildlife Crime Guide for First Responders was launched this month on the Police Scotland online training platform, which is primarily aimed at first responders to Wildlife Crimes to facilitate prompt and effective responses. It is relevant to all police officers in providing a basic knowledge and general understanding of the different facets of Wildlife Crime that may be reported to Police Scotland.

For officers wishing to become a recognised Wildlife Crime Officer (WCO), the Wildlife Crime Introduction Course was designed and is being delivered over two days and is aimed at new WCO's or existing WCO's who have a knowledge gap providing a sound basic understanding of wildlife crime, how to deal with it and protocol.

A training diary has been implemented to provide Continual Personal Development opportunities to WCO's, with sessions each month, delivered live or via Microsoft Teams focusing on wildlife priority crime and involving all relevant partner agencies, such as RSPB, SASA and the Scottish Badgers Association.

Further to the above, Scottish inshore waters are internationally important for many cetaceans with at least 23 species of whales, dolphins and porpoise occurring in this area. It was recognised that an increasing number of disturbances were being reported, primarily caused by Marine wildlife spotting day trip boats, photographers and holiday makers. Police Scotland has carried out operations utilising our Marine Unit and Air Support Unit to combat this growing problem under the UK wide Operation Seabird, which originated from Humberside Police in 2020, and now regularly engages in Operation Seabird meetings to discuss ongoing trends and issues with all UK forces.

7. Scottish Government

This section sets out details of specific projects carried out by or on behalf of the Scottish Government over the time period of this report.

The use of dogs to control foxes and other wild mammals in Scotland

The [2021/2022 Programme for Government](#) contained a commitment from the Scottish Government to:

“Introduce a Bill this year to strengthen the law relating to the use of dogs to hunt and flush foxes and other wild mammals, implementing the majority of the recommendations of the independent report on the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002, and introduce further measures such as preventing trail hunting.”

This follows ongoing concerns about the effectiveness of the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 which were the subject of a government review led by Lord Bonomy. Lord Bonomy’s report is available on the [Scottish Government Website](#).

As the Scottish Government has already consulted on the recommendations made by Lord Bonomy, a consultation was launched on the 29 October 2021 on the proposals made by the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment on 9 January 2019 as they pertain to the hunting of wild mammals with dogs. These proposals were:

- The implementation of the majority of Lord Bonomy’s recommendations
- A new limit of no more than two dogs to be used to flush foxes or other wild mammals from cover
- Consideration of a licensing scheme permitting more than two dogs to flush foxes or other wild mammals from cover where necessary for the purposes of pest control; and
- Provision to discourage the establishment in Scotland of the practice known as “trail hunting” as this poses significant risks for wild mammals.

The consultation ran until the 15 December 2021 and a full analysis of the consultation responses can be found [here](#).

Grouse Moor Management

A [report](#) on the environmental impact of grouse moor management practices was published on 19 December 2019. The Scottish Government provided a response to the recommendations on 26 November 2020. The response announced our intention to licence grouse moors and deliver the recommendations.

The 2021-22 programme for government subsequently contained a commitment to deliver the recommendations of the Werritty report as a matter of urgency, including the licensing of grouse moors.

Licensing or further regulation of grouse moors will cover the key areas identified in the review, including muirburn, wildlife control, the use of medicated grit and wildlife crime. Licensing will be supported by clear penalties to encourage compliance, as well as additional effort to detect wildlife crime.

The full [Scottish Government response](#) to the recommendations provides further detail.

Deer Management

There was a 2020-21 Programme for Government commitment to “modernise deer management, implementing the recommendations of the Deer Management Working Group”.

We published [our response](#) to the report by the independent Deer Working Group on 24 March 2021. The Scottish Government accepted the majority of the ninety-nine recommendations.

Given the links between deer management and biodiversity, Scottish Government have established a project under the Scottish Biodiversity Programme Board to encompass legislative and non-legislative components of ensuring effective deer management. This will ensure an appropriate level of governance, but will also bring deer management into consideration alongside biodiversity as the SBS progresses.

The Deer Project Board is comprised of senior officials from NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, CNPA and LLTNPA, and is chaired by Donald Henderson (Deputy Director, Nature Division). The board first met on 1 November 2021 and minutes are uploaded to the Scottish Government website.

The project board has a focus on four workstreams: legislative; incentives; regulation and operational delivery. These workstreams have now met for the first time and are progressing priority actions.

8. Legislative Changes

During the period of the 2020-21 Annual Wildlife Crime Report no legislative changes regarding wildlife crime were passed by the Scottish Parliament.

Appendix 1 - Offence Categories and Legislation

This Appendix provides further detail on the offence categories used in the wildlife crime and court proceedings statistics in Chapter 2, broken down by the crime codes used to group offences and the legislation which includes these offences.

Offences relating to	Legislation
Badgers	Protection of Badgers Act 1992
Birds	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Cruelty to wild animals	Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996; Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
Deer	Deer (Scotland) Act 1996
Hunting with dogs	Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002
Conservation (e.g. protected sites, conservation orders)	Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004
Poaching and game laws	Game (Scotland) Act 1772; Game (Scotland) Act 1832; Night Poaching Act 1828; Poaching Prevention Act 1862; Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948
Fish poaching	Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries (Protection) (Scot) Act 1951; Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries (Consol) (Scot) Act 2003; Salmon & Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 The Fish Conservation (Fishing For Eels)(Scotland) Regulations 2008 The Conservation of Salmon (Scotland) Regulations 2016 The Conservation of Salmon (Prohibition of Sale) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 The Salmon Carcass Tagging (Scotland) Regulations 2016 The Tweed Regulation (Salmon Carcass Tagging Order 2016 The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 The Scotland Act 1998 (River Tweed) Order 2006 The Tweed Regulation (Salmon Conservation) (No. 2) Order 2016
Other wildlife offences (e.g. European Protected Species, CITES, attempts to commit offences)	The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994; Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981; Control of Trade In Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regs 1997

Appendix 2 - Notes and Definitions for COPFS Data

- The information provided was compiled on 28 September 2022.
- At the stage of preparing this report, there remain a number of court cases pending trial.
- The figures reflect current Scottish Government offence categories.
- The figures relate to cases in which at least one statutory wildlife offence was reported to COPFS. The figures may also include those reported as animal welfare offences only or in which a common law offence with a wildlife element has been reported, such as breach of the peace or culpable and reckless conduct.
- The figures represent the number of cases reported and their outcomes but where cases have been combined, only one is counted. A case may relate to multiple incidents and to multiple accused persons.
- Where cases involve more than one accused person and the outcome for each person is different, they are counted at the level of the highest outcome only. For example, if one person is acquitted while another is convicted, the case is shown as a conviction.
- Cases which contain several charges falling into different categories are listed only once. In most cases, the category will reflect the most significant wildlife offence reported to COPFS by the investigating agency but in some the category may be adjusted to take account of the prosecution of a more appropriate charge or of the conviction recorded.
- Since 2012, the poaching of game birds has been an offence under section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is now categorised as "Birds, offences involving".
- Offences involving the poaching of mammals may be included in the categories "Hunting with Dogs", "Cruelty to wild animals", "Deer" or "Other wildlife offences" depending on the circumstances and the charges reported or prosecuted.
- Alternatives to prosecution include conditional offers by the Procurator Fiscal ("fiscal fines" etc. under section 302 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995) which have been accepted, or deemed to have been accepted, by the accused and also warning letters.
- COPFS uses a live operational database and the information contained within it is structured accordingly. Information provided may therefore be subject to change as our systems are updated for operational reasons.
- A 'conviction' is where a case involving a wildlife offence has been prosecuted and at least one accused in the case has pleaded guilty to or been found guilty of at least one offence having an element which directly relates to a relevant wildlife offence.
- Further information on prosecutorial decision making is available in the [COPFS Prosecution Code](#).

Appendix 2A - Further information on COPFS Case Outcomes

Table A: Outcomes of all fish poaching cases

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	8	5	*	5	12
Alternative to prosecution	20	*	10	9	42
Prosecuted	7	*	*	3	1
of which convicted	*	*	*	1	1
of which pending trial	-	-	-	1	-
No. of reports received	35	18	15	17	55

Table B: Outcomes of all other wildlife cases

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	19	25	16	17	3
Alternative to prosecution	15	*	8	5	1
Prosecuted	25	*	15	9	1
of which convicted	*	*	9	4	1
If which pending trial	-	-	-	5	-
No. of reports received	59	49	39	31	5

Outcomes by Individual Case Category

Offences relating to badgers

For the period 2016-2021, a total of 10 cases relating to badgers were reported to COPFS.

Table D: Offences relating to birds

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	10	*	*	0	5
Alternative to prosecution	5	*	*	0	1
Prosecuted	9	*	6	1	4
<i>of which convicted</i>	*	*	*	1	2
<i>of which pending trial</i>	-	-	-	-	2
No. of reports received	24	13	12	1	10

Table E: Offences relating to cruelty to wild animals

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No. of reports received	8	0	*	0	2

Table F: Offences relating to deer

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No. of reports received	*	*	*	3	2

Table G: Offences relating to hunting with dogs

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	*	*	*	9	7
Alternative to prosecution	*	*	0	0	10
Prosecuted	*	9	*	4	8
of which convicted	*	*	0	1	2
of which pending trial	-	-	-	3	4
No. of reports received	7	22	7	13	25

Table H: Other wildlife offences

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
No action	*	5	*	5	3
Alternative to prosecution	*	*	5	4	1
Prosecuted	6	*	*	2	1
of which convicted	*	0	*	2	1
No. of reports received	14	10	11	11	5

Table I: Other conservation offences

For the period 2016-21, a total of 6 cases relating to other conservation offences were reported to COPFS.

Appendix 3 - Court proceedings and penalties data by specific offence

Table A: People proceeded against in Scottish Courts for wildlife offences, where main charge 2016-17 to 2020-21

Main crime group	Main Charge	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total prosecuted		23	29	15	12	2
Badgers	Sub-Total	-	2	-	-	-
	Protection Of Badgers Act 1992 Section 11a(1)	-	2	-	-	-
Birds	Sub-Total	4	3	2	4	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(A)	3	1	2	2	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(B)	-	-	-	1	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(C)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(2)(A)	-	2	-	1	-
Cruelty to wild animals	Sub-Total	2	5	-	3	-
	Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 Section 1	-	1	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 11(1)(A)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 11(G)(1)	1	4	-	3	-
Deer	Sub-Total	1	1	-	-	-
	Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 Section 21(3)	-	1	-	-	-
	Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 Section 23(1)	1	-	-	-	-
Hunting with dogs	Sub-Total	8	4	6	-	1
	Protection Of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 Section 1(1)	8	4	6	-	1
Fish poaching	Sub-Total	5	5	3	5	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S.11(1)	-	1	1	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S.6(1)&(2)	1	1	-	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S2(1)&(2)	-	-	-	1	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 S.17(2)(A)	1	1	-	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 S.7	-	-	1	3	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 Sec 9(1)&(2)	3	2	1	1	-
Other wildlife offences	Sub-Total	3	9	4	-	1
	The Control Of Trade In Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regs 1997 Reg 8(1)	1	1	1	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 13(1)(B)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 18(1)	1	5	2	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 18(2)	-	3	1	-	-

Source: Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings Database

Table B: People with a charge proved in Scottish Courts for wildlife offences, where main charge 2016-17 to 2020-21

Main crime group	Main Charge	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total convicted		22	25	10	11	1
Badgers	Sub-Total	-	1	-	-	-
	Protection Of Badgers Act 1992 Section 13(7)(A)	-	1	-	-	-
Birds	Sub-Total	4	3	2	4	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(A)	3	1	2	2	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(B)	-	-	-	1	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(1)(C)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Section 1(2)(A)	-	2	-	1	-
Cruelty to wild animals	Sub-Total	2	5	-	2	-
	Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 Section 1	-	1	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 11(1)(A)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 11(G)(1)	1	4	-	2	-
Deer	Sub-Total	1	1	-	-	-
	Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 Section 21(3)	-	1	-	-	-
	Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 Section 23(1)	1	-	-	-	-
Hunting with dogs	Sub-Total	8	4	2	-	1
	Protection Of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 Section 1(1)	8	4	2	-	1
Fish poaching	Sub-Total	5	5	3	5	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S.11(1)	-	1	1	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S.6(1)&(2)	1	1	-	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 S2(1)&(2)	-	-	-	1	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 S.17(2)(A)	1	1	-	-	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 S.7	-	-	1	3	-
	Salmon And Freshwater Fisheries(Consolidation)(Scotland) Act 2003 Sec 9(1)&(2)	3	2	1	1	-
Other wildlife offences	Sub-Total	2	7	3	-	-
	The Control Of Trade In Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regs 1997 Reg 8(1)	1	1	1	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 13(1)(B)	1	-	-	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 18(1)	-	3	2	-	-
	Wildlife And Countryside Act 1981 Section 18(2)	-	3	-	-	-

Source: Scottish Government Criminal Proceedings Database

Appendix 4 - Health of the species

Common name	Badger	Brown long eared bat	Common Pipistrelle bat
Species name	<i>Meles meles</i>	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>
Summary	Badgers are a member of the mustelid family and live in networks of underground tunnels called setts. Setts feature large entrances and mounds of excavated earth outside. Cubs are born in January or February but spend the first two or three months underground, emerging in the spring. Their ideal habitat is deciduous woodland with grazed pasture nearby, but they will use most open habitats	Long-eared bats roost in tree holes and loft voids in old buildings. Strongly associated with woodland. They feed in large gardens, along hedgerows, in parks and in woodland. They hibernate over winter, between November and April.	Pipistrelles often roost in the roof spaces of houses and can often be seen in gardens at dusk. Pipistrelles hibernate over winter, usually between November and April, although they may come out to feed on warm days.
Diet	They mainly feed on earthworms, but also eat small mammals, birds' eggs, fruit and roots and bulbs.	They feed on flying insects especially moths which they find in the dark using echolocation.	They feed on flying insects including midges and moths which they find in the dark using echolocation.
Appearance	Badgers are large and grey, with a short fluffy tail, black belly and paws and the distinctive black and white-striped face	The brown long-eared bat has greyish-brown fur and characteristically big ears. It shows a relatively slow, fluttery flight.	Pipistrelles have dark, golden-brown fur, a slightly paler underside and a darker mask around the face. Their flight is rapid with lots of twists and turns.
Size	Length: up to about 1m including tail, weight: 7-17kg	Length: 9cm Weight: 5-11g Wingspan: 25cm	Length: 3-5cm Weight: 4-8g Wingspan: 20cm
Lifespan	Average of 3 years (up to 14)	Average of 4-5 years (up to 30)	Average of 4-5 years (up to 16)
Status	Protected in the UK by the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (England and Wales) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland and classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (England and Wales) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 (as amended) in Scotland and classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
Distribution	Found throughout most of mainland Scotland. Absent from most Scottish Islands.	Widespread throughout the country, but absent from most Scottish Islands	Widespread, found throughout the country, only absent from Shetland and some other Scottish islands.
Population	The available evidence indicates that the badger population is rising in England, although the trend in Scotland is less clear.	National data shows both the GB and Scottish brown long eared bat populations to be stable	The population of common pipistrelle in Scotland is stable, whilst that of the soprano pipistrelle has increased since 1999. Both species collectively account for over 80% of Scotland's bats.
Monitoring	<i>Scottish Badgers</i> collates distribution data collected by volunteers. Disease monitoring in badgers is largely carried out via road casualties.	Monitored via the National Bat Monitoring Programme, using data from roost counts in Scotland.	Monitored via the National Bat Monitoring Programme, using data from field surveys and roost counts.
Threats	Construction of roads, housing and other developments may have a direct impact on badger habitat, this should be mitigated by planning control. A major cause of mortality in badgers is road accidents. Illegal persecution is also an issue in some areas.	On-going threats to Scottish bats include pressure from human disturbance to roosting sites and foraging grounds. Roosts may be lost during development through demolition or renovation of buildings without provisions to replace roosting sites	On-going threats to Scottish bats include pressure from human disturbance to roosting sites and foraging grounds. Roosts may be lost during development through demolition or renovation of buildings without provisions to replace roosting sites

Common name	FWPM	Red deer	Roe Deer
Species name	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>
Summary	Freshwater pearl mussels live in the bottom of fast-flowing streams and rivers where they may be completely or partially covered in sand or gravel. They need water of the highest quality as they spend their first year harmlessly attached to the gills of either salmon or trout before dropping off onto the river bed.	Red deer have adapted to living on open hillsides and moorlands throughout much of Scotland. They can also be found in coniferous and deciduous forests. Although symbolic of wild and remote areas, red deer now also occupy areas closer to people, even entering some suburbs.	Roe deer are generally seen in loose family groups or as individual animals. They are generally found in woodlands, particularly around the edges where the woodland meets open ground, including farmland. They are increasingly found in and around our towns.
Diet	They feed by filtering food particles out of the river water, filtering up to 50l a day	Red deer graze and browse a wide variety of plants including grasses, red deer heather, shrubs and trees.	Their diet includes a variety of woodland plants including herbs, brambles, ivy, heather, bilberry & coniferous tree shoots
Appearance	They are dark brown to black and much larger than their marine relatives	Red Deer are dark russet-brown in colour, with a paler buff rump patch and a pale tail. Males have large, branching antlers, increasing in size as they get older.	Roe deer are small with a summer coat of reddish brown turning to grey, pale brown or black in winter. They have a black nose, white chin and white rump patch with a short tush in females. Antlers are rough, short and have three tines on each.
Size	Shell length: 80-145mm	Length: 1.7-2.6m Weight: 100-340kg Height: 1.2m at the shoulder	Length: 0.9-1.3m Weight: 10-25kg Height: 60-75cm at the shoulder
Lifespan	Over 100 years	16-18 years	Average 7 years (up to 16)
Status	Critically endangered in Europe(IUCN), Classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.	Common protected under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996.	Common protected under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996.
Distribution	There are freshwater pearl mussel populations in 115 watercourses in Scotland with the majority of these rivers located in the Highlands and the Western Isles	Common throughout Scotland	Common throughout Scotland
Population	Declining in Scotland	Evidence suggests that population level is stable.	Evidence suggests that population level is stable.
Monitoring	National survey published in 2009 and 2015. Our most critical freshwater pearl mussel populations are monitored every six years as part of NatureScot's Site Condition Monitoring programme.	Actions to monitor the numbers and impacts of red deer in the uplands are included in the Deer Management Plans produced by Deer Management Groups	Actions to monitor the numbers and impacts of roe deer in the uplands are included in the Deer Management Plans produced by Deer Management Groups
Threats	Illegal pearl-fishing invariably kills mussels. Water pollution and damage to river beds and banks can seriously affect populations	Disease and poaching will have an impact on the health of deer, although there is no evidence to suggest that either are having an impact at the population level.	Disease and poaching will have an impact on the health of deer, although there is no evidence to suggest that either are having an impact at the population level.

Common name	Brown Hare	Atlantic Salmon	Golden eagle
Species name	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	<i>Salmo Salar</i>	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>
Summary	Hares shelter in a 'form', a shallow depression in the ground or grasses. They are most common in grassland and at woodland edges. Often associated with cultivated areas. In early spring, brown hares are at their most visible as the breeding season encourages fighting or 'boxing'.	Atlantic salmon enter rivers throughout the year and travel upstream from November to February, to breed in gravel-bottomed headwaters. Most, but not all, fish die after spawning. In Scotland, juveniles will typically stay in freshwater for up to 2 years, then migrate to the sea as smolts – physiological changes allow them to survive in saltwater.	A bird mainly of the mountains and moorlands in Scotland, golden eagles have large territories, nesting on rocky cliff faces and in trees where it builds a nest or 'eyrie'. Most pairs have several alternative nests within their territory. These nests are often used by successive generations to rear their own young. Golden eagles form long term pair bonds.
Diet	They eat grasses and other herbaceous vegetation including various crops. Shrubs may be browsed in winter.	Atlantic salmon feed on invertebrates and small fish in the sea.	A wide range of mainly medium-sized birds and mammals (inc. grouse, ducks, rabbits and hares), varying regionally. Carrion is taken to varying levels and more important in winter.
Appearance	Hares are russet-brown in colour, with a pale belly and a white tail. They are larger than rabbits and mountain hares, with longer legs and longer ears with black tips.	Adult Atlantic salmon are generally larger than resident trout; they are silvery with a few dark spots on the back and may have a pinkish flush to the belly. Mature males may develop a hooked lower jaw, or kype, in the breeding season.	A massive bird of prey, adults are mainly dark brown, with a golden head and neck. Young birds have white patches in their wings and a white base to the tail, these reducing over 3-4 years until they get their dark adult plumage.
Size	Length: 50-70cm Weight: 3-4kg	Length: up to 1.3m Weight: up to 35kg	Length: 76-90cm Wingspan: 2.1m Weight: 3.7-5.3kg
Lifespan	Average 2-3 years (up to 12)	Grilse may spend 1-3 years in freshwater and one year at sea. Larger multi-sea winter fish may spend 1-3 years in freshwater and 2-3 years at sea.	Typical lifespan of around 14 years
Status	Classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.	Classified as Lower Risk/Least Concern on the IUCN Red List and as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The Scottish Wild Salmon Strategy provides a framework to tackle pressures on wild Atlantic salmon.	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified in the UK as a Green List species under the Birds of Conservation Concern review.
Distribution	Widespread throughout Scotland including some islands, largely replaced by mountain hares in upland areas	They are mostly found rivers in the north and west and spend most of their lives out at sea.	The species can be seen widely across the Highlands and Islands primarily in upland habitats, with a very small population in the Southern Uplands, bolstered by the ongoing South Scotland Golden Eagle Project.
Population	Previously suffered significant declines, but the population now seems to be more stable, albeit at a lower level than formerly.	Declining globally. The total rod catch in of Atlantic salmon in 2021 has the lowest recorded catch return figures since records began in 1952.	The population increased between the 2003 and 2015 national surveys, up to 508 occupied territories. This passed the 500 pair target required by NatureScot to reach favourable conservation status nationally.
Monitoring	British Trust for Ornithology has collected data from 1995. The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust long time-series game bag are also used for monitoring purposes.	The North Atlantic Conservation Organisation and the International Council for Exploration of the Seas Working Group on North Atlantic Salmon maintain an overview of Atlantic salmon stocks.	Around half the breeding population is monitored annually under the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme mainly by Scottish Raptor Study Group members.
Threats	Brown hares are a quarry species and driven shoots can reduce populations by 30 - 70%. Other illegal forms of hunting including hare coursing may add to this	The illegal exploitation of Atlantic salmon occurs both inland and in estuarine coastal areas. Freshwater quality, connectivity from the river mouth to potential spawning areas and predation can have a significant impact. Only 5% of fish leaving our rivers return from the sea as adults.	Natural mortality can include collisions with power lines, starvation and disease. Illegal persecution regionally remains a significant concern.

Common name	Hen Harrier	Peregrine Falcon	Red Kite
Species name	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
Summary	Hen harriers are medium sized, ground nesting raptors. They breed in upland areas, including open woodland, forestry and scrub, migrating to lowland and coastal habitats for the winter. Distances vary with most staying within the UK but some reach the continent. They form communal roosts out with the breeding season.	The peregrine falcon suffered from persecution and pesticide poisoning in the early 20th century. Over the last couple of decades they have been doing very well at a UK level. They mainly nest on inland and coastal cliffs in Scotland, though a proportion of the population use man-made structures like buildings and quarries.	A large raptor that nests in trees mostly in small woods or near the edges of larger woods. They are found mostly on lowland or upland edge habitats, although they will visit moorland. They are social birds especially out with the breeding season and form communal roosts which can number scores of birds in Scotland.
Diet	They hunt a wide range of small to medium sized birds and mammals.	A wide range of medium sized birds with pigeons important in many areas though ducks, seabirds and waders, and some smaller birds are also taken	They have a varied diet and are an opportunist scavenger, eating both carrion and small mammals, birds and insects.
Appearance	Males are a pale grey colour, with black wingtips and a white rump, females and immatures are brown with a white rump and a long, barred tail which give them the name 'ringtail'.	The peregrine is Scotland's biggest falcon; dark grey above with black barred white underparts. It has a white throat and cheeks and a black 'moustache' and mask.	Red kites are large, have largely reddish-brown plumage with a pale whitish head and a deeply forked tail
Size	Length: 45-50cm Wingspan: 1-1.2m, Weight: 300-600g	Length: 40-54cm Wingspan: 1m Weight: 670g-1,1kg	Length: 60-66cm, Wingspan; 1.75-1.95m, Weight; 800g-1.3kg
Lifespan	Typical lifespan of 7-8 years	Typical lifespan of 7 years	Average 8-10 years (up to 25)
Status	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified in the UK as a Red List species under the Birds of Conservation Concern review.	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified in the UK as a Green List species under the Birds of Conservation Concern review.	Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, and classified in the UK as a Green List species under the Birds of Conservation Concern review.
Distribution	The species is found widely across the country but has breeding concentrations in Orkney, some west coast islands and Argyll mainland.	Can be found throughout Scotland. Generally, the species is more common in the south and east of the country	There are four main population centres based around original reintroductions areas; Black Isle, those in Aberdeenshire, Perthshire/Stirlingshire and Dumfries & Galloway have merged to cover most of that area.
Population	The most recent national survey was in 2016 and the population was estimated at 460 pairs, a decrease from 2010.	The most recent national survey was in 2014 and the Scottish population was estimated at 516-538 pairs, a decrease since 2002.	Increasing after successful reintroduction, however the growth of the populations is varied with the North Scotland (Black Isle) one in particular suffering slow growth due to illegal persecution.
Monitoring	Up to two-thirds of the breeding population is monitored annually by the Scottish Raptor Study Group. The Heads up for Harrier initiative encourages landowners to participate in a nest camera scheme. There is also annual non-breeding roost monitoring.	Between a half and two-thirds the breeding population is monitored annually under the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, mainly by Scottish Raptor Study Group members.	There is annual monitoring of a large proportion of the breeding population under the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, mainly by Scottish Raptor Study Group members and other volunteers. There is also an annual winter roost coordinated count as part of a wider European survey.
Threats	Natural mortality includes starvation and disease. Foxes are the main natural predator of nests. The species is at the centre of the raptor game management conflict and regionally, illegal persecution is a significant threat to the species.	Natural mortality can include collisions with power lines, starvation and disease. Illegal persecution from both pigeon fanciers and game management interests remains a regional concern for some inland and upland populations.	Red kites are subject to natural mortality and their scavenging habits can make them vulnerable to collisions with vehicles and power lines. Growth of the North Scotland (Black Isle) population in particular has been hampered by illegal persecution.



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