

Wildlife crime

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Written by College of Policing

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This guidance is for all police officers and staff when investigating wildlife crime.

These crimes should be investigated by a trained wildlife crime officer (WCO). Most forces will have at least one WCO whose role it is to carry out wildlife crime investigations. If a WCO is unavailable to carry out the initial investigation, then another officer should do so, liaising with a WCO at the earliest opportunity. The force should then decide who should continue the investigation.

Wildlife offences are currently covered under a range of legislation. These briefing notes provide an investigator with advice on the more common offences which they may encounter and highlight issues they should consider during an investigation.

The briefing notes are based on the UK government wildlife crime priorities that are identified through the [National Wildlife Crime Unit \(2022\) Strategic Assessment](#) (set every two years) and advice taken from the [Wildlife Crime Conservation Advisory Group](#) that supports that process.

The [National Wildlife Crime Unit \(NWCU\)](#) can provide further advice and support, as can organisations that support particular plants or animals, such as the [Bat Conservation Trust](#) and [Kew Gardens](#).

In the majority of cases, the police service can enforce relevant legislation. In some cases, however, this power falls to other statutory agencies, such as [Natural England](#) and the [Welsh Government](#) (for poisoning incidents) or the [Environment Agency](#) (for unlicensed fishing).

The following briefing notes will assist investigations from initial contact in call handling centres through to the completion of the court file:

- [bats](#)
- [badgers](#)

- poaching (deer, fish and hare coursing)
- freshwater pearl mussels
- CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna)
- raptors

See also the [**Crown Prosecution Service Wildlife Guidance**](#) for prosecutors.

Some of the above resources are under development and will be made available as they are approved.

Tags

Investigation