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Birdcrime 2018

Exposing bird of prey persecution in the UK

The killing must stop

Birds of prey should be free to soar, enriching our lives as well as our ecosystems. But sadly, many of these birds fall victim to illegal persecution, particularly in upland areas of the UK.

There were 87 confirmed incidents of bird of prey persecution in 2018. These included the shooting, trapping and poisoning of birds such as hen harriers, red kites, peregrines and owls. Yet in that year, there was only one conviction for a raptor persecution offence.

The *Birdcrime* report is published annually by the RSPB, as a summary of detected offences against birds of prey (also known as raptors) that have been collated by the RSPB's Investigations Team. We know, from independent studies on raptor populations, that more incidents will have taken place undetected or unreported and so the true extent of the problem goes far deeper.

Scientific evidence and the government's own research show that raptors face a high risk of persecution on driven grouse moors. Sadly, many estates see birds of prey as a threat to their stocks of red grouse, which are managed in large numbers to be shot. The RSPB is urging the government to act now and end the culture of criminality in our uplands. Obeying the law should not be optional.

"Grouse moor management needs urgent reform. The relentless persecution of birds of prey must stop. Enough is enough." **Martin Harper, Conservation Director, RSPB**

Breakdown of 2018 incidents

In 2018, the RSPB recorded 87 confirmed incidents of raptor persecution in the UK. Forty-one of these incidents involved shooting, 28 involved poisoning, 16 involved trapping and a further two involved other forms of persecution.

Number of incidents per country



Number of victims



NB: Victim numbers and incident numbers differ because some incidents involve multiple victims, while for others a victim is not found.

Enough is enough

Birdcrime 2018: the illustrated facts



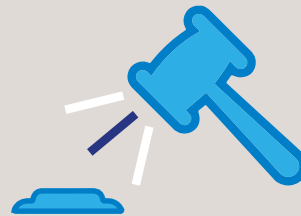
In 2018, there were **87** confirmed raptor persecution incidents, but only one conviction.



72% of 58 hen harriers satellite-tagged in a government study were killed, or most likely killed, on or near grouse moors (2007-2017).



Intensive grouse moor management, such as **burning**, is damaging important habitats and contributing to climate breakdown.



67% of those convicted of raptor persecution-related offences since 1990 have been gamekeepers.

Raptor persecution blackspots

RSPB data, when combined with information from raptor monitoring, scientific studies and intelligence information, allows persecution blackspots to be identified. These are primarily on and around land managed for driven grouse shooting.

In 2018, as in the previous five years, the highest number of incidents occurred in North Yorkshire. Other blackspots include the “Dark Peak” area of the Peak District and the area around Leadhills in Scotland.

To find out more about raptor persecution in your area, visit our map hub at rspb.org.uk/raptormap.

Environmental impacts

Raptor persecution is just part of a wider problem with intensive driven grouse moor management. Creating a landscape to purely benefit red grouse has led to the removal of scrub and woodland, and the burning of heather and protected peat bog, which is contributing to climate breakdown. The UK is facing a climate and ecological emergency, and urgent reform is needed if the government is to meet its own targets in this area.

Urgent reform is needed now

The RSPB wants the UK Government to get tougher on driven grouse shooting, to put an end to environmentally damaging and illegal practices. The RSPB is calling for:

The licensing of driven grouse moors.

The RSPB believes that the right to shoot should be dependent on legal, sustainable management. Grouse shooting licenses could then be removed if illegal activity is identified, which would act as a deterrent. Law-abiding estates should have nothing to fear from this.

A review of grouse shooting.

An industry that relies on criminal, unsustainable and environmentally damaging practices should not be allowed to continue operating as it currently is. In Scotland, the government has launched a review of grouse moor management and the RSPB would like to see a similar review in the rest of the UK.

Transparency, not secrecy: the public have a right to know.

It is a concern that, particularly in Scotland, some raptor persecution incidents are not made public for many months, or even years, despite the release of such information posing no threat to the integrity of an investigation. The public has a right to know if criminal activity is taking place on their doorstep, especially when, as with poisoning incidents, this poses a risk to public health.

What can you do to help?

Report crimes

The public have a huge role to play in the fight to protect birds of prey. If you see suspicious activity, find evidence of illegal traps or find a dead or injured bird of prey, please:

- Call the police on **101**.
- Call the RSPB's Investigations Team on **01767 680551** (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or **0131 3174100** (Scotland). Reports are treated in the strictest confidence.
- If you have information about someone killing raptors and want to remain anonymous, call the RSPB's confidential **Raptor Crime Hotline** on **0300 999 0101** or report it online at **rspb.org.uk/reportacrime**.

Donate

You can help the RSPB's Investigations Team fight for the future of birds like hen harriers by **becoming a Bird of Prey Defender** for just £3 a month, or through a one-off donation. To find out more, and watch a video about the RSPB's work, visit **rspb.org.uk/defend**.

Raise your voice

Join the conversation on Twitter (follow **@RSPBbirders** and **@RSPB_Skydancer**) or at Hen Harrier Day events. Public pressure on the government is crucial in turning the tide for birds of prey and ending the culture of criminality in our uplands.