

Animal charity fighting wildlife crime wins prestigious award

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A UK animal welfare charity has won a prestigious award for their work supporting police in the fight against wildlife crime.

Naturewatch Foundation, based in Cheltenham, received the coveted Charity Awards prize in the 'Animals and the Environment' category, at a ceremony on Tuesday 9th July at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London.

The prize was awarded for their 'Police control room wildlife crime training package', which has now seen over 5500 police staff trained, in less than 12 months, in how to deal with calls from the public reporting wildlife crimes. These crimes can include badger baiting, the barbaric act of setting dogs on badgers in their setts and hare coursing, which involves setting dogs on hares. Both crimes usually result in a gruesome end for the animals involved.

Kate Salmon, Campaign Manager and project lead said, "We are overwhelmed by this award and I commend the dedicated police officers up and down the country, whose teams are usually under-resourced, that continue to fight week on week to stop British wildlife being brutally persecuted. Our work to support them continues and it's a real delight to be recognised for what we do for animal welfare."

She continued, "Wildlife crime has such dire consequences for our rural communities, as well as causing suffering to the animals involved, including the dogs used so disgustingly by the people who are meant to protect them. It must end."

The training package, created in partnership with the National Wildlife Crime Unit, RSPCA and supported by the expertise of Thames Valley Police, aims to show the learner what a caller or witness may be experiencing when a wildlife crime takes place. Using innovative animations, it takes learners through the stages of wildlife crimes, such as the 'dig' in a badger baiting incident. This means that the police control room operator, responsible for logging calls and helping dispatch the right officer, knows exactly what is required of them to aid an effective police response.

Sarah Carr, Chief Executive at Naturewatch Foundation said, "We're delighted to receive this award and I wish to thank our wonderful supporters. Without their continuous loyalty and donations we wouldn't be able to continue our work, so it's lovely to be able to give something back to them, knowing that their charitable actions have had a direct impact on animal welfare."

The Charity Awards is in its 24th year and recognises innovative charities that exemplify best practice and deliver sustainable benefits to communities and society.

More information and advice is available on the Naturewatch Foundation website: www.naturewatch.org

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