

Major Online Marketplace Bans Catapult Sales in ‘Win for Wildlife’

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A major online marketplace has banned the sale of catapults and slingshots in a move hailed as a “win for wildlife”, as pressure mounts on other retailers to follow suit ahead of a Parliamentary briefing next week.

Animal welfare charity **Naturewatch Foundation** has welcomed the stance taken by **Gumtree**, which prohibits the sale of catapults and slingshots on its platform, citing concerns over their cruel misuse to harm animals.

The announcement comes as MPs prepare to hear new evidence next week surrounding catapult misuse.

Modern high-powered catapults can inflict lethal injuries and have been linked to attacks on swans, birds, hedgehogs, squirrels and domestic pets. Yet in England and Wales, they remain completely unregulated, with no minimum age for purchase and no controls on sale.

Andy Harper, CEO of Gumtree, said:

“Gumtree does not permit the sale of catapults or slingshots. Both are prohibited under our policies and any listings identified are removed. We support concerns regarding the cruel misuse of these items to harm animals.”

He added:

“Animal cruelty has no place in society, and we are committed to ensuring our platform is not used to facilitate the sale of items that could contribute to such harm.”

Gumtree also confirmed its support for stronger safeguards to prevent dangerous items being misused and to ensure they are not accessible to children.

Naturewatch Foundation says the decision demonstrates that immediate action is achievable and is urging other retailers to act now rather than wait for legislation.

Jim Clark, Wildlife Crime Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation, said:

“This is a real and meaningful win for wildlife, and for simple common sense. Gumtree has shown genuine leadership by becoming one of the first major platforms to recognise the devastating impact that the misuse of catapults is having on wildlife. By taking this bold and ground-breaking step, they are setting a powerful example for others to follow”

Wildlife rescue centres across the UK continue to report animals suffering catastrophic injuries consistent with catapult attacks. Police are often unable to intervene unless another offence has been committed, and incidents are not recorded as a specific crime, meaning the true scale of harm remains hidden.

Next week’s Parliamentary briefing, hosted by Naturewatch Foundation, will highlight growing evidence of catapult misuse and call for stronger safeguards.

Alongside calls for legislative reform, the charity is urging retailers to:

- Introduce voluntary age restrictions on sales
- Remove high-powered catapults from toy and sports categories
- Prevent the marketing of devices for “hunting” wildlife

Jim Clark added:

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"These weapons can cause immense suffering, yet they remain cheap, easily accessible, and largely unregulated. Gumtree's decision acknowledges that this is not just a retail issue, but a responsibility issue. Other retailers should act now and follow their lead; our wildlife and our communities simply cannot afford any more delay or inaction"

Public support for stronger wildlife protection remains high, and campaigners hope Gumtree's stance will encourage industry-wide action.

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About Naturewatch Foundation: Naturewatch Foundation is a UK-based animal welfare charity dedicated to ending cruelty and improving the lives of animals through campaigning, education and advocacy. For over 30 years, the charity has led initiatives to tackle illegal and unethical practices, including puppy farming, animal experiments and wildlife crime. By working with policymakers, enforcement agencies and the public, Naturewatch Foundation strives to make the world a kinder place for animals. Visit naturewatch.org to find out more.

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