Wildlife Crime is Being Overlooked on National Scale, Reveals New Report from Naturewatch Foundation

Thursday 11 September, 2025

Naturewatch Foundation launches Policing Wildlife Crime: Make Wildlife Count report at the Wild Summit 2025 and calls on government and police forces to take urgent action.

Wildlife crime across England and Wales is being systematically overlooked, under-recorded, and inadequately addressed, leaving thousands of wild animals unprotected. This is the stark warning contained in a new report published today at the Wild Summit by animal welfare charity Naturewatch Foundation, titled Policing Wildlife Crime: Make Wildlife Count. Drawing on Freedom of Information (FOI) responses from 33 police forces and a detailed survey of 128 frontline officers and call handlers, the report exposes serious gaps in how wildlife crime is recorded, investigated, and prosecuted. Among its most alarming findings are:

? Over 4,400 wildlife crime incidents were recorded between August 2023 and October 2024. The actual number is believed to be significantly higher, but poor and inconsistent recording practices make it impossible to know the true scale.

? 78% of recorded cases resulted in 'No Further Action'.

? Only 16% of officers surveyed had experience with wildlife or animal welfare prosecutions.

? 90% called for more face-to-face training, and 81% believe wildlife crime should be made notifiable.

? 87% do not believe wildlife crime is dealt with robustly by the courts.

The report's findings are accompanied by an open letter to DEFRA, the Minister for Policing, and all Chief Constables and PCCs across England and Wales, calling for urgent reform.

Jim Clark, Wildlife Crime Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation, said: *"The report highlights a disturbing pattern: wildlife crime is consistently treated as a low priority, despite the significant impact it has on biodiversity, public safety, and the rule of law. Inconsistent crime recording also means we still do not know the true scale of the problem, and if we cannot count it, we cannot combat it."*

"This lack of urgency not only enables wildlife crime to persist unchecked but also signals to offenders that these crimes carry little consequence."

Ultimately, the findings in this report highlight an urgent need for reform. Making wildlife crime notifiable would allow for consistent national data collection, better trend monitoring, and stronger enforcement, improving outcomes for both wildlife and communities.

Naturewatch Foundation is also calling for:

? A commitment from DEFRA to review and strengthen wildlife protection legislation to close current loopholes and reflect the seriousness of wildlife crime.

? The establishment of a standardised, mandatory wildlife crime recording framework.

? Clear prioritisation of wildlife crime from Police Forces, including assigning and properly supporting dedicated Wildlife Crime Officers.

? Investment in specialist training and resources to ensure frontline officers can respond effectively.

? Adoption of standardised crime recording practices to ensure consistent, transparent, and usable data.

With campaigners, policymakers, academics, businesses and charities gathering today at the Wild Summit, Naturewatch Foundation hopes this report will fuel the urgent conversations needed to ensure the UK's wildlife receives the protection it so desperately needs.

Jim adds: *"If we are serious about tackling the biodiversity crisis and building a society that respects all life, wildlife crime must be taken seriously at every level of policing and government."*

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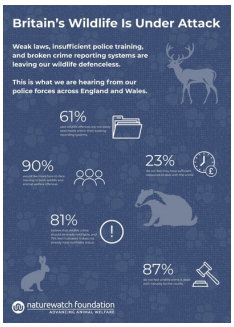

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Company Contact:

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Naturewatch Foundation

T. +44 (0)1242 252871
E. info@naturewatch.org
W. https://www.naturewatch.org

Additional Contact(s):
Sarah Carr, CEO
sarah@naturewatch.org

View Online

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