

RURAL TIMES

ISSUE 24 • AUTUMN 2025

**PROTECTING
OUR RURAL
COMMUNITIES**

HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT



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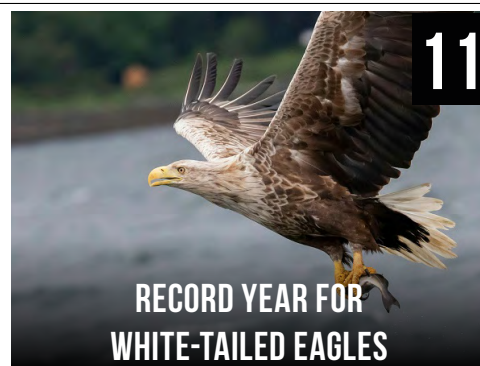
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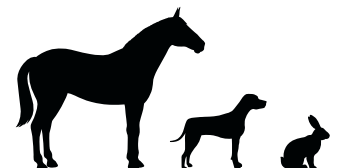
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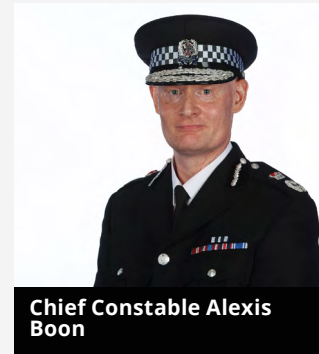
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WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF RURAL TIMES



Chief Constable Alexis Boon

Hello, I am Chief Constable Alexis Boon.

I know for many rural communities across the two counties of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight that tackling rural crime is a real priority for you, it is also a priority for me. I know that sometimes policing hasn't always felt like we were there for you. I don't want our rural communities to feel isolated or vulnerable.

As your Chief Constable I want you to see that Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary are well and truly on your side. I am determined for us to be proactive, responsive and visible to you so that you have real confidence we are tackling the criminals and the criminality impacting on you the most.

Rural crime comes in many forms; it can also be highly organised. We know criminal gangs commit plant and GPS theft, poaching, and many crimes that impact the quality of lives and livelihoods of rural communities. To tackle these challenges, we have built strong links with our neighbouring forces and routinely collaborate with them on cross-border operations to target criminals operating under the cover of darkness, particularly in light of recent instances of poaching, hare coursing and burglary.

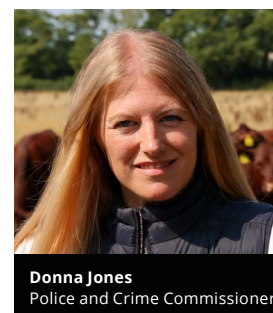
Whilst we have capable teams dedicated to policing rural areas – such as rural neighbourhoods teams and our specialist Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force – it's crucial that understanding of and commitment to policing rural crime is embedded in the wider force. We are actively training officers and staff across the Constabulary to ensure a better understanding of the types of crime committed,

their impact, and how best to tackle them. This includes a specific training module on rural crime for all our new PC recruits, as well as training for officers within roads policing and contact management. Contact management includes the call handlers and staff in our control room who are the initial point of contact for the public.

In order to identify rural criminals and link them to crimes, we continue to enhance our ability to gather and share intelligence locally and with our neighbouring counties.

We are working hard to identify and disrupt the individuals and gangs who have the most impact on our communities. As a Constabulary we have already invested in technology such as drones and ANPR, with support from the Police and Crime Commissioner, to gather intelligence and aid investigations and enforcement, which will help our continued commitment to strengthening our capabilities.

CLAMPING DOWN ON COURSING & COUNTRYSIDE CRIME AN UPDATE FROM PCC DONNA JONES



Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner

Hare coursing across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight started earlier than usual this summer due to an early harvest on the fields and farmland.

The Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, which I introduced at the start of the summer, saw reports begin in June with the illegal activity

expected to continue through to March next year.

Hare coursing is a devastating crime, not only for the wildlife, but also for the damage caused to fields, crops, and property.

Farmers and landowners also become victims of violence and intimidation which is completely unacceptable.

Organised criminal gangs are often behind this, operating across county borders.

With more than 75% of our two counties made up by

countryside, the area provides a perfect location for their illegal activities to take place.

I'm determined these type of incidents will be reduced by police working together with farmers, landowners and the rural community as a whole.

Farmers and landowners are suffering and I want to make it clear that they are not alone.

Through the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, I am determined we can help our rural communities feel more safe and secure.



HARE COURSING'S CONTINUED IMPACT ON THE COUNTY THROUGHOUT SUMMER AND AUTUMN THIS YEAR

Following a similar trend to last year, the hare coursing season started earlier than anticipated in 2025. In 2024, early harvests saw coursers take advantage of bare fields.

Suspicious vehicles, suspected to be involved in coursing, were spotted on farmland in the north of Hampshire as early as July last year, and during one such incident a farmer was threatened by an individual on his land.

A few months later, officers arrested and charged three men after responding to reports of coursing in progress on land in Bullington Cross.

They are all due to stand trial in March 2026.

Fast forward to this year and reports of hare coursing in rural Winchester were made to police towards the end of June.

Reports then spiked in July with around 20 instances of people reporting concerns around suspected hare coursing, or activity associated with it, such as suspicious individuals or vehicles on land, damage being caused to fields, and people lamping.

We experienced a further increase through September and October, which is typical for the autumn.

Coursing devastates the countryside with damage caused to land, and farmers subjected to violence, threats or intimidation.

Inspector Cath MacDonald, who leads the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, said: "We are fully aware of the impact that hare coursing has within our rural communities. We have the resources to disrupt these illegal events, prosecute those responsible and provide reassurance to those who are suffering harm from the impact of hare coursing.

"I would ask for people within our rural communities to support us, by reporting ALL incidents of hare coursing to the police. By doing this, you will be helping us to form an accurate picture of what is happening and where."



New legislation in 2022 under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act introduced offences of trespassing on land with intent to hunt a hare with a dog, and to have possession of an article to hunt a hare with a dog. This allows police

to arrest and prosecute offenders going equipped to course, meaning police can take robust action before coursing has actually taken place.

Five men were sentenced in Hampshire in 2023 under the new legislation, with the courts banning the men from owning dogs, ordering them to pay the kennel costs for the dogs seized by police, and more importantly repaying compensation to the farmer for the full cost of damage caused to his land.

Police and Crime Commissioner, Donna Jones said: "We need to take the fight to the criminals and the organised crime gangs that are working across the beautiful countryside in our two counties.

"Their activities, such as hare coursing, theft of machinery and poaching are leaving these farmers and landowners as well as their businesses suffering, but through the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force I am determined that we can help our rural communities feel more safe and secure.

"There is a strong link between hare coursing events and other crimes such as burglary to farm buildings and outhouses – often targeting farm machinery."

CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE



Quad bike thefts

Quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles (ATV) are attractive to thieves operating in rural areas,

We urge owners of quads and ATVs to read the advice below, and to report any suspicious activity around their homes or rural estates to police. Dial 999 if a crime, or something suspicious, is ongoing.

• Keep good records of your quad bikes or ATVs. Take colour photographs from the side, front and behind.

• Photos should include serial/ chassis numbers, model numbers and distinguishing features.

• All quads should be security marked with your postcode, followed by letters of your property name or number. Marking your property in this way makes it easier for police to return it to you if it's recovered following a theft.

• Register your quad on the Immobilise website.

• Park ATVs as close to your premises as possible, ideally in

a locked outbuilding with CCTV and security lighting, preferably out of sight from nearby roads.

• Secure them with wheel clamps and/or locking posts, and store in a secure building. Consider using ground anchor plates and chains for extra security.

• Consider investing in a bespoke quad security device (look for those approved by Secured By Design and Sold Secure).

• Fit a GPS tracking device.

• Remove keys when not in use and do not leave them near the quad.

These types of vehicles are sometimes stolen by offenders who then use them to commit crime.

We're also keen to hear from people who have seen quad bikes being driven in rural areas in suspicious circumstances, such as in convoy and at night.

If you have information about crime or suspicious activity in your area, please report this to police on 101, or via the report tool on our website.



Scoping drones

Over the summer we received reports of drones flying over areas storing plant and other machinery in the county.

It is possible that this is a tactic used by criminals to scope out areas to burgle.

If you spot any suspicious drone activity in your area, please report it to police on 101 or online, or tell us via DISC if you are a member of the platform.



Waste criminals and fly-tippers

We all have a duty of care to ensure that, when we are having waste removed, we are using a legitimate waste carrier.

The poster above details some steps you can take to ensure the provider taking your waste away is registered.

If you find fly tipped waste, you can report this to your local council, and large scale illegal waste dumping can be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers. Alternatively, you can report the incident on the go through apps and websites such as ClearWaste, FixMyStreet and LoveWhereYouLive.

Remember: If you come across a crime in progress, call the police on 999. Do not confront fly-tippers, as they are engaged in a criminal activity and may respond unpredictably.



THE TASK AT HAND: OPERATIONS, PATROLS AND JOINT WORKING RESULTS IN ARRESTS AND SEIZURES OF GOODS

The Constabulary continues to invest in resource and technology that will help bring the fight to organised rural criminal gangs.

This included the recent introduction of the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, which has brought in additional officers to have a greater proactive focus on disrupting offenders and being visible in rural Hampshire.

In its first two months, the Task Force had successfully recovered an estimated £180k worth of goods suspected to have been stolen or used in crime.

The team have routinely been patrolling hotspot areas through the county linked to issues such as burglary and poaching to deter criminals, stop suspicious vehicles and people, and make arrests.

In addition, the Task Force has also been standing up a number of larger scale operations to bolster their efforts.

In August, the Task Force utilised support from other specialist officers including drone operators, search officers,

firearms officers and the dog unit, for a warrant at a site off Farnham Road as part of an investigation into vehicle thefts in the county.



It is believed that a group have been stealing vehicles and bringing them back to the site in Odiham, with officers visiting the premises as part of the warrant early morning on Tuesday 5 August.

A number of items were seized including a suspected stolen digger, three trailers, a quad bike and a number of tools.

The same site was subject to a warrant in 2021, during which police seized 29 stolen vehicles including caravans, vans, cars

and quad bikes.

Following August's warrant, officers arrested four men on suspicion of theft – two of which were arrested over the border by our colleagues in the Thames Valley Rural Crime Task Force.

They are as follows:

- A 35-year-old man from Reading
- A 26-year-old man from Odiham
- A 38-year-old man from Reading
- A 20-year-old man from Tadley

The four men have been bailed with conditions while officers continue this investigation.

Enforcement action like this is only possible if we know what is happening, and we understand the issues that are impacting rural communities.

Task Force Inspector Cath MacDonald and Police & Crime

Commissioner Donna Jones recently met with farmers and gamekeepers from the Southwick Estate, near Fareham.

Poaching, anti-social behaviour, fly-tipping, dangerous driving and balaclava-clad youths on trail bikes were all raised as issues of concern affecting the countryside.



PCC Donna Jones said: "It is so important to have meetings like this, to hear from our rural communities about the issues affecting them.

"I am investing millions of pounds to deal with rural crime issues, with new technology and the introduction of initiatives like the Rural Crime Task Force. Around 75% of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight consists of rural areas, where incidents of poaching,

theft of farm equipment and intimidation are unfortunately happening all too often.

"Landowners, famers, gamekeepers and the whole rural community are suffering because of these crimes. I am focused on Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary taking the fight to the criminals and making our countryside a safer place.

Inspector Cath MacDonald said: "We are aware of how much these issues of anti-social behaviour, poaching and theft cause misery for our countryside communities.

"Since the Rural Crime Task Force launched, we have already seized hundreds of thousands of pounds of property that has either been stolen or involved in crime, thanks to the intel we have gathered and from our proactive approach.

"We've now got modern tools to take the fight against rural crime to new levels, including mobile ANPR cameras and drones, but it is also vital that people across our rural areas report all crimes to us. This allows us to build a profile

of activity, even from smaller incidents – as these may well be linked to a large-scale organised crime activity.

"We're working alongside Local Bobbies, response teams and Roads Policing to conduct daily patrols in hotspot areas for rural crime and make the environment a hostile place for criminals."

Many police teams in the county are actively involved in policing rural areas, and leading the charge on operations. For example, in the north of the county officers have run 'Operation Scraper' nights of activity, which have recently involved Test Valley Priority Crime Team, Winchester Greater Rural Neighbourhood teams, and the Northern Neighbourhood Enforcement Team.

Scraper sees teams out on patrol in rural areas, engaging with local people, conducting numerous vehicle stop checks and dealing with any offences identified.

You can read on in this magazine to find out more about rural police operations in the county.



OP WOLF: DEDICATED TO DISRUPTING CRIMINALS ON THE ROAD NETWORK IN RURAL HAMPSHIRE

Hart Neighbourhoods Policing Team led a proactive operation in September as part of efforts to intercept criminals on the road network in rural Hampshire.

Joining them were officers within Roads Policing, the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force, and the Northern Neighbourhood Enforcement Team, as well as Hart District Council, the Environment Agency, DVSA, HMRC, and the Motor Insurers' Bureau.

On Thursday 11 September, teams based themselves at Blackbushe Airport and engaged with motorists transporting waste in order to prevent any potential fly-tipping. Vehicles transporting other goods and machinery were also stopped and checked by all agencies present.

Vehicle stops such as these enable police to check for any number of offences, including individuals potentially transporting stolen goods, and also ensure vehicles transporting heavy loads are safe and roadworthy.

In the morning, police stopped 30 vehicles and directed them back to the site at Blackbushe where officers and partners got to work in conducting necessary checks.

The majority of vehicles were roadworthy and all in order. However, a number of issues were identified with

some vehicles that were unroadworthy with brake issues, load issues or cracked windscreens.

A pickup truck was seized for having no insurance, and the Environment Agency dealt with a waste carrier who was unable to provide evidence of their waste carrier's licence or waste transfer note.



If you are having waste removed, ensure that the company you are using is legitimate and registered to help prevent fly-tipping. You can check this by contacting the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506. Refuse any unexpected offers to have waste taken away.

PC Terry Read, who ran the operation, said: "Operations like this provide a great opportunity for police teams to pool their skills together, and also call

upon the expertise of partner agencies to target offenders using the county's roads.

"Our focus was on rural criminality, including fly-tipping which blights our countryside, and we had the Environment Agency and local authority with us to support this work.

"Roads policing officers were working through the morning to identify vehicles of interest.

"Waste carrier licences were checked, and police teams and other agencies including DVSA and HMRC conducted additional checks and enquiries to deal with any further offences identified.

"A huge part of our county is rural, and we want the communities in these areas to feel supported, to know that we are out there being proactive, and we encourage them to keep reporting concerns around rural crime and suspicious people or vehicles to police."

Information about fly-tipping can be reported to your local council.

If you have information about crime or suspicious activity in your area, please report this to police or Crimestoppers.

MEETING OUR COMMUNITIES: A ROUND-UP OF POLICE SUMMER ENGAGEMENTS - TOLD IN PICTURES

When they're not out on patrol or chasing down the bad guys, our officers and staff attend local events to meet the public and listen to their concerns. Here, we have illustrated a number of our summer engagements.

New Forest & Hampshire County Show 29-31 July

The Task Force had a stall here.



And Neighbourhoods officers made an appearance too!



Alresford Show - Saturday 6 September

Much like the New Forest Show, the Task Force set up a stall to talk about rural crime and wildlife issues.



Romsey Show - Saturday 13 September



Romsey Show was extra special, as the Task Force scooped 3rd Place for best display under the large display competition!



Royal Isle of Wight County Show - 12 & 13 July

The Task Force couldn't make it to the IOW show - but West Wight NPT had it covered!



This gives you a snapshot, but teams also attended events in Highclere, Bisterne and Beaulieu, engaging with many along the way!



POACHING RISES DURING THE GAME BIRD SHOOTING SEASON

BASC & HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT CONSTABULARY

The shooting season for game birds in Hampshire typically runs between September and February for species such as partridge, pheasant and duck.

The season tends to coincide with a rise in crime, with rural criminals trespassing on land to target wildlife for poaching whilst also engaging in other criminal activity such as burglary.

Landowners and gamekeepers are often subject to abuse, threats or intimidation by these offenders, and in the worst case scenario they can face serious violence when they challenge poachers.

Between September 2024 and February this year, we had 55 reports relating to game bird poaching in Hampshire.

Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force Inspector, Cath MacDonald, said: "Poaching not only involves deliberate cruelty to animals, but we know that those who poach are often linked to wider crime networks involved in theft, burglary, criminal damage, and violence.

"The groups involved blight the countryside, which is why we are urging people to report crime as well as suspicious activity to police so our dedicated Task Force can take action.

"In August the Task Force arrested a man whilst on patrol in Bishop's Waltham, and after searching the vehicle he was driving they found evidence of poaching and other crimes including dead pheasants,

a catapult, ball bearings, some cannabis and a knife discarded nearby.

"Patrols will continue and action will be taken against anyone identified as being involved in rural crime."



The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) South East director, Michelle Nudds, said: "Wildlife crime impacts both individuals and communities. The scale of poaching and hare coursing varies geographically and seasonally, often organised by criminal gangs. Many individuals involved in poaching are also engaged in other rural and urban crimes.

"Farmers or gamekeepers who intervene in poaching or hare coursing may face intimidation through threats of violence, and in some cases, they are assaulted while trying to protect their livelihoods and property.

"It is therefore essential that adequate resources are allocated to tackle these crimes. BASC has recently funded a £40,000 initiative through its Legacy Fund to support the National Wildlife Crime Unit's digital training academy,

which will provide police forces across the UK with the specialised knowledge needed to combat poaching effectively. It is encouraging to see Hampshire police prioritising these issues, and we urge all our members and the general public to report any incidents."

We are asking people in rural areas to be on the look out for suspicious people or vehicles on farmland, including individuals engaging in lamping, and to report this to police. Lamping sees individuals using high powered lights to locate and kill wildlife on private land after dark.

Your safety is the priority, so please do not approach these individuals. Instead, dial 999.

If you have seen people using or carrying catapults in rural areas or places where you know there is an abundance of wildlife and wild birds please let us know.

Anyone with information about crime or suspicious activity in their area is encouraged to report this to police by calling 101, or using the online reporting tool on the Hampshire police website.

Alternatively, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers 100% anonymously on 0800 555 111, or via their anonymous online form at crimestoppers-uk.org

Dial 999 if a crime is in progress, or in the event of an emergency.



Stock Image

RECORD NUMBER OF WHITE TAILED EAGLE CHICKS HATCH IN ENGLAND

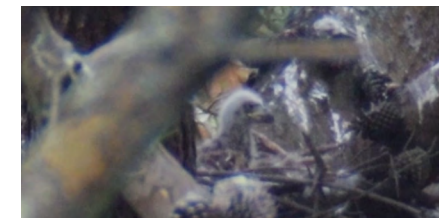
FORESTRY ENGLAND

A record three white-tailed eagle chicks have successfully fledged from two wild nests in England.

The chicks were reared by white-tailed eagles released on the Isle of Wight, in a ground breaking conservation project by Forestry England and the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation to return this lost species to England.

Two different pairs of eagles successfully bred this year. This included the first chick in Dorset for more than 240 years, and two chicks raised in Sussex.

A single male chick fledged from a nest in Dorset. The parent birds were released in 2020 and paired up in 2023. This is their first successful breeding attempt and made more remarkable by the fact that the male adult bird has only one leg after it lost this four years ago.



A chick in the Dorset nest.
©Forestry England

Two chicks, both females, fledged this year from a nest in Sussex. Both are the offspring of two white-tailed eagles released by the project in 2020. The parent birds also bred in 2023 and 2024.

This year's successful breeding brings

the number of these iconic birds born in the wild through the project to six. In 2023 a single chick was born, the first in England since the eighteenth century when the species was lost due to persecution. A further two chicks were born in the summer of 2024.

In time, it is hoped that a population of 6-10 breeding pairs will become established within 60 kilometres of the release site on the Isle of Wight.

Roy Dennis OBE, Founder of the Roy Dennis Wildlife Foundation, said: "We are delighted to see another year of successful breeding and that two pairs have now reached this key stage. This is a long-term project, and it will take some years before the population is fully restored but the progress made over the last year has been incredibly encouraging. We have some well-established pairs and two that are actively breeding. We hope to build on this progress, and I'm really pleased that we have been able to release an additional 8 birds this year to further boost the population.

"I always find it particularly rewarding to see so much support for these magnificent birds and the positive impact they are having on so many people's relationship with the natural world."

Steve Egerton-Read, White-Tailed Eagle Project Officer for Forestry England, said: "We have been patiently monitoring these nests for many months and hoping

they would be successful. It is always such an exciting time but also incredibly nerve wracking! This was especially the case for the pair of eagles in Dorset who were first time parents. It was an incredible moment when we caught our first glimpse of that tiny fluffy chick in the nest, but equally, it's an anxious time as the parents get to grips with what they need to do. Ultimately, it has been so rewarding to see this pair of eagles, often spotted in and around Dorset, care for the chick all the way through to it fledging the nest. Now it won't be long until he is starting his own journey and hopefully one day, he will breed somewhere in southern England.

"Returning lost species like the white-tailed eagle is a key part of Forestry England's approach to restoring biodiversity and helping nature to recover. We hope that in years to come these iconic birds will become a much more common sight, inspiring future generations and deepening their connection with nature."



Chicks in the Sussex nest.
©Forestry England



© Tom Hilder

TREE MANAGEMENT WORK TO RESTORE RARE HABITAT

HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT WILDLIFE TRUST

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust has been carrying out essential tree management at Hook Common and Bartley Heath Nature Reserve, North Hampshire, as part of a project to restore rare wooded heath habitat and improve road safety.

Wooded heath is one of the UK's rarest habitats. It is home to reptiles such as adders, ground-nesting birds like the declining tree pipit, and specialist plants including heather.

The project will benefit a wide range of species by restoring the open, sunlit woodland edges that provide vital feeding and nesting areas, especially for tree pipits - a small bird whose UK population has declined significantly in recent decades.

Opening up the landscape will also allow heather and other heathland species to regenerate, leading to the re-establishment of wooded heath - a nationally rare habitat characterised by open heathland with scattered trees, particularly oak.

Work has taken place along the north and south sides of the A287 dual carriageway, which runs along the reserve. Around three hectares of dense birch and scrub are being clear-felled from along the narrow, public-facing woodland edges.

Tom Hilder, Senior Nature Based Solutions Officer (practical delivery) at Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife

Trust, said: "Although the felling may appear drastic at first, it is a vital step in restoring ecological balance. We carefully assess each tree's health, species, and ecological value. Only selected trees, mostly birch and aspen, are being removed.

"This work will restore balance and lead to a richer, more biodiverse and resilient habitat, benefiting a range of species including rare adders, tree pipits, and heather-dependent insects."

Tree pipits, despite their name, prefer open woodland edges, particularly on wooded heathland. The project will replace dense, less suitable woodland with a more favourable structure of scattered trees and edge habitat woodland - creating ideal nesting and feeding conditions. With a 29% reduction in their UK breeding range since the 1960s, restoring this habitat could make a real difference for their future.



Tree Pipit
© Derek Moore

Tom added: "Tree pipits are summer visitors that stage unmistakable, parachute-like song flights from open woodland perches. It's this exact sort of habitat that's disappearing across central and southern England as these landscapes succeed into denser woodland. Restoring this mosaic of scattered trees could be a lifeline for them.

"Likewise, adders - Britain's only native venomous snake - flourish in sunny heathland and woodland edges, where they bask on warm ground to hunt their prey. Enhancing habitat connectivity, by establishing open corridors, will give them the open, sunlit areas they need to bask, hunt, and move safely across the landscape."

The project also supports the Adder Project in Hook North, which aims to safeguard one of Hampshire's most threatened reptile populations. Removing dense vegetation and opening up the woodland structure will create a warmer, sunnier environment with areas of bare ground - ideal conditions for adders and other reptiles.

All the work is fully licensed and supported by The Forestry Commission and Natural England. Ground-level assessments by the Trust's ecology team have also confirmed there are no active nests or protected species present.



© Brian Cooper

Brian S Cooper

HELPING OUR HOUSE MARTINS

KEITH BETTON - HAMPSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

If you live in a rural location in Hampshire or the Isle of Wight, you are probably familiar with House Martins, the small black and white birds that make mud nests under house eaves. These close relatives of the Swallow migrate here every spring from as far away as South Africa - a journey of around 8000 miles each way. In fact, in rocky areas such as the coast or on limestone cliffs in northern England, House Martins sometimes nest on cliffs, which will be where they nested before we started to build houses.

But the sad news is that House Martins are declining, and the Hampshire Ornithological Society has been surveying them to try to find out just how many we have, and why some of them are struggling.

House Martins catch flying insects on the wing and to some extent they may be affected by the decline in some of these species. However, the main problem for them is probably connected to their breeding sites where they build cup-shaped mud nests under the rooves of houses and other buildings. Each nest uses 1,000 beak-sized pellets of mud. Often, they form colonies with several nests in proximity, which helps them to fight off predators, but despite having a close-knit community, they have been added to the Red List of Britain's most

endangered birds.

Not every homeowner is delighted to have House Martins as they do leave a pile of droppings right below the nest, and on the vertical wall. These can be cleared away easily enough in the winter, but sadly, some people remove the nests each year. This is not against the law if the birds have left but be aware that it is an offence to remove a nest with fresh eggs or chicks.

House Martins often raise two or three broods during a breeding season which can last into October. Raising two broods helps ensure that enough juveniles survive to maintain the local population, and this usually occurs in old nests in good condition or in artificial nests.



Artificial nest cups (©CJ Wildlife)

Building a new mud nest can take two weeks or more to complete. Because they take so long to build, new nests are less likely to be used for more than one brood in their first season after construction. Also,

in dry conditions (as we had this spring) it is difficult for the birds to find soft mud from which to build their nests.

How can you help?

This year a team of our volunteers and many homeowners have provided detailed information on over 500 nest sites, and we are now analysing these details. In 2026, we plan to continue this work, but in addition, we are going to offer artificial nest cups to extend some existing colonies. This would save House Martins valuable building time, allow them to lay eggs sooner, and it would also make the nests more robust. If we boost their breeding success locally, then hopefully, we will help to grow their population.

We have two requests

Look at our website: <https://hampshirehousemartins.org.uk/>

If you know of House Martin nests that are not shown already, please let us know.

If you live in an area with House Martins nesting nearby and would be willing to add some nest cups to your own house, please get in touch.

Please address general enquiries to admin@hampshirehousemartins.org.uk

RURAL ROUND-UP

TOTTON MAN CHARGED IN CONNECTION WITH ANIMAL DEATHS AFTER CARCASSES LEFT OUTSIDE CHURCHES

Officers investigating reported animal deaths in the New Forest, including the discovery of carcasses outside churches, have charged a man.

Benjamin Lewis, aged 47 years, and of Kinross Road, Totton has been charged with the following offences:

- Two counts of criminal damage
- One count of racially/religiously aggravated harassment without violence
- The charges relate to five incidents, between Wednesday 5 February and Tuesday 29 April, in which dead deer and lambs were discovered at various locations in Bramshaw, Totton and Emery Down.
- Lewis was remanded in custody and will be tried at Southampton Crown Court on 2 March 2026.
- Four counts of racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage
- Four counts of racially/religiously aggravated intentional harassment/alarm/distress
- Two counts of theft

RECENT ARRESTS AND INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES FOR CRIMES COMMITTED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY

We have a short round-up of some recent arrests, outcomes and other matters that police have been dealing with in recent months.

An arrested man is currently on bail until 4 January 2026 after more than £20,000 of fishing equipment was stolen from Parker Baits in Bishop's Waltham.

Callum Dainty, 19, of Warburton Road, Southampton, will appear in court on 6 January to face the following charges

- Killing a non-Schedule 1 wild bird
- Killing game out of season
- Possessing an article capable of being used to commit a summary offence
- Found by a constable in possession of game coming from land
- Driving without due care and attention
- Driving a motor vehicle otherwise in accordance with a licence
- Using a motor vehicle without third party insurance

This follows a vehicle stop in Bishop's Waltham in August where police seized six dead pheasants, a catapult and ball bearings.

TEEN CHARGED WITH IOW BADGER OFFENCE

A teenager has been charged in connection with an offence against a badger on the Isle of Wight.

The incident is alleged to have occurred in February this year in the Binstead area, and police became aware on 29 March.

Following enquiries, an 18-year-old boy was charged with wilfully attempting to kill a badger - an offence under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992

He was bailed and is due to appear before Isle of Wight Magistrates on 17 December.

THE NEW FOREST PONY ROUND-UP



In September, officers went out with the New Forest Agisters and Commoners in the Latchmoor area helping with the round up of the New Forest ponies. The ponies are rounded up each year to be health checked and turned back out or brought in for the winter.

Police attended to ensure road users were kept safe while the ponies crossed the road at some considerable speed.

Our thanks go out to all the road users for their patience during the round-up.

RURAL ROUND-UP

POLICE TEAMS JOIN FORCES IN RURAL BASINGSTOKE

Police teams have been proactively patrolling rural areas late at night to deter criminals involved in offences such as burglary, poaching and hare coursing.

On 9 October, officers from Basingstoke Rural Neighbourhoods Policing Team (NPT), the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force and Roads Policing joined forces to patrol and stop vehicles in the southern and western parts of rural Basingstoke.

Throughout the evening there were multiple stops and checks conducted of suspicious vehicles in the area. The majority of these were all in order, however a Sprinter Van driver was stopped over concerns around his licence.

Officers encountered a Honda CR-V of interest in the Mortimer area, which then failed to stop.

Police also seized a Volkswagen Touareg which is suspected to be linked to rural non-dwelling burglaries in Hampshire, and for failing to stop for police over the border in Wiltshire.

Sergeant Rachel Marshall said: "High visibility patrol activity like this really makes a difference in deterring criminals and keeping rural communities safe, and this is evidenced by the lack of calls for service throughout the evening while officers covered a vast area in the north of the county.

"No arrests were made throughout the evening, however multiple vehicles were stopped and checked, and vehicles of interest to our ongoing burglary investigations were encountered by officers.

"One of these vehicles was seized by police, whilst another failed to stop and left the area. We will continue to patrol and make enquiries as part of efforts to deter offenders from committing crime in Hampshire, and to detect crimes that have already been reported.

"We are grateful for the support shown to police on Thursday night by a handful of our local gamekeepers, and we continue to urge our rural communities to keep reporting crime and suspicious activity to us so we can target our resources accordingly."

WORKING ACROSS COUNTY & BORDERS TO RECOVER STOLEN PROPERTY

Persistence certainly pays off...



This trailer, which was stolen in 2020, has at last been reunited with its rightful owner thanks to the work of the Country Watch Rural Crime Task Force and some key partners.

It belongs to a small plant hire firm in the West Midlands, and whilst out on hire in 2020 it was stolen.

The trailer was recovered in Alton back in December by Hampshire officers making enquiries into a stolen JCB – which has also since been returned to its rightful owner.

Efforts had been made by the thieves to try and remove certain identification features of the trailer, however with some dedication and support from Data Tag – who examined the vehicle - and Ifor Williams, we have now been able to track down the owner, who is very happy to have it returned to them!

Police teams in Hampshire have been making continued efforts to identify or

locate stolen vehicles and machinery, and reunite these with their rightful owners.

In August the Task Force recovered a vehicle in Surrey, which had originally been stolen in Hampshire, before returning it to the owner.

The same month, the Basingstoke Neighbourhood Enforcement Team (NET) worked with colleagues over the border in the Thames Valley Rural Crime Task Force to retrieve a stolen digger.

A member of the public had reported the theft in Southampton, and the vehicle was tracked to Berkshire.

Basingstoke NET officers quickly travelled to the site in question, where they were able to safely recover the piece of machinery.

Whilst on the site, Thames Valley officers who were there to support our local team, also located another digger that they suspected to be stolen, and this was also recovered.



WANT TO STAY INFORMED? REGISTER FOR HAMPSHIRE ALERTS

As a local resident, you can play a key role in helping us to prevent and detect crime in rural areas.

By signing up to Hampshire Alerts, you will receive timely updates covering crime prevention advice, crime alerts and witness appeals for incidents.

[Click here to sign up to receive regular Hampshire Alerts](#)

It is your way of being kept informed of what we're doing in the community, allowing us to keep the communities of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight safe.

You can also tell us what issues matter most to you by completing our 'Let's Talk' survey here: <https://survey.hampshirealert.co.uk/>

COUNTRYWATCH

RURAL CRIME TASK FORCE



Insp Cath MacDonald
07909 770242



Sgt Kev Pearson
07392 314285



Sgt Michael Cork

Want to speak to a rural officer in your area? See the map below for your local contact. **Please note – these mobile numbers must not be used to report crime. Phone 101 to make a report. Dial 999 in an emergency or if a crime is in progress.**

PC David Bustin

PC Claire Goudie

PC Oliver Brown



PC Nick Atkins
07554 775466



PC Will Butcher
07775 542982

Special Constable Alex Corbishley

Tadley



PC Kris Stephens
07929 868068

**Police Staff Investigator
Chloe Wilmott**



**Hazel Cross
Country Watch Coordinator**
07799 587691

Alton

Bishop's Waltham

**Special Constable
Simon Gallear**

**Special Sergeant
Phillips**
07795 476662

Lyndhurst



PC Mark Webb
07392 314427



PC Sam Chapman
07392 314268

**Special Constable
Phil Keeling**
07392 289634

Isle of Wight



PC Rob Power
07966 109503

**PC
Liz Clapp**

**PCSO
Karen Allen**

**PCSO
Justin Keefe**

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HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT
CONSTABULARY

Register at www.hampshirecountrywatch.co.uk