

'Zero Tolerance' for raptor persecution: A joint statement

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), Countryside Alliance (CA), Moorland Association (MA) and National Gamekeepers' Organisation (NGO) – four of the largest organisations representing shooting in England and Wales – have been joined by the Country Land and Business Association (CLA) in issuing the following joint statement condemning all forms of raptor persecution:

“There is no excuse for the illegal killing of any bird of prey, and we unreservedly condemn all such acts. The shooting community has been tarnished with a reputation for persecuting raptors, and while many reports of such persecution have proven to be false and confirmed cases are decreasing year-on-year, the illegal killing of birds of prey continues to be carried out by a small minority of irresponsible individuals. We strongly condemn their actions and have a zero tolerance policy towards any such incident. These people have no place in a sector that is otherwise overwhelmingly positive; one that is the economic driver for many of our more remote communities, and the largest contributor to conservation schemes in England and Wales.

“Our countryside is a managed landscape and it is an environment in which there can be instances of some species coming into clear conflict with land managers. But two developments should serve to emphasise that the illegal killing of birds of prey is unjustified and self-destructive. Firstly, after the successful Judicial Review brought by Ricky McMorn against Natural England in 2015, farmers, gamekeepers and others working to create an environment that balances human and ecological interests should be reassured that Natural England will treat applications for wildlife licences – including those to control buzzards – more consistently. Secondly, the trial brood management scheme for hen harriers provides relief for land managers suffering high predation losses during the nesting season in the uplands.

“All incidents of illegal persecution are extremely harmful to the reputation of shooting and we are working in partnership with the police and wildlife agencies, as well as developing a number of initiatives, to eradicate the persecution of birds of prey.

“Our organisations are clear that any individual member convicted of a crime against birds of prey will be expelled. Should anyone know of, or encounter, any form of raptor persecution they should report it to their local police force immediately. Alternatively, information can be passed anonymously through Crimestoppers by telephoning 0800 555 111.”

Further Information:

All individuals, including businesses involved in shooting, should have a zero tolerance towards raptor persecution. This should be stated when entering into an arrangement to let, manage, work or provide services associated with shooting.

Shoots and people who shoot can show their commitment to zero tolerance by:

- Ensuring that management agents, letting agents, sporting tenants, syndicates, employees and contractors are signed up to a zero tolerance policy towards raptor persecution; and that this forms part of the conditions of any agreement.
- Ensuring best practice is followed, with a clause prohibiting illegal activities towards raptors contained within any written agreement.
- Ensuring that existing written agreements are reviewed to include a clause that prevents the illegal persecution of any raptors. In the absence of a written agreement, a memorandum of understanding should be signed between the parties, agreeing a zero tolerance to raptor persecution.
- Ensuring that any agreements for the provision of connected services include a zero tolerance statement on raptor persecution.
- Shoot owners, or their representatives, tenants and employees should attend a training course to familiarise themselves with laws that protect raptors.
- Ensuring all employees and contractors are aware that there are to be no prohibited pesticides or poisons on the premises.

The signatories to the joint statement on zero tolerance will collectively support their members by:

- Providing guidance and standard clauses on prohibiting raptor persecution for insertion into shooting agreements and contracts.
- Working with government agencies and enforcement teams to prevent and resolve issues around raptor persecution.
- Providing training opportunities for shoots to understand laws that protect raptors.
- Delivering education programmes with young gamekeepers and the wider shooting community on raptor persecution offences, risks and intelligence reporting methods.
- Delivering a shooting sector awareness campaign on laws that protect raptors.
- Proactively engaging with shoots that have any areas of concern regarding raptor persecution to discuss and find solutions.
- Promoting examples of best practice in managing shooting activities alongside healthy raptor populations.
- Promoting the opportunities for individuals to report illegal activities associated with raptors.
- Continuing to support the collaborative efforts to resolve raptor persecution including as members of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime and the Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group.
- [Expelling](#) from their organisation any individual member convicted of raptor persecution.

In return we ask government to:

- Provide accurate and independently verified raptor statistics in the form of an annual report.
- Work proactively with countryside organisations to find ways to resolve and manage conflict between raptors and shoots.