

[Press release: New raptor persecution maps to help tackle wildlife crime](#)

Updated: Photo change

[Raptor persecution maps for England and Wales](#) have been published to enable the police to clearly see where the highest incidents are taking place and focus enforcement efforts in the areas that need it most.

The maps present the number of shootings, trappings, poisonings and nest destructions that took place across England & Wales between 2011 and 2015 and will be updated annually, providing an invaluable intelligence tool to help fight crimes against birds of prey.

North Yorkshire will be a priority area as the most incidents occurred there (39), followed by Norfolk (17), Cumbria (11), Derbyshire (11), Lincolnshire (10), Suffolk (8) and Northumberland (8).

Wildlife Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Birds of prey are a vital part of our animal landscape, icons of our cultural heritage and key to boosting local economies by attracting visitors to England and Wales.

These maps highlight hotspots across the country for crimes against these precious birds, enabling the police to crack down with increased enforcement in areas where it's needed most – building on the valuable work land management, conservation and shooting organisations are already doing to help protect iconic birds of prey.

There are already strong penalties in place for committing offences against birds of prey and the unlawful use of traps and all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The Government takes all wildlife crime very seriously and raptor persecution has been identified as a UK wildlife crime priority. Each priority has a delivery group to consider what action should be taken, develop a plan to prevent crime, gather intelligence on offences and enforce against it.

The [National Wildlife Crime Unit](#) also monitors and gathers intelligence on illegal activities affecting raptors and provides assistance to police forces when required.

These maps build on this valuable work and will help boost the fight against those who continue to commit crimes against raptors. In the five year measurable period there have been 262 incidents in England and Wales: 146 of

these caused by shooting and 66 by poisoning.

The majority of incidents took place against buzzards (108), followed by owls (40), red kites (39) and peregrine hawks (34).

In January 2016 the government published the [Hen Harrier Action Plan](#) and the new maps will help support the six positive actions outlined in the plan, which are already underway. Today's maps show one incident involving Hen harriers.

The maps were developed by the [Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group](#), which includes Defra, the Devolved Administrations, [Natural England](#), National Wildlife Crime Unit, the police, [British Association for Shooting and Conservation](#), [RSPB](#), [Country Land and Business Association](#), [Moorland Association](#), [National Game Keepers' Organisation](#), [National Parks England](#), [Crown Prosecution Service](#) and [the Countryside Alliance](#).

Image credit Allan Drewitt, Natural England

[Press release: Don't throw plastic or other items at Matlock raft racers](#)

With this year's annual Matlock Boxing Day Raft Race given the go-ahead once again, the Environment Agency is urging the thousands of spectators expected to turn out to watch the popular event to leave their flour-filled plastic bags and other objects at home.

In previous years, spectators have thrown eggs, flour, plastic or paper bags, and other products at the raft racers from various points along the 3.5 mile course of the race on the River Derwent, which poses a real threat to the environment and wildlife.

Paul Reeves, Environment Officer at the Environment Agency, said:

We realise the Matlock Raft Race is an important social event for the area, which attracts a large number of local residents as well as visitors from further afield, has a positive impact on the local economy, and raises funds for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

However, we are appealing to spectators to consider the environment by not throwing flour-filled plastic bags or other objects at the raft racers and into the water this year.

If plastic or paper bags enter the watercourse, they pose a real threat to wildlife both locally and further afield. Last year there

were sightings of water birds trying to eat floating flour-filled bags, and the deadly impact of plastics on river and sea life is well known and currently in the news.

Councillor Lewis Rose OBE, Leader of Derbyshire Dales District Council, said:

The Boxing Day raft race has become something of a tradition here in the Derbyshire Dales and long may it continue. However, we absolutely support the Environment Agency's plea to spectators to refrain from activities that threaten the environment and wildlife, as well as littering our waterways and streets.

Kath Stapley, Living Rivers Officer, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, added:

On behalf of the 60 partner organisations which make up the Derbyshire Derwent Catchment Partnership, we're asking people to spare a thought for the wildlife in and around the River Derwent.

We're constantly working to improve the rivers in the catchment, from Howden Moor above Ladybower Reservoir, down into Derby, but we can only make a difference with support from members of the public. If plastics and other items are thrown into the river at Matlock, they may travel out of sight, but will inevitably affect the watercourse and wildlife downstream in Belper, Duffield, Derby and even down into the River Trent.

Corporate report: Cefas: Civil Service People Survey 2017

The survey shows responses by theme:

- leadership and managing change
 - involvement in work
 - management
 - team
 - learning and development
 - inclusion and fair treatment
 - pay and benefits
-

[Corporate report: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs single departmental plan](#)

Updated: Added the May 2018 version of the plan.

Our single departmental plan sets out our objectives and how we will achieve them.

[News story: Brakes are off as reactor clean-up moves forward](#)

Engineers also used the wheels from a kitchen can opener, attached to the handbrake, to help steer a camera inside the Prototype Fast Reactor (PFR) for a survey inside the plant.

Conditions inside the reactor make it impossible for workers to access, meaning photographs taken by the piece of kit help in understanding how best to go about dismantling the redundant facility.

Chris Irwin, Senior Design Engineer, came up with the innovative concept. He said:

I was opening a can of beans at home and realised that the cutting wheel of a can opener was exactly what was needed to make the required diamond-shaped wheel.

I bought four of them and took the wheels off. The camera needed to be guided over obstacles within the reactor, so we realised the incremental nature of the clicks on a handbrake would give us the precise control that we needed.

This is the latest in a long line of novel approaches developed by the company's workforce, with blu-tack and Cillit Bang among the everyday items that have previously been used to help deliver safe and cost-effective clean-up on behalf of the site's owner, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

We are delivering one of the most challenging closure programmes in Europe, but this is another example where innovative, simple

solutions prove critical in safely delivering complex projects.

PFR is one of three reactors at the former centre of fast reactor research. It was closed down in 1994, 20 years after it began producing power.