

RURAL TIMES

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PROTECTING
OUR RURAL
COMMUNITIES

HAMPSHIRE AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT



CONTENTS

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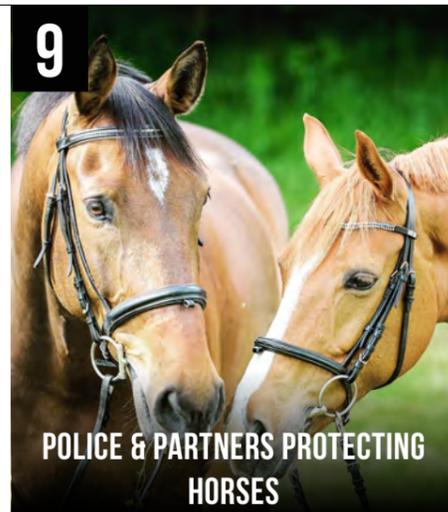


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WELCOME TO THE LATEST ISSUE OF RURAL TIMES



Chief Inspector Korine Bishop

Hello, my name is Chief Inspector Korine Bishop, and some of you may recognise me from my time leading the Country Watch team.

I have been a police officer for 26 years – six of which were spent with Country Watch. The role helped me gain crucial understanding of the issues faced by people living in rural areas, and I still keep a rural hat on as chair of the National Equine Crime Priority Delivery Group.

I recently accepted a new role locally as District Commander for Winchester.

Many will associate Winchester with the historic

city, however we have a vast rural area within the district which encompasses much of central Hampshire.

From my time in a rural policing leadership role, I know all too well the challenges faced by rural communities, not least the sense of isolation or detachment from larger urban areas or indeed from the police service as a result of living in more remote areas.

My commitment as district commander is to ensure we maintain a sense of connectivity between our rural public and the police, and to deliver the best possible service so that those communities feel safe and supported.

We have two Neighbourhood Policing Teams who cover rural

Winchester. Their efforts are bolstered by local District Policing Teams and the specialist support provided by Country Watch. They are focused on relentlessly pursuing the criminals who cause the highest harm to rural communities.

Hare coursers are active this time of year, and you can read later in this edition the efforts of officers to respond to this type of crime and target criminals, including in Winchester district.

Please keep reporting incidents to police, and I encourage those of you with a business connection to the rural environment to become a member of DISC where you can report to police and stay informed about issues in your area. Simply email discreports@hampshire.police.uk

DANGEROUS DRIVERS NOT WELCOME AN UPDATE FROM PCC DONNA JONES



Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner

Our roads can be tricky to navigate at the best of times, and with the darker evenings comes the need to remind ourselves that we must all drive safely and responsibly.

Every year, too many animals die on the roads in Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight and for horses and their riders it's a truly terrifying experience when drivers pass too fast or

too close. One local rider I met this summer says there are just too many incidents that could easily end in tragedy.

The Highway Code is now very specific about what drivers should do to safely pass horses – slow down to a maximum of 10mph, be patient and don't sound the horn or rev the engine, pass the horse wide and slow when it's safe to do so with a minimum of two metres if possible, and drive slowly away.

Horse riders have to be on the roads so they can link up with the bridleway network and the British Horse Society has worked really hard with the Department of Transport to get this advice into the Highway Code and give due consideration to all road users.

I'm doing all I can to make sure that road safety is a priority across the two counties. We need to protect horses, riders, drivers and passengers alike, and put simply this guidance in The Highway Code saves lives.



OPERATION GALILEO: DISRUPTING HARE COURSING IN HAMPSHIRE & ISLE OF WIGHT

Autumn is the time of year that we see the bulk of hare coursing incidents across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

The Country Watch team routinely monitor these trends throughout the year and are often on hand to support District Policing Team (DPT) and Neighbourhoods Policing Team (NPT) colleagues to respond to crimes in action.

Tackling hare coursing under Operation Galileo is a Country Watch priority, and the specialist team are committed to using all options available to them to deal with offenders.

Police efforts were bolstered as a result of new legislation that was introduced in April 2022. Sections 63 and 64 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 saw the introduction of the new offences of trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, and being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs.

This legislation is a boon for policing as it allows officers to arrest and prosecute individuals who have demonstrated intent to poach hares – such as having Lurchers in their possession on private land – without an offence of hare coursing having actually taken place.

Often police who attend hare coursing calls will seize the offenders' dogs. Section 65 of the Act now ensures police can recover kennelling costs through the courts from criminals who have been prosecuted.

We recently secured Hampshire's first set of charges, convictions and sentences through

the courts under this new legislation, and you can read more about this particular case later in this magazine.

Responding to calls for service is just part of the effort needed to address hare coursing, however. Police also conduct proactive patrols at night in hotspot areas, in addition to working closely with farmers and landowners to raise awareness of the crime, ensure they feel supported, and to encourage reporting to the police.

Country Watch take part in proactive Galileo operations, including ops on the evening of Friday 15 September in the New Forest and on 25 October in Avon Valley. The September op involved engaging with landowners in the Breamore area, conducting police drone patrols over hotspots, carrying out high visibility patrols and stop checking vehicles.

The team were called to deal with a hare coursing in progress in Bisterne. On attendance it was determined that it was not coursing as was initially suspected, but nonetheless officers were met with reassured residents who were grateful for the police response – and likewise, the team were grateful that a swift report was made to police.

The operation also resulted in officers identifying a vehicle suspected to be involved in cross-border hare coursing incidents.

The following week, on Thursday 21 September, officers from the Country Watch team, NPT, DPT and the Roads Policing Unit

responded to reports of hare coursing in the Clanfield and Woodmancott areas of the county.

A 35-year-old man was arrested in Clanfield on suspicion of trespass with intent to search for or pursue hares with dogs. He has been bailed until 22 December while enquiries continue.

During the incident in Woodmancott, a 4x4 vehicle failed to stop for police before later being located overturned in Cliddesden.

The vehicle occupants had since left the area, leaving behind a Lurcher dog, a dead hare and some cannabis.

This activity coincided with Rural Crime Action Week, and you can read more about police efforts during this week in this edition's Rural Round-up.

We continue to encourage people to report incidents of hare coursing, or suspicious people and vehicles to police. To report information, please call 101 or submit details online here: <https://www.hampshire.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

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

If you have a business connection to the rural and wildlife environment, you are eligible to be a member of DISC. Please email discreports@hampshire.police.uk

CRIME PREVENTION ADVICE

Collisions with animals on Hampshire roads

Country Watch officers have been dealing with a number of incidents recently of animals being hit by cars in the New Forest.

We are encouraging motorists to familiarise themselves with what to do in the event of a collision, and to be aware of certain animal activity in the Forest in the hopes that this can help prevent collisions occurring.

A pig was hit and killed in a collision with a car on the B3079 at Bramshaw on 30 June this year. The car did not stop at the scene.

In a separate incident, on 29 September, we received reports of a pig being hit and killed in a collision on Stoney Cross Plain Road. Similarly, the vehicle did not stop at the scene.

On 27 September we also received reports of two dead sheep in the road in Cadnam.

Many of the animals that roam the New Forest such as pigs, horses, sheep, cows and donkeys are owned by the Commoners.

Under the ancient practice of pannage, pigs are released into the Forest to feed on fallen acorns, beechmast, chestnuts and other nuts. Green acorns in particular are poisonous to the ponies and cattle which roam the forest the majority of the year.

The pannage season this year runs from Monday 11 September to Friday 17 November 2023 so you may come across pigs during a visit to the New Forest.

If you encounter an animal in the road or verge, remember to PASS WIDE AND SLOW. This is particularly important this time of year when it is darker and the weather is unpredictable. Animals have no road sense so may walk out in front of you.

In the event of a collision, it's important to stop your vehicle, check on the animal

if safe to do so, identify your location and report to the police. It is worth downloading the What3Words app on your phone to help you identify exactly where you are – this information can then be passed to a police call handler to help track you down. Police will then make contact with an agister.

Failing to report a collision with an animal is an offence under Section 170(8) of the Road Traffic Act 1988. The animals captured within this piece of legislation are horse, cattle, ass, mule, sheep, pig, goat and dog.

Further details on who to speak with in the event a collision, or finding a sick/injured animal in the road can be found [here](#)



Autumn also marks the rutting (mating) season for our 3 largest species of deer in the UK – Red, Fallow and Sika.

Sadly the rut also brings with it a marked spike in the risk of deer vehicle collisions (DVCs) through October and November – particularly with Fallow deer on motorways.

Knowing you need to be more cautious for deer on the road from now until late November is extremely useful, but also knowing where to be extra vigilant in your local area could also greatly help reduce your risk of a collision.

The British Deer Society have produced DVC hotspot maps which you can access on this web page: <https://bds.org.uk/information-advice/issues-with-deer/advice-for-drivers/deer-vehicle-collision-hotspots/>

We also encourage people to download the free leaflet on the [BDS website](#) with advice on what to do if you hit a deer in the road.

Theft of tools from vans

Detectives are investigating a series of thefts of tools from vans, which is primarily affecting the east of the county and up the A3 corridor. These take place on dark evenings or overnight.

We'd like to remind van owners of the following advice. Please share this with professional groups and contacts you may have, especially if you are a self-employed tradesperson in the areas affected:

- Wherever possible remove your tools from your vehicle and store securely overnight.
- Mark the tools clearly with your name/company name and address using paint pens and seal with a clear lacquer spray. Other property marking systems are available.
- Use a lockable cabinet within your van to store the tools during the day.
- Use a small camera designed to record within vehicles.
- Take photographs of items of value, making a note of the serial numbers and registering them online at a property register site such as [Immobilise](#).

For more general advice about preventing thefts from vehicles, see [here](#).

We are especially keen to hear from anyone who sees vehicles acting suspiciously in the areas affected, or who has had their number plates stolen.

If you have any information about these incidents, please don't post this online, report it to us [here](#) instead, or by calling 101 quoting 44230391471.





HAMPSHIRE HARE COURSING GROUP SENTENCED FOR OFFENCES UNDER NEWLY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION

Five men have been sentenced for hare coursing offences in Hampshire under newly introduced legislation, following an investigation by the specialist Country Watch team.

This is the first time Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary has secured charges and convictions under Sections 63 & 64 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 since its introduction.

On the evening of 18 January this year, police received a report that crops had been damaged during an ongoing hare coursing incident in Itchen Abbas.

Police were deployed to the area and located the vehicles – a Mercedes and a Jeep – before the Jeep, driven by 35-year-old Lloyd Jefferies, reversed and collided with a police car. Once police detained the Jeep’s occupants, the vehicle was searched and officers located three Lurcher dogs, five dead hares, bolt croppers and a lamp.

Meanwhile, the Mercedes left the scene and was followed by police to Southampton where the occupants

were detained by officers, who seized two more Lurchers, two dead rabbits, a slingshot and a lamp.

Following enquiries, five people were charged with offences and pleaded guilty in Basingstoke Magistrates’ Court on Thursday 3 August:

- Leonard Pinnick, aged 36, of Montgomery Road in Southampton pleaded guilty to trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, and being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs.
- Shane Jefferies, aged 27, of Hornbeam Close in Hedge End pleaded guilty to trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, and being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs.
- Lloyd Jefferies, aged 35, of Tanhouse Lane in Botley pleaded

guilty to trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs, criminal damage, and dangerous driving.

- Martin Tony Buckland, aged 19, from Hound Road in Netley, pleaded guilty to trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, and being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs.
- Martin Eli Buckland, aged 40, from Hound Road in Netley, pleaded guilty to trespass with intent to search for or to pursue hares with dogs, being equipped for searching for or pursuing hares with dogs, criminal damage, and dangerous driving.

Appearing at the same court on Monday 25 September, Lloyd Jefferies and Martin Eli



Buckland were ordered to pay £550 compensation each to the landowner.

Jefferies was also handed a 12 month driving ban with a requirement to complete an extended retest, a two year ban on owning dogs, a 12 month community order with a requirement to complete 200 hours unpaid work, and was ordered to pay £100 kennelling costs for the seized dogs, £85 court costs and a £114 victim surcharge.

Buckland was subject to the same costs and surcharge, as well as the same driving disqualification and dog ban. He was also handed a 12 month community order with a requirement to complete 50 hours unpaid work.

The vehicles’ passengers were sentenced as follows:

- Martin Tony Buckland - 12 month community order, 40 hours unpaid work, £40 fine, £100 kennelling costs, £85 court costs, £114 victim

surcharge, and banned from owning dogs for two years.

- Shane Jefferies - 12 week curfew, 12 month community order with 40 hours unpaid work, £40 fine, £100 kennelling costs, £85 court costs, £114 victim surcharge, and banned from owning dogs for two years.

- Leonard Pinnick - 18 month community order with 60 hours unpaid work and requirement to attend a ‘Thinking & Skills Programme’. He was also ordered to pay a £40 fine, £100 kennelling costs, £85 court costs, £114 victim surcharge, and banned from owning dogs for two years.

Another passenger, a 17-year-old boy, was also arrested by police. He was not prosecuted through the courts but must participate in a Youth Diversion Programme.

Police Staff Investigator Andrew Williams, from the Country Watch team, said: “Hare coursing is a scourge

on our rural communities. It involves the senseless persecution of wildlife, whilst also making life miserable for innocent farmers and landowners, who suffer trespass and damage to their property which accompanies this type of offending.

“The Country Watch team take a very robust stance against hare coursing, and will do everything in our power to respond to reports, assist landowners and target the criminals responsible.

“Last year new legislation was introduced which is bolstering the police’s efforts to target hare coursers, bring them to justice and recover costs from them. I hope rural communities can be reassured that we are making the most of this legislation.

“In autumn we see the bulk of annual hare coursing reports. Please remain vigilant, and report any suspicious people or vehicles on private land to police. If a crime is in progress, dial 999.”



MEET THE TEAM: PC DIANNE READ FOR NEW FOREST EAST, TEST VALLEY SOUTH, AND ISLE OF WIGHT

We want you to get to know the officers and staff working in Country Watch, and will be running a regular 'Meet the Team' segment in Rural Times...

This season we start by introducing the newest member of the team – PC Dianne Read.



Dianne has been with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary for the last 15 years, and became part of the Country Watch team in July this year.

Her most recent post was in 24/7 Intelligence where she spent 5 years of her service. Prior to this, PC Read has worked in a number of roles including the Proactive Drugs and

Proactive Vehicle Crime teams, working as a Neighbourhood Officer in Lymington and Totton, and also had a spell working in the Resolution Centre.

Now, she will be serving rural communities in the east of the New Forest, the southern edge of Test Valley including Broadlands and the surrounding villages, and the Isle of Wight.

PC Read said: "I'm really pleased to be part of Country Watch, and am making the most of my previous experience policing rural areas in the New Forest.

"It's been a busy summer and autumn period for me already, with much of my time spent responding to crimes in action within the areas I cover. They are large areas and a key part of my work will be developing strong ties with the respective communities that live and work in these districts, whilst working closely with partners and other local police teams to disrupt criminals who operate here.

"I will also continue to make regular trips to the Isle of Wight. The Wight Rural West team are based out of Yarmouth and I will support their efforts. However, the bulk of my time on the Island will be focused on conducting proactive patrols, and in a similar fashion to my mainland districts I will be looking to network with rural communities, build up a strong connection with them, and ensure they feel their concerns are heard and addressed.

"The rural space on the Island is vast, and there are unique protected species living there such as the White tailed eagles and Red Squirrels. Part of our role in Country Watch is dealing with wildlife crime and working with key partners to protect the county's wildlife. I look forward to working more closely with the project and conservation leads on the Isle of Wight who strive to protect the Island's iconic species."

OPERATION GALLOP: NATIONAL POLICE & PARTNER APPROACH TO PROTECTING THE NATION'S HORSES

It's estimated that there are approximately 1.2million horses in the UK, with 1.3million riders.

In 2022, the RSPCA received 27,000 equine related calls, culminating in 7,000 investigations.

The Equine Crime Priority Delivery Group (PDG) has been running for a number of years and sits under the National Rural Crime Team. The PDG is made up of police and partners nationally, and is led by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary's Chief Inspector Korine Bishop.

The importance of ensuring all police forces take a similar and co-ordinated approach to tackling equine crime has been recognised, and in October this year the PDG launched Operation Gallop.

At its core, Op Gallop's main objectives are to reduce horse, tack and trailer theft; improve responses to neglect and fly grazing; and increase education/ awareness of equestrian road safety. It's sponsored by the National Equine Welfare Council, and brings together police forces, equestrian partners, subject

matter experts and charities to tackle issues together.

This co-ordinated approach to equine crime will bolster the police's ability to identify offenders – particularly those working cross-border - and return stolen property to rightful owners. There will also be an emphasis on tackling animal welfare issues, and providing equine communities with robust Crime Prevention Advice to protect horses & property.

What is fly grazing?

Fly grazing sees horseowners tether their horse to the side of the road or a field to graze, and leave it with some water. It is not an illegal practice, but it can become a welfare issue if the horse is left and not properly tended to.

The PDG meets quarterly, and under Op Gallop will establish national guidance to help police forces set up Green Yarding schemes. A green yard is a safe space for a horse to be taken and looked after if an animal has been found wandering and away from its usual paddock.

Chief Inspector Korine Bishop said: "We're considering what best practice looks like and how we can collectively support the equine community. We have prevention, intelligence and enforcement leads and we've also set up a sub-group around green yarding, because we know there are issues with loose horses in certain areas of the country.

"Forces across the country use different recording systems and we are looking at national approaches to how equine crime is recorded to better understand the problem.

"We will soon be launching an Op Gallop website where horseowners can access the best and most up to date advice and support, and get an understanding longer term of what the PDG is doing to support the equine community.

"In the meantime, we encourage people to visit our recently launched [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages to stay up to date."



FIGHT OR FLIGHT: SECURING THE FUTURE OF UK BATS

MARK GOULDING - THE BAT CONSERVATION TRUST

The UK hosts 18 species of bat, with the autumn period seeing these airborne mammals mating, building up their fat reserves and seeking suitable hibernation sites.

Mating season begins in September and continues into October, when periods of torpor begin - a state of decreased physical activity, with the bats reducing their body temperature and metabolic rate before hibernation. Some will then begin hibernating in November to save energy for the colder months.

Bats are a European Protected Species (EPS) due to their historic decline and vulnerability across Europe; this means they are afforded legal protection that covers individual bats and their roosts.

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) work closely with police forces and other partners including local bat groups, volunteers, scientists and government departments to help secure the future of bats.

The National Wildlife Crime Unit's Strategic Assessment has identified bat crime as one of seven UK wildlife crime priorities for 2022-2025. The Bat Crime Priority Delivery Group leads on the work aligned with this priority, with an objective of reducing bat crime by working with key stakeholders, identifying obstacles

that may prevent the delivery of objectives, and raising awareness.

The delivery group - chaired by a member of the police service and deputised by a BCT representative - also promotes a preventative approach to bat crime, and develops support and improves standards of investigation relating to offences against bats and their habitats.

In addition to this, the BCT have been running a Wildlife Crime Project for more than 17 years. Its purpose is to work with key stakeholders in partnership to reduce the level of bat-related crime in the UK, and to ensure that wildlife crimes are reported and recorded. Where appropriate, the project also provides specialist support on the identification, police investigation and prosecution of such offences, ensuring effective and proportionate outcomes are achieved, and at no cost to those involved.

In the 10 year period 2012-2022, the BCT recorded 43 police incidents involving bats in Hampshire, with 1300 incidents recorded nationally.

This data is analysed by the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and is believed to only reflect a sample of incidents involving bats. The true extent of bat crime throughout the UK is thought to be even greater.

Earlier this year, the BCT supported Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary with an investigation into the destruction of a Pipistrelle bat roost in the Pitcot Lane area of Owslebury.

The incident was reported to have occurred on the afternoon of 27 January when a day roost was destroyed during building works, prior to any mitigation licence being obtained.

During the investigation, police spoke with a man in his 40s who admitted responsibility for this, and he was dealt with by means of a Community Resolution. Under the conditions of the CR, the man was required to install bat boxes, make an acceptable donation to the local bat group and go above and beyond in creating an acceptable environment for bats.

Conditions one and two were already adhered to prior to the CR being issued, with the man making a £250 donation to the local bat trust.

To report bat crime, please contact police by calling 101. Once you have obtained a crime reference number from the police, you can send this to the BCT by calling their helpline on 0345 1300 228 or emailing enquiries@bats.org and the BCT's Wildlife Crime Project will make contact with the police to offer specialist support.



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FLY-TIPPING: THE IMPACT & HOW YOUR REPORTS HELP

ROB YOUNG - HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of waste onto or into land that is not licensed to receive it. The type and quantity of the waste involved can be wide-ranging in nature, including anything from a single black bag of household waste through to trailer-loads of commercial or construction materials.

Fly-tipping is both a criminal offence and one of the most common forms of anti-social behaviour. It blights the countryside, contaminating the land and water, and is a threat to livestock and local wildlife. It also endangers public health and can attract other forms of environmental crime - including dog fouling, graffiti, littering and arson. The associated costs also deplete local authority budgets, and those of other responsible bodies, draining resources which could be better utilised elsewhere.

Targeting Fly-Tipping

Where offenders can be identified, whether from information within the waste or from witness statements, Hampshire's local authorities will take robust action. In 2021-2022, there were 117 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for fly-tipping offences, alongside 59 prosecutions and fines totalling over £35,500.

Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Constabulary and their partners also assist in the planning and undertaking of multi-agency "Operation Wolf"

events, which target both fly-tipping hotspots and the thoroughfares that are commonly used in the illicit transport of waste materials.

The Hampshire Fly-Tipping Partnership, meanwhile, established in 2017 and led by Hampshire County Council, meets quarterly to share best practice, and explore new strategies for dealing with the fly-tipping problem. For this, however, accurate information is key.



© Hampshire County Council

Reporting Fly-Tipping

In 2021-2022, there were a total of 21,691 reported incidents of fly-tipping within the Hampshire region. Of these, just 292 were described as having

occurred on private land. We know, however, that the fly-tippers do not distinguish between public and private land, with over 50% of landowners, farmers and land managers affected by waste crime in the past year. Reporting all occurrences of fly-tipping, including those on private land, helps to expose the true extent of the problem, reveals hotspot areas, drives investment in vital counter-measures, and increases overall levels of community awareness.

If you find a fly-tip, this can be reported through your local authority website - which can be found at the link below: -

www.hants.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/flytipping/report-fly-tipping

Alternatively, you can report the incident on-the-go through apps such as ClearWaste or websites such as FixMyStreet and LoveWhereYouLive.

Remember: -

- If you come across an incident in progress, **call the police on 999/101**. Do not confront fly-tippers, as they are engaged in a criminal activity and may respond unpredictably.

- Fly-tipped waste may be dangerous, as it can potentially contain sharp objects, chemicals, or other forms of hazardous materials. **Do not touch the waste and do not open any boxes or barrels!**



©Keith Betton



©Keith Betton



©Forestry England



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AVIAN FLU SPREADS TO HAMPSHIRE & IOW SEABIRDS

KEITH BETTON - HAMPSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (HOS)

All of us had hoped bird flu would pass by our threatened seabird species this breeding season, after colonies elsewhere in the UK were devastated by the virus in 2022. However, hundreds of seabirds are suspected to have died from bird flu along the Solent coastline.

The current bird flu outbreak began in 2021, caused by a highly pathogenic strain of the avian influenza virus (referred to as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or HPAI) of the H5N1 strain, which has spread globally and appears to be widespread through European bird populations. A small number of detections of the H5N5 strain of HPAI have also affected British wild birds.

The breeding colonies have experienced a 2nd summer of disease. Over 10% of the UK's breeding Black-headed Gulls may have been killed, including many at Titchfield Haven near Fareham.

HPAI is now impacting species like Guillemot, Razorbill, and Kittiwake – all of these nest in small numbers on the Isle of Wight. These species were already Red or Amber-listed due to population declines occurring over many years, prior to any mortality from HPAI. The true scale of the losses will not be clear for some time, but scientists at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) are very concerned about the impact of the virus on long-

term population trends and expect to see even higher levels of conservation concern for these species in future.

HOS has given £5000 towards research BTO are doing in addition to the usual suite of monitoring surveys. Data from these surveys will be crucial in assessing the impact of the virus on particular species.

HPAI goes beyond seabirds, impacting birds who naturally prey upon small numbers of them – including the Peregrine Falcon which has successfully increased its numbers after huge declines in the 1960s & 70s. A young Peregrine born on the Hampshire coast in 2022 was found dead on the roof of a church in Ringwood in August 2023. Tests detected the presence of HPAI.

HPAI has also been detected in Mute Swan, Greylag Goose, Canada Goose, Mallard, Teal, Moorhen, Coot, Curlew, Ringed Plover, Grey Heron, Wood Pigeon, Pheasant, Sparrowhawk, Goshawk, Buzzard, Kestrel, Tawny Owl and Barn Owl, plus a number of other species.

Human infections with HPAI are rare; the risk to the public is low and most infections have been among those having close contact with infected birds – usually poultry workers. Defra advise against having close contact with sick or injured birds.

Defra have also published a Mitigation

Strategy for Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in England and Wales which provides guidance to wildlife trusts, conservation charities, ornithologists and land managers including local authorities, on how to respond to suspected and confirmed findings of avian influenza in wild birds.

Landowners, local authorities and other organisations can [download and print bird flu posters](#) to display on site when there's a risk of bird flu, or bird flu is detected in the area.

How you can help

- Look out for dead birds, report them and keep dogs on leads & away from carcasses. You can help monitor the situation by reporting dead birds to Defra via the [online reporting system](#) or by calling the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77).
- The Animal and Plant Health Agency triages reports and does not collect all birds. They adjust the [collection thresholds](#) for dead wild birds for different species to increase or decrease the sensitivity of surveillance.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water if you touch wild bird faeces or feathers or after feeding wild birds.

You can find out more about how APHA monitor HPAI in wild birds on [gov.uk](#).

GROUND NESTING BIRDS THRIVE WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

FORESTRY ENGLAND

Unlike most birds, ground nesting birds build nests and raise their young on the ground around woodland edges and on the open heathland areas of the New Forest.

As such they are particularly sensitive to disturbance. In the UK, it is a criminal offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb birds and their young at, on or near an active nest site under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

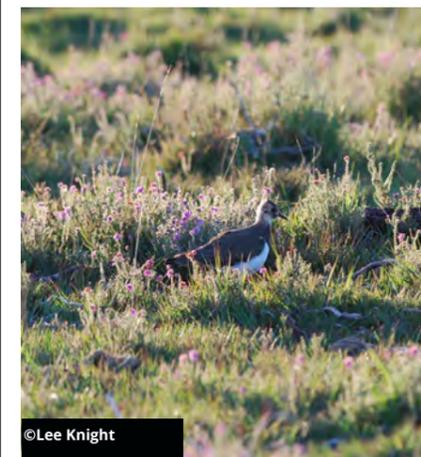
Locally, some of our ground nesting bird species include Woodlark, Lapwing, Curlew, Snipe and also Nightjar – which are later arrivals, landing in the UK late April to mid-May, before departing for Africa in August. All of these species occur in the New Forest.

Each breeding season can be very different, with varying environmental factors having an impact on the birds. Last year for example, the extreme conditions and sustained dry periods impacted insect hatches and available food for bird species relying on these. The much cooler temperatures and wetter conditions experienced this summer created much better conditions for many of the ground nesting bird species.

During the 2023 breeding season, special quiet zones were set up from March until late summer at critical breeding locations to help reduce the

likelihood of disturbance resulting in nests being abandoned and chicks exposed to predators.

A small number of car parks in the New Forest situated near nesting areas were closed. Visitors, including walkers, cyclists, dog walkers and equestrians were urged to stick to main tracks and avoid venturing into open heathland areas.



©Lee Knight

New Forest Keeper Lee Knight undertook crucial fieldwork throughout the season such as monitoring the birds and conducting predator management for crows and foxes, in addition to working with specialist partners whose expertise on individual species assisted with the protection of both the birds and their habitats.

Lee said: "We have begun a journey to try and ensure these amazing ground nesting birds remain here in the New Forest and can thrive. A huge amount of work has been done by all involved and we are starting to see some positive signs of recovery. The support from the local community and new forest organisations has played a crucial role."

The work on the ground this year was supported by a large multi-agency publicity campaign between February and August to generate greater community awareness and involvement in supporting ground nesting birds.

We are a country of wildlife lovers, and having the public's support and patience in enabling partners to safeguard the species of birds most vulnerable to disturbance has been key to breeding success.

The New Forest Business Partnership also assisted in amplifying the campaign messages to their customers to further enable partners to foster a sense of value and appreciation of birds amongst the wider community.

As a partnership, we are so grateful to residents and visitors to the New Forest who did their part in sticking to marked tracks and giving our breeders their much-needed space to successfully fledge this year's young.

RURAL ROUND-UP

HAMPSHIRE CONVICTIONS UNDER NEW HARE COURSING LEGISLATION RECEIVE NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The Country Watch team's efforts to tackle hare coursing were recognised at the 34th Annual Wildlife & Rural Crime Conference in Staffordshire in October.

This is a national event which sees law enforcers, statutory agencies and Non-Governmental Organisations gather to discuss the latest views, approaches, successes and challenges to combating wildlife & rural crime in the UK.

Sergeant Stu Ross and Inspector Cath MacDonald attended to represent Hampshire & Isle of Wight Constabulary's

Country Watch team.

At the conference, Sgt Ross and Insp MacDonald were delighted to be presented with a Certificate of Recognition for the team's efforts in securing convictions under newly introduced hare coursing legislation.

Details of this hare coursing investigation, and the subsequent convictions and sentences passed for five defendants involved, can be read on pages 6 & 7 of this edition of Rural Times.

RURAL CRIME ACTION WEEK: A PARTNERSHIP EFFORT TO BUILD INTELLIGENCE & TARGET RURAL CRIMINALS

The Constabulary supported Rural Crime Action Week between Monday 18th and Friday 22nd September.

The week was driven by the National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) with support from police forces and partners across the country.

A key element to the campaign focused on highlighting what police and partners do together to tackle rural crime.

The week also coincided with Equine Week of Action. PCs Giraudet and Bourne – two of our Equine Liaison Officers – joined forces with Thames Valley Police Mounted Section, the Roads Policing Task Force and the British Horse Society (BHS) to conduct a close pass operation in Silchester on Wednesday 20 September.

The purpose of the operation was to allow police and partners the opportunity to engage with motorists and give advice to drivers on passing horses safely on the road network. Their efforts were in response to recent statistics gathered from the BHS reporting app, and reports made to police, regarding road safety concerns for horse riders.

During Rural Crime Action Week, Country Watch PCs Bassett and Webb teamed up with the Environment Agency on Thursday 21 September to carry out enquiries into

rural metal theft and heritage crime, under Operation Tornado.

Scrap yards were visited in the Southampton area, and within Winchester district, with a view to developing crucial intelligence into theft of metal, individuals involved and where this metal ends up after it is stolen.

Theft of metal and heritage crime is a high priority for Country Watch throughout the summer months, as it is one of the highest reported offence types within rural communities.

The types of items stolen include catalytic converters, batteries from telecoms boxes, metal cabling and lead flashing.

During our visits to the premises in question, police located large quantities of commonly stolen items such as those listed above.

The Environment Agency will also be taking action against some of the premises visited due to the standard of their operational practices.

Our enquiries over the course of the day helped the development of the wider intelligence picture around this type of offending. We encourage our communities to please keep reporting these crimes to police or Crimestoppers, and to report any suspicious behaviour or vehicles.

TWO HARE COURSERS HIT WITH FINES

Two men have been sentenced after pleading guilty to charges of daytime trespass in pursuit of game, and hunting a wild mammal with dogs.

This follows a report of hare coursing on land off Micheldever Road, Whitchurch, on 3 January 2022.

Liam Pincham, 25, of Mill Lane in Carshalton, was fined £180 by Basingstoke Magistrates and ordered to pay £250 costs and a £72 victim surcharge on 14 August this year.

Tyron Young, 25, of Bolton Drive in Morden, was fined £103, and ordered to pay £250 costs and a £41 victim surcharge.

OP WOLF CARRIED OUT IN TEST VALLEY

On Thursday 14 September, in the run up to Rural Crime Action Week, police teams were engaged in Op Wolf in the Test Valley – near the border with Ludgershall, Wilts.

Op Wolf forms part of our partnership efforts to target vehicles used in rural crime. It offers us a proactive opportunity to disrupt criminality, in addition to addressing traffic offences, and targeting vehicles used in fly-tipping.

This was a great bit of team work between the Country Watch, Neighbourhoods and Roads Policing teams from Hampshire, police officers from Wiltshire Police, and Test Valley Borough Council.

Op Wolf forms part of our partnership efforts to target vehicles used in rural crime, as well as disrupting fly-tipping.

More than 30 vehicles were stopped during the op, with a number of document offences and defects identified.

RURAL ROUND-UP

PARTNERS DELIVER POLICE TRAINING ON ILLEGAL FISHING

On Friday 12th October police attended a training day at Lakeside Country Park in Eastleigh.

The Angling Trust and the Environment Agency came together to give Country Watch officers and the Rural Test Valley Neighbourhoods Policing team some training and guidance around illegal fishing.

Teams received training around rod licences, the different fish licences available, what kit and tackle equipment should be used dependent on what people are fishing for and what to look out for when fish poachers are about, and of course the bylaws, rights and legislation around fishing.

Officers also learnt the impact fish poaching has on our rivers and waterways, the cost to the environment as well as the huge impact on estates and businesses connected to fishing.

The teams had a very full on day, and although officers were not actually able to have a go at fishing due to the green-blue algae, the day offered a fantastic opportunity for police and partners to work together, and be given expert advice and training by the leading organisations in this field.

Thank you to the Angling Trust, Environment Agency and the 'Building Bridges Project' for putting on the day, and we look forward to working closely together in the future.

For more information on these agencies and the work/projects that go into protecting our rivers, see the links below:

<https://anglingtrust.net/>

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/fishing-hunting>

<https://anglingtrust.net/building-bridges-project/>

<https://anglingtrust.net/freshwater-projects/operation-traverse-leviathan/>

NEW POWERS HELP TO ENCOURAGE RESPONSIBLE VISITS TO THE NEW FOREST

Newly granted powers were used in the New Forest this summer to intervene in over 150 incidents involving petting and feeding New Forest ponies or donkeys, and a ban on the use of BBQs and fires.

Staff from Forestry England, the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) and the Verderers of the New Forest were granted powers to enforce two new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) introduced by New Forest District Council.

The orders aim to protect the forest from wildfires by banning BBQs/ fires and prohibit feeding and petting ponies or donkeys to improve public safety and animal welfare. Failure to comply could result in a fixed penalty fine or prosecution.

In the first 3 months, the New Forest team used the powers to intervene in 152 incidents involving over 700 people. More than 120 of the incidents involved petting and feeding ponies or donkeys. Those involved were made aware of the rules and potential fine to prevent them approaching the animals and to intervene where people were getting too close. No fines were issued.

Only around a fifth of the overall number of PSPO related incidents involved using BBQs and fires on the Forest. This may have been affected in part by this summer's mixed weather and reflects an overall downward trend in their use compared to during last year's heatwave. Despite this, 30 engagements were recorded where staff intervened using the potential fine to stop the use of a number of BBQs, campfires and even a pizza oven set up on the Forest.

Teams from Forestry England, New Forest NPA and the Verderers of the New Forest have regular patrols to engage with the public and explain more about the new rules. Signs and information are in place across the Forest. Along with other key things to know about visiting the area, the new rules are also highlighted in the [New Forest Code](#) widely publicised across the area and shared by local tourism businesses with many visitors before and during their stay.

A [video](#) was also launched earlier this year encouraging visitors and locals to help look after the landscape and its wildlife.

RURAL VEHICLE STOPS

During proactive patrols in the Avon Valley on 7 October, officers stopped a suspicious vehicle and removed a number of catapults from the occupants.

Four days later, officers seized a silver Nissan X-Trial that's suspected to be involved in hare coursing across the Hampshire Avon Valley, and in Dorset & Wiltshire.

REGISTER FOR HAMPSHIRE ALERTS

Want to stay informed? Sign up to Hampshire Alert to receive crime prevention advice, crime alerts and witness appeals for incidents.

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

[Click here to sign up.](#)

COUNTRY WATCH

Meet the team

Contact numbers and locations for our Country Watch officers are shown here, should you need to contact them about your concerns and issues. Please note that these phone numbers should not be used to report crimes. You should call **101** if you think an offence has been or is about to be committed, or call **999** in an emergency.

Although our officers are based in the locations stated, they have a countywide responsibility and can help you with any issue.



Insp Cath MacDonald
07909 770242



Sgt Stuart Ross
07970 145099



PC Will Butcher
07775 542982



PC Lee Stanbrook
07775 543719



PC Amy Giraudet
07787 004801



PC Ian Bassett
07775 537382



PC Matt Thelwell
07392 314410



PC Nick Atkins
07554 775466

Special Constable Alex Corbishley

Tadley

Bordon

Stockbridge

Special Sergeant Shane Phillips



Hazel Cross

Country Watch Coordinator
07799 587691

Bishop's Waltham



Police Staff Investigator Hannah Levy
07469 562472

Lyndhurst



PC Dianne Read
07717 665673

Isle of Wight

Special Constable Simon Galliar

Portsmouth

Special Constable Phil Keeling
07392 289634

PCSO Justin Keefe



Police Staff Investigator Toni Harris
07554 112779



Police Staff Investigator Andy Williams
07890 970929

PCSO Kevin Cooke

PCSO Cat Quinn

PCSO Karen Allen



PC Mark Webb
07392 314427

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