

What should I do if I suspect a wildlife crime?

- Contact your local PSNI station immediately on 101.
- Explain you believe a crime is taking place, contrary to the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985.
- Make sure you include details of location, time, date, who you suspect is involved and any other information which could help the police (for example photos of damage).
- Be sure to ask for the Police 'Command and Control' reference number for your records.

The PSNI has a Wildlife Liaison Officer who raises awareness of wildlife and welfare issues and is the central point of contact within the Police Service for police and police staff when support and advice is required regarding wildlife crime.



©Andy Hay

A recently box cut and partially removed hedgerow could have been left over spring/summer to provide safe nesting habitat.

Who is PAW NI?

The Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime in Northern Ireland (PAW NI) is comprised of various organisations involved in wildlife law enforcement.

PAW NI members are from both non-governmental organisations and statutory agencies.

PAW NI has various sub-groups, each focusing on a separate area of wildlife crime.

PAW NI members work together to reduce wildlife crime by raising public awareness and promoting effective enforcement.



BREEDING BIRDS



Adult tree sparrow feeding chick © Ray Kennedy

Information and guidance to protect breeding birds

Working in partnership to reduce wildlife crime by raising awareness & promoting effective enforcement

Nesting sites

Breeding birds build their nests in a variety of places including our gardens and parks, in hedgerows and woodlands, along river banks and lough shores, on the sides of houses and inside farm buildings. Nests can turn up anywhere!

Everyone can play a part to help breeding birds by taking simple steps to ensure nest sites aren't disturbed or destroyed.



Newly fledged duncock © Ben Hall

The breeding season is a sensitive time for birds as they can be easily disturbed and are at risk of predation. The adults, nests, eggs and chicks are all protected to help ensure that chicks fledge successfully.

What can I do to help?

PAW NI advises people avoid cutting or clearing hedges, trees or dense vegetation during the spring and summer months, as this is the time of year when you are most at risk of disturbing nest sites. Pruning is best done in late winter after flowering and fruiting has taken place. This doesn't just leave nest sites undisturbed but also maintains food availability during the breeding season, when the birds need it most. If you discover birds nesting, PAW NI advises you simply leave them alone, as the birds will only be there temporarily. You can contact the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) if you have any concerns about public health and safety.

In the garden...



Adult robin © Ray Kennedy

Robins are a common garden bird and breed from March to the end of July. They can be found nesting in trees, hedges, stone walls, outhouses and even in plant pots! Robins can raise up to three broods of chicks each year.

On the farm...

Yellowhammers nest near the ground in hedges, amongst scrub and in ditches. They are one of our most threatened farmland birds, with a core population in County Down. They can have up to three broods from April to the end of September.



Foraging adult yellowhammer © Tom Marshall

Under the eaves...



Adult house martin visiting nest © John Markham

House martins migrate thousands of miles from Africa to breed here. When they arrive they use mud to build bowl-shaped nests, typically under the eaves of houses and out-buildings. They will reuse old sites or build new nests and raise up to three broods of chicks from late April until early October.

Legal protection for breeding birds

The Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 protects all wild birds from unlawful killing or injury. The Wildlife Order makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird
- take, damage, destroy or disturb a nest whilst it is being built or is in use
- at any other time take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird on Schedule A1*
- obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest
- take or destroy the egg of any wild bird
- disturb any wild bird whilst it is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young
- disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Some wild birds are more vulnerable than others and an offence against these birds receives a higher penalty of prosecution. These birds are listed as Schedule 1 on the Wildlife Order and include grey heron, curlew and yellowhammer.

*In 2011 the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 (WANE) strengthened the Wildlife Order by adding species to Schedule 1 and creating Schedule A1, which provides year round nest protection for some birds of prey including barn owl and peregrine falcon.

Red kite nests are Schedule A1 meaning they are protected all year.



Red kite chick ©Adam Mc Clure