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LEGAL EAGLE

THE RSPB'S INVESTIGATIONS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2005 No 45



Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Gamekeepers club buzzard to death

Two gamekeepers have been found guilty of the intentional killing of a buzzard and possession of its body. The RSPB provided the investigation with crucial video footage, which captured one of the pair beating the buzzard to death with a stick while the other looked on. Both received a fine of £2,000.

On the afternoon of Sunday 22 February 2004, a local birdwatcher discovered a crow cage trap containing a live common buzzard on land managed as the Bradenham Hill pheasant shoot on the Dashwood Estate at West Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The bird was reported to the RSPB. Under the terms of the defra General Licence, operators of these traps have a legal

obligation to check active traps once every 24 hours and to release any non-target species.

The following morning, a Landrover arrived at the trap and two gamekeepers got out. Michael Clare, of Cookshall Farm, West Wycombe, entered the trap armed with a piece of wood and beat the buzzard to death, while the head keeper Leslie Morris, also of Cookshall Farm, West Wycombe, looked on. The body was taken away in their vehicle.

With video evidence of these events, the RSPB alerted Thames Valley Police Wildlife Crime Officer PC Paul Beecroft. A police search of the estate failed to produce the body of the buzzard but did lead to



Mark Thomas (RSPB)

Michael Clare and Leslie Morris caught on video.

the discovery of another active crow trap holding two live kestrels, which were subsequently released. Blood droplets in the original trap were submitted to the Central Science Laboratory for DNA testing and identified as coming from a buzzard.

A six-day trial began at High Wycombe Magistrates Court on

continued overleaf..



**In this issue: Ten-week jail term for Norfolk egg thief
£7,500-plus fine for company that damaged moorland**



The crow cage trap.

Mark Thomas (RSPB)

strongly countered by the evidence of several prosecution witnesses who all said the buzzard was healthy and alert both on the Sunday and early on the morning of the killing.

Describing the clubbing of the buzzard, veterinary surgeon Stephen Cook said 'The method of dispatch was botched and inhumane'. In complete contrast, the defence veterinary expert, Neil Forbes, said: 'The bird was dispatched quickly and proficiently'. These arguments proved irrelevant as District Judge English reluctantly dismissed the charge of cruelly ill-treating the bird based on case law from a higher court in respect of the definition of 'being in captivity'.

On 21 April 2005, District Judge English found both defendants guilty of intentionally killing the buzzard and being in possession of

its body. He ruled that the buzzard was not injured and Clare had given the buzzard the most cursory of looks and then immediately killed it. He also ruled that Morris, as Clare's boss, had directed Clare's actions and looked in his direction while he was beating the bird. Morris had claimed he only found out about the incident when Clare returned to the vehicle carrying the dead bird. The judge branded their evidence 'so inconsistent'.

The men were each fined £2,000 for killing the bird and ordered to pay £500 costs. No extra penalty was given for possession of the dead bird.

The RSPB wishes to give special thanks in this case to PC Paul Beecroft, CPS lawyer Carl Barker and prosecution barristers Richard Singer and Susan Drummond.

14 March 2005. Both keepers faced charges under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 of intentionally killing the buzzard and possessing its body, and under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 of cruelly ill-treating the bird.

The defence claimed the buzzard had a badly broken leg and Clare had simply taken action to euthanase the bird and had then hidden it on the estate. This was



Peregrine with chicks at nest.

Chris Gomersall (rspbimages.com)

PROSECUTIONS

Ten-week jail term for Norfolk egg thief

On 9 November 2004, 3,603 wild birds' eggs were discovered in a Norfolk mobile home.

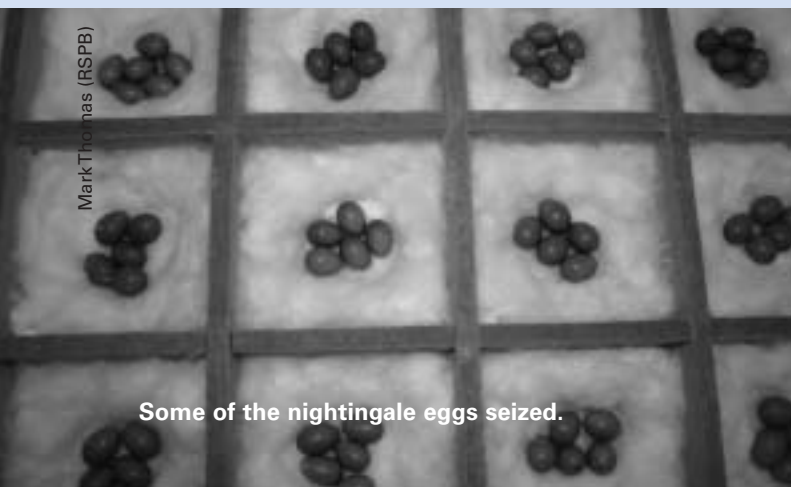
Under a Wildlife and Countryside Act search warrant, Wildlife Crime Officers from Norfolk Constabulary assisted by RSPB investigations officers, searched Newton Van Park, Fairholme Road, Newton St Faiths, Norwich, the home of Daniel Lingham. Most of the eggs were found hidden in secret compartments.

In the collection, the RSPB found 200 Schedule 1 eggs including 24 little tern eggs, as well as, alarmingly, 89 nightjar and 166 nightingale eggs. Documentary evidence suggested that Lingham had been extremely active in East Anglia and, in the last five years, had persistently targeted nightjars and nightingales. Both species have suffered significant population declines in the last 25 years.

When interviewed, he confessed to having taken a large number of the eggs in the collection over the previous 30 years, including all the nightjar and nightingale eggs from sites within East Anglia. Norfolk Wildlife Trust testified that, at one of their reserves that Lingham had targeted, numbers of breeding nightingales had fallen steeply despite the Trust's active management to help them.

At Norwich Magistrates Court on 23 March, Lingham pleaded guilty to seven charges under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and, despite having no previous convictions, was sentenced to 10 weeks' imprisonment, reflecting the regional seriousness of his crimes.

The RSPB wishes to thank DC Jerry Simpson, Sgt Alan Roberts and PC Jon Hopes for their efforts on this case.



Some of the nightingale eggs seized.

Mark Thomas (RSPB)

Falconer falls for peregrines

A young man with a broken leg, found in a quarry, was trying to rob a peregrine nest, Worksop Youth Court heard.

The 16-year-old youth from Worksop was found in a quarry in Derbyshire in May 2004. After he was taken to hospital, a rope was found hanging down the quarry face directly over a peregrine nest ledge containing three young chicks. Fortunately, these birds later successfully fledged from the site.

The young man was arrested and interviewed by Nottinghamshire Wildlife Crime Officer PC Douglas Kent, with the assistance of the RSPB. When interviewed, he gave contradicting accounts of how he sustained his injuries and denied any involvement in trying to take peregrine chicks or eggs from the site. It was established he was a practising falconer, and information gathered by the RSPCA while investigating another matter indicated that he also had an interest in egg collecting.

A file was prepared and the quarry staff provided statements and aerial photographs. The young man subsequently pleaded guilty at Worksop Youth Court to attempting to take the chicks or eggs of a peregrine. The court considered it a serious offence and asked for a pre-sentence report, following which, on 12 April 2005, he received a 100-hour Community Punishment Order.

This is the second incident in this area, as in 2003 an attempt was made to take three goshawk chicks from a nest site. The RSPB believes these sorts of incidents highlight the continuing demand for these bird species for use in falconry; we urge the government to retain them on Schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to give them maximum protection.

The RSPB would like to thank Wildlife Crime Officer PC Kent, Anna-Marie Pierrepont of the Nottinghamshire CPS and staff from Lafarge Aggregates Ltd for their roles in bringing this prosecution.

PROSECUTIONS



Roger Wilmslow (rspb-images.com)

Great crested newt.

£1,000 fine for newt disturbance

A man who recklessly disturbed great crested newts was fined £1,000 and ordered to pay £500 costs in March 2005. Despite advice from English Nature, Peter Dennis of Spennymoor, County Durham went ahead and cleared a pond of weeds on land that he was developing. He knew that this would harm any newts in the pond at this time. Mr Dennis admitted that he removed the weed and then did not check it after removal. When the police investigated, they found newts had been killed and others trapped in the removed weed.

Facombe Estates damage SSSI

A commercial shooting company was fined £7,500 and ordered to pay £6,787 costs after pleading guilty to damaging important heather moorland in the North York Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This is the largest tract of heather moorland in England.

Facombe Estates Limited runs grouse shoots on Westerdale Moor in the North York Moors National Park and elsewhere in the north of England. In Northallerton Magistrates' Court on 25 April 2005, they admitted



English Nature

Unsafe pesticide store in North Wales

Police cautioned the head keeper on a pheasant shooting estate in North Wales over the storage of pesticides. When the police searched the estate in August 2004, helped by the National Assembly for Wales and the RSPB, they found a work shed being used to store a number of pesticides. These included an unapproved brand of Cymag, a very toxic fumigant, and several herbicides. The storage conditions were very poor with products stored without appropriate signage and in association with flammable items and with foodstuffs.

The head keeper was later interviewed and it became apparent that he had little understanding of the requirements in relation to the safe use and storage of pesticides. In March 2005, he accepted a caution from the North Wales police for storing unapproved Cymag, and for storage of other pesticides without proper regard for the safety of humans and wildlife.

This incident highlights yet another example where sporting estates are failing to manage pesticides safely and the RSPB would encourage the police and other statutory agencies to take more action in relation to pesticide matters. It should be noted that, since the end of 2004, no brand of Cymag can be stored or used.

constructing 620 metres of three metre-wide stone track across the moorland without English Nature's (EN's) consent. EN officers first discovered the heather moorland had been destroyed when they visited the SSSI in August 2004.

The track, pictured left, has smothered over 1,800 square metres of healthy heather moorland, a habitat of European importance that supports birds such as merlins and golden plovers. A restoration order has now been imposed, which means that Facombe Estates Limited will have to pay to restore the damage to the satisfaction of EN.

After the hearing, EN's Director of Protected Sites, Dr Andy Clements, said 'The company already had permission to maintain existing tracks but instead it went further and created a new hard-surfaced track which resulted in an area of important wildlife habitat being lost.

'Land owners and occupiers of land designated as a SSSI have a legal responsibility to consult English Nature about operations that may damage the wildlife interests of a site. In this case, Facombe Estates Limited failed to do this.'

Quarry company fined



Barry Hughes (rspb-images.com)

Sand martin nest.

Action by a birdwatcher led to the prosecution of a quarrying company that destroyed 26 sand martin nests.

During three survey visits in 2004 to land adjacent to the Thomas Armstrong Quarry at New Cowper Quarry, Westnewton, Cumbria, the experienced ornithologist recorded an active sand martin colony containing 41 nests within the working quarry. On 18 June, he was dismayed to see that a section of the bank containing the nests had been removed and 26 nests destroyed. RSPB Investigations and Cumbria Police were contacted and a joint investigation began.

When interviewed, quarry manager Alan Hodgson admitted removing the vertical sand face but denied that any nests had been present. The company's environmental director disclosed that Thomas Armstrong Aggregates didn't have any written guidance on nesting sand martins. The director accepted that this might have led directly to the destruction of the nests.

On 17 May 2005, both the company and the quarry manager pleaded guilty to the nest destruction at Carlisle Magistrates Court. The court heard RSPB evidence that

during early June active sand martin nests would almost certainly have contained eggs or small young.

Thomas Armstrong Aggregates were fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £138 costs and Hodgson was fined £375. The Magistrates commented that the company had known about the issue of nesting sand martins for several years but had failed to have a written policy and had neglected their responsibility to seek advice.

After the case, an RSPB investigations officer said 'We are pleased that the magistrates recognised that quarry companies have a clear responsibility for the environment when carrying out their operations, including positive pro-active management of protected species.'

The RSPB leads in providing advice in these situations and has recently published an updated handbook for the minerals industry. To obtain a copy, telephone the RSPB advisory section on 01767 680551.

The RSPB wishes to thank Cumbria Police Wildlife Crime Officer PC John Shaw and Becky McGregor of the CPS.

Help for birds of prey in Scotland

Pesticides that have been used illegally to kill birds of prey and other wildlife have been brought under tighter control.

The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 inserted a new section (15A) into the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in Scotland. This makes it an offence to be in possession of a pesticide containing one or more of a list of 'prescribed' active ingredients. This follows repeated

abuse of these products to kill protected wildlife. It will be a defence to show that the possession of the pesticide was for the purposes of doing anything in accordance with any regulations made under section 16(2) of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 (FEPA) or the Biocidal Products Regulations 2001 (SI 2001/880) or any replacement regulations.

The list has now been published in the Possession of Pesticides (Scotland) Order 2005 (Scottish SI 2005/66), which came into force on 14 March 2005. The Order currently lists aldicarb, alphachloralose, aluminium phosphide, bendiocarb, carbofuran, mevinphos, sodium cyanide and strychnine. Some of these are, in any case, no longer approved under FEPA and storage of these products would also be contrary to this legislation. It is hoped similar measures will be introduced in England and Wales.

Duncan Orr-Ewing from the Scotland headquarters of the RSPB said, 'The Scottish Executive has provided the police with a new and very effective tool in the constant fight against those who seem as determined as ever to destroy Scotland's precious birds of prey.'

Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)



Golden eagle.

No licence to kill for starling and house sparrow

A special licence is now needed to kill starlings and house sparrows. In February, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (defra) announced that the starling and house sparrow would be taken off most of the General Licences that previously allowed numbers of these species to be killed in England.

Where starlings or house sparrows are causing serious damage to

crops, or are responsible for spreading disease, defra may issue specific licences to kill them; they will only do so where there is evidence of damage and there is no satisfactory alternative.

We are pleased that defra has reviewed the licences for these birds. House sparrows and starlings have both declined so much that they are on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern. However, we are disappointed that other species have not also been removed. Evidence of damage by jackdaws and rooks has not been reviewed and herring gulls have declined by nearly 50% in recent years.

The RSPB will be urging defra to review the species lists to ensure that only those birds which cause serious damage and are not of conservation concern can be killed under General Licence.

Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)



House sparrow.

PAW Partner of the Year award

The National Federation of Badger Groups (NFBG) is the first partner organisation to win the new Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) 'Partner of the Year Award'. The award ceremony was held at London Zoo on Monday 7 March as part of the annual PAW Seminar and was sponsored by Browne Jacobson Solicitors. Tom Huggon of Browne Jacobson presented the award to Dr Elaine King, Chief Executive of NFBG, supported by the co-chairmen of PAW: Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales Police and Martin Brasher, head of defra's Global Wildlife Division.



Dr Elaine King with PAW award.

Trevor Lawson (Red Fox Media)

The Right Hon Elliot Morley, Minister of State for the Environment and Agri-Environment, also present at the seminar, said the award was 'very well deserved'.



Skylark.

Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Warwickshire police save skylarks

Wildlife Crime Officer PC Craig Fellowes of the Warwickshire police reports on the value of quick intervention when nesting birds are at risk.

Over the past two to three years, there has been an increase in the number of reports received in spring of nesting birds threatened by development works. In late March 2005, an RSPB member alerted us to the development, for recreational use, of a 30-acre site, which was being sprayed to clear vegetation before stripping the entire surface. The developers agreed to wait for ecologists to carry out a site assessment, which revealed that the

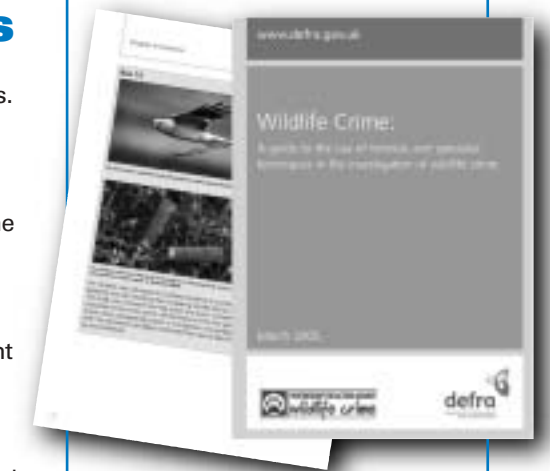
area held around 30 pairs of skylarks.

The skylark is a red-listed species of high conservation concern because of a steep national population decline over the last 25 years, but the developers were unaware of the value of the site for this species and the implications of their development work. Once the police had become involved and the relevant parties realised the consequences, they became very co-operative and agreed to delay the work to the end of the breeding season. This sort of prompt intervention is clearly preferable to having to deal with cases of actual nest destruction, which are often time consuming and difficult to prove.

Forensics for wildlife

A new document will help anyone considering using forensics to investigate wildlife crime. *Wildlife Crime: A guide to the use of forensic and specialist techniques in the investigation of Wildlife Crime* was compiled by the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Forensic Working Group (FWG) and launched at the PAW Seminar in London in March 2005 by the Right Hon Elliott Morley, the Minister of State for the Environment and Agri-Environment.

The document outlines a wide range of methods that have and could be used in wildlife investigations and lists contacts in FWG who can draw on a wide range of scientific and practical experience to provide extra help. A copy has been sent to every WCO plus the forensic Scientific Support Managers for all police forces. It will also be available in PDF format on the PAW website, www.defra.gov.uk/paw



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)



Mixed news for hen harriers

The results of a national survey of breeding hen harriers undertaken in 2004 have shown a significant overall increase in their numbers, particularly in Orkney, the Hebrides and the North and West Highlands. However, they have declined in areas where there is a concentration of grouse moors.

The survey, conducted throughout the UK and the Isle of Man between April and July 2004, is the first snapshot of the small and threatened hen harrier population since previous surveys in 1998 and 1988–89. It shows:

- a UK population increase of 44% from 521 pairs in 1998 to 749 pairs in 2004
- a Scottish population increase of 45%, from 436 pairs in 1998 to 633 pairs in 2004
- within Scotland, increases in Orkney (34 to 74 pairs), Hebrides (24 to 48 pairs), north Highlands (30 to 102 pairs) and west Highlands (159 to 243 pairs). But decreases in east Highlands (82 to 65 pairs) and southern uplands (117 to 64 pairs)

- most of the decreases have been in areas with a concentration of driven grouse moors (south and east Scotland and the north of England)
- increases have occurred on moorland not managed for grouse shooting, in young conifer plantations and in more mature conifer plantations that contain rides with tall vegetation.

The sizeable increases found in some areas may be due to improved breeding success and adult survival in recent years. An increase in food supply following a series of mild winters, and reduced persecution pressure in some areas may have benefited hen harriers.

Sadly, it seems they are less welcome on the grouse moors of northern England and Scotland, where numbers have fallen and illegal persecution is strongly implicated. Hen harriers rightly receive the highest levels of legal protection, and we urge responsible moorland managers to work with us and Operation Artemis to prevent crime and reduce conflicts between conservation and field sports. www.savetheharrier.com

Alien crayfish update

Legal Eagle 43 reported on the case of the release of signal crayfish into trout ponds on an estate in south Aberdeenshire. These North American crayfish are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and it is therefore an offence to release them into the wild. Despite this, the Sheriff at Stonehaven Sheriff Court delivered a verdict of not guilty, having accepted the defence argument that it was not a release 'into the wild'.

Since the trial's conclusion, an eradication programme has found that the crayfish have escaped from the trout ponds into the drainage system and are now in effect in 'the wild'. They are now free to disperse downstream and colonise the Luther Water and River North Esk. The eradication programme, thought to be the first of its kind in Scotland, has to date cost £40,000 but the threat remains.

Mike Lane (rspb-images.com)



The impact that North American signal crayfish have on aquatic life and river ecosystems is not fully understood, but they are an aggressive and invasive species that present a real threat to the biodiversity of Scottish rivers by preying on small fish, eggs, and competing with other fish species for food and shelter.

INTERNATIONAL

Raptors persecuted in Germany and France

Two recent studies in Europe have revealed that human persecution of birds of prey is not just a problem in the UK.

In Germany, in the county of Soest, a survey between 1992 and 2003 found that 229 raptors were killed in 71 incidents of raptor persecution. The incidents involved 10 species of birds of prey and two species of owl, with nest destruction and poisoning claiming most of the victims. Most of the nest destruction cases involved Montagu's and marsh harriers while poisoning mostly affected buzzards

and red kites. Most of the persecution took place during the breeding season and alarmingly, the number of cases showed an increase over the survey period. To try to counter this trend, there have been some anti-poisoning campaigns in recent years.

In addition, a recent survey of bird of prey populations in France has shown that there are between 3,000 and 3,900 breeding pairs of red kites. Unfortunately, the survey also found evidence of persecution with six birds found shot.

Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)



Marsh harrier.

Times of Malta



Smuggled birds seized in Malta

A suitcase full of protected birds, only a few of which were alive, was intercepted by Maltese Customs in January 2005 after officials became suspicious of a Maltese man arriving from Tunis. The suitcase contained greenfinches, serins, linnets, herons, barn owls, mallards, a Mediterranean shearwater and a greater flamingo.

Some of the – mostly dead – greenfinches smuggled into Malta.

CITES law enforcers honoured

Six law enforcement officers received the 2004 Clark R Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards at the Bangkok CITES conference on 4 October 2004. The Species Survival Network (SSN) organises the awards, in the form of magnificent sculptures of great white sharks. The CITES Secretariat asked all 166 CITES parties for nominations.

The awards were presented to Police Major General Sawaeke Pinsinchai, Thailand; Chey Yuthearith, Cambodia; Sheila Einsweiler, United States; Thanit Palasuwan, Thailand; Corporal Huka Umuro Kuri, Kenya; and the entire Anti-Smuggling Bureau, China.

An example of the work that led to these awards is the raid carried out by a team of forestry police officers under Major General Sawaeke Pinsincha. They entered a house on the outskirts of Bangkok in 2003 and discovered tiger carcasses quartered and on ice, 21 bear paws severed at the joints, six starving tigers, five live bears, and four baby orang-utans, one of which died because of the horrendous conditions. Sawaeke's team also raided an open market, seizing more than 1,000 protected birds in one day, and a couple of private zoos, where they found 70 unregistered orang-utans. The illegal trade in wildlife in Thailand has

suffered a serious blow because of this seasoned police officer's actions. The details of the other awards winners' work can be viewed at www.ssn.org/Meetings/cop13/press/pressreleases/bavin.htm

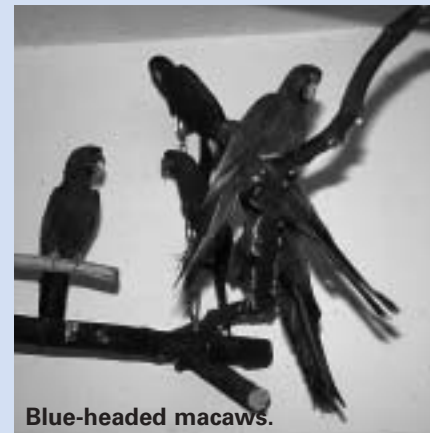
Will Travers, Chairman of the Species Survival Network said 'Conserving wildlife is frequently difficult, dangerous and sometimes deadly. The Bavin Awards recognise the extraordinary efforts that field-based wildlife protectionists and law enforcement officers are willing to go to stamp out wildlife crime. Sometimes they pay the ultimate price. We salute them.'

Sissen supplier loses case

An appeal court in Trnava, Slovakia has thrown out a civil action brought against a Slovakian newspaper by one of the dealers implicated in supplying convicted parrot smuggler, Harry Sissen.

Zdenek Pichlik, who was said to have supplied Sissen with six rare blue-headed macaws, sued the national newspaper *SME* after it published a report on Sissen's April 2000 conviction in the UK. Although the newspaper only referred to Pichlik by

his initials, he sued for defamation to the tune of 12,000 euros. A court in Dunajska Streda originally upheld Pichlik's case, but the matter went to appeal. Following a request for information by the newspaper's lawyers, the RSPB sent a detailed dossier about the Sissen conviction. This included copies of faxes between Sissen and contacts in Slovakia which had been produced at the original trial, and which clearly implicated Pichlik in the deal involving the six macaws.



Blue-headed macaws.

Guy Shorrocks (RSPB)

Concern over US 'wildlife rescuers'

Recent investigations have revealed a growing number of unethical and illegal activities among some wildlife rescue organisations and non-profit corporations in the USA.

Although many such groups and corporations are dedicated and ethical, some are taking advantage of unsuspecting supporters and earning income from solicited donations and from the sale of pets and wildlife entrusted to their care. These activities are particularly rife among so-called reptile rescue and reptile conservation groups. At reptile enthusiasts' meetings, reptile auctions, exotic animal fairs and through reptile dealers, the sale of

rescued and donated reptiles is increasingly becoming the norm, rather than the exception.

Concern is also mounting over the growing trend for these disreputable rescue organisations to illegally ship wildlife and exotic pets – including venomous snakes – throughout the US, using carriers such as Federal Express and the US Postal Service, both of whom prohibit such shipments.

Calls are being made for tighter regulation of these so-called wildlife and pet rescue services.

Crawford Allan leaves for the US

Crawford Allan, global enforcement co-ordinator for TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, has taken up the post of Deputy Director of the TRAFFIC North America office. Crawford began as TRAFFIC's enforcement support officer in 1993. He worked closely with the newly established Customs CITES team at Heathrow and was instrumental in a number of high profile wildlife cases in the 1990s.

He worked with Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the RSPB in bringing action against an international wildlife trader who received an 18-month sentence for smuggling many CITES specimens, including the skull of the critically endangered Philippine eagle. Another case with HMCE resulted in an eight-month sentence for a man who smuggled black cockatoo eggs from Australia.

With TRAFFIC, Crawford also provided information to the Metropolitan Police Service, on the illegal traditional Asian medicine trade; this started the long running Operation Charm. Crawford was one of the founder members of the enforcement group that resulted in PAW and chaired the Forensic Working Group from its inception in 1996.

In 1998, Crawford was promoted to global enforcement co-ordinator for TRAFFIC. This involved carrying out research in other parts of the world, including the rhino horn trade in Yemen, and an overview of illegal CITES trade in the Caribbean Overseas Territories. He was also the TRAFFIC lead at the CITES Conferences of the Parties. He will continue to be involved in enforcement work whilst taking on the responsibilities of being a deputy director.

The RSPB would like to congratulate Crawford on his significant contribution to wildlife crime enforcement and wish him all the best for the future.



Crawford Allan on a raptor-handling course.

Guy Shorrocks (RSPB)

Retiring WCOs

Wildlife Crime Officers PC John White from Northumbria and PC Bob Fryer from West Mercia have recently retired.

John became involved with wildlife work over 15 years ago when police involvement in wildlife crime was still in its infancy. He was the case officer, and later commended, for one of the most significant cases in the 1990s. This involved the large-scale laundering of peregrines for

which the offender received 18 months' imprisonment. Other notable cases involved wildlife poisoning, illegal snaring and offences under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations (COTES).

Bob worked as a WCO for over six years, helping to raise the profile of wildlife crime by working with local groups and through the media. He has worked on a number of cases

involving welfare, trapping, pesticides and badger cases. Bob was forced to take early retirement following an injury on duty and two bouts of skin cancer. However, Bob intends to carry on the fight for wildlife through his own company, The Wildlife Promotion Company Ltd, e-mail: WildlifePromoCo@aol.com, doing species surveys and lectures.

The RSPB is grateful to both officers and wish them well for the future.

Graham Elliott moves on

Diane James (RSPB)



After nine years as head of the RSPB's investigations section, Graham Elliott has left to take up a new role of Fenland area manager with the RSPB.

This was Graham's second stint working on enforcement at the RSPB as from 1980–1986 he worked in the old species protection unit. During his time as head of section, there have been a number of significant developments in the investigation of wildlife crime with the continuing development of the WCO network and establishment of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW). He has also chaired the PAW publicity subgroup for a number of years. Graham has overseen the involvement of the RSPB in a number of high profile wildlife cases coinciding with the increasing use of custodial sentences by the courts. During this period there appears to have been an encouraging reduction in certain offences such as egg collecting and the illegal taking of birds of prey for falconry. In addition to managing a busy department, Graham took the lead in preparing a number of RSPB responses to government consultations on wildlife crime, which helped push through a number of significant legislative improvements.

We all wish Graham the very best of luck in his new post in turning the fens of East Anglia back into a world-class wetland, and thank him for all his hard work and good humour whilst leading the team.

Write to be read

We welcome contributions to *Legal Eagle*. Please let us know about wildlife crime initiatives, news, events and prosecutions in your force. Send your articles to the Editor, The RSPB, Investigations Section, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, by e-mail to sarah.eaton@rspb.org.uk or by fax to 01767 691052. The views expressed in *Legal Eagle* are not necessarily those of the RSPB. Please help us keep the WCO mailing list up to date by letting us know of any changes.



The RSPB is the UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife, helping to create a better world for us all. We belong to BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations.

The RSPB

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