



# WILDLIFE CRIME GUIDELINE

LIFE EUROKITE WILDLIFE CRIME GUIDELINE FOR AUTHORITIES  
AND POLICE

LIFE EUROKITE - "Cross-border protection of the red kite in Europe by reducing human-caused mortality"



This wildlife crime guideline was compiled by TB Raab GmbH within the LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) and is meant to give authorities and police an overview about wildlife crime topics.

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# 1. Introduction

Wildlife crime is a subset of environmental crime, involving the illegal capture, trade, possession, or killing of protected wild animals. This brochure is a compilation of existing information and guidelines related to wildlife crime, focusing on crime connected to raptor species. It aims to bring together all relevant information, provide an overview of key topics, and serve as a guide for investigations, supplemented by additional insights from the LIFE EUROKITE project.

Wildlife crime is driven by various motives and includes actions such as poaching, trafficking, and harming wildlife. While we often associate wildlife crime with the poaching of elephants, rhinos, birds, and reptiles in Africa and Asia, it is in fact a global issue threatening species in nearly every region. In Central Europe, for instance, protected bird species are often illegally killed through poisoning, shooting, or trapping (Brochet et al., 2017).

## 2. Background information

### 2.1. Wildlife Crime Numbers

Estimating numbers of illegally killed birds in the European countries is, however, extremely difficult. Partly, this is due to a high number of undetected cases, but also due to a lack of harmonization in reporting cases. Here we provide a short overview of existing data.

Countries in central and northern Europe with the highest numbers of illegal persecution of birds in general (all species, not raptors only) are Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Estonia as well as many (Brochet et al., 2017).

The RSPB has published data about crimes against raptor species in the UK since 2007. This data shows that the largest part of these crimes (about 75 %) is due to shooting and poisoning. In 17 years, 712 cases of shot and 609 cases of poisoned raptors have been reported (77.7 per year) (RSPB, 2025). In Germany, numbers of shot raptors are a lot lower (251) and numbers of poisoned raptors a lot higher (925) in a timespan of only 11 years (2005-2015), amounting to 106.9 cases per year. This difference in the type of persecution may mirror a difference in criminal motives (see 2.6). In France, 840 raptors have been shot in a time span of 7 years (2013-2021, LPO, 2021). In Castilla y Leon (Spain), a region less than one sixth the size of France, 1,185 raptors had to be treated with gunshot wounds in 27 years (1989-2016, Balmori, 2019).

A study about the most widespread poisons used in raptor persecution in the EU investigated poisoned raptors in 1996-2016. In the UK, 925 poisoned birds were included, 697 in Hungary and 671 in the Netherlands (Buji et al., 2025). In relation to the size of the countries, densities of poisoning are doubled in the Netherlands as compared to Hungary. However, the main purpose of this study was to identify commonly used poisons, meaning that these are minimum numbers and real numbers of detected cases may range higher. In Slovakia, for instance, a recent study reports numbers that are nearly 6 times higher in the years 2016-2022 (Veselovski et al., 2024).

The first results of the LIFE EUROKITE project show that 20.08 % of the tagged birds within the sample size were victims of illegal activities in 24 countries. Poisoning was by far the most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds. The most used poison was

Carbofuran which has been banned in the EU in 2008. The second most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds was shooting. When extrapolating the data on illegal bird persecution over the past five years (2020–2024), it is estimated that approximately 46,180 Red Kites have died as a result of persecution. This estimate is derived by scaling up known persecution rates of tagged birds to the entire European Red Kite population, based on published population size estimates, average annual mortality rates, and the proportion of mortality attributed to illegal killing. It therefore reflects a population-level extrapolation, not a direct count of detected cases. (LIFE EUROKITE, 2026)

## 2.2. Poisoning

As known for many years, use of poison-baits in the countryside is one of the most widespread used predator eradication methods worldwide (Márquez *et al.* 2012) and is a significant threat to biodiversity in the European Union. Poison is used to kill wildlife considered to be harmful to certain activities, for game management, for hunting, for livestock farming and other agricultural practices (Graham *et al.* 2005, Sotherton *et al.* 2009).

Illegal use of poison is considered one of the most important issues regarding illegal killing of birds due to the serious conservation impacts (Margalida *et al.* 2008, BirdLife International 2011) and is confirmed to be among the most important direct threats in Europe to the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*), Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*) and Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*). Poison-baits have been identified, for example, as the primary limiting factor in the expansion of the reintroduced population of Red Kites in northern Scotland (Smart *et al.* 2010) and of the UK Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) population (Whitfield *et al.* 2008).

In addition, poison-baits pose a serious impact on carnivore mammals (Virgós & Travaini 2005), by causing population decline and/or regional/national extinction of some species of bears, lynxes, wolves, mustelids or wild cats (Council of Europe 1993, Breitenmosser 1998, Lozano & Malo 2012, Ripple *et al.* 2014). Indiscriminate use of poison-baits also presents a risk to other wildlife, working animals (shepherd and hunting dogs), pets and human health, with lethal consequences. The perpetrators use offal, eggs, dead hares, rabbits, pheasants, chickens and particularly pigeons as lures and poison carriers. These are often placed in fields and fallow land as well as at the edge of remote crops. A study investigating 4,437 cases of raptor poisoning in the EU in 1996 to 2016 identified 4 poisons used in 86% of these cases (Buji *et al.*, 2025). These are **carbofuran** (48% of cases), **aldicarb** (17.7%), **parathion** (10.4%) and **alpha-chloralose** (9.8%). In the LIFE EUROKITE project as well, carbofuran and aldicarb were the most used poisons next to rodenticides.



Figure 1: Pictures of different kinds of poison baits © LIFE EUROKITE Archive

### 2.2.1. Commonly used poison

**Carbofuran** is a highly toxic carbamate pesticide used in agriculture for pest control. The European Union banned its use in 2008. However, because this pesticide is still available in countries outside the European Union, it continues to threaten vulnerable species. Animals which had contact with Carbofuran, especially birds, can be found directly on the bait or nearby. Carbofuran has one of the highest acute toxicities to humans of any insecticide widely used on field crops. 1 ml can be fatal to humans.



Figure 2: Carbofuran on poison bait. Most common as a type of granulate in purple or dark blue color.

Just like carbofuran, **aldicarb** is a carbamate. It is a cholinesterase inhibitor, causing rapid accumulation of acetylcholine at the synaptic cleft. It is a crystalline, white solid that is the active substance in pesticides like Temik. Its toxicity is even higher than the one of carbofuran – 1 g of aldicarb can kill up to 31 humans. In more than 100 countries across the world (including the EU and Switzerland), aldicarb is banned. Depending on the formulation, the granules may appear white, bluish, or slightly gray/dark gray. It consists of small, solid granules that can often be confused with sand or fine fertilizer.

Another toxic substance that is frequently detected in cases of poisoning is **parathion**, which belongs to the group of organophosphates. Before it was banned, it was marketed under the name E 605 as an insecticide, usually a powder. Due to its abuse in suicides and murders it became known as "mother-in-law poison" in colloquial language. Parathion is a highly toxic chemical compound that belongs to the organophosphates, a class of chemicals that interfere with the nervous system by inhibiting acetylcholinesterase.

**Alpha-chloralose** is a bitter, crystalline powder with narcotic properties. It has been used in human medicine, as a pesticide it works by causing hypothermia in cold temperatures. The use of alpha-chloralose as a rodenticide is legal in the EU.

Many common substances used to poison wildlife are not approved for use under current European legislation (Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and Council, which repealed Directive 91/414/EEC). In the LIFE EUROKITE project, 12 substances not approved for use in the EU were detected in Red Kites and other raptor species (Table 1). However, there have been substances detected that are approved within the European Union such as cadmium, chloralose, metaldehyde and pentobarbital.

*Table 1: Regulatory status and legal framework of not approved toxic substances detected in poisoned raptors tagged in the LIFE EUROKITE project (2013–2024) according to Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and Council.*

Substance	Status	Regulation	Legislation
Aldicarb	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	2003/199/EC
Bendiocarb	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2002/2076
Carbofuran	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2007/416
Chlorpyrifos	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2020/18
Diazinon	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2007/393
Dieldrin	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2019/1021
Methiocarb	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2019/1606
Metamidophos	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	2006/131/EC
Mevinphos	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	2002/2076
Oxamyl	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	Reg. (EU) 2023/741, Dir 06/16/EC, Reg. (EU) No 540/2011
Parathion	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	01/520/EC
Terbufos	Not approved	Reg. (EC) No 1107/2009 (repealing Directive 91/414/EEC)	2002/2076

### 2.2.2. Unintentional poisoning of wild animals

Unintentional poisoning of wildlife is most often due to rodenticide. Rodenticides are substances used in agriculture to reduce the population of voles that live in the fields and cause farmers significant crop damage. Instructions on their use recommend that the granules or immersed grain be inserted in occupied vole burrows with a dispenser and the permitted dosage per hectare of agricultural land should never be exceeded. Similarly, rodenticides are not allowed to be

applied near water sources and streams. Voles that have not died in their burrows, but whose corpses remain on the soil surface, are supposed to be collected and safely disposed of.

Unfortunately, many farmers do not obey the prescribed rules for using rodenticides (see 3.3). Worse still, they are also using unauthorized chemicals in an attempt to save money and especially second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. These are chemicals that keep blood from clotting and cause extensive internal bleeding. Because of the high risk that other animals besides rodents will be poisoned, there is a ban on the use of anticoagulant rodenticides outside buildings. Yet some farmers ignore the prohibition and every year there have been localized cases of widespread poisoning where dozens of brown hares, pheasants and roe deer have been killed. The poisoned animals themselves pose a risk to other animals that feed on carcasses. Often detected substances in dead birds are brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difenacoum and difethialone.

These four poisons are structurally similar synthetic compounds inhibiting the coagulation factor prothrombin. They are often sold as blue-green or red pellets as well as powder and paste. brodifacoum, as a second-generation rodenticide, has also caused numerous severe and sub-lethal poisoning of Imperial eagles in Hungary between 2019 and 2021. Brodifacoum and Bromadiolone have also been measured in non-lethal concentrations in raptors which can weaken their fitness and decrease breeding success.

### 2.2.3. Risks to humans

Poisonings expose more than just populations of protected species to the risk of death. Because poisoned baits are left out in the open, even pets and people can come into contact with them. All it takes is for a dog on a walk to lick or taste the bait. When the first clinical signs appear, namely convulsions and vomiting, trying to save the dog the owner's hands will become contaminated with dog's saliva or vomit and the poison will also enter the owner's body through the skin.

In worst case scenario, a child attracted to the pink color may also come into contact with the poisoned bait. The deliberate poisoning of protected species has thus become a serious social problem, too. It is in everybody's interest to take such attempts at poisoning birds and animals seriously and to roundly condemn them.

## 2.3. Shooting

Hunting in Europe is restricted by national laws, determining the hunting season and the closed season, as well as minimum quota for frequent animals and maximum quota for rare animals. EU legislation (see 2.7.2) determines which species are legal to hunt and which are illegal. In the EU, hunting for 82 species of bird is allowed (in certain time periods), hunting raptors is forbidden.

Illegal shooting of raptors is mostly conducted by buckshot. However, cases have become known where raptors have been shot by air guns or rifle.

Especially with buckshot it is difficult or impossible to see injuries on large birds. Characteristic damage in the plumage can give first clues, but concrete evidence (birdshot, buckshot, projectiles) is best achieved using x-ray, which can be made in most veterinary practices. If rifles are used, projectiles frequently pass through the bird's body and are no longer detectable. In such

cases, an entry and an exit wound provide the first clues. In some instances, x-rays can reveal lead residue from the bullets along the shot channel.

## 2.4. Trapping

Perpetrators use a wide range of traps, almost always with live decoy birds (e.g., pigeons) or pieces of meat as bait. We present the three most commonly used traps for the illegal trapping of larger birds. The EU Birds Directive prohibits the use of traps and nets that can lead to mass capture or the capture of protected species (including all birds of prey). Even though some kind of traps might be legal under certain rules and countries, it is always prohibited to catch birds of prey.

### 2.4.1. Hawk Basket Traps

One of the most widespread traps for raptors is the so-called hawk basket-trap. It consists of a net, fixed to two sturdy metal bows with a basket below, where live decoy birds or pieces of meat lure in raptors. If a bird lands on this construction, a release is activated and the metal bows snap shut. These traps can often be found in close vicinity to pigeon lofts or poultry farms.



Figure 3: Example of a hawk basket trap © [www.respetktiere.at](http://www.respetktiere.at)

### 2.4.2. Ladder traps

Another widespread trap is the ladder trap (“Nordic crow trap”). These are large cages looking like aviaries at first glance. A ladder-like opening in the roof enables birds to enter the cage and blocks the way out. Live decoy birds (pigeons, chicken, but also trapped corvids), eggs or pieces of meat serve as bait for corvids or raptors. Ladder traps are usually set up in remote field woodlands, forest edges or nearby larger poultry farms.



Figure 4: Example of a ladder trap. © Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

### 2.4.3. Leghold traps and spring traps

Leghold traps are snap-traps catching animals’ legs between two metal bows. This is the type of trap commonly described as “bear trap”. The width of the bow ranges from 10 to 40 cm and the release is activated by pressure. If an animal steps on the trap, the bows snap shut and catch the animal’s leg, often crushing it in the process. The use of leghold traps was banned in the EU already in 1991 as animal abuse in regulation (EEC) No 3254/91. Nonetheless, leghold traps may still be sold legally and are used illegally to catch raptors, martins, foxes and house cats.

Spring traps work and look very similar. Their release is equipped with bait to catch animals by the neck when they reach for the bait. The caught animal is usually immediately dead. Spring traps may legally be used in the EU to catch foxes, martins, etc. if they fulfill the AIHTS (Agreement on International Humane Trapping) standards. These standards also include a set-up that ensures the protection of humans and predators hunting on sight (like raptors).



Figure 5: Example of a leghold trap. © zgt

## 2.5. Other wildlife crime (focusing on raptors)

### 2.5.1. Cut down nesting trees

Cutting down trees during the nesting season is in general not forbidden but regulated on national level. It is difficult to prove that the destruction of a nest was deliberate. However, the reckless destruction of an active breeding site, meaning, felling a tree that could potentially be occupied by a breeding bird without checking for it, is illegal. Fines for this offense are usually low, or cases get dropped.

### 2.5.2. Theft of chicks and eggs

Historically, chicks and eggs have been taken from active breeding sites for use in falconry, but also as a means of persecution. To date, this practice is still threatening species like the Bonelli's eagle that are difficult to breed in captivity and coveted by collectors.

Taking eggs and chicks from wild birds is generally forbidden, but exceptions have been issued for very limited numbers of raptors to be used in falconry (i.e. goshawks in Germany, peregrine falcons in UK).

### 2.5.3. Illegal keeping of raptors

In general, keeping raptors is not forbidden in the EU. Individual countries may have demands concerning proof of proficiency (falconry license, etc.) and the size of cages. Signs of wild birds that have been caught are:

- Missing rings (as demanded by individual country's legislation)
- Uneasy behavior
- Damaged plumage

### 2.5.4. Mutilations, animal torture

Some cases of mutilations, especially involving goshawks have become known in Germany. In these cases, the animals' legs were cut off with a sharp object, like gardening scissors. The animals were then returned to the wild.

## 2.6. Criminal Motive – The Reason Behind an Offender's Actions

The reasons people perpetrate bird crimes are varied. Most often because some people consider birds to be pests or, conversely, consider their sale to be an important source of financial income. Based on court decisions from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, it can be concluded that the perpetrators who have been convicted so far are persons who were also involved in hunting and fishing or pigeon, poultry and cattle breeding. In Austria, there is a clear connection between bird crimes and hunting. Raptors, but also foxes or martins are perceived as concurrence and persecuted non-specifically. In their hatred against wild animals that are perceived as "pests", they do not hesitate to turn to illegal methods, not only putting raptors at danger, but also risking other people's health and life.

In Germany, a notable increase in the destruction of nesting sites has been recorded in the vicinity of planned wind power sites. Changes in the protection status of the birds have made them "problematic species" in the development of wind power and the associated economic benefits.

In the UK, there is a connection between raptor persecution and grouse shooting (Newton, 2020). Landowners expect a higher density of huntable bird species and higher economical margins when disposing of unwelcome competition. Scotland has reacted by introducing licenses for grouse shooting in 2024, that can be revoked if crimes against raptors are committed on shooting estates. However, due to landowner interest, the scope of the licenses was altered shortly thereafter to exclude remote areas of the estates, effectively nullifying their use.

## 2.7. Legal Framework for Wildlife Crime in Europe

Wildlife crime in Europe is governed by a combination of international agreements, European Union regulations, and national laws. These legal instruments aim to protect wild species, regulate their trade, and ensure effective enforcement against illegal activities.

### 2.7.1. International Conventions

- **CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora)**  
Regulates the international trade of endangered species to prevent over-exploitation. European countries are signatories and implement CITES provisions through their national laws.
- **Bern Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats)**  
Focuses on the conservation of wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats in Europe, promoting cooperation among member states.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**  
Provides a global framework for biodiversity conservation, including protection against wildlife crime.

### 2.7.2. European Union Legislation

- **EU Wildlife Trade Regulations (EC 338/97 and EC 865/2006)**  
Implement CITES within the EU, regulating the import, export, and intra-EU trade of protected species.
- **Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC)**  
Protects all wild bird species naturally occurring in the EU, prohibiting their capture, killing, and trade.
- **Habitat Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC)**  
Aims to protect natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, establishing the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.
- **EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking**  
Sets priorities and measures to improve coordination and enforcement across member states.

### 2.7.3. Enforcement and Cooperation

Cooperation between law enforcement, customs, environmental agencies, and NGOs is essential to tackle wildlife crime.

Tools like Europol and Interpol facilitate cross-border investigations and information sharing.

## 2.8. LIFE EUROKITE Crime Report

The LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) is a cross-border protection project for the Red Kite and other raptor species in Europe. Within the LIFE EUROKITE project the core idea is to use telemetry technology to identify the spatial habitat use of the target raptor species, quantify the key reasons of mortality of bird of prey species in the EU and reduce human-caused mortality, particularly illegal activities such as poisoning.

Between 2013 and 2024, 3,554 individuals of 7 raptor species were tagged with solar-powered GPS satellite tags in 19 countries across Europe. Of these, a total of 1,623 died so far. The first results of the LIFE EUROKITE project show that 320 (20.08 % of the tagged birds that died) were victims of illegal activities in 24 countries (10/01/2025). Poisoning (n= 238; 74.38 % of illegal activities) was by far the most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds. The most used poison was Carbofuran which is banned in the EU since 2008. The second most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds was shooting (66 individuals; 20.63 % of illegal activities). In only 8 cases a conviction was achieved for bird persecution.

Bird persecution in Europe persists all over Europe. Effective conservation requires stronger law enforcement, public education, international cooperation, and better tools like GPS tracking to detect and prosecute offenders. Political commitment across countries is crucial, along with harmonized laws, stricter penalties, and national action plans with clear goals. Raising awareness through initiatives like the “European Day Against Criminal Poisoning of Wildlife” and systematic data collection can help inform both the public and policymakers. Finally, stronger cross-border collaboration and support for monitoring and reporting systems are essential to address bird persecution at a European level.

The Full report and country specific reports can be found under the following link:  
<https://www.life-eurokite.eu/de/publikationen/life-eurokite-crime-report.html>



## 2.9. CPEW

The Campaign against Criminal Poisoning of European Wildlife (CPEW) was initiated by the LIFE EUROKITE Project. Within the Campaign many organizations and supporters ask the European Union for:

→ Supporting the “**European day against criminal poisoning of wildlife**” on 1st March to raise awareness of the general public and the political decision makers, as the topic is widely underestimated and unknown.

→ Systematic data collection for whole Europe to create a poisoning database and to identify hot spots. Ideally, this database should be managed by the European Union or one of its organisations.

→ Pursue the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030 further and more vigorously.

Under the following link you can find more information:  
<https://stopwildlifepoisoning.eu/>



## 2.10. SWiPE

The SWiPE project (Successful Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe) was an EU-funded LIFE project aiming to increase awareness, knowledge and capacity of wildlife crime professionals. It comprised 13 partners in 11 countries in eastern Europe, Italy and Spain. [National reports \(https://stopwildlifecrime.eu/resources/national-reports/\)](https://stopwildlifecrime.eu/resources/national-reports/) have been published about wildlife crime in all 11 countries and are available in the countries' language as well as in English.

## 2.11. WildLIFE Crime Academy (WCA)

The [WildLIFE Crime Academy project](#) aims to address these challenges by equipping relevant governmental agencies and law enforcement authorities in the target countries with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to combat wildlife crime effectively. By sharing best practices and fostering international collaboration, the project seeks to improve operational capacities across various sectors and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to reduce wildlife crime and ensure the protection of threatened species.

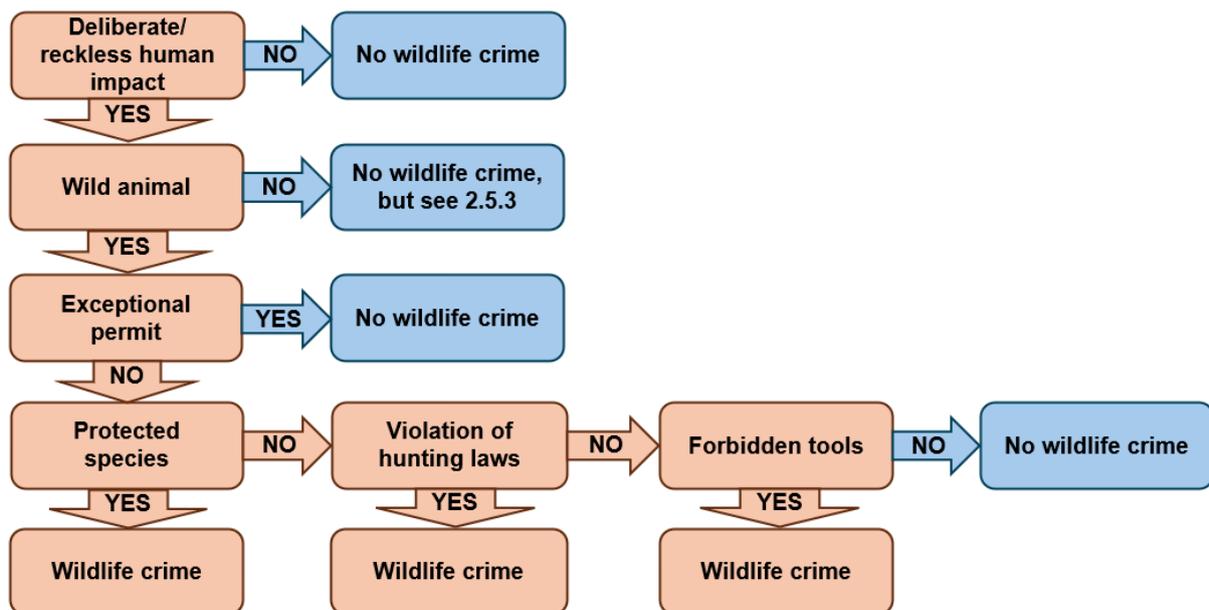
Through a three-level Wildlife Crime Academy programme, law enforcement officers, forensic experts, prosecutors, and conservationists are trained. Up to 100 professionals are trained in Spain and subsequently pass on their knowledge to more than 1,000 others in their home countries. People who are interested can subscribe to this training.

More information about WCA can be found here: <https://wildlifecrimeacademy.eu/>

## 3. Guidelines

### 3.1. Recognizing wildlife crime

Recognizing wildlife crime is not always an easy task. Is this youtuber allowed to keep that species of owl? Is that farmer allowed to use brodifacoum against rats? The following questions can help to figure out whether poisoning, shooting, trapping or similar actions qualify as wildlife crime:



Most of these points have already been addressed in the background information (the youtuber may keep the owl if it is bred in captivity and not a wild animal and the farmer is allowed to use brodifacoum inside buildings), but as a first step, it is imperative to be able to identify human impact.

#### 3.1.1. What poisoned animals and baits look like

Anybody can come across a dead animal while they are walking outdoors. But how can they learn whether it was poisoned? There are a number of outward signs that tell if the animal had not died naturally.

- Anybody that finds a dead raptor should be alert to the following:
  - Whether its claws are spasmodically clenched
  - If the claws are grasping blades of grass, leaves, or soil
  - If there is meat residue in its beak
  - Whether it is lying in the prone position with its wings semi-extended
  - Whether its head is turned to the side
  - Blue color of beak mucosal
  - Other dead animals in the surrounding
  - Dead flies, maggots etc. on the carcass

- In the case of a fox, badger, marten or cat:
  - It is lying on its side with its legs and tail outstretched
  - The fur is bristling
  - There are burrowing marks around the feet
  - There is a sardonic smile or spasmodic grin on its face
  - There is food residue in its mouth
  - There are fresh droppings or vomit around it.
  - The claws are extended if it is a dead cat
  - Other dead animals in the surrounding
  - Dead flies, maggots etc. on the carcass
  
- Nearby the dead bird or animal:
  - Meaty bait (if poisoned by carbofuran note blue/purple color)
  - Are dead insects around the carcass
  - Are other dead animals or birds
  
- Indications of poisoned bait:
  - Various meat scraps, animal parts or offal placed in the open
  - Meat bait with traces of chemicals that had been applied (see 2.2.1 and 2.2.2)
  - Eggs with needle marks evident on the shell
  - Poisoned eggs that may have been stamped with the words “Caution: poison”
  - Holes on the shell sealable with wax
  - Dead insects on or near the bait
  - Dead animals or birds near the bait

See Figure 1 for examples of poison baits.

### 3.1.2. What shot animals look like

In raptors, characteristic damages in the plumage:

- Asymmetric gaps in the flight feathers (in natural moult, birds usually loose feathers symmetrically in both wings or on both sides of the tail, losing one feather on just one wing is rare, losing 2-3 in just one wing does not occur naturally)
- Parts of the damaged feather(s) are left in the wing (in natural moult, birds lose complete feathers)
- Large holes in the wings (in natural moult, adjacent feathers often cover the gaps. If holes are bigger, they are symmetric)

Example pictures of birds in natural moult and birds that were shot at are provided by BirdLife Austria here: <https://www.birdlife.at/birdcrime-schussmarken-bei-greifvoegeln-erkennen/>

In dead animals, shooting might be detected by entry and exit wounds. Buckshot, however, can often not be detected by visual inspection only, in these cases the use of x-ray can help.

### 3.1.3. What trapped animals look like

Dead or caught animals in combination with the trap are easily recognized. Certain types of traps, however, may easily be mistaken for an aviary (see 2.4.2).

## 3.2. Steps to take if wildlife crime was detected

Depending on the situation at the crime scene, there are some general rules to follow in order to secure evidence and find the perpetrator (Numbers refer to Figure 6 and 7).

- If a person reports a wildlife crime, ensure that they are safe and do not touch anything. If possible, the person may take photographs of the scene from a distance and check whether other people are nearby. At all times, the individual's safety must be the highest priority.
- Nowadays more and more animals are equipped with GPS loggers to follow their routes and behavior. If the animal is equipped with a GPS logger ①, attempt to identify and contact the owner. They may be able to provide detailed data on the animal's last known locations and relevant circumstances.
- With the support of trained detection dogs ② (specialized in specific poison substances), it may be possible to locate additional poisoned animals or even the poison bait ③ itself.

Note: Carbofuran has been prohibited in the EU since 2008, yet it remains one of the most commonly used poisons in wildlife crime.

- The surrounding area should be examined for relevant traces and structures ④.
- Experience has shown that without house searches, crucial evidence is often missed. Whenever legally possible, house searches should be conducted, ideally with dogs ② trained to detect poisonous substances ⑤. Key areas include cellars ⑥, garages, and garden sheds ⑦. Freezers ⑧ should always be checked for animal carcasses and poison ⑤.
- House searches are generally only permitted with a warrant. However, in cases of exigent circumstances, immediate action may be justified. Substances such as Carbofuran are extremely toxic and pose serious health risks to humans even in very small amounts. Additionally, perpetrators often attempt to dispose of evidence quickly. These factors may justify conducting a house search without a warrant under exigent circumstances.

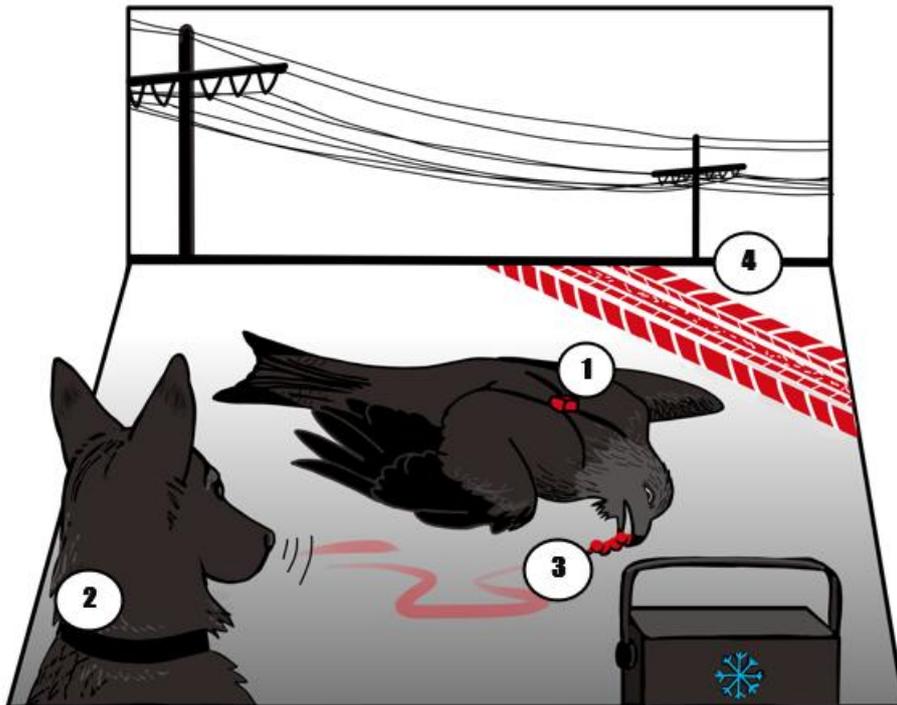


Figure 6: Crime scene with GPS-logger (1) bird, poison detection dog (2), poison bait (3), track marks and other relevant surroundings (4) as well as a cooler to transport evidence.

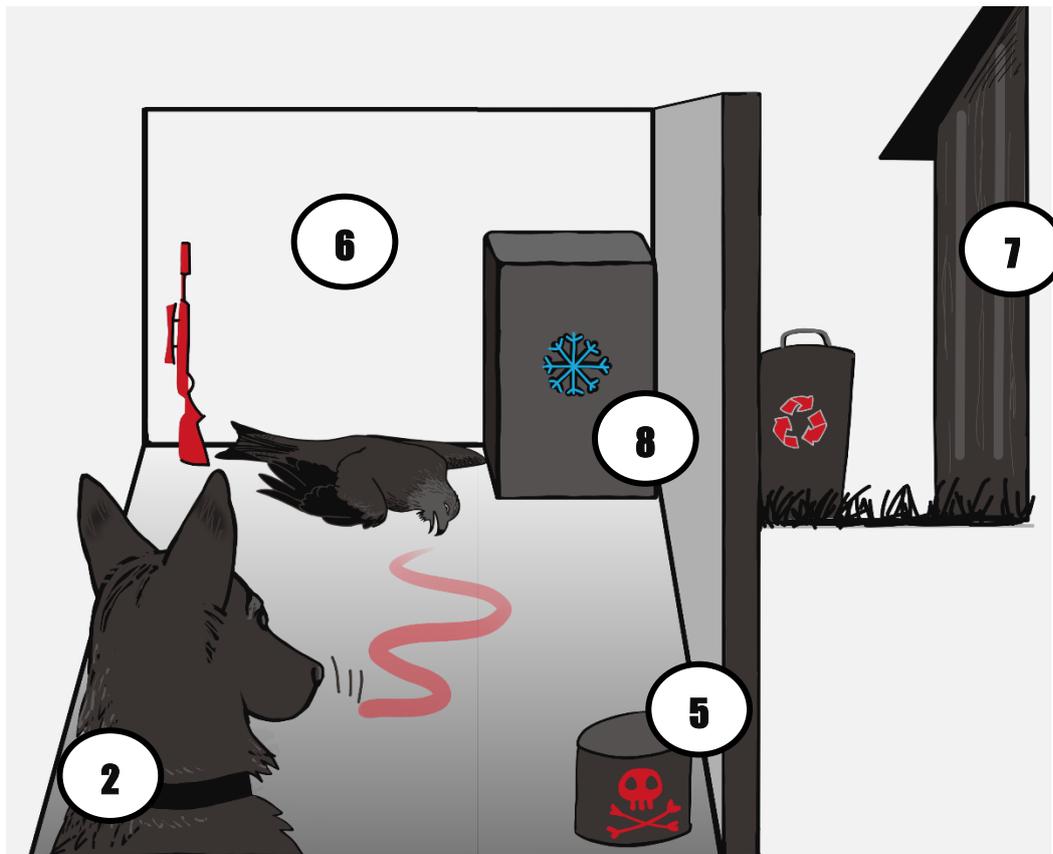


Figure 7: House search with poison detection dog (2), poison (5), a carcass and a gun in a cellar (5), a garden shed that should be checked (7) and a freezer (8).



Figure 8: GPS Tags – close-ups and tags in use on living and a dead Red Kite.

### 3.2.1. Protocols

LIFE EUROKITE developed a standardized method to determine mortality causes in large GPS-tagged birds (LEAP). The method to determine the mortality reason with the help of GPS data is described here: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ece3.70975?af=R>

Additionally, the LIFE EUROKITE Project developed helpful searcher protocols, including a case form and necropsy protocol.

All documents can be found here: <https://www.life-eurokite.eu/en/dead-finds.html>

## 3.3. Responsible Rodenticide Use

The following information was copied from [thinkwildlife.org](http://thinkwildlife.org) and was developed as part of the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU).

The rodenticide industry recognizes the need to ensure that rodenticides are used correctly and in ways that minimize the exposure of wildlife and other non-target animals. CRRU was established to promote responsible use of rodenticides among all user groups, including professional pest controllers, farmers and gamekeepers.

CRRU promotes responsible use through a seven-point Code of Practice.

#### Always have a planned approach:

- Before treatment begins, a thorough survey of the infested site is an essential key to success when using any rodenticide.
- Environmental changes which could be made to reduce the attractiveness of the site to rodents should be noted for implementation after the treatment. Usually this will involve rodent proofing and removing rubbish and weeds that provide harbourages and cover. However, the site should not be cleared up before treatment since this will disturb the rodent population and make bait acceptance more difficult to achieve.
- Obvious food, such as spilled grain, should be removed as far as possible and any food sources covered.
- Rodenticide bait should only be used for as long as is necessary to achieve satisfactory control.

In most cases, any anticoagulant bait should have achieved control within 35 days. Should activity continue beyond this time, the likely cause should be determined and documented. If bait continues to be consumed without effect, a more potent anticoagulant should be considered. If bait take is poor, relative to the apparent size of the infestation, consideration should be given to re-sitting the bait points and possibly changing to another bait base, as well as making other environment changes.

#### Always record quantity of bait used & where it is placed:

- A simple site plan or location list identifying areas of particular concern pertinent to the site should be drawn up and retained on file.

- A record of all bait points and the amount of bait laid should be maintained during the treatment. Activity should be noted at each bait point, including any missing or disturbed baits, as the treatment progresses.
- By carefully recording the sites of all bait points, responsible users of rodenticides are able to return to these sites at the end of the treatment and remove uneaten bait so that it does not become available to wildlife.

Always use enough baiting points:

- Users should follow the label instructions regarding the size and frequency of bait points and the advice given regarding the frequency and number of visits to the site.
- By using enough bait points the rodent control treatment will be conducted most efficiently and in the shortest possible time. This will restrict the duration of exposure of non-target animals to a minimum.

Always collect and dispose of rodent bodies:

- The bodies of dead rodents may carry residues of rodenticides and, if eaten by predators or scavengers, may be a source of wildlife exposure to rodenticides.
- It is essential to carry out regular searches for rodent bodies, both during and after the treatment period. Bodies may be found for several days after rats have eaten the bait and rats may die up to 100 m or more away from the bait site.
- Any rodent bodies should be removed from the site and disposed of safely using the methods recommended on the label.

Never leave bait exposed to non-target animals and birds:

- Care should be taken to ensure that bait is sufficiently protected to avoid accidentally poisoning other mammals and birds. Natural materials should be used where possible.
- Bait stations should be appropriate to the prevailing circumstances. They should provide access to the bait by rodents, while reducing the risks of non-target access and interference by unauthorised people. They should protect the bait from contamination by dust or rain. Their design, construction and placement should be such that interference is minimised.

Never fail to inspect bait regularly:

- Where the risk assessment or treatment records show that multiple visits are required, then those should be made as frequently as is considered necessary. Daily inspection may be required in some circumstances.
- At each visit, baits should be replenished according to the product label and a thorough search made to ensure that bodies and any spilled bait are removed and disposed of safely. Records of such visits should be maintained. Never leave bait down at the end of the treatment.

Never leave bait down at the end of the treatment:

- Bait left out at the end of treatment is a potential source of contamination of wildlife.

- 
- On completion of the treatment, records should be updated to signify that the infestation is controlled and that, as far as reasonably practical, all steps have been taken to ensure that the site is now free of rodenticide baits.

## 4. List of relevant documents

The following documents contain further information on the topic of wildlife crime.

### English:

[2020 report poison in Spain](#)

[stopwildlifecrime.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Wildlife-poisoning-in-Spain\\_2020-report.pdf](https://stopwildlifecrime.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Wildlife-poisoning-in-Spain_2020-report.pdf)

[LEAP – Publication](#)

[onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ece3.70975?af=R](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ece3.70975?af=R)

[LEAP – Guideline](#)

[life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE\\_EUROKITE\\_content/Todfunde/Mortality%20Protocol\\_20230616.pdf](https://life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE_EUROKITE_content/Todfunde/Mortality%20Protocol_20230616.pdf)

[LEAP – Checklist for searchers](#)

[life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE\\_EUROKITE\\_content/Todfunde/Case%20Form\\_20230613.pdf](https://life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE_EUROKITE_content/Todfunde/Case%20Form_20230613.pdf)

[LEAP – Checklist for necropsy](#)

[life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE\\_EUROKITE\\_content/Todfunde/Necropsy\\_Form.pdf](https://life-eurokite.eu/files/LIFE_EUROKITE_content/Todfunde/Necropsy_Form.pdf)

### English and respective native language:

<https://stopwildlifecrime.eu/resources/national-reports/>

[SWiPE report Bosnia Herzegovina](#)

[SWiPE report Poland](#)

[SWiPE report Bulgaria](#)

[SWiPE report Serbia](#)

[SWiPE report Croatia](#)

[SWiPE report Slovakia](#)

[SWiPE report Hungary](#)

[SWiPE report Romania](#)

[SWiPE report Italy](#)

[SWiPE report Spain](#)

[SWiPE report Ukraine](#)

**German:**

[Guideline Wildlife Crime of the Committee against Bird Slaughter, focusing on Germany](http://www.komitee.de/media/leitfaden_greifvogelverfolgung_2023.pdf)  
[http://www.komitee.de/media/leitfaden\\_greifvogelverfolgung\\_2023.pdf](http://www.komitee.de/media/leitfaden_greifvogelverfolgung_2023.pdf)

[Guideline Wildlife Crime of the WWF, focusing on Austrian legislation](http://www.wwf.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023_Wegweiser_Artenschutzkriminalitaet_Saeuger.pdf)  
[http://www.wwf.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023\\_Wegweiser\\_Artenschutzkriminalitaet\\_Saeuger.pdf](http://www.wwf.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2023_Wegweiser_Artenschutzkriminalitaet_Saeuger.pdf)

[Other reports of the committee against bird slaughter](http://www.komitee.de/de/service/berichte-und-veroeffentlichungen/)  
[www.komitee.de/de/service/berichte-und-veroeffentlichungen/](http://www.komitee.de/de/service/berichte-und-veroeffentlichungen/)

**Spanish:**

[2020 INFORME 2020 EL VENENO EN ESPAÑA](https://wwfes.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/veneno_en_espana_informe_2020_web_corr_1_.pdf)  
[https://wwfes.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/veneno\\_en\\_espana\\_informe\\_2020\\_web\\_corr\\_1\\_.pdf](https://wwfes.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/veneno_en_espana_informe_2020_web_corr_1_.pdf)

## 5. List of relevant projects and websites

The following links contain further information on the topic of wildlife crime.

**English:**

[Wildlife Crime Academy](http://www.4vultures.org/projects/wildlife-crime-academy)  
[www.4vultures.org/projects/wildlife-crime-academy](http://www.4vultures.org/projects/wildlife-crime-academy)

[LIFE EUROKITE](http://www.life-eurokite.eu)  
[www.life-eurokite.eu](http://www.life-eurokite.eu)

[CPEW](http://www.stopwildlifepoisoning.eu)  
[www.stopwildlifepoisoning.eu](http://www.stopwildlifepoisoning.eu)

[MEGEG](http://www.raptorprotection.eu)  
[www.raptorprotection.eu](http://www.raptorprotection.eu)

[SWiPE](http://www.stopwildlifecrime.eu)  
[www.stopwildlifecrime.eu](http://www.stopwildlifecrime.eu)

[wildLIFEcrime](http://www.wildlifecrime.info/en/project)  
[www.wildlifecrime.info/en/project](http://www.wildlifecrime.info/en/project)

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project](http://www.imperialeagle.eu/en)  
[www.imperialeagle.eu/en](http://www.imperialeagle.eu/en)

[Raptor Persecution Map \(UK\)](http://www.rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/)  
[www.rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/](http://www.rspb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/)

[IREC, Institute for Game and Wildlife research  
www.irec.es/en](http://www.irec.es/en)

**German:**

[EDGAR  
https://www.greifvogelverfolgung.de/](https://www.greifvogelverfolgung.de/)

[BirdLife Austria  
https://www.birdlife.at/wildtierkriminalitaet-in-oesterreich/](https://www.birdlife.at/wildtierkriminalitaet-in-oesterreich/)

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project  
https://www.imperialeagle.eu/en](https://www.imperialeagle.eu/en)

[BirdLife – recognizing shot birds  
https://www.birdlife.at/birdcrime-schussmarken-bei-greifvoegeln-erkennen/](https://www.birdlife.at/birdcrime-schussmarken-bei-greifvoegeln-erkennen/)

**Czech:**

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project  
https://www.imperialeagle.eu/cs](https://www.imperialeagle.eu/cs)

**Hungarian:**

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project  
https://www.imperialeagle.eu/hu](https://www.imperialeagle.eu/hu)

**Serbian:**

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project  
https://www.imperialeagle.eu/sr](https://www.imperialeagle.eu/sr)

**Slovak:**

[Pannoneagle LIFE Project  
https://www.imperialeagle.eu/sk](https://www.imperialeagle.eu/sk)

**French:**

[Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux \(LPO\)  
https://www.lpo.fr/](https://www.lpo.fr/)

**Spanish:**

[SEO birdlife, Sociedad Española de Ornitología  
https://seo.org/](https://seo.org/)  
[IREC, Institute for Game and Wildlife research  
https://www.irec.es/](https://www.irec.es/)

## 6. List of relevant Contacts

### Europe:

[info@4vultures.org](mailto:info@4vultures.org)

(only for incidents with vultures)

### Germany:

Counties' State offices of criminal investigation (Landeskriminalamt)

Call 110 for urgent matters

Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

[info@komitee.de](mailto:info@komitee.de)

Tel: +49 228 66 55 21

### North Rhine-Westphalia:

Vernetzungsstelle Umweltkriminalität

[vstuk.lka@polizei.nrw.de](mailto:vstuk.lka@polizei.nrw.de)

### Bavaria:

Tatort Natur

[tatort-natur.de](http://tatort-natur.de)

### Austria:

National office of criminal investigation (Bundeskriminalamt)

Meldestelle Umweltkriminalität

E-Mail: [umwelt@bmi.gv.at](mailto:umwelt@bmi.gv.at)

Fax: +43 1 24836-951136

<https://wildlifecrime.info/>

[meldung@wildlifecrime.at](mailto:meldung@wildlifecrime.at)

Tel: +43 660 869 2327

### Burgenland:

Landespolizeidirektion Burgenland

Landeskriminalamt Außenstelle Oberwart

Prinz-Eugen-Straße 10, A-7400 Oberwart

Tel: +43 59133 12 48209

### Lower Austria:

Landespolizeidirektion Niederösterreich

Landeskriminalamt

Neue Herrengasse 15, A-3100 St. Pölten

Tel: +43 59133 30 3333

(Ermittlungsbereich 7 – Umweltkriminalität)

### Upper Austria:

Landespolizeidirektion Oberösterreich

Landeskriminalamt

Nietzschestraße. 33, A-4021 Linz

Tel: +43 59133 40 3333

(Ermittlungsbereich 7 – Umweltkriminalität)

**Switzerland:**

Police of the respective Canton  
polizei.ch

**France:**

Call 112 for urgent matters  
file complaints, search for closest police station:  
masecurite.interieur.gouv.fr/en

**Spain:**

SEPRONA nature guards  
Jefatura Central in Madrid  
Tel: +34 (91) 514 69 00  
Email: [dg-seprona-ucoma@guardiacivil.org](mailto:dg-seprona-ucoma@guardiacivil.org), [va.adu@aeat.es](mailto:va.adu@aeat.es)

Sociedad Española de Ornitología

[seo@seo.org](mailto:seo@seo.org)

Tel: +34 914640910

**UK:**

RSPB

[crime@rspb.org.uk](mailto:crime@rspb.org.uk)

Tel: +44 300 999 0101

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