

Raptor Persecution UK

‘Not fit for purpose: Scotland’s bird control licensing system is failing wildlife’ says RSPB

RaptorPersecutionUK

August 25, 2026

2024 persecution incidents: News

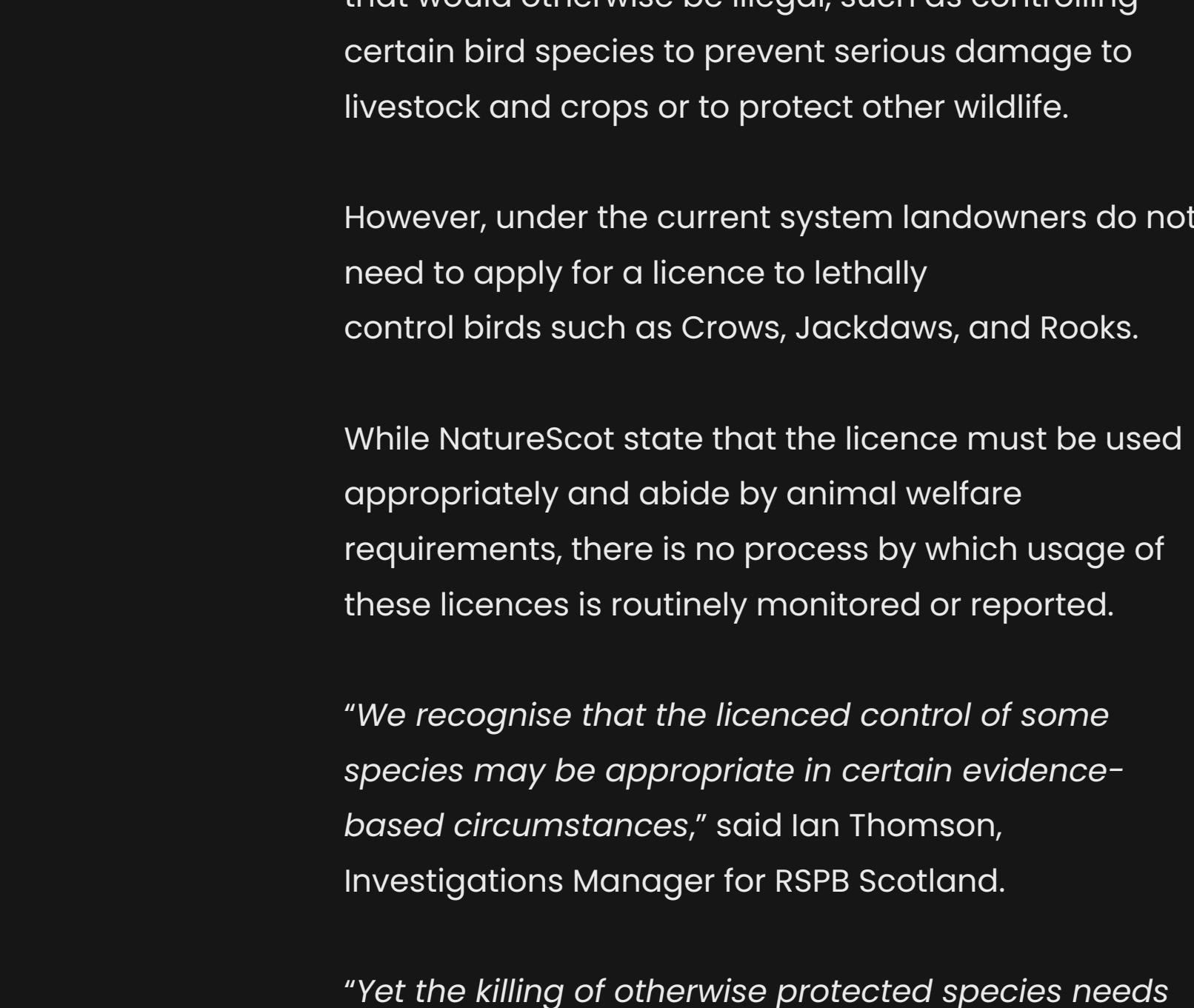
crow trap, gamekeeper, goshawk, trap

NatureScot is currently running one of its periodic public consultations on the use of General Licences for wildlife management.

In response, RSPB Scotland has today issued the following statement:

NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE: SCOTLAND’S BIRD CONTROL LICENSING SYSTEM IS FAILING WILDLIFE

The licencing system allowing people to lethally control wild birds in Scotland is not fit for purpose, according to RSPB Scotland.



Screen grab from RSPB covert footage showing a Scottish gamekeeper beating a Goshawk to death inside a Crow cage trap that was being used under a General Licence on the Milton of Drimmie Estate, Perthshire

General licences allow people to carry out activities that would otherwise be illegal, such as controlling certain bird species to prevent serious damage to livestock and crops or to protect other wildlife.

However, under the current system landowners do not need to apply for a licence to lethally control birds such as Crows, Jackdaws, and Rooks.

While NatureScot state that the licence must be used appropriately and abide by animal welfare requirements, there is no process by which usage of these licences is routinely monitored or reported.

“We recognise that the licenced control of some species may be appropriate in certain evidence-based circumstances,” said Ian Thomson, Investigations Manager for RSPB Scotland.

“Yet the killing of otherwise protected species needs to be backed up by a system of compliance monitoring, submission of licence returns, and publication by NatureScot of summarised results on an annual basis – as the RSPB does for its own landholdings.

“We currently have no idea how many wild birds are killed under General Licence in Scotland every year”.

NatureScot is currently holding a consultation on General licences, which could see changes to how the current system functions.

At present, NatureScot does not record who uses these licences, to what extent they are used or why, nor does it record where in Scotland they are utilised.

The unaccountability within this system has repeatedly been abused such as in the recent case of a Perthshire gamekeeper who beat a Goshawk to death after pulling it from a crow trap, which was being used under the General Licence.

“This consultation gives us a chance to ask whether a system that permits the unrestricted, unmonitored, and unregulated killing of protected species should continue,” added Thomson.

“The proposals in this consultation currently perpetuate a system that is out-dated, unaccountable and not fit for purpose.

“Multiple police investigations and successful prosecutions show how this system is widely misused and abused to the detriment of protected species, including birds of prey.

“In order to fully protect Scotland’s incredible wildlife, we need a licensing system which is up to standard”.

The RSPB has called on those with concerns to respond to the consultation here.

The closing date for NatureScot’s consultation on General licences is 31 August.

ENDS

Share this:

[Facebook](#)[X](#)[Reddit](#)[LinkedIn](#)[Bluesky](#)

7 thoughts on “Not fit for purpose: Scotland’s bird control licensing system is failing wildlife” says RSPB”

2bluetails

August 25, 2026 at 4:10 pm

And they are so right and nor are the systems in place in the rest of the UK fit for purpose either. All are widely open to abuse with little chance of being caught, meaningful punishment or for any redress. The whole system needs a thorough overhaul with a vigorous licensing system put in including for all game shooting and game bird release as the adherents to these so called sports and those who provide it have proved time again and again they cannot stick to either the law or best practice. Their claims of self regulation are at best delusional and at worst a very sick joke, the criminals in their midst are totally integrated and never shopped.

Reply

SusanH

August 25, 2026 at 5:15 pm

I agree with the comment, above. Since our police forces cannot stop practically any crimes in this country, what chance will NatureScot or Nature England have of regulating the ongoing practice of gamekeepers killing any predators with impunity. I lived in England last spring and saw first hand the mismanagement of Larsen traps on the farm where we kept our horses.

Reply

Keith Dancey

August 25, 2026 at 5:59 pm

First point. This consultation has been open since the 16th of June. Who was informed of that? I cannot find any coverage within Scottish newspapers, TV or Radio.

But there is widespread coverage within the Scottish shooting industry outlets.

“NatureScot is carrying out a review of our General Licences, and we want to hear your views. We have now launched a consultation so that **all stakeholders** can have their say and we’re urging *everyone* to take this opportunity to express their thoughts for General Licences for 2027 and onwards.”

Are the general Scottish public – who fund NatureScot and presumably experience *living* with Crows, Jackdaws, Rooks and the rest... NOT considered **stakeholders** in any capacity whatsoever by NatureScot?

There appears to be 16 General Licences up for Review, but the ‘consultation’ ends on August 31st(!) Does the general Scottish public have even a Hen Harriers chance of being able to meet that deadline?

This is clearly designed by NatureScot to *exclude* the wider Scottish Public, without actually changing the law to explicitly exclude the wider Scottish Public.

Second point. Is there a suitable template response available, given that there is insufficient time to properly respond. Answer: no.

When Governments and NGOs seek to confirm their own prejudices and vested interests they simply publicise consultations within their *closed circle* of vested interests... and call them their **stakeholders**:-)

The great unwashed, on the other hand, can *bogoff*...

If you are not discouraged...

<https://generallicensingreview.commonplace.is/>

Reply

Alex Milne

August 25, 2026 at 10:26 pm

Does anyone know of any location where persons such as myself who do not approve of the actions of the senior members of NatureScot and wish to reduce the worst effects of the persons making use of the general licences and the lack of recording required, can view a template we can use to adapt to my response. I don't have the time to make a reasoned reply.

Reply

RaptorPersecutionUK

August 26, 2026 at 10:50 am

Alex – Wild Justice will shortly provide a step-by-step guide for those who wish to reply to the consultation. If you subscribe to the Wild Justice newsletter you'll be notified as soon as the guide is available: <https://wildjustice.org.uk/newsletter/>

I'll also post a link to the guide on this blog.

Reply

Frances

August 26, 2026 at 10:34 am

I think the conduct of NatureScot is open to challenge as it stands it is unlawful. There has been no reasonable opportunity for the public to become involved in this so called “consultation”. There is a clear bias towards the Scottish shooting industry as they have had a lengthy period of time to respond to this. It could breach Article (6) ECHR, the right to a fair hearing. This covers all types of cases, not just those in court. NatureScot isn't an independent body and the manner in which it conducts business favours the shooting industry. Questions need to be asked at the very least. The Scottish Government should be contacted over this.

Reply

RaptorPersecutionUK

August 26, 2026 at 10:47 am

Frances, I don't think there's anything unlawful about NatureScot's approach to this consultation. It was clearly flagged on the NS website in June when the consultation opened: <https://www.nature.scot/doc/general-licensing-review-terms-reference-2026>

Reply

Leave a comment

PREVIOUS

Pressure building on Defra to consider gamebird shoot licensing in England

NEXT

Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution

Search –

FOLLOW BLOG

Enter your email address to follow this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Email Address

Sign me up!

BLOG STATS

13,333,153 hits

CATEGORIES

- 1989 persecution incidents (1)
- 1990 persecution incidents (1)
- 1991 persecution incidents (2)
- 1992 persecution incidents (2)
- 1993 persecution incidents (2)
- 1996 persecution incidents (1)
- 1998 persecution incidents (4)
- 1999 persecution incidents (1)
- 2000 persecution incidents (3)
- 2001 persecution incidents (7)
- 2002 persecution incidents (3)
- 2003 persecution incidents (13)
- 2004 persecution incidents (6)
- 2005 persecution incidents (6)
- 2006 persecution incidents (16)
- 2007 persecution incidents (14)
- 2008 persecution incidents (13)
- 2009 persecution incidents (50)
- 2010 persecution incidents (71)
- 2011 persecution incidents (51)
- 2012 persecution incidents (124)
- 2013 persecution incidents (147)
- 2014 persecution incidents (182)
- 2015 persecution incidents (106)
- 2016 persecution incidents (149)
- 2017 persecution incidents (146)
- 2018 persecution incidents (219)
- 2019 persecution incidents (221)
- 2020 persecution incidents (278)
- 2021 persecution incidents (235)
- 2022 persecution incidents (164)
- 2023 persecution incidents (148)
- 2024 persecution incidents (111)
- 2025 persecution incidents (77)
- 2026 persecution incidents (18)
- Henry the Hen Harrier (62)
- News (4,625)
- Opinion (328)
- Our satellite tagged golden eagles (18)
- Persecution Incidents in England (881)
- Persecution Incidents in Irish Republic (63)
- Persecution Incidents in Northern Ireland (63)
- Persecution Incidents in Wales (81)
- The Real Price of Grouse (6)

RECENT COMMENTS

- RaptorPersecutionUK on Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution
- chrisgreenbird on Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution
- Stuart Wilson on Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution
- Jeremy Moore on Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution
- Invermark Estate appeals 3-year General Licence restriction imposed after evidence of raptor persecution – Raptor Persecution UK on Peregrine found shot in notorious grouse moor area in Angus Glens

ARCHIVES

- August 2026 (18)
- July 2026 (11)
- June 2026 (17)
- May 2026 (15)
- April 2026 (16)
- March 2026 (17)
- February 2026 (13)
- January 2026 (30)
- December 2025 (16)
- November 2025 (26)
- October 2025 (22)
- September 2025 (18)
- August 2025 (23)
- July 2025 (18)
- June 2025 (13)
- May 2025 (19)
- April 2025 (22)
- March 2025 (22)
- February 2025 (19)
- January 2025 (20)
- December 2024 (18)
- November 2024 (16)
- October 2024 (19)
- September 2024 (17)
- August 2024 (20)
- July 2024 (13)
- June 2024 (18)
- May 2024 (17)
- April 2024 (20)
- March 2024 (28)
- February 2024 (23)
- January 2024 (27)
- December 2023 (22)
- November 2023 (26)
- October 2023 (21)
- September 2023 (17)
- August 2023 (50)
- July 2023 (20)
- June 2023 (36)
- May 2023 (37)
- April 2023 (31)
- March 2023 (27)
- February 2023 (24)
- January 2023 (60)
- December 2022 (18)
- November 2022 (15)
- October 2022 (22)
- September 2022 (14)
- August 2022 (33)
- July 2022 (21)
- June 2022 (26)
- May 2022 (32)
- April 2022 (26)
- March 2022 (34)
- February 2022 (28)
- January 2022 (31)
- December 2021 (22)
- November 2021 (27)
- October 2021 (29)
- September 2021 (24)
- August 2021 (26)
- July 2021 (21)
- June 2021 (15)
- May 2021 (35)
- April 2021 (41)
- March 2021 (38)
- February 2021 (42)
- January 2021 (38)
- December 2020 (33)
- November 2020 (48)
- October 2020 (29)
- September 2020 (41)
- August 2020 (50)
- July 2020 (40)
- June 2020 (38)
- May 2020 (35)
- April 2020 (27)
- March 2020 (30)
- February 2020 (21)
- January 2020 (22)
- December 2019 (34)
- November 2019 (21)
- October 2019 (30)
- September 2019 (23)
- August 2019 (31)
- July 2019 (30)
- June 2019 (30)
- May 2019 (30)
- April 2019 (30)
- March 2019 (42)
- February 2019 (23)
- January 2019 (25)
- December 2018 (23)
- November 2018 (25)
- October 2018 (22)
- September 2018 (13)
- August 2018 (35)
- July 2018 (26)
- June 2018 (18)
- May 2018 (31)
- April 2018 (37)
- March 2018 (31)
- February 2018 (26)
- January 2018 (28)
- December 2017 (31)
- November 2017 (33)
- October 2017 (28)
- September 2017 (26)
- August 2017 (28)
- July 2017 (29)
- June 2017 (30)
- May 2017 (27)
- April 2017 (37)
- March 2017 (31)
- February 2017 (30)
- January 2017 (37)
- December 2016 (25)
- November 2016 (23)
- October 2016 (28)
- September 2016 (30)
- August 2016 (29)
- July 2016 (27)
- June 2016 (31)
- May 2016 (30)
- April 2016 (25)
- March 2016 (23)
- February 2016 (15)
- January 2016 (10)
- December 2015 (12)
- November 2015 (17)
- October 2015 (13)
- September 2015 (18)
- August 2015 (22)
- July 2015 (37)
- June 2015 (37)
- May 2015 (33)
- April 2015 (27)
- March 2015 (25)
- February 2015 (19)
- January 2015 (23)
- December 2014 (23)
- October 2014 (40)
- September 2014 (16)
- August 2014 (16)
- July 2014 (10)
- June 2014 (14)
- May 2014 (23)
- April 2014 (33)
- March 2014 (26)
- February 2014 (18)
- January 2014 (21)
- December 2013 (20)
- November 2013 (15)
- October 2013 (16)
- September 2013 (16)
- August 2013 (22)
- July 2013 (32)
- June 2013 (12)
- May 2013 (18)
- April 2013 (18)
- March 2013 (23)
- February 2013 (22)
- January 2013 (24)
- December 2012 (21)
- November 2012 (20)
- October 2012 (32)
- September 2012 (18)
- August 2012 (27)
- July 2012 (23)
- June 2012 (20)
- May 2012 (26)
- April 2012 (17)
- March 2012 (27)
- February 2012 (28)
- January 2012 (13)
- December 2011 (20)
- November 2011 (28)
- October 2011 (11)
- September 2011 (20)
- August 2011 (18)
- July 2011 (19)
- June 2011 (15)
- May 2011 (23)
- April 2011 (14)
- March 2011 (13)
- February 2011 (6)
- January 2011 (7)
- December 2010 (10)
- November 2010 (7)
- October 2010 (6)
- September 2010 (10)
- August 2010 (11)
- July 2010 (3)
- June 2010 (10)
- May 2010 (13)
- April 2010 (3)
- March 2010 (96)

Aldicarb | alphachloralose

Balmoral Estate | barn owl

Bendiocarb | buzzard

Cairnros Estate

Cairnros National Park

carbafuran | Cardross Estate

Cawdor Estate | chloralose

clam trap

Carrybrough Estate

crow trap | dailyprompt

dailyprompt-1889

Dinnet & Kinord Estate

Edradynate Estate

Environment Minister

gamekeeper | Gift of Grouse

gin trap | Glanusk Estate

Glenogil Estate | Glen Orchy

Glenturret Estate

golden eagle | goshawk

hen harrier

Invercauld Estate

Invermark Estate | kestrel

Leadhills Estate

Lochindorb Estate

long-eared owl

Marsh harrier | merlin

mevinphos | Millden Estate

mountain hare | Moy Estate

North Glenbuchat Estate

osprey | peregrine

poisoning | pole trap

Raeshaw Estate | red kite

Ross-shire Massacre

scottish gamekeepers association

scottish parliament

shooting | short-eared owl

Skibo Estate

sodium cyanide

sparrowhawk | spring trap

Stody Estate | strychnine

tawny owl | trap

vicious liability

Wemmergill Estate

white-tailed eagle

OUR RECENT BLOG VISITORS

Comment Subscribe