

Police launch new wildlife crime investigators course



Police Scotland. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Police Scotland has today (Monday 20 January) launched a new wildlife crime investigators course to enhance capability in this complex area of local policing.

Wildlife crime covers a wide range of offending from badger baiting, to raptor persecution, freshwater pearl mussel theft, to hare coursing and salmon poaching.

Reports of wildlife crime are increasing and also include cruelty to wild animals, crimes involving deer and hunting with dogs.

While wildlife crime poses significant harm to the species targeted by criminals, it also impacts on the communities who rely on wildlife for employment and tourism.

Every division across Scotland is represented on the inaugural course, which was launched by Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, at the Scottish Police College.

Assistant Chief Constable Duncan Sloan, Major Crime and Public Protection, said:

“Investigating wildlife crime can be demanding, difficult and complex.

“Scotland’s wildlife habitats cover vast tracts of land, often in remote areas, where the discovery of a suspected offence can be made days or weeks after the event.

“This new course is designed to build on our current capability, to enhance the skills and knowledge of our officers in what is a specialist area of criminal investigation.

“We want to ensure that we have officers who are experts in the investigation of the wildlife crime in all of its forms.

“Scotland’s wildlife is one of its greatest attractions, we are committed to. Our officers will be trained to the highest level to ensure thorough investigation of wildlife crime.

“We will continue to work with our partners to prevent crime and to ensure that Scotland’s wildlife is protected.”

Environment Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham, said:

“Wildlife crime, in any form and against any species, is unacceptable. This government is determined to do all we can to prevent, address and reduce it.

“Our police officers on the ground provide the crucial initial response to wildlife crime, collecting the evidence necessary for the courts to pursue prosecution, and leading the way in its detection and prevention.

“Investigating these crimes can be challenging, often occurring in remote areas where witnesses are rare and where evidence is often exposed to the elements.

“It is therefore essential that our officers have the support and tools necessary to do their job effectively, and I commend Police Scotland for designing this new training course and providing teams across the country with additional knowledge and skills in support of their pivotal role in combating wildlife crime.”

The Wildlife Crime Investigators course runs over five days and will cover:

- Investigative techniques
- Wildlife forensic recovery, and examination
- Inputs from selected partner agencies including COPFS, Scottish Government, RSPB and SNH
- Firearms legislation and ballistics