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Operation EASTER ~ 25 years of stopping egg thieves and egg collectors

Wild birds are nesting and the national campaign to protect them across the UK is underway.

Egg thieves will go to any lengths to raid the nests of rare wild birds but Operation EASTER is determined to stop them in their tracks.

Operation EASTER was developed in Scotland 25 years ago. The operation is now facilitated by the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) in conjunction with UK police forces and partner agencies. The operation targets egg thieves by sharing intelligence across the UK to support enforcement action.

In recent years the operation has also been expanded to cover some emerging trends of criminal behaviour such as the online trade in eggs and the disturbance of nests for photography.

The taking of wild bird eggs is a serious crime yet it remains the pastime of some determined individuals. Whole clutches of eggs can be taken from some of the UK's rarest birds with potentially devastating impacts. The eggs are stored in secret collections.

Chief Inspector Kevin Kelly (Head of the NWCU) says: "Operation Easter is a yearly event that is ingrained within wildlife crime policing. The NWCU collates and disseminates the information that identifies the hotspot areas where the crimes are likely to be committed and we work with Police Officers and partners to ensure these areas of interest are given the attention they deserve, to protect the future of our wild birds. We have a number of skilled and dedicated Police Wildlife Crime Officers across the UK who have adopted this operation and will work with us to reduce criminality, and for this, I thank them greatly".

If you have any information on egg thieves, or those who disturb rare nesting birds without a license, you should contact your local police by dialing 101 - ask to speak to a wildlife crime officer if possible. Nesting will be in full swing in April so please contact the police if you see anyone acting suspiciously around nesting birds.

Information can also be passed in confidence to Crimestoppers via 0800 555 111.

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