

## RAPTOR UPDATE...RAPTOR UPDATE...RAPTOR UPDATE...

# Raptor Alliance in the News

from Sharon Ayling

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2013

DEFRA Meeting 25th September 2013, Stewart Wardrop (RPRA) & Colin Clark (WHU) attended a meeting with the Wild Bird Policy Advisors in Bristol, to discuss our Submission. They did comment that they thought it was one of the best submissions and asked if we had taken legal advice and had professional help (which we did). We discussed Natural England, Artificial nest boxes for raptors, Peta complaints, raptor numbers in the welsh valleys (increasing number of Goshawks). In summary it was a very productive meeting.

We still have a long way to go with collating data and evidence and will be needing help and information from the pigeon racing fraternity on a daily basis.

We were very surprised, but good to receive the News Release from the Law Commission so soon after this meeting,

### DONCASTER SHOW 2013

I would like to thank everyone who came by the Raptor Alliance stand on Saturday 23rd November 2013, who signed our petition and for the money donations. Please remember to contact me with any hawk attacks you may have, over the next year we need to be collating data and evidence. I look forward to meeting old and new at the Blackpool Show 2014.

**Please contact me at the following address**  
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 Reforming the law

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**News release**  
**Tuesday 15th October 2013**

## Modernising Wildlife Law

The Law Commission has today set out its proposed principles for a new regulatory regime for wildlife.

The Law Commission and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs have agreed that the Commission should continue its review of the law relating to wildlife and make recommendations for its reform. In an interim statement published today, the Commission outlines its initial thinking on the scope and content of the new regime.

The current law regulating the conservation, control, protection and exploitation of wildlife is spread over a collection of Acts dating back to 1829. The principal piece of legislation, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, functions alongside EU Directives on wild birds and habitats. The result is a legal landscape that is out of date, confused and often contradictory.

The aim of the Law Commission's review is to develop clear, modern and coherent wildlife law, set within a single statute. Following wide consultation, the Commission has identified a number of reforms.

- Killing and capturing wild birds – bringing the rules into line with EU obligations
- Wildlife crime – extending criminal liability to the ultimate beneficiaries
- Sanctions – increasing the availability of penalties for wildlife crime but allowing for a more proportionate response by extending the possibility for civil sanctions.
- Invasive, non-native species – increasing powers to allow public bodies to gain access to land to control invasive, non-native species
- Keeping the law up to date – requiring the Government to keep wildlife legislation under regular review

Sir David Lloyd Jones, Chairman of the Law Commission, said: "We are pleased that the Government agrees this complex area of law is in need of reform. The benefits of our proposals are clear: reduced burdens on licensing authorities and those seeking are clear: ensuring that our EU obligations are met and making the law effective, proportionate and easier to use.

"Our paper sets out what we believe the law should do. We will now turn our attention to refining our thinking and drafting a Bill that would achieve these much-needed reforms. Our thinking and drafting a Bill that would achieve these much-needed reforms."

The Law Commission expects to publish its final recommendations for the reform of wildlife law and a draft Bill in summer 2014.

### Notes for editors

1. The Law Commission is a non-political independent body, set up by Parliament in 1965 to keep all the law of England and Wales under review, and to recommend reform where it is needed.
2. For more details on this project, visit [www.lawcom.gov.uk](http://www.lawcom.gov.uk)
3. For all press queries please contact:  
 Phil Hodgson, Head of External Relations: 020 3334 0230  
 Jackie Samuel: 020 3334 0216  
 Email: [communications@lawcommission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:communications@lawcommission.gsi.gov.uk)

For your interest follow the following link (<http://lawcommission.justice.gov.uk/areas/wildlife.htm>). To read the interim statement.

**Countryside Alliance****Grass e-route****Weekly e-newsletter**

10th October 2013

## “Unsustainable” claims on raptor death

You may recall the case of a dead hen harrier named ‘Bowland Betty’ found on a Yorkshire grouse moor and the news at the time that it was shot. The Countryside Alliance team has accessed and reviewed autopsy reports and has serious concerns about this claim.

The claim made by Natural England that the autopsy reports on this hen harrier prove it was shot is completely unsustainable and would not last a second in a court of law. The Alliance will always condemn illegal persecution of protected species, but we require proof, not simply supposition. If Natural England can explain the anomalies in the reports we will, of course, accept its conclusions, but at the moment it is not even attempting to make clear how it came to them.

We are seeking an urgent meeting with Natural England after post mortem reports revealed only tiny metal objects within the leg bone of the hen harrier of a size, shape and composition that have not been linked to any known ammunition.

The hen harrier, which carried a radio tracking device and had been named ‘Bowland Betty’, was found dead on a North Yorkshire grouse moor in July 2012.

In December of that year a press release from Natural England claimed that an autopsy had ‘proved’ it had been shot. It took a further six months before we finally acquired copies of two separate autopsy reports dated 4th and 6th December 2012.

The reports intimated that the hen harrier had been shot but failed to address two fundamental issues: Firstly the three tiny metal objects found in the hen harrier’s leg contained a high proportion of lead, which is the main metal used in most bullets and shotgun pellets, but also a proportion of niobium. Niobium is not a constituent of any known shotgun or rifle ammunition.

Secondly the size and shape of the metallic objects are very difficult to reconcile with injury caused by a shotgun or a rifle. The metal objects found in the hen harrier were smaller than any commercially available shotgun pellets, but round or ovoid in shape unlike splinters from a shattered rifle bullet.

Neither in the original autopsy reports, nor in subsequent correspondence, has Natural England or the authors of the reports provided any explanation to reconcile the composition, size or shape of the metallic objects with the claim that the hen harrier had been shot.

We are also very concerned that Natural England shared sensitive information about this case with the RSPB, which was used to fuel a national media campaign against grouse shooting, but not with other partner organisations. Had the autopsy reports been shared earlier police resources spent in investigating this case might well have been saved.

The Alliance is seeking an urgent meeting with Natural England.

Barney White-Spunner  
Executive Chairman



**Pembrokeshire – Coastal Lives on BB2 7th November 7th showed Ossie Duffy waiting for his pigeons to return home from a race to see the clip follow this link:**  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0113rnp>

**I would like to thank Mr K R Whiting from Raydon, Suffolk for the following article he found and sent into us.**

### **PIGEONS BEWARE!**

Since the spring, at least six pigeons and collared doves have been killed by female Sparrow Hawks. The six I know about but there may be others a well. I have lived at Stratford St Mary since 1987 and it has been unusual to come across the remnants of even one kill in a year. During May, a pigeon was brought down by a Hawk in my garden and was dismembered with me watching from about 6 yards away, the bird being at the kill 40 minutes oblivious to my presence. I was able to take a photograph. During the period, September 5th to 8th, 4 kills were reported including a Collared Dove in my front garden. Another kill was reported on October 4th in another garden. I have had Sparrow Hawks perched on my fence and have seen male birds kill Thrushes, it is estimated that a pair of Sparrow Hawks will kill about 1600 small birds in a year. The female Sparrow Hawk is considerably larger than the male and can tackle bigger prey. I have to conclude that there must now be several pairs of these birds around Stratford. Sparrow Hawk numbers were considerably reduced during the 1960’s until certain pesticides were banned for use but have made a remarkable come back since.

On a recent Country File programme, cats were blamed for reducing the bird population of many species. I think this was over exaggerated because I am sure the cats kept as pets at Stratford are too well fed! They will sometimes catch birds, it is their nature but unlikely to reduce the bird population by any extent. Magpies will go after eggs as will rats and other predators. There are now pairs of Buzzards also resident in the Stratford vicinity but they may prefer young rabbits and fish to catch but haven’t the nerve to visit people’s gardens.

**Robin Jackson**