

# Rural Crime Team NEWSLETTER

Derbyshire Police RCT Seasonal Round Up

Winter – Jan 2024

Welcome to the winter edition of the Rural Crime Team's newsletter. This quarter we're aiming to update you on matters we have dealt with over the last year as well as provide an overview of some of the other work the unit undertakes. We are aware that much of what we have to report is advice to help raise awareness, and assist the prevention, of rural crime. So, we felt it's time to share some more positive news. We also want to reach out to our readers and social media followers to ask about the issues that are important to all of you. Please contact us and tell us what you feel passionate about within your local area.

## **Successful prosecution – theft of peregrine falcon eggs**

In April 2023, the Rural Crime Team were contacted by our partners from the RSPB Investigations Unit, regarding a crime they had captured on video footage.

The crime related to the taking of wild peregrine falcon eggs, from a nest site at Bolsover Moor quarry in Derbyshire. This is a site that has been targeted in the past by egg thieves. It's believed that such thefts are feeding the illegal market in wild taken peregrine falcons sold to the middle eastern falconry market. Wild taken British peregrines are prized for their blood lines and eggs can retail at prices in excess of £5000 each.

Peregrine falcons and their breeding sites, nests and eggs are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.



X @DerbysPolice | f derbyshireconstabulary

☎ 101 non-emergency, in an emergency always call 999

[www.derbyshire.police.uk](http://www.derbyshire.police.uk)

Making Derbyshire Safer **Together**





The RSPB team had obtained video footage of a man abseiling down a quarry face to the peregrines nest ledge where he then stole the clutch of eggs. As a result of this footage, a police investigation began, and the man in the footage was quickly identified by officers who knew him as Christopher Wheeldon from Matlock.

As a result of further investigations, two search warrants were obtained and executed and Wheeldon was arrested on suspicion of offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The warrants involved officers from the Rural Crime Team and the police Uniform Task Force, as well as representatives from the National Wildlife Crime Unit, the RSPB Investigations Unit and a Falconry expert. Evidence recovered during the searches included climbing equipment and clothing matching what was worn by Wheeldon in the video footage.

Further evidence was also obtained from the nest site at the quarry, again with the assistance of the Task Force Work at Height / Rope Access Team, this included forensic samples.

Wheeldon was subsequently interviewed about the theft of the peregrine eggs and initially denied any involvement.

Due to the available evidence, Wheeldon was charged with theft of Schedule 1 Bird Eggs and disturbance of a Schedule 1 Bird nest site.

He pleaded guilty to the offences at his first court appearance due to the strength of the evidence against him. He was subsequently sentenced to 18 weeks imprisonment for the offences and a number of other shoplifting offences.

The case against Wheeldon relied heavily upon the covert work done by the RSPB investigations team and it's fair to say without the video footage, its unlikely these offences would have been detected.

We would therefore like to publicly thank the RSPB for their work, particularly the local team, Tom Grose and Jack Ashton Booth, who's help, and support is very much appreciated. We look forward to continued partnership working with the RSPB and other relevant organisations in our fight against Rural and Wildlife crime.



Officers from the Task Force rope access team preparing to visit the nest site to recover forensic samples.



Bolsover Moor Quarry



It's also fair to say that whilst being the thief, Wheeldon is clearly at the bottom of the chain when it comes to the criminality around the taking, sale and trade in wild taken peregrine eggs. We will continue to work towards breaking the cycle of this damaging activity. The impact on the conservation status of peregrines in the Peak District should not be underestimated.

We appeal to the public to report any suspicions you may have on activity relating to egg theft and indeed if you are in the countryside and witness anything you consider to be suspicious activity in, or around peregrine nest sites / habitat please don't hesitate to contact police at the time.

#### **Operation Owl – Protection of Birds of Prey – raptor persecution national operation.**

Operation Owl is the National Wildlife Crime Unit operation tackling bird of prey persecution. Police forces across the country participate and focus their efforts, in conjunction with partnership organisations, on activities aimed at reducing bird of prey crime across the country. Derbyshire Rural Crime Team supports Operation Owl, and the team will be out and about across the county this spring, maximising our efforts to prevent further offending, such as the peregrine falcon case outlined above.

We reported in an earlier newsletter on the types of crime affecting bird of prey populations in the UK, and so, with the 2024 breeding season just around the corner we would like to ask for your help in stamping out this cruel and unnecessary criminal activity.

If you see, or suspect, any activity that may constitute offences against wild birds, please contact the police, and where possible, call at the time it is happening. Please remember vehicle registration numbers and person descriptions, if at all possible, and of course photograph and video assist enormously, as long as it is safe for you to obtain it. Do not put yourself at risk.

If you have information that may be of use to the police but do not feel you can report it directly to us, then please remember you can use Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.



Christopher Wheeldon, convicted egg thief.



## CRUEL AND ILLEGAL...



Putting a trap on a post to capture - and later kill - birds of prey is illegal. National Wildlife Crime Unit are working with key partners to put a stop to this cruel and illegal practice.

**You can help.** If you see a dead or injured bird, poisoned bait or a pole trap, note the location, take a photo and report it. It will help us build the intelligence picture and could lead to a prosecution.



**Help us stop bird of prey persecution**

Call 101 to report to the police.

[www.nwcupolice.uk](http://www.nwcupolice.uk)

## National Award for Derbyshire Rural Crime Team.

Our Rural Crime Team have been recognised as the most proactive team in the country in preventing farm machinery and plant theft.

Accepting the Rob Oliver Award, Sergeant Chris Wilkinson said: "I'm immensely proud of the achievements of this team, and their commitment to supporting our rural communities. "It's an honour to win this for our efforts in getting essential equipment protected against theft, which we know has a devastating effect on people's lives and businesses. "By offering a reduced cost for security marking and registration on the CESAR database, we've tagged more than £3 million worth of machinery. This works as a deterrent to theft as well as being instrumental in reuniting owners with stolen machinery. The rural crime team have also continued to proactively patrol the county day and night. Recent successes include returning a generator to its owner within an hour of the theft and uncovering a quarry being used for storing stolen machinery."

Rob Oliver, the namesake of the award, presented the team with the trophy: "What they've done here in Derbyshire is a good template for other forces, as we've seen them working closely with local councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner to prioritise rural crime issues.

"This award is now in its third year, and it's in recognition of police forces up and down the country who have specialist rural crime teams running initiatives to combat machinery theft. It's really heartening to see the enthusiasm and expertise that they bring to the job here in Derbyshire."

Congratulating the team, Police and Crime Commissioner Angelique Foster said: "I am proud of this national award. The team deserves full



### "CESAR STOPS THEFT"

Protecting Tractors, ATV's, Trailers and GPS equipment with CESAR and Datatag security

Derbyshire Police and the Derbyshire Police & Crime Commissioner, in partnership with the Official CESAR Scheme are offering an exclusive CESAR & Datatag security promotion to owners of agricultural and construction machinery across Derbyshire.

To combat the threat from opportunistic and organised criminals alike the triangular CESAR registration plate has become the industry standard identification mark with support from local authorities, leading contractors, the farming community, the Police, insurers and hire and finance companies. Combining state of the art Datatag ID technologies, both overt and covert, a low one-off cost, registration on a secure database, accessible through an accredited and dedicated 24/7 UK based secure contact centre, the scheme aims to deter theft and aid recovery.

Now any Derbyshire resident who owns a piece of agricultural or construction machinery or an agricultural trailer or horse trailer can get the CESAR Security System fitted for half price thanks to a new subsidy fund. This generous discount reduces the price of the CESAR system so getting protected has never been easier:

- Tractor: £90.00 plus VAT (RRP £180 plus VAT) inc. installation
- ATV or Quad: £67.50 plus VAT (RRP £135 plus VAT) inc. installation
- Datatag Trailer System: £29.16 plus VAT (RRP £58.33 plus VAT) Installation NOT included
- Datatag GPS Marking System: £24.99 plus VAT (RRP £49.99 plus VAT) Installation NOT included

#### HOW TO GET INVOLVED

To order your half price CESAR system, please call us on 01784 778 310 or email us at [enquiries@cesarscheme.org](mailto:enquiries@cesarscheme.org) for a call back.

We will ask you for your details and a payment, and pass your details onto one of our participating dealers who will contact you within 7 days to arrange the installation of your CESAR system.

If you have a preferred Derbyshire based Agricultural dealer, please tell us.

**Terms & Conditions**

- Offer valid while stocks and funding last.
- Offer only open to residents of Derbyshire. Subject to provisions. All provisions will be outlined using the Government only site <https://www.gov.uk/real-estate-subsidy>
- All prices are subject to change without notice while stocks last.

Powered by **DATATAG** www.datatag.co.uk

[www.cesarscheme.org](http://www.cesarscheme.org)

Powered by **CEA** **AEA** thesia.org.uk aea.com



credit for their hard work and efforts.

“Our rural communities deserve a first-class response to the issues that threaten their safety and livelihoods. Derbyshire’s Rural Crime Team works hard to listen and understand these unique problems, and takes robust proactive action, alongside partners, to prevent more of these crimes and bring rural criminals to justice.

“Significant progress has been made in the way our force tackles rural crime, with a notable effort to strengthen the team and additional funding from my budget invested in the roll out of new resources and equipment to protect agricultural businesses from theft and reunite victims with their stolen property quickly. These new tools have also been highly valuable for the retrieval of evidence to bring more offenders before the courts.

“Machinery theft costs farmers and agricultural businesses millions of pounds every year. They deserve the full support of the police in preventing these disruptive and costly losses. I am pleased Derbyshire’s Rural Crime Team is recognised as the best in the UK for its proactive work and will continue to push the force for further improvements.”

Superintendent Andy Huddleston, Head of the National Rural Crime Unit, said: “The Rob Oliver award is a significant award because it recognises the outstanding work, in this case by Derbyshire Constabulary, in helping tackle construction and agricultural machinery theft by making Derbyshire a really hostile area for criminals to operate in.

“It’s no coincidence that this is the case because the work that the team has put in over the past few years is really showing now and I’m delighted to see the investment from the PCC in the CESAR scheme, which helps us to get machinery back if it’s stolen. It’s great to see this work going on in Derbyshire, and I hope to see other forces follow.”



## **Reminder - Police DataTag Crime Prevention Initiative**

DataTag is a company specialising in security marking kits for vehicles, trailers, farm and plant machinery.

Derbyshire's Rural Crime Team continue to work in partnership with DataTag offering Cesar Datatag security kits at reduced prices.

The offer is open to Derbyshire residents who either own a piece of agricultural or construction equipment, such as a tractor, trailer, horse box trailer, All Terrain Vehicle, Quad Bike, or GPS tracking systems.

The kits are being offered at half of the retail price.

- Tractor Kits: £90.00 plus Vat (RRP £180.00 plus Vat). Installation is Included  
Vintage Tractors being offered at the ATV / Quad price as below.
- ATV or QUAD Kits: £67.50 plus Vat (RRP £135.00) Installation is Included
- Datatag Trailer Systems: £29.00 plus Vat (RRP 58.33 plus Vat). Installation is included.
- Datatag GPS Marking Systems: £24:00 plus Vat (RRP £49.99 plus Vat). Installation is included.

More information, contact details and terms and conditions please contact the Rural Crime Team. Also see [Datatag ID](#).

### **Seasonal acquisitive crime / travelling criminality.**

Over the autumn and winter seasons we have seen an uplift in acquisitive crime (burglary and theft) in rural areas. Some of this crime is undoubtedly committed by local opportunists, but it's clear from the national intelligence we access that criminals are travelling widely across the country to target what they perceive are soft targets within rural communities.

Clearly our advice to our communities is safeguard your property and possessions as far as you can, using the advice we have published in previous issues of this newsletter. Don't be complacent. Be suspicious of anything out of the ordinary, even what looks like workmen, delivery teams or contractors can sometimes be a cover for crime. Don't accept or admit cold callers.





Once again, please call police if you suspect something is not right and if you can get photos or video to support your report safely, then please do so.

Remember - If you suspect it, report it.

### **Heritage Crime**

Another of the Rural Crime Team priority areas, is the protection of national heritage sites. This can include buildings like churches as well as scheduled ancient monuments and cover activities from burglary, theft, damage or vandalism to illegal metal detecting for historical artifacts.

Over recent months we have seen a number of historic sites and buildings subject of crime / vandalism.

- Theft of lead from St Marys Church in Derby.
- Vandalism by graffiti at an Anglo-Saxon Church near Repton.
- Damage and attempted theft of marker stones at Arbor Low stone circle.
- Fire damage at Nine Ladies Stone Circle near Birchover

Crimes against heritage assets in Derbyshire should be reported to police. Operation Chronos is a national operation that Derbyshire Constabulary supports. We also work with partners such as the National Trust and English Heritage to address heritage crime.

If you can offer information on any of the above cases or indeed any other form of heritage crime, please contact the police on 101 or, if it is happening at the time dial 999.

Again, if you do not want to talk to the police directly, please use Crimestoppers.



Arbor Low Stone Circle damaged at Parsley Hay



Anglo-Saxon caves vandalised at Ingleby



**Instagram – Derbyshire Rural Crime Team**

**Facebook – Derbyshire Rural Crime Team**

**Twitter @DerbyshireRCT**

**Email – DRCT@derbyshire.police.uk**

X @DerbysPolice | f derbyshireconstabulary

☎ 101 non-emergency, in an emergency always call 999

[www.derbyshire.police.uk](http://www.derbyshire.police.uk)

Making Derbyshire Safer **Together**

