OPERATION LAKESHOT

EVERYTHING **YOU NEED TO KNOW** ABOUT CATAPULT CRIME

OP-LAKESHOT AND CATAPULT CRIME

Operation Lakeshot is a response to the disturbing trend of young people, typically aged between 8 and 15, using catapults to illegally kill or maim wildlife. Their victims are usually waterfowl, such as swans, geese and ducks, but can also include gulls, wood pigeons and other small garden birds.

These crimes typically take place in public spaces in towns and cities, around ponds, lakes, rivers and canals. However, wild birds are also targeted on the roofs of buildings, while perched on lamp posts or even as they roost in trees. These areas are often frequented by members of the public enjoying a walk or a quiet day out, who may witness these callous acts up close.

But the problem does not end there. These crimes are frequently shared on social media platforms, sometimes with individuals bragging about the species they have targeted or sharing 'kill lists' of their intended targets.



DID YOU KNOW?



21 ORGANISATIONS
including 8 police forces, British Wildlife Rehabilitation Council, Angling Trust, UK Slingshot Association, NatureWatch Foundation and RSPCA



557 INCIDENTS
in 2026 and growing in numbers all the time across the UK



NOT JUST BIRDS
Reports also include attacks on pets, squirrels, and even people, cars and properties.



A WIDER PICTURE
Incidents are concentrated in the South East, but with increasing reports across more UK counties.



VARIED LOCATIONS
Not just by water. Attacks have also been reported in town centres, shopping precincts and high streets.



AMMO USED
Ball bearings are most common, alongside stones, marbles, nuts and bolts.

TAKE ACTION

FOLLOW OUR GUIDE TO **REPORTING** CATAPULT CRIME

OP LAKESHOT



1: IDENTIFY IT

It is important to identify where catapult crime may be taking place. You should:

- Be sure what you have seen is accurate and reliable.
- Make a note of where it has taken place along with the date and time.

2: REPORT IT

Always report anything you see that is related to catapult crime against wild birds and wildlife.

- If crime is happening call 999 or after the event 101 Always ask for a reference number and then report it to the League. We need to collect all the incidents centrally.
- In the first instance report the incident to your local police force. When reporting ask for an Incident Reference Number and say it's related to ***Op-Lakeshot.***

ANIMAL CRIMEWATCH

0300 444 1234

league.org.uk/crimewatch

crimewatch@league.org.uk

0755 278 8247 (WhatsApp)



3: ACT ON IT

You can raise awareness of this wildlife crime by:

- Downloading our Op-Lakeshot poster and displaying them around the area the incident occured. REMEMBER: Always seek permission from your local authority before putting up posters.
- Consider creating a local community group to check on local wildlife. Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are great ways to raise awareness to a larger audience.

4: AMPLIFY THE MESSAGE

- Speak to your friends about Operation Lakeshot and what it is all about.
- Share our link to posters on social media
- If you see social media incidents encourage others to report

5: WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- Engage with Town and Parish councils to highlight the problem
- Offer to write an article in local council newsletters
- Make contact with local radio and press
- Locate your local wildlife rescue centre
- Write to your local MP
- Speak to your local Neighbourhood Police about your concerns

LEAGUE AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS

uk|NWCU uk|National Wildlife Crime Unit

TO ACCESS OUR MATERIALS AND FIND OUT MORE, FOLLOW THE LINK OR SCAN THE QR

league.org.uk/op-lakeshot