

**fund the national
wildlife crime unit**



ifaw

background

The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) is a specialist unit dedicated to tackling wildlife crime and plays a vital role in enforcing wildlife law, both in the UK and globally.

Since its inception in 2006, the NWCU has never received permanent funding. Unlike other specialist units, which are funded in full by the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), the NWCU must re-apply for funding every few years to remain in operation.

In 2016, the current Government gave a four-year funding period to the NWCU. This round of funding allowed the NWCU to have its longest period of stability and deliver real impact. However, this will expire in March 2020 – leaving the NWCU's future, and wildlife crime enforcement, uncertain.

IFAW's global network of experts work on the frontlines to ensure that animals have the protection they need from the illegal market forces that threaten their survival. We rely on intelligence units such as the NWCU to enforce the laws that protect our wildlife, both at home and abroad.

The Government has shown its ongoing commitment to tackling wildlife crime and the impact of the illegal wildlife trade - such as hosting the 2018 Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in London and introducing one of the world's toughest ivory bans.

However, without a National Wildlife Crime Unit, the UK risks sending the wrong message globally and will leave key new legislation unenforced. If the Government is serious about tackling wildlife crime in the UK, permanent funding needs to be allocated to the National Wildlife Crime Unit by the Home Office and NPCC.

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**how to stop wildlife
crime?**



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further information on the NWCU

- ▶ The National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU) was created in 2006 and collates and disseminates intelligence, provides specialist investigative support to police forces and UK law enforcement agencies. The NWCU ensure officers have the tools and knowledge required for complex wildlife crime investigations. It is currently headed up by Chief Inspector Louise Hubble.
- ▶ The Unit acts as a UK policing focal point for EUROPOL and INTERPOL activity on all wildlife crime related matters.
- ▶ The Government has so far failed to allocate permanent funding for our own national unit, whilst helping to establish others overseas. The annual costs of the Unit are currently met by the Home Office, Defra, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, totaling £496,000.
- ▶ Without the NWCU, Police forces across the UK would have to dedicate more of their own resources to train and prepare individuals to tackle these specialist types of wildlife crimes. Failing this, these crimes will go unchecked in the UK.
- ▶ The NWCU represents the UK at a number of European and international events, showcasing best practices from the UK on an international stage.
- ▶ Actions by the NWCU in 2018 include tackling bat persecution, bird of prey persecution, securing convictions for the illegal trade in endangered species and the formation of a Cyber-Enabled Wildlife Crime Working Group – chaired by the NWCU.
- ▶ Currently there is no system to record wildlife crimes, which means vital information is not being collected by Police forces across England and Wales. A recent Wildlife and Countryside LINK report noted that 1,283 wildlife crime incidents were recorded by NGOs in 2017, but shockingly only 9 were prosecuted. A system must be introduced to tackle this.
- ▶ The NWCU currently receives a small amount of money in comparison to other specialist units. IFAW would advocate that this funding structure is both increased and becomes permanent.

take action

- 1** Write to the Home Secretary asking that they, and the NPCC, allocate permanent funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit. Please ensure that the Secretary of State for the Environment, Rt Hon Theresa Villiers, is copied into all correspondence to help resolve the issue.
- 2** Ask Parliamentary Questions to the Home Office about permanent funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and whether increased allocations to NPCC budgets will be made available to permanently fund the NWCU after March 2020.
- 3** Hold a Westminster Hall debate.
- 4** Discuss the issue with your local force's Wildlife Crime Officers to ascertain the problems particular to your constituency.
- 5** Share your support on social media using #endwildlifecrime.

#EndWildlifeCrime

about ifaw

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans, and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate, and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we're up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organisations, and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish.

further information

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