

PRESS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leading animal welfare organisations call for urgent update to outdated wildlife laws

Naturewatch Foundation has joined leading animal welfare organisations in calling on the UK Government to put the welfare of wild animals at the heart of environmental, farming, trade and land-use policy.

The Bristol Declaration was agreed at this year's **Wild Summit** in Bristol, where organisations and individuals from across the animal welfare and environmental sectors came together to call for stronger protection for wild animals.

Naturewatch Foundation co-hosted **The Big Wild Animal Welfare Conversation** at the summit, bringing delegates together to discuss some of the biggest challenges facing wild animals and how communities, police, enforcement agencies and non-governmental organisations can work together to tackle them.

During the workshop, Naturewatch Foundation Wildlife Crime Campaign Manager Jim Clark highlighted the urgent need for meaningful government action to review existing legislation, ensuring that police and enforcement agencies have the tools they need to effectively tackle and reduce wildlife crime.

The Bristol Declaration warns that the UK's complex patchwork of wildlife laws, some dating back to the early 1800s, has failed to keep pace with modern understanding of animal welfare and the threats facing wild animals today. For example, the **Night Poaching Act 1828** is still relied upon by police when prosecuting wildlife crime.

These threats include wildlife crime, the wild pet trade, habitat loss, climate change, inappropriate development and other human pressures.

Naturewatch Foundation is among the organisations supporting the Bristol Declaration, alongside Humane World for Animals UK, Born Free, FOUR PAWS, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the League Against Cruel Sports and the RSPCA.

The declaration sets out a number of priority actions needed to improve protection for wild animals, including:

- **Combatting wildlife crime** by strengthening enforcement, ensuring penalties act as an effective deterrent and banning activities that cause suffering to wild animals;
- **Tackling the harmful trade in wild animals** through stronger regulation of the wild pet trade and greater protection for animals vulnerable to commercial exploitation;

- **Encouraging wildlife-friendly land use** by ensuring farming, land management and environmental policies help wildlife thrive and reduce harm;
- **Improving planning and development decisions** so the welfare of wild animals is properly considered when new housing, infrastructure and other developments are proposed;
- **Embedding wild animal welfare across government** by making the interests of wild animals a central consideration in environmental, planning, agricultural and wider public policy.

The call comes after the UK Government announced its Animal Welfare Strategy for England in December, committing to updating legislation that has not kept pace with the latest scientific evidence.

While the organisations behind the Bristol Declaration welcome measures included in the strategy, including commitments to ban trail hunting and snares and a review of penalties for wildlife crimes, they say further action is needed.

Jim Clark, Wildlife Crime Campaign Manager at Naturewatch Foundation, said:

“Naturewatch Foundation’s ethos of Advancing Animal welfare is as important now as it has ever been, the Bristol Declaration is an extremely important show of commitment from those who care about our UK Wildlife and its environment. We will continue to work with the public, partners and the government to create a safer environment for all animals and make it easier for enforcement agencies to bring those who persecute wildlife to justice.”

To find out more about the Bristol Declaration, visit [The Bristol Declaration | Naturewatch Foundation](#).

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About Naturewatch Foundation: Naturewatch Foundation is a UK-based animal welfare charity dedicated to ending cruelty and improving the lives of animals through campaigning, education and advocacy. For over 30 years, the charity has led initiatives to tackle illegal and unethical practices, including puppy farming, animal experiments and wildlife crime. By working with policymakers, enforcement agencies and the public, Naturewatch Foundation strives to make the world a kinder place for animals. Visit naturewatch.org to find out more.