# PSNI deploys high-tech drones to combat illegal persecution of peregrine falcons in Northern Ireland



The deployment of high-tech drones will form a critical component of an initiative aimed at safeguarding peregrine falcons in Northern Ireland. The move, led by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), aims to counteract a worrying trend of persecution against these protected birds, which includes acts of poisoning, shooting, trapping, and egg theft.

This enhanced surveillance, part of "Operation Raptor - Peregrine Watch," responds to escalating reports of these illegal activities targeting the falcons. The operation is a collaborative effort with the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW), which will enable monitoring of inaccessible nesting and breeding sites. This proactive approach seeks to reduce occurrences of wildlife crime that threaten the already vulnerable peregrine population.

Peregrine falcons are legally protected under the Wildlife Order 1985, which safeguards all birds of prey from mistreatment and disturbance. Breaches of these regulations can lead to significant penalties, including fines of up to £5,000 for each offence, and potentially six months in prison.

Superintendent Johnston McDowell, head of the PSNI's rural and wildlife crime unit, highlighted the dangers associated with the use of poisons in these cases. Speaking to The Irish News, McDowell noted, “This initiative is a direct result of birds being targeted with very serious and dangerous substances in a number of areas across Northern Ireland.” He further emphasised the broader dangers of such poisons, stating, "Many of the poisons identified in previous cases are deadly not only to our precious wildlife but also to humans, and so the potential impact could go beyond the persecution and destruction of our beautiful native birds of prey."

As part of the operation, members of the public are encouraged to report any suspicions regarding potential threats to peregrine falcons. This community involvement is seen as crucial for the success of the initiative.

The mobilization of drones for monitoring reflects a broader commitment to wildlife protection and the enforcement of existing legislative measures in Northern Ireland.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/environment/psni-using-unmanned-drones-to-protect-birds-of-prey-in-uk-first/35741639.html> - This article discusses the PSNI's use of unmanned drones to monitor areas where crimes against birds of prey occur, marking a UK first in such applications.
* <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/birds-prey-be-safeguarded-by-new-technology> - The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs outlines the 'Hawk-Eyes' project, which involves satellite tracking devices and surveillance to combat wildlife crime against birds of prey.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-39996932> - BBC News reports on the PSNI's deployment of drones to patrol the nest sites of protected birds of prey, marking the first use of such technology in this context in the UK.
* <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-licensing> - This page provides information on wildlife licensing in Northern Ireland, detailing the requirements and penalties associated with disturbing or removing protected wildlife.
* <https://www.nirsg.com/bird-of-prey-disturbance-legislation/> - The Northern Ireland Raptor Study Group explains the legal protections for birds of prey under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, including penalties for disturbance and nest destruction.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-40685562> - BBC News reports on the success of PSNI drones in protecting peregrine falcon chicks, highlighting the effectiveness of this technology in safeguarding nesting sites.
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/drones-to-be-deployed-as-part-of-plan-to-protect-peregrine-falcons-from-persecution-NLV5WHQLVZEGBLAWF4EXSECAZE/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data