

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

WILDLIFE (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985 (AS AMENDED)

LICENCE

General licence to kill or take certain birds, including the taking, damaging or destruction of their nests or the taking or destruction of their eggs, or the disturbance of such a bird or the young of such a bird.

This licence must be read in conjunction with the material detailed in the Appendix.

This licence hereby authorises for the purpose of preventing the spread of disease and preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber and fisheries **ANY AUTHORISED PERSON** to kill or take any of the following birds: -

Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*)
Jackdaw (*Coloeus monedula*)
Magpie (*Pica pica*)
Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)
Feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*)
Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)

By shooting or by the use of a cage-trap or net or any other method not prohibited by Article 6 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended) (the Order); to take, damage or destroy their nests, or to take or destroy their eggs; or to disturb such a bird or the dependent young of such a bird.

Use of this licence on designated sites, ie, ASSIs, (Areas of Special Scientific Interest) SPAs (Special Protection Areas) or SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) must not engage with the schedule of damaging operations or activities listed for each site. Where a listed operation or activity is proposed to take place, written consent must be sought from the Department.

Specific conditions must be observed in relation to certain Special Protection Areas – these are detailed in the Appendix.

This licence does not apply on Sundays or during the period commencing one hour after sunset on any day ending one hour before sunrise on the next day.

This licence is granted under Article 18 of the Order by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (the Department). It comes into operation on 01 January 2026 and is valid unless previously revoked, in all regions of Northern Ireland until 31 December 2026.

In this licence: -

“authorised persons” means: -

- the owner or occupier, or any person authorised by the owner or occupier, of the land on which the action authorised is taken;
- any person authorised by the Department.

(The authorisation of any person for the purpose of this definition shall not confer any right of entry upon land)

“to kill” includes accidentally to wound, whilst attempting to kill;

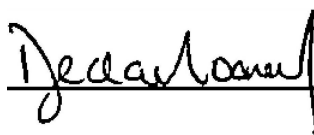
“wild bird” means, any bird of a species which is ordinarily resident in or is a visitor to the European territory of any Member State in a wild state but does not include poultry or any game bird.

“livestock” includes any animal which is kept: -

- (a) for the provision of food, wool, skins or fur;
- (b) for the purpose of its use in the carrying on of any agricultural activity; or
- (c) for rearing and release into the wild for the provision or improvement of shooting or fishing, or for the purpose of nature conservation.

Date: 9 December 2025

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. O'Connell', written over a horizontal line.

Authorised Officer

APPENDIX

Purpose of General Licences

General licences are granted under Article 18 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (as amended) by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

General licences permit authorised persons to carry out actions that would otherwise be illegal, and where the Department considers there is no other satisfactory solution to meet the purpose of each licence. They cover certain types of activity relating to birds, such as preserving public health, protecting crops and preventing the spread of disease. General licences cover situations that are regarded as relatively commonplace and where there is not considered to be any great conservation impact.

General licences avoid the need for people to apply for individual licences for these specific circumstances. General licences are still subject to strict conditions, and abuse of them or failure to comply with the conditions could constitute an offence.

Application of General Licences

General licences apply to the whole of Northern Ireland.

They are issued annually and unless revoked, are valid for the calendar year, excepting Licence TPG3 for the conservation of wild birds which is restricted to use in the breeding season between 1 March and 31 August.

General licences cannot be used on Sundays or during the period commencing one hour after sunset on any day and ending one hour before sunrise on the next day.

All general licences are subject to certain conditions of use. If you plan to act under the authority of a general licence, you must:

- be eligible to do so (see conditions of each licence)
- comply with the terms of the relevant licence and therefore the law

These licences do not give any right of access or right to take action to otherwise unauthorised persons. You should read a copy of the relevant licence in addition to the information below before undertaking any action.

Failure to comply with the terms of the licence may mean you commit a criminal offence under the Wildlife Order and shall be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale or to both.

Use of General Licences on Protected Sites

While General Licences are valid for use across Northern Ireland, anyone intending to use them on designated sites in Northern Ireland, ie, ASSIs, (Areas of Special Scientific Interest) SPAs (Special Protection Areas) or SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) must ensure that such use does not engage with the schedule of damaging operations or activities listed for each site. Where a listed operation or activity is proposed to take place, written consent must be sought from the Department.

Locations of all ASSIs, SPAs and SACs together with further information on each site can be accessed on the following link –

[Natural Environment Map Viewer | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/natural-environment-map-viewer/)

(On the Map Viewer homepage, select the Layer List from the lefthand menu, then 'Protected Areas')

and select the appropriate site types. These will then be displayed on the map. Click on the relevant site, and a further additional information link will be displayed. This will detail site features, management views, and a schedule of damaging operations or activities.)

European Sites

The following conditions on licence use apply to the named SPAs which have sensitive breeding bird species.

Special Protection Area	Species	Conditions
Antrim Hills	Hen Harrier, Merlin	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any hen harrier or merlin while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Copeland Islands	Arctic tern, Manx Shearwater	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any shearwater or tern while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest within a colony - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young within that colony You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	Common Tern	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any common tern while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest within a colony - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young within that colony You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Outer Ards	Arctic Tern	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any arctic tern while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest within a colony - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young within that colony You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young

Pettigoe Plateau	Golden Plover, Hen Harrier, Merlin	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any golden plover, hen harrier or merlin while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Rathlin Island	Peregrine	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any peregrine while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Slieve Beagh – Mullaghfad - Lisnaskea	Hen Harrier	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any hen harrier while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young
Strangford Lough	Arctic Tern, Common Tern, Sandwich Tern	You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb any arctic, common or sandwich tern while it is: - on breeding territory - building a nest within a colony - in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young within that colony You must not intentionally or recklessly disturb its dependent young

Anyone intending to use a general licence is reminded of the statutory legal position in relation to the disturbance of all nesting birds.

Article 4 (6) of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 states –

‘Subject to the provisions of this Part, if any person intentionally, or recklessly

(a) disturbs any wild bird while it is building a nest or is in, or near a nest containing eggs or young;
or

(b) disturbs dependent young of such a bird.

he shall be guilty of an offence.’

If you unexpectedly disturb nesting birds, you should stop the activity and ensure disturbance is prevented from occurring again.

Methods

Licence users should assess alternative, lawful non-lethal methods to achieving the purpose of each licence, including audible and visual deterrents, and exclusion measures. Anyone intending to act under a general licence should first consider these alternatives, but it is recognised that these will not be practical, effective or proportionate for all situations.

The general licences allow a range of control activities, including but not restricted to pricking eggs, oiling eggs, removing eggs and nests, shooting birds and falconry. Licence users should be aware of the prohibited methods of killing or taking wild birds detailed in Article 6(1) of the Wildlife Order, and that use of such a method constitutes an offence.¹

It is expected that the licence user should employ the method that has the least welfare impact to achieve the purpose of the licence. Those birds killed must be dispatched in a humane and timely manner.

¹Prohibition of certain methods of killing or taking wild birds

6.(1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, if any person—

(a) sets in position any of the following articles, being an article which is of such a nature and is so placed as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild bird coming into contact therewith, that is to say, any springe, trap, gin, snare, hook and line, any electrical device for killing, stunning or frightening or any poisonous, poisoned or stupefying substance or muscle-relaxing agent;

(b) uses for the purpose of killing or taking any wild bird any such article as aforesaid, whether or not of such a nature and so placed as aforesaid, or any net, baited board, bird-lime or substance of a like nature to bird-lime;

(c) uses for the purpose of killing or taking any wild bird—

(i) any missile which is not discharged from a firearm, including in particular any arrow or spear;

(ii) any explosive other than ammunition for a firearm;

(iii) any automatic or semi-automatic weapon;

(iv) any shotgun of which the barrel has an internal diameter at the muzzle of more than one and three-quarter inches;

(v) any metal bar, axe, hatchet, cudgel, club, hammer or similar instrument;

(vi) any device for illuminating a target or any sighting device for night shooting;

(vii) any form of artificial light or any mirror or other dazzling device;

(viii) any gas or smoke not falling within sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) or

(ix) any chemical wetting agent;

(d) uses as a decoy, for the purpose of killing or taking any wild bird, any sound recording or any live bird or other animal whatsoever which is tethered, or which is secured by means of braces or other similar appliances, or which is blind, maimed or injured; or

(e) uses any mechanically propelled vehicle in immediate pursuit of a wild bird for the purpose of killing or taking that

bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence.