



## WILDLIFE OFFENCES - BIRD NESTING SEASON

At this time of year it is not uncommon for Police Forces to receive complaints of hedges or birds nests' being destroyed. This is understandably a passionate issue for many people. Dorset Police Rural Crime Team received a report in the Poole area only this week.

Q. Is it illegal to destroy a birds nest? The answer is 'yes'. es, bird nests are protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. ***Specifically, it is illegal to intentionally take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built. This protection extends to all wild bird species, their eggs, and nests.***

**You must not cut hedgerows during the main bird nesting season which is taken to be from 1 March to 31 July (inclusive).**

A key word you will see above is 'intentionally'. This is really the crux of this offence and can be a challenge to prove.

Farmers are very much aware of protecting the birdlife and nests on their land. Obviously the timing of hedge cutting is crucial and on a much smaller scale a thorough 'eyeball' search of a small hedge area may prevent any problems, (eg widening gateposts and field entrances).

i It is not illegal to destroy a nest, egg or bird if it can be shown that the act was the incidental result of a legal operation (ie under a Govt Licence) which could not reasonably have been avoided.

As you would expect the RSPB Website has excellent details around these Wildlife Offences , including tips on how to report safely, what details to record etc.

Enjoy this spring weather - long may it last!!



**Message Sent By**

Dorset Police Rural Crime Team