

Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 Licence to Hold Birds of Prey

Explanatory Notes



Under the terms of Article 18 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 it is necessary for any person wishing to keep a bird of prey which is ordinarily resident in, or is a visitor to, the European territory of any member state to be in possession of a licence issued by the Department. The following notes are for the guidance of those persons applying for such licences. The types of licences are as follows:-

BPH - Licence to possess birds of prey for the purpose of falconry or captive breeding. (No Fee)

BPL - Licence to possess a bird of prey. (Fee £10)

BPC - Licence to breed birds of prey in captivity. (Fee £50)

BPD - Licence to exhibit birds of prey. (No Fee)

1. (BPH and BPC) It is necessary for the Department to assure itself of the standard of all premises before the issue of a licence BPH or BPC and it may wish to satisfy itself regarding the suitability of premises before the issue of any other form of licence. Only in exceptional circumstances will licences be issued where the birds are to be held at premises other than the home address.
2. (BPH and BPL) It is not essential that an applicant be a member of an established falconry club or association. However, as the Department will wish to establish the acceptability and degree of experience of each applicant, delays in the issue of the licence may be expected where an applicant is not a member of an established body. In such cases the Department will seek the opinions of two people with proven experience of falconry and with knowledge of the applicant's ability.

A BPL licence must be held for every indigenous bird of prey and the bird must be fitted with a closed ring of the appropriate size or a tie ring fitted by the Department's Wildlife Inspector. The licence fee will be £10 and will last for the life of the bird. However, if the ownership of the bird is transferred permanently, a fee of £10 must be paid for transfer of the licence.

3. (BPC) The Department may permit the use of birds of prey for captive-breeding. Usually such licences will relate to birds already held under licence and the Department may permit the temporary transfer of a bird so that breeding may take place.
4. (BPD) The Department may permit the public exhibition of birds of prey at a permanent exhibition site or at occasional events such as agricultural shows etcetera.
5. No applications will be considered relating to any other species of bird of prey naturally occurring in a wild state in Northern Ireland, except where the case of a bird which is injured or otherwise incapable of performing its natural functions is involved.

Certain members of the staff of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency are authorised to inspect, at reasonable times, premises where birds are kept under these licences; they may also catch for inspection any bird or examine any egg; an authorised officer may request that a licence holder assists in catching any for inspection; or that a bird may be seen flying at quarry.

Failure to conform with the conditions of a licence may result in the cancellation of the licence, or in prosecution; the maximum penalty which the court may impose for a breach of the Order is £5,000 for any one offence.

A licence holder should ensure that he is familiar with the conditions stated on the licence and if there are any to which he cannot, or can no longer conform he should inform the Department at once.

6. A wild bird of prey that is injured, may, with the permission of the Department be held by a BPH licence holder pending its restoration to full fitness and release to the wild. Licence holders should notify the Department immediately they come into possession of any injured bird of prey.
7. A trainee BPH licence will normally be issued for a period of two years and the licensee has the responsibility of ensuring that he renews at the appropriate time.
8. A BPH full licence will be issued for the life of the licensee.
9. A BPD licence will normally be issued for a period of three years and the licensee has the responsibility of ensuring that he renews at the appropriate time.

The Grading of Falconers for Licensing Purposes

BPH licences are granted in two grades, Trainee and General. A trainee BPH licence holder will be restricted to the possession of either a Common buzzard or a Kestrel only.

In order to decide on the grade of falconry licence an individual should hold, the Department will take the following factors into consideration:-

- (i) age of falconer;
- (ii) length of time associated with the handling of birds of prey;
- (iii) species of birds that have been held by falconer;
- (iv) degree of proven expertise of falconer;
- (v) the history, achievements or problems a falconer may have experienced with birds.

In circumstances where a falconer is not known to the Department, references from general licence holders will be taken into consideration.

The normal period for a "restricted" or "trainee" licence to be held before renewal or consideration for upgrading will be 2 years.

If a trainee falconer wishes to be considered for upgrading to a general licence, he should make arrangements with the Wildlife Inspector to demonstrate his expertise. The Wildlife Inspector will prepare a report for consideration by the Department and a decision will be given in due course.

If you require further clarification of this policy, please contact the Wildlife Inspectorate by telephone on Belfast (028) 9056 9557.

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the natural environment and built heritage for
the benefit of present and future generations.



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