

Bat Conservation Trust



Complaint to Ofcom

Bear Grylls: Born Survivor, Discovery Channel, Monday 10th May 2010 9pm

The Bat Conservation Trust (the national charity conserving bats and their habitats) are registering a formal complaint about the content of *Bear Grylls: Born Survivor*. In this episode the presenter, Mr Grylls is filmed killing bats, he can be seen outside a cave in Asia smoking out, swatting and stamping on bats, while treating his killing of bats as a game of “bat tennis”. Not only is the footage highly distressing and offensive to many people Mr Grylls’ actions would be illegal in the countries, including the UK, where the programme was shown, and is likely to encourage or incite the commission of crime.

Smoking bats out of their roost, swatting, stamping on and killings bats are all crimes in the UK and Europe, punishable by law, with penalties of up to £5000 per bat and up to 6 months in prison. His behavior would break animal welfare law (Wild Mammals Protection Act 1994) as well as conservation laws (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Conservation & Habitats Regulations 2010). Mr Grylls is glamorising bat persecution. Travelling to Asia to smoke bats out of a cave, swat and stamp on them, whilst joking about winning a game of “bat tennis”, is an affront to international biodiversity conservation. For Mr Grylls to travel abroad to perform acts that would be illegal in his own country and for the footage of these acts to be shown to an UK audience where this behavior is illegal is unethical.

The programme is in breach of the rules of the Ofcom Broadcasting Code. The material shown on *Bear Grylls Born Survivor* break rule 3.1 as Mr Grylls’ behavior is likely to encourage or incite the commission of crime. Some people viewing this programme are likely to see this “game” as something they would like to try in the UK; perhaps visiting known a roost in a barn, loft or cave, and in doing so they would be committing an offence, breaching animal welfare legislation (Wild Mammals Protection Act 1994) as well as conservation legislation (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Conservation & Habitats Regulations 2010). The influence of this footage is particularly worrying as Mr Grylls is a role model to young people worldwide in his role as Chief Scout of the Scouting Association.

The footage is detrimental to the huge strides taken forward in bat conservation over the past few decades, to encourage understanding and appreciation of bats, and conserve these endangered species. Mr Grylls actions shown on the Discovery Channel undermine bat conservation efforts worldwide. We are concerned that this programme is going to be scheduled to be repeated, exposing this footage to an ever growing audience and further encouraging the commission of crime.