



Wayne May

Until the day I die

After experiencing the devastation of dog theft, Wayne May has reunited over 2,000 lost pets and has no plans to stop

“Criminals followed me home from a dog show and stole my dogs,” says Wayne May remembering the day six of his dogs were taken. “We got home from the dog show and we bathed the dogs and we fed them, and we were sitting down in our living room, having our tea,” says Wayne. “It was later in the year, so it was getting dark early, and the dogs started barking. When I went out to see why the dogs were barking, the criminals

were already in the process of stealing my dogs.

“I had about 18 dogs at the time. We interuened and they drove the car and ran me over and got away with six. It was because of that incident that I joined DogLost and devoted my time to dog theft.

SIDEHEAD

“Within DogLost itself there’s a really good police liaison team and we get given information via the public. DogLost can’t make arrests or anything. What we do as the police

liaison team is digest the information and make sure that the evidence we gather is authentic. I do most of the homework for the police and we give them all the factual stuff and hopefully we get someone’s dog, horse, parrot or whatever animal it is back home to them.”

Losing your dog, or having them taken from you, is an unbearable thought. But, sadly, it’s a reality for the families of 2,000 dogs that are stolen each year in the UK.

“The most common theft would definitely be dogs,” says Wayne. “The

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We were following up an enquiry regarding some stolen working terriers about 10 years ago. We believed we’d seen the dogs in a vehicle and they were being used for hunting, so we followed them back. We needed to ascertain some more information to clarify that we were looking at the right dogs. We were following them about two o’clock in the morning, in a remote part of the country. I got out and got shot in the back of the neck”

types of breeds change each year and each month. We get fads. One month, it will be French Bulldogs; that will change to working dogs, terriers and spaniels. And then it will change again to Labradors and then it’ll change again to other breeds. It all depends on what’s commanding the highest price.

SIDEHEAD

“The thieves advertise via social media and online selling sites. Very rarely, dogs are stolen to order; the majority are opportunist thefts,

DOG THEFT AWARENESS DAY



Photo posed by models

The Stolen and Missing Pets Alliance (Sampa) Dog Theft Awareness Day is an annual event held on 14 March. According to Sampa, 12 dogs go missing every day in the UK – 52% are stolen from gardens, 19% are stolen in house burglaries, 16% are stolen while on a walk, 7% are stolen while being tied up outside shops and 5% are stolen from cars.

To find out more visit:

www.stolenandmissingpetsalliance.co.uk/dog-theft-awareness-day

but in lockdown there were a lot of pre-planned thefts. Some dogs are stolen to order. It is rare, but it happens.”

Wayne explains why he and the people he meets get involved in dog theft and rescue.

SIDEHEAD

“Being a victim of dog theft means that strangers helped me – people that I never knew or met in my entire life. The least I can do is repay these strangers and donate my time to get their animals back. Some have become friends and almost family. I suppose people are surprised that I keep on doing it after all these years. I never asked these people to help me; they just helped me because they were such nice people, so the least I can do is repay my community by doing the same.

“The most unusual place that I’ve rescued a dog from was on the roof of a block of flats where someone had built a kennel on the outskirts of London. A lift company phoned us and said they’d found this dog kept in a kennel and the person that owned it was using a fire escape to get on the roof because he wasn’t allowed to keep pets in his property.”

As well as rooftop rescues, there have been other risks. Wayne has been harmed several times in the course of his work.

“I’ve been shot and I’ve been stabbed. I wouldn’t advise anyone else to do it. I know my own limitations, I know what I can and can’t do, and I’m fully aware of the circumstances that I put myself into. I wouldn’t advise anyone else to go to the lengths and measures that I do, but it’s my personal choice.

“We were following up an enquiry regarding some stolen working terriers about 10 years ago. We believed we’d seen the dogs in a vehicle and they were being used for hunting, so we followed them back. We needed to ascertain some more information to clarify that we were looking at the right dogs. We were following them about two o’clock in the morning, in a remote part of the country. I got out and got shot in the back of the neck. Another time, I got stabbed right between my shoulder blades.”

Wayne plays down the risks.

“It is dangerous, but it’s very rare. It’s only happened three times in 34 years. A police officer or an ambulance driver put themselves in

that position every time they go to work, so it’s really rare. In my area, Kent, we’re really lucky; we’ve got a really good team of police officers. If I submit intelligence regarding a dog or dog theft, or criminal gangs importing dogs from abroad etc, they do act on that.

SIDEHEAD

“If we can do all the homework – tracking people, finding addresses, police footage, photographs, even drone footage – we pass that over to the police and that’s less work for them. Quite often, we know where the dogs are, so we supply all of that to the police. All they have to do is get a warrant or whatever to retrieve the animal because it’s all been done for them.

Wayne has five dogs of his own – dogs that he’s rescued and kept. “I’ve got two collies, a crossbreed and two Lurchers. They’re all rescued – they came to us and ended up staying.”

And staying is what Wayne plans to do. “I’m 53 next month and I’ll keep doing this for the rest of my life.” ☑

LINKS



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