

The Telegraph

'Hooligan' foxes blamed for cutting motorists' brake cables

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Motorists in Royal Tunbridge Wells have been warned to check their brakes before setting out on car journeys after spate of incidents in which urban foxes were found to have chewed through cables.

Police in the affluent commuter town initially suspected foul play when they were called in to investigate six incidents in a fortnight in which brake lines had been damaged.

But fears that a dangerous vandal with a grudge was on the loose were allayed when a wildlife expert identified the culprits as a gang of rampaging fox cubs.



The juvenile animals, which use the underside of cars as cover when they are on the prowl, often chew on the pipes to help strengthen their jaws and teeth.

Drivers are now being told to check their brakes are working before setting off and are also been advised to wash their cars in animal repellents in order to try and deter the foxes.

Fox expert John Bryant who was called in to identify the culprits said: "It was thought to be vandalism but it was not human vandals.

"I looked at the damaged cables and the only possible explanation is foxes. Fortunately it is a pretty rare occurrence but you do get a couple of cases every year. It is the cubs who are teenage hooligans now so they are up to all sorts.

"They get under cars and snap away at all the cables when they are hyped up."

He said the cubs responsible for the damage were probably about three months old and were just beginning to find their feet in the outside world.

Mr Bryant said: "I would always advise people to get some strong animal repellent and squirt it underneath and round the car. Or park your car elsewhere.

"I did know of a case once where a woman got in her car and went out down the M25 and suddenly realised she had no brakes. Fortunately she was fine, but the potential implications could be huge."

A Kent Police spokesman said: "Officers have investigated the full circumstances of these reports and a wildlife expert has confirmed that the damage has been caused by foxes.

"There is no evidence at this stage to suggest the damage was deliberately caused by a person however any new reports will be thoroughly investigated.

"Foxes, especially cubs at this time of year, are known to rest under vehicles and can chew through pipes."

Inspector Christian Mayers, from the Tunbridge Wells Community Safety Unit, said: "Each of the incidents were quickly noticed by the driver, as they have attempted to drive off from being parked.

“No one has been injured as a result of this. These reports are very unusual and, as a precaution, I would encourage motorists to safely apply their brakes before they set off on a journey.

“Also, check your dashboard for a warning light. If there is damage to your brakes a warning message is likely to appear. It is also a good idea to regularly inspect the underside of your vehicle

“Finally, consider regularly washing your car to remove any scents left by foxes. There are also animal repellents available, which can be applied to vehicles in order to deter foxes.”