

# Northern England Raptor Forum



Annual Review 2011

## Acknowledgements

The production of this, the third Northern England Raptor Forum Annual Review, is the result of the collaborative efforts by the members of each of the constituent NERF Groups who have kindly shared their data with the Forum.

NERF would like to express its gratitude to Mark Holling, Secretary to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, for writing the Foreword and his continued support for NERF.

The Forum is thankful for the support from Stephen Murphy, Natural England, and Dave Hoccum, Head of Investigations, RSPB in 2011 and now Head of Species Conservation there. Our thanks to James Leonard, Investigations Dept, RSPB, for his support during 2011; we wish him every success in his new post in Scotland, and welcome Alan Firth and Howard Jones, who have joined the Investigations Dept.

We would like to express our thanks to the individuals who allowed us to use their photographs.

Our gratitude also goes to Nick Dixon, Ed Drewitt and Robin Arundale for their articles, which bring raptor monitoring to life.

The Forum is indebted to Steve Downing, the former Editor, and his wife Val Webber, for their hard work, help and advice in the preparation of this report.

## Northern England Raptor Forum

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Calderdale Raptor Study Group  
Cumbria Raptor Study Group  
Durham Upland Bird Study Group  
Manchester Raptor Group  
Northumbrian Ringing Group  
North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group  
Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group  
South Peak Raptor Study Group  
South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group  
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

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**This Report should be referenced as:** Smith, A.J. & NERF *et al.* 2012.

**Cover Photograph:** Little Owl, courtesy of Robert Kenworthy

**Design:** frogsdesign, Hebden Bridge

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The Northern England Raptor Forum is supported by:



# Northern England Raptor Forum

Annual Review 2011



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# Photograph credits

**Cover, Little Owl:** Robert Kenworthy

**Buzzard, Common:** Ivan Ellison (2)

**Buzzard, Honey:** Mark Yates

**Buzzard, Rough-legged:** Kevin Lin

**Eagle, Golden:** Mark Yates

**Goshawk:** Graham Brodie

**Harrier, Hen:** Les Steele

**Harrier, Marsh:** Steve Collins

**Harrier, Montagu's:** Wilf Norman

**Hobby:** Ken Smith

**Kestrel:** Lisa Murphy

**Merlin:** Joe Wynn

**Osprey:** Jon Taverner

**Owl, Barn:** Judith Smith

**Owl, Eurasian Eagle:** Mike Killelea

**Owl, Little:** Judith Smith

**Owl, Long-eared:** Robert Kenworthy

**Owl, Short-eared:** Ivan Ellison

**Owl, Tawny:** Peter Johnson

**Peregrine:** Ivan Ellison

**Red Kite:** Ivan Ellison

**Sparrowhawk:** Ivan Ellison

**Raven:** Judith Smith

**Peregrines at St. Michael's, Exeter** (2 photos): Richard Heeks

**Red Kite at Harewood House:** Ivan Ellison

**Marsh Harrier found shot near Barnard Castle and later released** (N. Turner)

**Peregrine chicks at an urban site:** Adrian Dancy

**Moorland in Greater Manchester:** Judith Smith.

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## Useful telephone numbers

If you discover a wildlife crime please report the details to the Police, obtain an incident number and ask that, in addition to sending an Officer to the scene, the report is brought to the attention of the Force Wildlife Crime Officer. If the incident is a 'crime in progress' dial 999.

The national non-emergency telephone number is 101 from 2012.

Cheshire Constabulary	0845 458 0000	Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Cleveland Police	01642 326326	RSPB Investigations Dept.	01767 680 551
Cumbria Constabulary	0845 330 0247	RSPB North of England Investigations Officer (Alan Frith)	07900 678 925
Derbyshire Constabulary	0345 123 3333	RSPB Investigations Officer (Howard Jones)	07834 534 142
Durham Constabulary	0345 606 0365	Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme	0800 321 600
Humberside Police	0845 125 3545	Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme	01524 5959 830
Lancashire Constabulary	0845 125 3545		
Manchester Police	0161 872 5050		
Northumbria Police	0345 604 3043		
North Yorkshire Police	0845 606 0247		
South Yorkshire Police	0114 220 2020		
West Yorkshire Police	0845 606 0606		
National Wildlife Crime Unit	01506 833 722		

**Please report Hen Harrier sightings to:**

Stephen Murphy,

Natural England HHRP

07932 662 258

# Foreword



THE NORTHERN England Raptor Forum (NERF) has now produced three annual reports reviewing the status of birds of prey, owls and the Common Raven in the north of England. Each one has provided extensive and detailed documentation of the numbers and breeding productivity of up to 23 species of raptor, from the widespread Common Buzzard to the rare and localised Hen Harrier, Honey Buzzard and Osprey, and including species which are only vagrants to the area such as Montagu's Harrier and White-tailed Eagle. This review includes contributions from two new groups now operating under the NERF umbrella: Bowland Raptor Study Group and the South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group. It is encouraging that NERF can now represent a larger area of the north of England, enabling it better to fulfil its objectives in the promotion of raptor conservation across the whole of the region.

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) operates at the UK level and also reports annually. RBBP's focus is on the rarer birds which breed in the UK, generally those with fewer than 1,500 breeding pairs. Owing to their specialist requirements and their position in the food chain, raptors tend to be less numerous than other species of bird and this, coupled with the history of intense persecution of anything with a hooked beak, means that most of the species included in the NERF report are also on the RBBP's list of species to be monitored. However, the work on the more numerous and widespread raptors such as Common Buzzard, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Kestrel, Barn Owl and Tawny Owl is just as important. It may not be possible to monitor all breeding pairs of these species, but data on nesting attempts in sampled areas is vital to assess what is happening to these birds.

The importance of the north of England for raptors is illustrated by the proportions of the UK populations of the following species which breed in the NERF area. From the English perspective the Hen Harrier is the most important in that 100% of the English population occurs in the north of England. Unfortunately though, continued illegal persecution of this iconic species of the

uplands has directly led to the decline in the numbers of nesting pairs and means that Hen Harriers may be lost as a breeding bird of the area. Four other species are important at the UK level: Merlin (30-40% of the UK population in northern England), Northern Goshawk (21-28%) Peregrine (19-24%) and Red Kite (9-10%). Too little is currently known about the national populations of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls, but the monitoring work by NERF members shows that significant numbers of these species occur in the NERF area.

The annual totals of rare breeding birds, including the scarcer raptors, published by RBBP are respected as the most reliable current estimates for these species and they are used by conservation bodies such as the RSPB and the government conservation agencies such as Natural England in their assessment of conservation priorities. Annual totals of the numbers of breeding pairs of many raptor species across the UK and supplied by RBBP will be used in the forthcoming review from the Avian Population Estimates Panel (which will be published early in 2013). RBBP would not be able to provide these figures without the hard work and dedication of fieldworkers such as members of NERF, who give up many hours (indeed, weeks!) of their spare time each year to locate their specialist species and to monitor nest attempts from display and nest-building through to either successful fledging of young or failure of the breeding attempt. It is these raw data, built up to the county recording level, which are the bread and butter of the RBBP datasets. But it is beyond the capability of RBBP to document and collate details on each nesting attempt, and this is where the NERF Annual Review takes over, as the permanent repository of these details, combined with erudite comment based on the on-the-ground knowledge of NERF members. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel would like to thank all the fieldworkers within NERF for their important contributions and for working together in partnership to further the conservation of raptors in the north of England.

The Annual Review also provides important feedback to all fieldworkers and to other interested parties, including decision makers in government and non

government organisations. This would not be possible without the efforts of the individual fieldworkers who contribute. Even in these austere times, some funding to help support the publication and distribution of this incredibly important report would be welcome. Perhaps those amongst the readership who have access to funds will look to how their organisation might be able to offer financial support in the future. An equivalent report on raptors in Scotland does receive funding to help ensure that the important information collated by raptor fieldworkers there is published annually.

For NERF members who have contributed to this review, watching and monitoring birds of prey and owls is their hobby as well as their passion and in the process they become knowledgeable not only about the birds but also the habitats and the conservation issues associ-

ated with the wild places where so many of the raptors live. They also get to know the people who live and work on the land they have access to, and many build positive relationships with these people, working in harmony. It is sad then that some landowners and gamekeepers treat raptor workers with suspicion and derision, and continue to illegally destroy the birds and nests which the fieldworker is monitoring in the interests of science and the conservation of the birds. The publication of this third NERF Annual Review is therefore a tribute to those who continue to study raptors in the north of England and their contributions should be celebrated.

**Mark Holling**

*Secretary, Rare Breeding Birds Panel*

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## Chairman's Report

**W**ELCOME TO this, the 3rd Annual Review from the Northern England Raptor Forum [NERF], where we detail the status of birds of prey, owls and Raven in our region during 2011. The review represents the combination of many hours of fieldwork undertaken by experienced and dedicated members of the various local raptor study groups [RSGs] affiliated to NERF. It provides undoubtedly the most authoritative summary available of the current status and population trends for our target species. Many of the species studied require our individual members to be licensed from Natural England or to be permitted from the BTO and this Review is one means of presenting the large volume of data collected under these schemes. Ultimately, the data is supplied to the Rare Breeding Birds Panel [RBBP] to help present the national status which is reported annually by the RBBP in *British Birds*. NERF believes firmly that by combining the results of the fieldwork undertaken by local raptor study groups the overall regional results offer a far clearer picture of trends and highlight common concerns. In this way species conservation and protection is best served.

It is therefore especially heartening to welcome two new groups to NERF since our last Annual Review. The inclusion of South Ryedale & East Yorkshire RSG and the Bowland RSG means that we can speak with even

greater conviction and with one voice for raptor conservation issues in northern England. The map included elsewhere in this report readily confirms just how widespread and representative NERF membership has become. We are reliant on, and forever grateful to, the many fieldworkers, who quietly and unassumingly volunteer their considerable time and energies each season to monitoring work.

NERF members wish to record their particular thanks to Steve Downing of the Calderdale RSG who, through his huge personal commitment, has set the very high standard seen in the two NERF Annual Reviews previously published. Judith Smith, of Manchester Raptor Group is to be applauded for taking on the mantle of editor for this the 2011 Annual Review; I trust that you'll agree that thanks to her our Review continues to go from strength to strength.

I'd also like to record the members' huge vote of thanks to our outgoing Secretary, Ian Court. Ian was instrumental in forging and binding NERF at its inception and in acting as Secretary for 6 years he has provided direction and shouldered a considerable amount of work on behalf of the Forum. We are grateful that both Ian and Steve will continue to play their part as active members.

The Review once again reveals the various successes and concerns for raptor populations in northern Eng-



land. Sadly, the conservation status of raptors, especially in the uplands, remains as critical today as ever. Our natural heritage is under threat and one of NERF's core functions is to provide rigorous data sets from survey and monitoring studies that irrefutably show the true status of species. Beyond that, NERF is determined to use its knowledge and experience to influence attitudes and policy and to better inform the conservation debate.

The publication\* in 2011 of the collaborative paper with the RSPB on the breeding status of Peregrines in the uplands was an important landmark for the use of NERF members' collective data in a published scientific paper. (\* A. Amar *et al*, "Linking nest histories, remotely sensed land use data and wildlife crime records to explore the impact of grouse moor management on Peregrine Falcon populations". *Journal of Biological Conservation*). The challenge for NERF is to follow through with the theme of this paper to ensure policy makers are aware of the serious issues facing upland Peregrines breeding on or close to managed grouse moors. The use of species specific data in scientific papers is something that NERF intends to repeat.

NERF has remained committed to the Hen Harrier Dialogue facilitated through the Environment Council. This remains a slow and often frustrating process in the face of the well publicised continuing decline in Hen Harrier status in England. During 2011 only one meeting took place, which we felt, given the urgent need for harrier conservation, was intolerable. There are those who have trumpeted the success of this process, and continue to do so, yet in practical terms it has delivered no real changes on the ground, intolerance of harriers in defiance of the law is as it ever was and six years into

the process I believe it is now time for NERF to carefully review where we go from here. It is clear that the urgent and dire plight of English Hen Harriers is something that unites us all. This single issue and the steps we take now, may well determine how we are judged by future generations. We need to get it right, the birds themselves demand no less of us.

I'm sure that most readers will be aware that there has been considerable pressure on Natural England to grant licences to some Pheasant shoots to allow them to control "problem" Buzzards near pheasant release pens. As a result of the refusal to grant these licences and the resultant pressure, DEFRA initiated a "Buzzard stakeholder group" to which we were invited. We have throughout the process vigorously insisted that good science should be the only criteria by which the situation can and should be judged and we have yet to see evidence that Buzzards present a demonstrable problem. We were opposed to the ill-fate control proposals which were subsequently withdrawn amidst much publicity at the end of May 2012. Other issues remain under discussion and we will continue to argue for a solution which precludes all lethal control of both adults and nest contents.

I am confident that our member's unstinting contribution to raptor surveying, monitoring and protection will continue to provide a meticulous basis for the assessment of the status of raptors in our region and the conservation challenges that remain.

**Paul Irving**

*Chairman, Northern England Raptor Forum*

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## Secretary's report

**T**HE NORTHERN England Raptor Forum [NERF] has been established for over six years. It provides a valuable focal point for local raptor study groups, operating in northern England, to come together and speak with one effective voice on matters of conservation interest and concern for raptors, including owls and Raven. We have seen that the issues raised by the local RSG's are often common right across our

region and believe that it is more powerful to speak collectively when the need arises. The inherent strength of NERF rests with the many hours of monitoring undertaken by individual members of the various local raptor study groups. Their combined efforts ensure that the research needs, policies and reports that might be developed by NERF, as a parent body, are based on the most comprehensive and current data pertaining to raptor





breeding and overwintering.

We are delighted to report on the continued expansion of membership with the very welcome addition of two new groups to the Forum since our last Annual Review. The South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group was elected in the latter half of 2011 and the Bowland Raptor Study Group in the spring of 2012. Both groups represent important areas and bring a wealth of experience with several long term monitoring studies already well established. This brings to a total of ten the number of affiliated groups in NERF. We also benefit from links with the Cumbria Bird Club. Full details of our member groups are listed elsewhere within this review. NERF would welcome applications for membership from other active raptor study groups in northern England.

Each of the affiliated local RSG's is represented on NERF by two members. Meetings are held twice per year with business and decisions between main meetings conducted by email correspondence. Sub committees may also meet to progress matters with any binding decisions being taken back to the full membership for approval.

NERF is clear in its desire to remain an independent and responsible voice within the raptor conservation movement but we would like to acknowledge the benefit of having invited representatives from other organisations attending our meetings. These have included contributions the National Wildlife Crime Unit, the RSPB Northern Region, the RSPB Species Policy and Investigations units, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the Hen Harrier Recovery Project.

Matters addressed during the last year have included a review of NERF's aims and objectives and the priorities we should place on them. We have also identified the actions necessary to develop and launch a NERF Website. There has been discussion on the follow up that will be necessary on our collaborative paper with the RSPB on the status of Peregrines on northern grouse moors and the species where similar reports might be published using NERF's long term data sets and fieldworker resources.

NERF has increasingly found representation on outside bodies. The long standing involvement on the Hen Harrier Dialogue facilitated by the Environment Council has continued and NERF now attends the Buzzard Stakeholder Group facilitated by DEFRA to review the impact of Common Buzzards at Pheasant poult release

pens. These forums present challenging issues but NERF believes its expert opinions should be heard and that its influence should be felt. Our policy towards species protection and conservation is resolute.

NERF has also met with RSPB national and regional staff to review areas of common interest and concern. Here, we would like to record our sincere appreciation of the excellent contribution made in our region by James Leonard, RSPB Investigations Officer, Northern England. James moved in 2012 to take up a new appointment as Investigations Officer, RSPB Scotland.

The two activities which are considered central to NERF's aims are the publication of this, the Annual Review, in time for our conference the following year, and the hosting of the conference itself. Both activities place significant time demands on the members who volunteer to lead them and we are grateful to the Annual Review authors and main editor and to the respective conference organisers.

The 2011 Northern England Raptor Conference was hosted jointly on behalf of NERF by the Durham Upland Bird Study Group and the Durham Bird Club at Gala Theatre in Durham City. An attendance of 140 fieldworkers and professional conservationists enjoyed presentations that included Professor Brian Huntley speaking on the likely effects of climate change on upland species populations and Dr Ruth Tingay on worldwide eagle conservation. Species talks included the results from the national Hen Harrier winter roost survey (Anne Cotton, BTO) and the latest views on the challenges of monitoring Short-eared Owl (John Calladine, BTO). The value of recording systems was highlighted by Mark Holling from the RBBP and Dave Leech from the BTO Nest Record Scheme. Amanda Miller, RSPB completed the day with news of the launch of the Sky-dancer project as one important initiative aimed at promoting Hen Harrier conservation. Thanks should also go to Gala Theatre staff and the day's principal sponsor, the RSPB.

NERF continues to grow in its thinking and influence. Our commitment to make use of rigorous field data to help conserve and protect raptors remains as strong and as necessary as ever.

**David Raw**

*Secretary, Northern England Raptor Forum.*

*August 2012*

# NERF: geographical coverage

## **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Coverage:** Upland area of Bowland AONB.

The Bowland Raptor Study Group's area largely coincides with the boundary of the Forest of Bowland AONB, which in turn is roughly marked out by the M6 to the west, the Lune valley to the north, the A65 to the east and the A59 to the south. The group's main interests lie with the monitoring of upland birds of prey, including hen harrier, merlin and peregrine, with additional interest in barn owls on the low ground. To this end, much of the monitoring effort is focused on the moorland areas of Bowland.

## **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

Covers some, or all, of the following grid squares: SD91, 92, 93; SE01,02,03 and SE11,12.

Effectively the southern border in the M62, with the Worth valley in the north. In the east the Group covers Brighouse (between Bradford in the north and Huddersfield in the south). The western border is the Pennine county boundary with Lancashire.

## **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

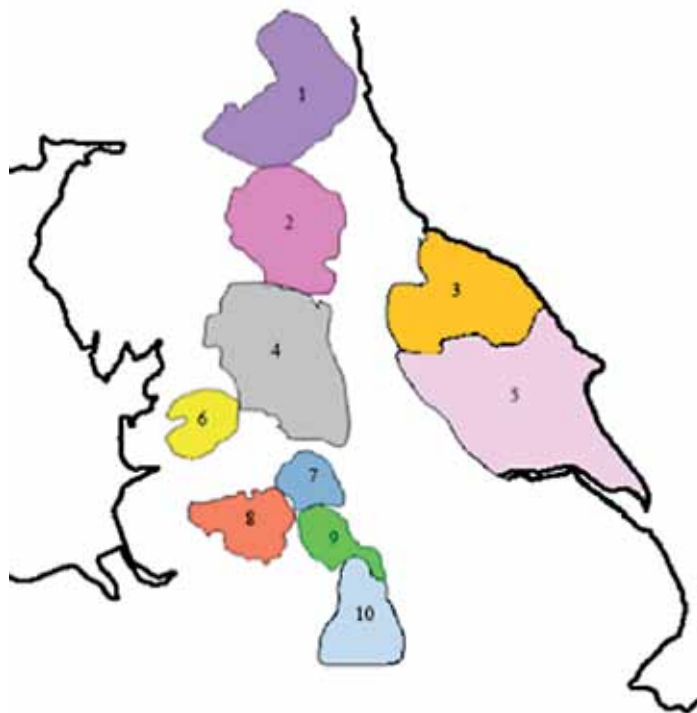
**Coverage:** In this report the Group's comments refer principally to the Durham uplands [defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining valley systems all lying generally west of the Easting NZ10 up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire]. Where appropriate, comments are also made on the status of species throughout the Durham recording area as determined by the county ornithological society, the Durham Bird Club.

## **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Coverage:** Whole county

The area is bounded on the north and west by Lancashire and Merseyside, on the north east by Calderdale, in the east by Kirklees, in the south

## **NERF member groups**



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Northumbrian Ringing Group                          | 6. Bowland Raptor Study Group            |
| 2. Durham Upland Bird Study Group                      | 7. Calderdale Raptor Study Group         |
| 3. North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group   | 8. Manchester Raptor Group               |
| 4. Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group             | 9. Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group |
| 5. South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group | 10. South Peak Raptor Study Group        |

east by Derbyshire and by Cheshire in the south and south west.

The work previously undertaken by the Mosslands Barn Owl Conservation Group has been absorbed into the MRG.

## **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Coverage:** Part uplands and part lowlands areas.

The group is active throughout the county of Northumberland. The data in this report primarily refers to the Cheviot uplands, the Kielder Forest, the Border Forest, and a small section of eastern Cumbria around Keshope where the forested area straddles the county boundary.

## **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Coverage:** Upland areas only.

The area studied covers the upland areas, gills, dales, forests and farmland within the boundaries of the

North York Moors National Park.

## **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

The PDRMG covers the Derbyshire Peak District, including the Goyt Valley and the Macclesfield Forest, including the low-lying areas. Glosop forms the western boundary, and the north east of the Peak Park is bounded by Huddersfield, Sheffield, Barnsley and Wakefield. The Group does not cover the limestone areas within the peak Park, nor Derwent Dale.

## **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Coverage:** In the north: National Trust land in the upper Derwent valley, west to the R. Alport and east to the National Trust boundary.

In the south: all of the White Peak,



**Moorland in Greater Manchester**

with the exception of the Goyt valley. Includes the Staffordshire Moors, Eastern Moors, North Lees Estate, Chatsworth Estate and the Haddon Estate. In addition the Group covers central Derbyshire as far as the Nottinghamshire border and South Derbyshire (mainly Hobby).

***South Ryedale and East  
Yorkshire Raptor Study Group***

**Coverage:** Everything south of the North York Moors to the Humber estuary, east of the A1.

***Yorkshire Dales Upland  
Bird Study Group***

**Coverage:** Upland areas only. Covers the central Pennine block from the southern boundary between Skipton, Harrogate and Otley, and west to the Cumbria and Lancashire boundaries.

# Annual Review

THE NORTHERN England Raptor Forum [NERF] was formed in 2006 with the specific objective of speaking on behalf of birds of prey, with one collective voice. Members of the Forum survey all 23 species of raptor, including owls and Raven, an honorary raptor, occurring in, or transiting through, the northern uplands.

The uplands of the North of England are wild, often inhospitable, the terrain can be difficult to negotiate and many bird of prey nests are, inevitably, in remote locations. Within each individual member Group resources are extremely limited and the time required to study all of the 23 species, in any depth, is very considerable. Despite the resourcing issues there are several NERF members who have been undertaking long-term detailed studies of specific species, often for very many years.

The problems associated with the difficulties of accessing remote breeding areas are exacerbated by the fact that the majority of the monitoring takes place during the breeding season, which is a very small window of opportunity to complete a very large body of work.

In 2011 all of the NERF Groups used the same criterion to record their monitoring activities; however due to resource constraints not all species were recorded fully, and in some cases they were not recorded at all. This, the third NERF Annual Review, combines all of the available data from each Group in one document.

Data gaps are shown as 'NR' [no records] in the NERF species tables. This notation merely indicates that no records were kept by the originating Group, or that the records are irretrievable for the purpose of this report. The notation should not be interpreted to conclude that the species does not occur in that study area. Where specific numbers are given they refer to the number of birds monitored and should not be interpreted as a definitive population count for the area.

These same criteria also apply to persecution data. The numbers in the persecution bar-chart refer only to evidence-based cases recorded by the members, during 2011, in respect of both species and type of persecution categories. Once again the figures in each bar should not be seen as definitive, they simply reflect the number of Groups that have experienced each specific category of persecution. Nor should the fact that no persecution is recorded in some of the categories, or for some of the species, be interpreted that no persecution occurs in respect of that species; it merely indicates that none was discovered by NERF members.

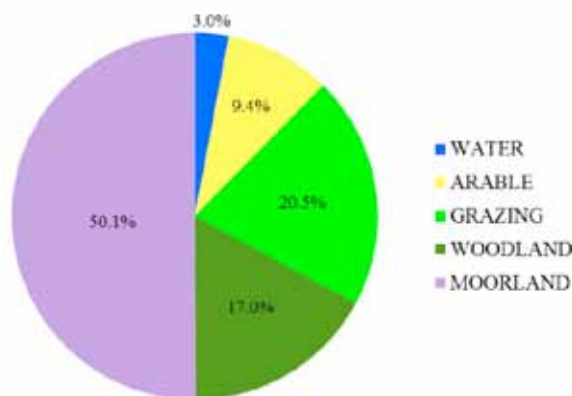
## NERF regional habitat coverage

Northern England Raptor Forum members monitor 23 raptor species across the northern uplands. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that almost 50% of the habitat monitored consists of moorland and that together moorland and woodland, often situated on the moorland fringe, account for c70% of the habitat monitored.

Although c20% has been categorised as grazing much

of this habitat comprises of white moor, sheepwalk and 'in-by'. It is evident that very little, less than 10%, of the monitored habitat is arable land.

### NERF habitat breakdown

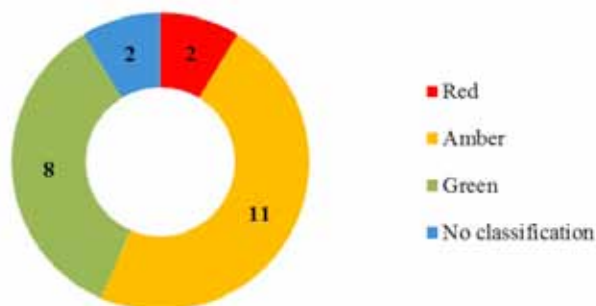


From the data supplied by the individual Groups it is clear that if the species monitored by NERF are to prosper they are dependent on sensitive management of moorland, moorland fringe and forestry. Whilst many of the upland SSSIs are not in 'favourable' status, overall upland land management practices do provide vast areas of suitable habitat for raptors.

Not shown in the above chart is the small amount of urban habitat covered by NERF members, mainly relating to Peregrines and Kestrels breeding on buildings.

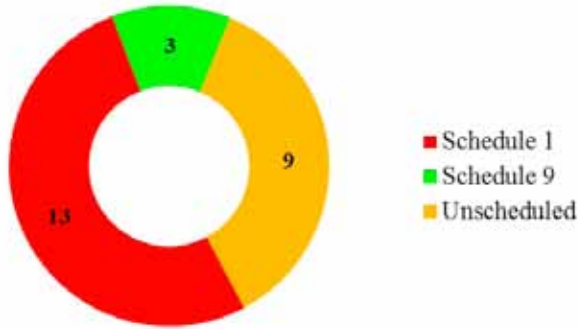
## Conservation status of raptors in the NERF Region

### Conservation status of the 23 raptors surveyed by NERF members



Many of the raptors monitored by NERF are vulnerable and the conservation status of 13 of the 23 species is listed as red or amber, which emphasises the importance and benefit of the work being undertaken for raptor conservation by the Groups. Data collated by NERF is extremely valuable when the conservation status of each species is being considered whether at the local, county, national or international level.

**WCLA schedule status**



Thirteen of the species studied are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and work on these species is undertaken under the appropriate licence issued by Natural England or the BTO.

Barn Owl, Eagle Owl and White-tailed Eagle are listed on Schedule 9 and cannot be released without first obtaining a licence from Natural England.

**NERF regional species monitoring**

Given that the membership of each constituent Group of NERF has historically consisted of a small number of dedicated volunteers the volume of monitoring undertaken across the NERF region is quite remarkable.

The chart below graphically indicates the level of monitoring undertaken by NERF. In this Review there is a small but significant change to the 'traffic light' system used to depict the monitoring process. In 2009 3 colours, green, amber and red were used with red being used to identify the species that were absent from individual study areas. However; this system indicated that species such as Montagu's Harrier and Osprey were absent i.e. red, and whilst this is true the species is better depicted as a 'passage bird' rather than absent. The red

colour visually emphasised this distortion in the data. In this Review blue has been added to represent birds that are only observed on passage at the present.

Analysis of the species breeding & monitored / breeding & not monitored / absent / passage data identifies the areas in which NERF will be able to focus future monitoring efforts more effectively. This will provide an opportunity to expand the overall dataset in a more meaningful way. This improved dataset, when combined with the persecution dataset will be used to set and / or modify NERF's monitoring priorities over time.

Rough-legged Buzzards are recorded as passage birds by 4 Groups and the species has been added to the list of birds recorded by NERF members for completeness.

In 2009 NERF set priorities to improve the monitoring of both Kestrel and Sparrowhawk. Both priorities have been fulfilled. In relation to Kestrel the number of Groups monitoring this species in 2011 has increased from 2 to 5 and in relation to Sparrowhawks the number of groups monitoring the species has increased from 3 to 5. Whilst these improvements are welcome there remains an opportunity for additional monitoring, which would complete the datasets across the NERF region.

In 2009 Little Owls were not monitored by any NERF Group. In 2010-11 this situation was greatly improved when 4 of the 8 Groups were able to dedicate time to this charismatic species.

In 2011 the Rare Breeding Birds Panel [RBBP] added Long-eared Owl and Short-eared Owl to their list of species that are believed to have a population of less than 1,500 breeding pairs in the UK and are therefore deserved of more extensive monitoring. Whilst NERF members were already active in monitoring both species in 2011 only 15 pairs of Short-eared Owls and 27 pairs of Long-eared Owls are recorded as fledging young. With regard to the expanse of suitable habitat within the NERF region it is possible that this species is under-re-

GROUP	SPECIES MONITORED BY NERF IN 2011																						
BRSG																							
Cumbria																							
CRSG						*																	
DUBSG						*					*												
MRG		*								*													
NRG		*	*		*		*	*		*				*		*							
NYMRSG									*						*	*							
PDRMG			*						*		*						*						
SPRSG	*					*			*		*			*									
YDUBG	*	*			*	*	*		*	*		*		*									
	Breeding & monitored	Breeding & not monitored	Absent	Passage only																			
	Buzzard Common	Buzzard Honey	Buzzard Rough-legged	Eagle Golden	Eagle White-tailed	Osprey	Harrier, Hen	Harrier, Marsh	Harrier, Montagu's	Hobby	Kestrel	Martin	Osprey	Owl, Barn	Owl, Eagle	Owl, Little	Owl, Long-eared	Owl, Short-eared	Owl, Tawny	Peregrine	Red Kite	Sparrowhawk	Raven

Notes:

\*Indicates a change in monitoring

The Cumbrian Golden Eagle record refers to a lone male holding territory, not a bird on passage

corded; if not it may be under threat. In either case both species are deserved of increased attention by all upland Raptor Workers.

Further information and advice in relation to the criterion for categorising breeding evidence for both species can be found on the RBBP website at [www.rbbp.org.uk](http://www.rbbp.org.uk)

## NERF regional persecution data

Of all the data gathered by Raptor Workers the number of persecution cases consistently invokes discussions in relation to the claims. Proven persecution is relatively easy to assert in cases where birds have been shot or poisoned or in cases where traps have been recovered adjacent to nests.

It is self-evident that claims of persecution would be contentious where birds are reported to have 'disappeared' from a given location, perhaps during the breeding season. A similar situation arises when the absence of a particular species from a given area, where there is ample suitable habitat and prey, cannot be explained unless human interference is the cause.

No matter how contentious these issues are it is the responsibility of Raptor Workers to raise their concerns in the public domain. It is then a matter for others to make evidence based challenges to the assertion that persecution is affecting several species, particularly in areas associated with game shooting rather than to simply state that it does not occur.

The values shown in the bar chart refer to the number of individual NERF member Groups reporting persecution in each category.

When all incidents are summed together, the total of 82 is a rise of 46% over 56 in 2010, but is still less than 2009, when 119 incidents were recorded, although this

figure did include some historical data.

Particularly disturbing this year is the rise in persecution of Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Peregrine and Merlin. Theft of Peregrine chicks (6) doubled, and the relentless destruction of Hen Harriers, by whatever method, led to their extinction as a breeding species in England in 2012. Once again, species occupying moorland habitat predominate.

The recent disclosure (September 2012) of a Scottish gamekeeper's diary, with a horrifying list of kills, (<http://raptorpersecutionscotland.wordpress.com/>) merely emphasises that the table above is just the tip of the iceberg, in all probability.

## Summary

Within the NERF region 21 of the 23 raptor species were monitored and / or recorded by Group members during 2011. Full details of the work undertaken is set out in the 'species reports,' however for quick reference the combined data for all of the species has been collated into a single table. See Appendix I.

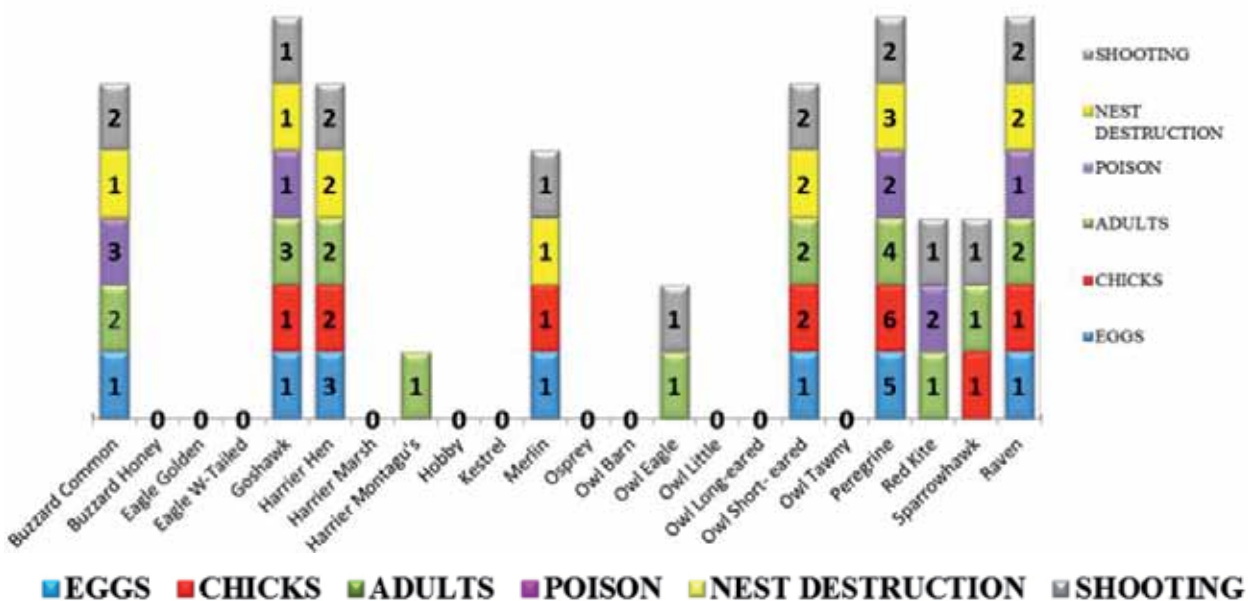
For ease of comparison the overall statistics for 2009 v 2011 are presented in the table overleaf.

Collectively NERF members checked 2115 home ranges in 2011. Whilst this was only 4.78% more than in 2010, it was 68.7% more than in 2009. Of these 1196 were occupied by pairs of birds and 968 pairs (80.93%) were monitored throughout the season, slightly less than 2010. A minimum of 742 pairs are known to have fledged in excess of 1794 young birds. This was down on 2010 by 6.3% and 2.8% respectively.

Records also reveal that the overall breeding rates for the combined species for 2011 were:

- 865 pairs laid eggs,

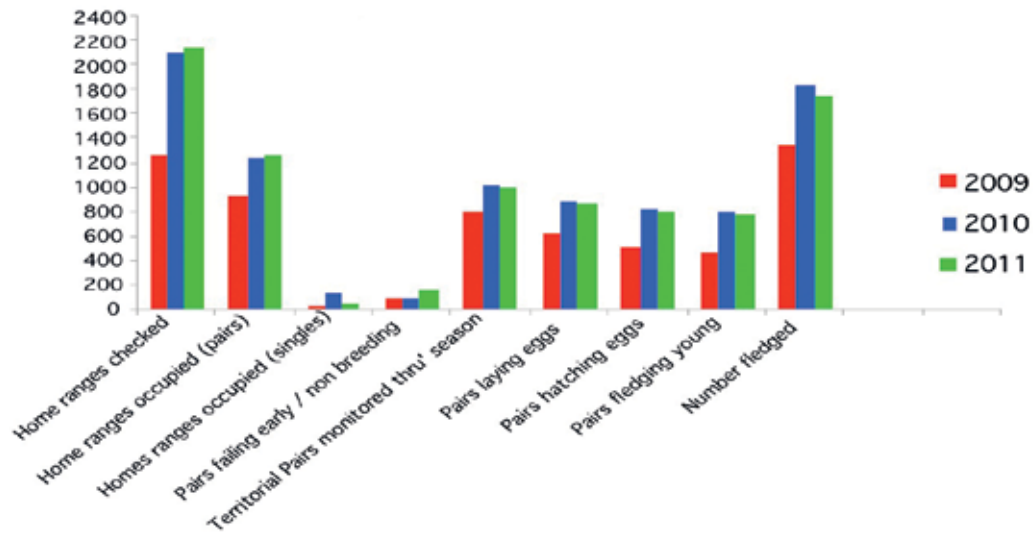
### NERF groups reporting persecution by species and category



**Note:** The values shown in the bar chart refer to the number of individual NERF member Groups reporting persecution in that separate category.

'0' values have been attributed to some species under circumstances where they either do not occur within the NERF area, or, where no persecution was detected by Group members. In this second category readers should not infer that no persecution took place, merely that it went undetected.

## Combined statistics 2009-2011



- 812 pairs hatched eggs (93.87%) and
- 774 went on to fledge young (95.32%)

Comparisons with 2009 and 2010 fledging rates for pairs laying eggs and pairs monitored are provided in Appendix II.

Taking into account travelling time and the distance to some of the remote locations, over rough terrain, it is estimated that each Raptor Worker commits 5 hours per nest visit. For health and safety reasons nest visits are invariably made by 2 Raptor Workers, which doubles the time to 10 hours per nest visit.

To achieve this number of nest visits NERF members committed in excess of 45,000 hours to monitoring and protecting raptors during 2011. This is a conservative estimate. Nor does it take account of the many hundreds of hours spent monitoring and protecting passage birds transiting the North of England outside of the breeding season.

Using an average of £150 per day for professional survey work, the voluntary contribution of NERF Group members during the 2011 breeding season is valued at approximately £850,000.

Although NERF members completed an extraordinary amount of monitoring during 2011 there is more to do and anyone interested in joining one of the Groups should contact the relevant Group representative. Contact details are provided in Appendix V.

Some very interesting conclusions can tentatively be drawn from the 2009 and 2011 datasets and these baseline figures will aid the NERF Committee to make strategic decisions for future monitoring projects, including the publication of single species reports.

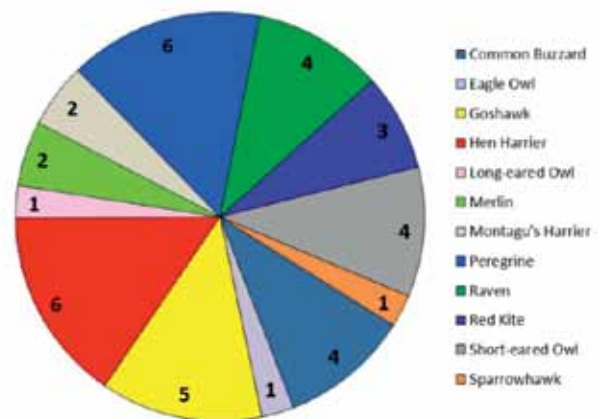
When additional data is available, via future Annual Reviews, a more detailed analysis will be undertaken and comparisons and trended information will provide the Forum with a better overall understanding of the

status of birds of prey in the region.

The main body of the Annual Review identifies each of the 23 species in BOU order, concluding with Raven. The sub-sections then examine the national perspective for each bird, including the UK population estimate, the national threat assessment and the conservation status. The Review then outlines the monitoring activity undertaken by NERF, including individual Group reports, Group species summary and the NERF regional threat assessment.

Finally the species section concludes with data kindly provided by non-NERF members.

## Blackhole species



During 2011 NERF members analysed the various habitats within their respective study areas with a view to identifying 'Blackhole Species', i.e. those habitats where there is ample suitable habitat and food supply but where the relevant species are absent or occur at levels well below those experienced in similar habitat. The pie chart indicates the species and the number of NERF member Groups experiencing reduced populations.

# Species reports

**Editor's Note**

Please note that the species are now arranged in BOU order.

<http://www.bou.org.uk/british-list/>

The Contents List still arranges them alphabetically, for easy reference.



# Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*



## UK population estimate

Up to 47 pairs (RBBP, 2010)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Amber ●  
 Europe Not of concern  
 Global Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

Egg collectors represent the most serious threat to nesting Honey Buzzards in Britain. As the species presents no risk to game birds, those gamekeepers who can differentiate between Honey and Common Buzzards are quite happy to tolerate the former! Migration to and from Africa has its own inherent dangers of course but

at least British birds, which migrate across the Straits of Gibraltar, avoid the slaughter of their European counterparts running the gauntlet of passage across the central Mediterranean via Malta where significant numbers are shot each year in flagrant contravention of EU laws.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species

Not recorded in 2011

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Following the same pattern as previous years, once again there were no records of this species crossing the Group's study area during 2010.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

2011 proved to be a typical year with a small number of spring and autumn passage birds mostly reported from the eastern part of the county. There were just 2 spring records, on 28th April and 7th May, the latter being a bird seen over a western afforested area. Four autumn birds were recorded between 2nd and 28th September along or near to the coastal strip

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
Bowland	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NYMMSG	3	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

No records for this species in 2011

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Wasp combs found at one particular site may well have been evidence of a nest in the vicinity. Unfortunately, the area was not subsequently checked out.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Six adults were recorded this season but only one pair nested. The attempt which appeared to be proceeding well failed following a full day of torrential rain when half the nest, (most unusually sited in a Sycamore) collapsed. Changeover of the adults at the nest had been observed which indicated eggs were being incubated. It is thought the eggs may have become buried in the slipping nest material and could not be retrieved by the female. There was no sign of any eggs below the tree and certainly no evidence of the tree having been climbed, so nest robbery was not considered a possible reason for failure.

### **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Several sightings of a single bird in an area led to increased observation but no further evidence was obtained.

### **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Not recorded in 2011

### **Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

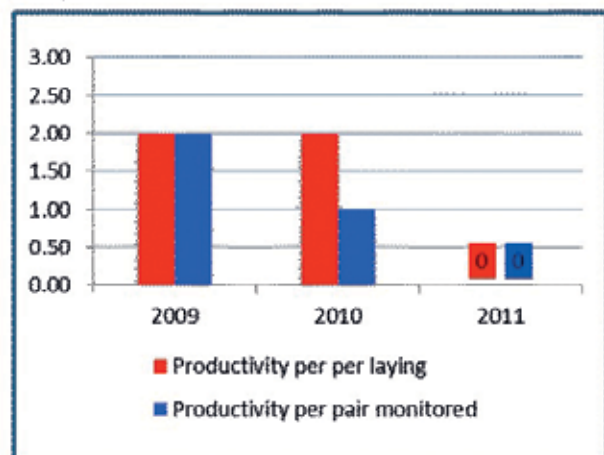
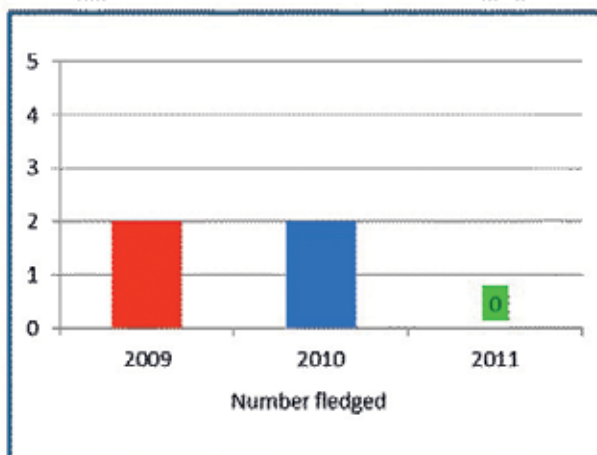
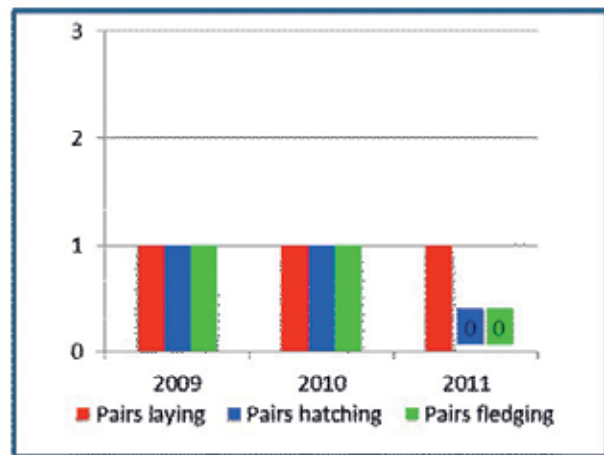
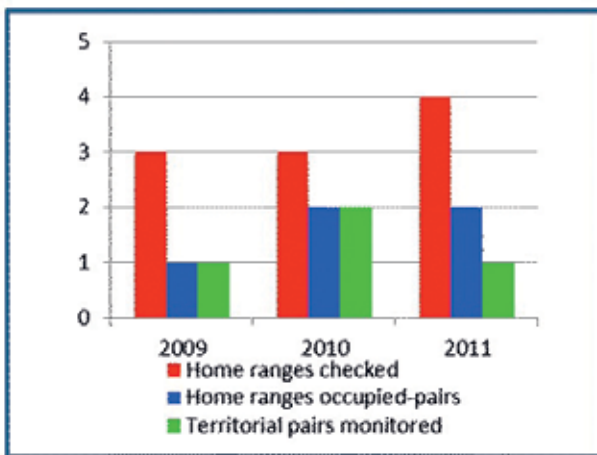
**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

This species is a county description bird in Yorkshire. No acceptable records have been received for the Dales area in 2011, although a possible honey buzzard was seen in Nidderdale during early October.

## **NERF Regional Summary**

The data for 2011 across the region simply reinforce the perceived situation to date that the North York Moors is the only area which can be relied upon to hold potential breeding pairs(s) from season to season.

### **Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**



# Red Kite *Milvus milvus*



they are scavengers and will consume poisoned baits placed out illegally to kill foxes or crows. They are also susceptible to secondary poisoning from the new generation of rodenticides intended to control rats. There is strong evidence that guidelines for the proper use of these poisons are not being followed and that, in consequence, they are getting into the food chain of scavenging species. Collisions with overhead power lines also pose a risk with perhaps a new threat posed by the many wind turbines that are appearing in the region. They will always be a potential target for egg collectors, although this risk is no longer likely to have any impact on the national population.

## UK population estimate

A minimum of 1193 pairs, possibly over 2200 pairs (RBBP 2010). Rapid increase since estimate of 372-490 pairs in 2000.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Amber ●  
 European 2: Concern, most not in Europe; declining  
 Global Near threatened  
 Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National threat assessment

By far the biggest threat to Red Kites comes from illegal poisoning. Whilst they may not be the intended target

## NERF regional threat assessment

Red Kites are scavengers and are extremely susceptible to poisoning, either by secondary poisoning e.g. by rodenticides, or by poisons deliberately placed to target this or other species. Over recent years a number of birds have been found poisoned within the NERF study area and 1 bird was found shot dead in 2010.

In 2011 4 kites were confirmed killed by rodenticides and 1 from illegal poisoning.

There is a noticeable absence of a co-ordinated nature conservation and planning guidance approach to the erection of micro-turbines in the proximity of kite breeding and roosting sites.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSG	26	21	0	3	18	18	15	12	24	1.33	1.33
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSR	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SREYRSG	11	9	0	2	9	6	6	6	12	2.00	1.33
YDUBSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	4	4	10	2.00	2.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>1.59</b>	<b>1.44</b>

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland area

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

There were regular sightings throughout the year, with a peak in the spring when four sightings were recorded.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

There were 7 records for Red Kite in Calderdale during 2011. Regrettably all of these records were of single birds. The Group believes that it is only a matter of time before this species breeds within the study area.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The Durham Upland Bird Study Group is grateful to the Friends of Red Kites [FoRK] Project Group for allowing NERF to reproduce their data.

Following one of the harshest ever winters this was rather a 'standstill' year in County Durham in 2011. Despite the harsh winter it is encouraging that the number of successful nests and young fledged were both very similar to 2010. Nevertheless it remains a point of concern that the majority of the successful sites were confined to a core area within, or immediately adjoining, the original release sites in the Derwent Valley, Gateshead. Additionally there were also two successful pairs in immediate adjoining areas of County Durham.

There were no known breeding attempts in the Durham Dales which have both supported pairs in the recent past.

Elsewhere, a wandering bird picked up dead near Barnard Castle was eventually shown to have died from Carbofuran poisoning.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Increasingly recorded as passage or wandering birds, especially in the east.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The Northumbrian Ringing Group is grateful to the Friends of Red Kites [FoRK] Project Group for allowing NERF to reproduce their data.

There were no recorded breeding attempts in Northumberland for the first time since 2006 and no known occupied territories in south Northumberland. A very disappointing situation considering the establishment of a core population nearby in Gateshead and north Durham.

There have been five cases of poisoning in the Hex-

hamshire area of Northumberland since 2006, all in game kept areas.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species. As usual wandering single birds were recorded here and there, e.g. at Lockwood Beck Reservoir on 1st May, Sleddale 5th May and Scaling Dam Reservoir 21st June. Individuals can be encountered in any month of the year though. These may well originate from the splinter colony/ roost to the south of the moors.

### **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

The Group have increasingly recorded sightings of Red Kite each in recent years, including several in 2011

### **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Sightings continue to increase throughout the study area, mainly of single birds, but two birds were seen together in the area during early spring without any evidence of breeding.

### **South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

The population of red kites is continuing to grow in East Yorkshire with increased sightings to the North in to the South Ryedale area and East of the area. The heartland for breeding pairs remains in a 10 mile circle on the south edge of the Wolds. However; East Yorkshire is a massive area and we are confident there will have been other breeding pairs that we aren't aware of. A maximum of 38 birds were recorded at the communal winter roost and consecutive successful breeding seasons indicate that Red Kites are well established in this area.

**Yorkshire overall breeding figures are shown in the table below:**

Area	Pairs Found	Pairs Bred	Pairs Succ.	Young
West Yorkshire	44 (43)	39 (42)	33 (40)	66 (85)
North Yorkshire	29 (33)	27 (27)	19 (23)	41 (46)
East Yorkshire	9 (8)	8 (8)	6 (7)	12 (16)
Totals	82 (84)	74 (77)	58 (70)	119 (147)

Average number of young raised per successful pair = 2.05 (2.10)  
(2010 figures shown in brackets)

## Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Five pairs were monitored throughout the season and are known to have fledged ten young.

Additionally there was certainly one pair and possibly two pairs in Upper Nidderdale; however the nest sites were not located.

A bird found in January in Nidderdale was confirmed as a poison victim and another found in the Washburn at the end of the year had been poisoned with alpha-chloralose. These were the tenth and eleventh suspected and confirmed poison victims in Nidderdale and the Washburn since 2000.

## NERF regional summary.

Reliable records are not available from all parts of the NERF region

Red Kites are also frequently recorded as passage birds in many study areas.

### WARNING

Some poisons are exceptionally toxic and can be absorbed directly through the skin. Raptor Workers finding a dead Red Kite, or any other species suspected to have been poisoned, should exercise extreme caution before handling a carcass. Butyl gloves offer some protection

and may be used. However standard, thin, household gloves are not effective against many of the poisons found in dead Red Kites and should not be used. If the carcass is recovered it should be dropped into a bin liner. This bin liner should be placed inside a second with the butyl gloves dropped into the space between the 2 bags. The bags should then be securely tied. In every event it is advisable to wash or sterilise hands immediately after contact with a dead animal and in all cases before eating or smoking.

Yorkshire Red Kites have their own guidelines for dealing with casualties that may be found at:

[http://www.yorkshiredkites.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=13](http://www.yorkshiredkites.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=13)

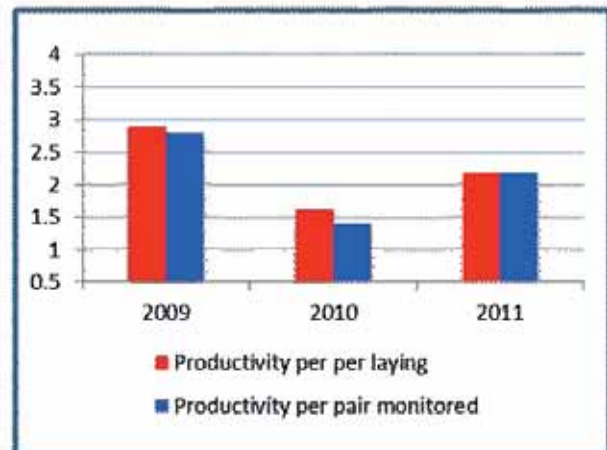
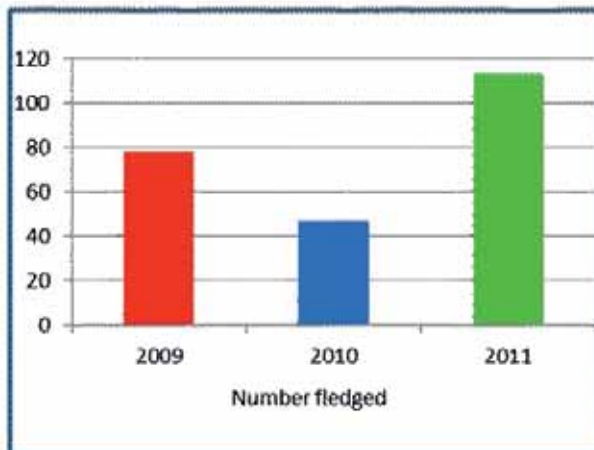
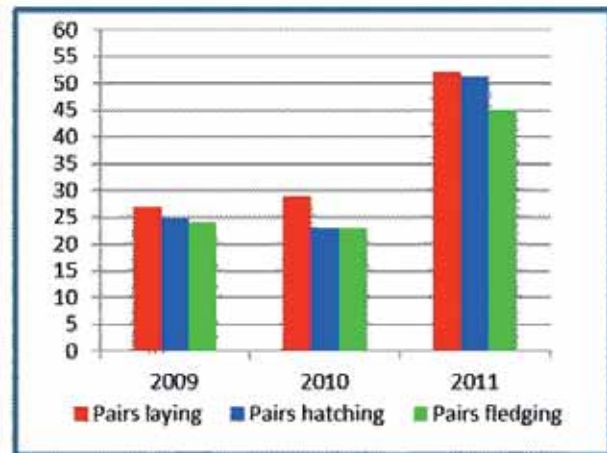
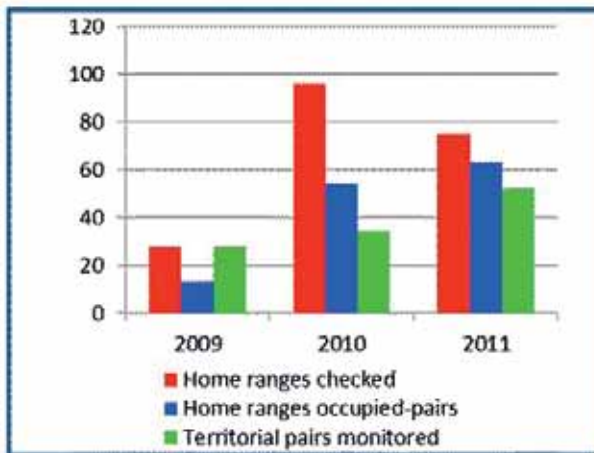
It is essential that all suspected poisoning incidents are reported to the local Police and that an incident number is obtained. The cause of death will be determined by either the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [PBMS], telephone 01524 959830 or the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme [WIIS] telephone 0800 321600.

The information should also be passed on to the RSPB Headquarters, telephone 01767 680551 and ask for the Investigations Team during office hours, or 07595 654947 at other times.

Sick or injured birds can be reported to the RSPCA, telephone 0300 1234 999.

All telephone numbers were correct at September 2012.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*



## UK population estimate

The White-tailed Eagle population was estimated to be 57 pairs in 2011. (BTO) 47-52 fledged 46 young in 2010 (RBBP). It does not breed in the NERF area.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Red ●  
Europe 1: Global Conservation Concern; rare  
Global Near threatened  
Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981  
Listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981  
Listed on CITES Appendix 1

## NERF status

There were no recorded sightings of this species during 2011.

## National threat assessment

Whilst the population is self-sustaining, in or adjacent to the release sites, it is still very small and consequently any loss of either adults or young will have a significant detrimental impact on this species. Being carrion eaters they are susceptible to both accidental and deliberate poisoning. WTE eggs are highly prized by collectors and they are likely to be targeted, therefore the location of active nests is kept a closely guarded secret. The use of CCTV not only offers a high level of protection to the nests it also allows the public to become intimately involved with these magnificent birds. Knowledge is power and the more knowledgeable the public become the more they will appreciate these totemic birds and paradoxically the safer they will be.

To reduce the threats to the birds from irate shepherds who occasionally lose lambs to troublesome pairs, a positive management plan, including a compensation scheme has been introduced on Mull and in parts of the Isle of Skye, by Scottish Natural Heritage [SNH]. A similar scheme may be required when the English re-introduction takes place at some time in the future.

Recent unconfirmed press reports of dubious origin are of concern, serving only to harm the recovery of this species and damage its iconic status – no doubt as intended.

# Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*



## UK population estimate

The average summer population, 2006 to 2010, was estimated to contain 384 breeding pairs and in 2010 258-327 breeding females/pairs were reported. This may well be an under-estimate. (RBBP)

## Conservation status

UK Amber ●  
European Not of concern  
Global Least concern  
Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

The UK population is more secure now than at any other time during the last 100 years. However; significant habitat loss could reverse this trend. As with any small population the impact of egg collecting could be locally significant.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Whilst there is no evidence of breeding there are sightings in the study area most years, predominantly in spring with the occasional passage bird recorded in summer. 2011 was no exception when there were 2 sightings in May and 1 in June.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2.00	2.00
NYMRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

This species normally occurs as a passage migrant in the study area in both spring and autumn. However; there were no records for 2011.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

2011 produced another strong showing for the county although, as yet, there has been no confirmed breeding in the modern era. There were reports of probably 13 separate birds on spring passage between 10th April and the end of May. These came predominantly from lowland sites, especially near the coast although a 2CY male was seen on heather moorland on 5th May. Lowland records continued during the summer and autumn with light coastal passage evident in September. For the first time ever, 2 birds wintered on the North Tees Marshes.

Less encouraging, was a report of a badly emaciated bird found alive in late August on an upland estate near Bowes. The bird was taken into care where it was shown to have a broken wing and still carrying several pellets from a shot gun. Thanks to expert veterinary attention the bird was saved and spent the winter in a local sanctuary where amazingly it regained its ability to fly. It was subsequently released onto the North Tees Marshes in early spring 2012 but quite soon afterwards was found dead on the Marshes. The original incident was investigated by Durham Constabulary and the RSPB Investigations Team but as yet no charges have been made.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of Coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

In 2011 a female or immature bird was present from 4th June to at least 23rd August on Chat Moss, a large area of agricultural land in the west of the county which also includes some original peat bog designated as SSSI/SAC. This followed a similar pattern to 2010. No male was seen with this bird, which ranged widely within the area. However; this continuous presence in a suitable area may indicate future colonisation. At Woolston Eyes and Risley Moss, both in Warrington, Cheshire, not far away, a similar pattern has occurred, and the species bred for the first time in Cheshire in 2010.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

A pair raised 4 young at this site in 2009. Unfortunately they failed to appear in 2010. However, they returned and re-occupied the same site in 2011 where the pair successfully fledged 2 young.

Many birds were seen on passage but no other sites were occupied in the county.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

The opinion among members of the NYM (Merlin) Group is that this species is occurring more frequently on the NYMs. In the past it has primarily been a spring passage migrant but individuals are now being recorded regularly through summer and into autumn. If there are pockets of habitat in the NYMs that could appeal as nesting habitat to the species then it is not beyond the

realms of possibility that there could be nesting attempts taking place in the not too distant future. Birds were recorded at Sleddale, Fylingdales Moor, Scaling Dam Reservoir and elsewhere in the NYMs.

### Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

This species is not known to breed within the Group's study area. However; the Group did record sightings of migratory birds outside of the breeding season.

### South Peak Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Although there is little likelihood of this species breeding in the Group's study area, it is interesting to note that the upland areas are used on migration. Spring and autumn passage birds were once again noted; mainly in April and May and from late July through to September.

### Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Whilst there were no records reported during 2011 this species usually occurs as a scarce but annual passage migrant and infrequent summering bird. Historically al-

most all records have referred to sub-adults.

It is suspected that this species may be as unpopular with some game shooters as other harrier species and therefore there is a high risk that some birds will be killed.

## NERF regional summary

Only the Northumbrian Ringing Group reported a successful breeding attempt in 2011. However; most other NERF Groups observed passage migrants in spring and autumn.

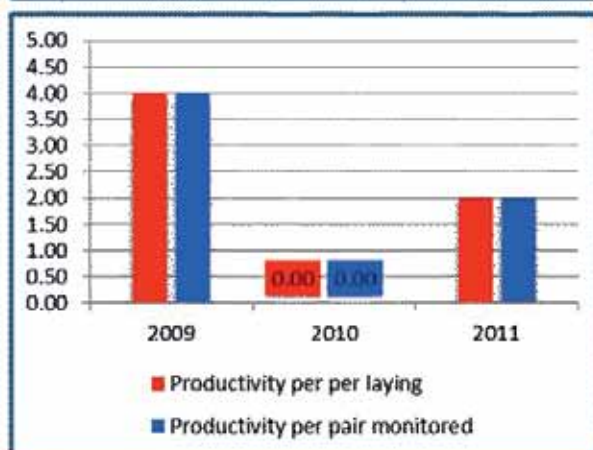
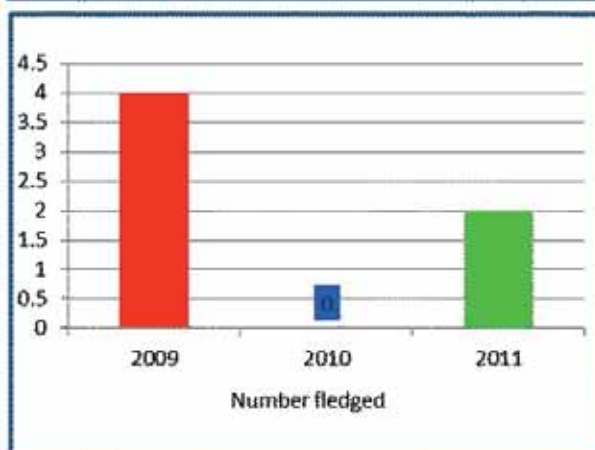
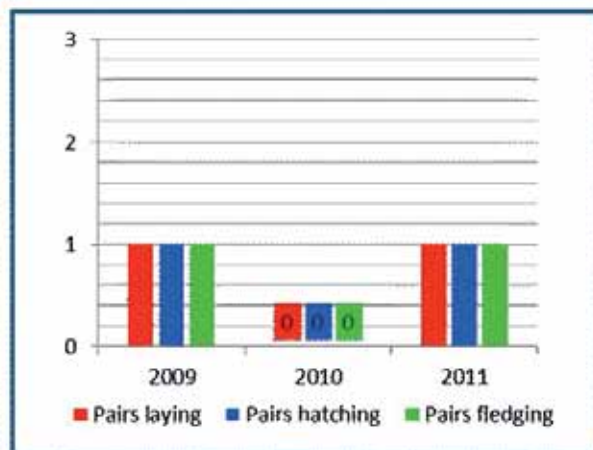
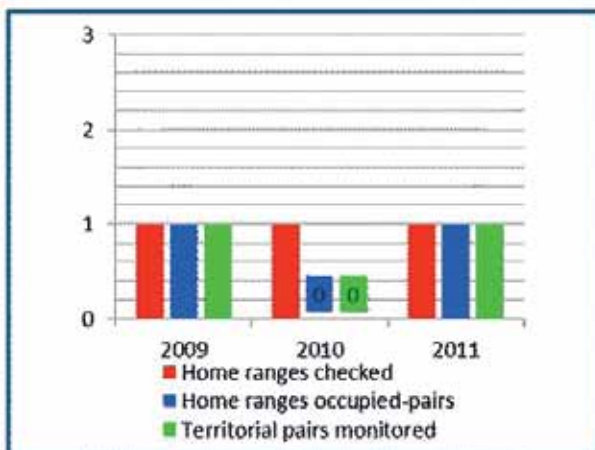
## Wing-tagging project

In 2011 Phil Littler commenced a wing tagging project in Norfolk where the current population is estimated to be in excess of 100 females. During the first season 14 birds were fitted with green wing tags from which there have been 3 confirmed sightings; a success rate of c22%.

Following on from this success there are plans to expand the research area to include both the Norfolk Broads and the north Norfolk coast.

Phil would welcome sightings of any birds seen in the NERF region. Sightings should be forwarded to Phil at [phillittler10@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:phillittler10@yahoo.co.uk), or by mobile on 07748 556758. Please include the tag number, letter and number, time and date, location, including the grid reference if possible, age and sex in the report.

## Comparative Data 2009 – 2011





# Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*



## Conservation status (BTO)

UK: Red ●  
 European: 3 Concern, most not in Europe,  
 Depleted

Global: Least Concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

The over-arching determinant to the Hen Harrier population density and breeding range in England is illegal persecution at the breeding and wintering grounds. There are no obvious ecological reasons why the species should not be widespread across the suitable upland habitats. The diminutive Hen Harrier population is particularly susceptible to limiting stochastic events, such as the harsh winters of 2010 and 2011. This will inevitably compound the effects of the other natural and unnatural limits to growth. It is also apparent through satellite telemetry that Hen Harrier dispersal is complex, most young male Hen Harriers are migratory, travelling as far as Spain to winter, conversely most females adopt a stay at home strategy, staying faithful to the uplands.

It is incontestable that Hen Harriers readily take gamebirds and in high densities can deplete red grouse stocks; hence reduce the amount of surplus birds available to the guns. In recent years, and particularly in 2011, several of the English grouse moors have yielded the high-

## UK population estimate

A national survey carried out in 2010 estimated a population of 662 pairs, an 18% decline in the population since 2004. The main decline was in Scotland with numbers staying stable in England and Northern Ireland and increasing in Wales. A substantial decline was also recorded in the Isle of Man (57 pairs in 2004 to 29 in 2010). Hayhow, D. *et al.* Status of Hen Harrier in the UK and Isle of Man in 2010. In prep.

However, it is misleading to report that the English population has remained stable between 2004 and 2010, as during this period the species was lost as a breeder from several former key sites including, Geltsdale, The Yorkshire Dales, The Peak District and Northumberland. Conversely, a positive trend was noted in Bowland up to 2007, hence the national population was statistically “stable”. Since 2008, the decline has continued and the mainstay of the population at Bowland has declined significantly.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRS/G	13	9	0	3	6	6	4	4	12	2.00	2.00
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSG	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
NYMRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.71</b>

est grouse bags since the war, a probable response to investment, increasing medication and a lack of predators. Given the English Hen Harriers close association to grouse moors and red grouse, one would expect the Hen Harrier population to have also responded positively. As this has not been forthcoming, the most likely reason remains persecution.

## Group Reports

### ***Bowland Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland area

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent on UU, but less coverage on Bowland's grouse moor estates, some monitoring undertaken by NE staff but less field time than in previous years. The birds failed to breed at several key sites in the SPA for the first time since 2002.

Early in the breeding season, several Hen Harriers of both sexes were reported with wing damage and the regular individually marked birds failed to return to breed, with the exception of a 2007 satellite tagged female (possibly birds returned with the damage, but ostensibly could have occurred locally). In general, fewer birds were recorded, especially adult males.

It was estimated that breeding females were down from 7 to 8 in 2010 to 5 to 7 in 2011. The intensive grouse moors were devoid of breeding birds, as was the UU owned Langden valley, the stronghold for breeding birds in recent years. The nest that produced 5 young in 2010, on a private grouse moor, was relocated approximately 350m away onto UU land and was again successful fledging 2.

However, a traditional site on the Abbeystead Estate has now been vacant for 2 seasons. Between 2002 and 2009, it was successful in all but one season producing 34 young.

### ***Calderdale Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

### ***Cumbria Raptor Workers***

The established single breeding pair attempted and failed.

### ***Durham Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Upland areas: Comments made by the DUBSG refer principally to the Durham uplands (defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally laying to the west of Easting NZ10, and extending up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire). Additional comments covering the whole Durham Bird Club recording area are provided where appropriate to explain the wider context for the county.

Despite extensive monitoring of suitable upland areas for this and other species there were no reports of any nesting attempt and indeed no reports of pairs being established. The last successful breeding in the county was in 1999.

There were reports of ringtail harriers from 6 upland

locations in the first quarter but none appeared to linger. At one site, an adult male attracted two ringtails in late January but there were no subsequent sightings until early March when a lone male was seen nearby on just a single date. There was a single report of a male seen in the uplands in late autumn before single ringtails were recorded at two locations by year-end.

In the lowlands, there was a typical spring passage record at Washington at the very end of April but more unusually adult males were seen at Hurworth Burn Reservoir in July and Hart Reservoir in September. October produced a marked influx of birds with reports of ringtails from 10 lowland sites leading eventually to 5 birds over-wintering here, with seed-plots and game cover planting proving an obvious draw.

### ***Northumbrian Ringing Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Part of upland area

After a successful nest in 2010 it was a great pity that the only the adult male returned to the site and was unsuccessful in attracting a female in 2011.

### ***Manchester Raptor Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Passage birds and winter visitors are usually picked up quickly on the mosslands where wintering used to occur. In 2011, though, there were only two records, both in the late winter period, and neither stayed.

### ***North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** There was the usual smattering of wandering birds over the winter/spring months and 2 ringtails were at Sleddale in October. No evidence obtained anywhere of attempted breeding. A female spent some time in spring in the company of a female Montagu's Harrier at one location.

### ***Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Part of upland areas. A pair of Hen Harrier attempted to nest in the Goyt Valley, 2 unsuccessful nesting attempts, the later attempt resulted in the female dying on the nest whilst incubating 7 eggs.

### ***Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Part of upland areas

All of the recent, potential and some older breeding areas checked. Notably totally absent for the first time in many years from the Nidderdale, Masham, and Washburn areas in spring. Occasional spring sightings of presumed passage birds at one watch point in Wharfedale. This was despite a few birds known to have wintered in the Dales at both ends of the year. The current likelihood of a pair being allowed to breed is slight.

## Satellite tracking

Five birds were fitted with satellite transmitters as part of Natural England's research into Hen Harrier dispersal in 2011 (Table 1). All males stopped transmitting in France, two females last transmitted from grouse moors (Scotland and England) and female 74843 was tracked from fledging throughout 2011 and into May 2012 where she was recovered dead on a grouse moor in Yorkshire.

ID	Sex	Provenance	Dates tracked		Location
			From	To	
58872	M	Langholm	25/06/10	29/11/11	Kerriou, Brittany, France
58941	M	Langholm1	21/06/11	03/11/11	Carentan, Normandy, France
74842	M	Bowland 1	28/06/11	13/11/11	Saint-Guen, Brittany, France
95133	F	Langholm2	19/07/11	17/10/11	Moorfoot Hills, Scotland
58943	F	Langholm1	21/06/11	23/08/11	North Pennines, Cumbria
74843	F	Bowland 2	22/06/11	06/05/12	Recovered, Yorkshire

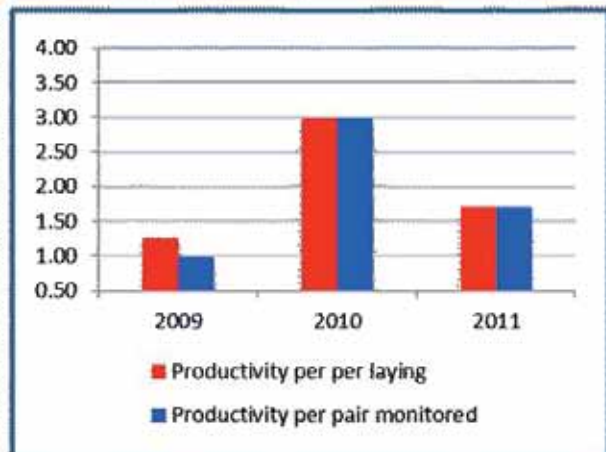
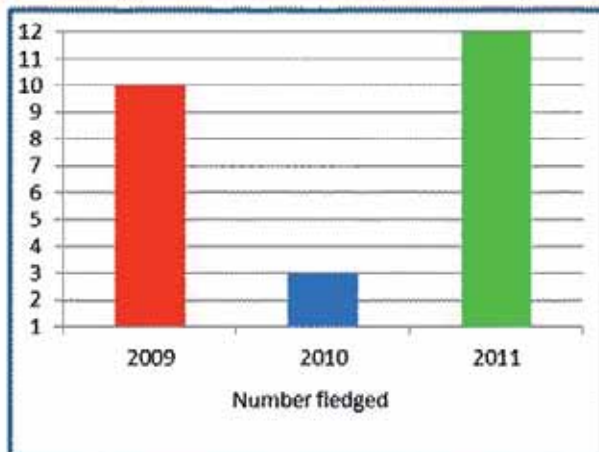
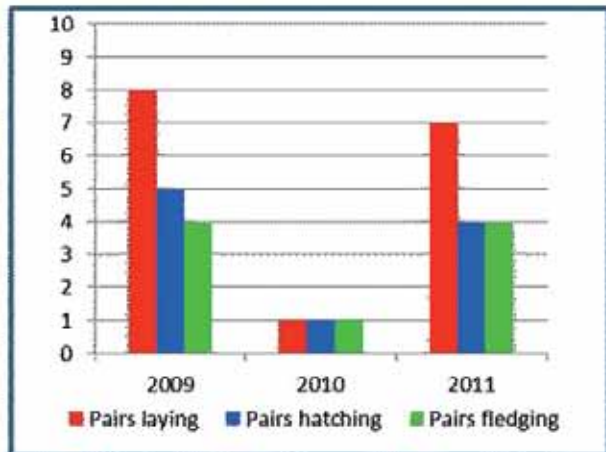
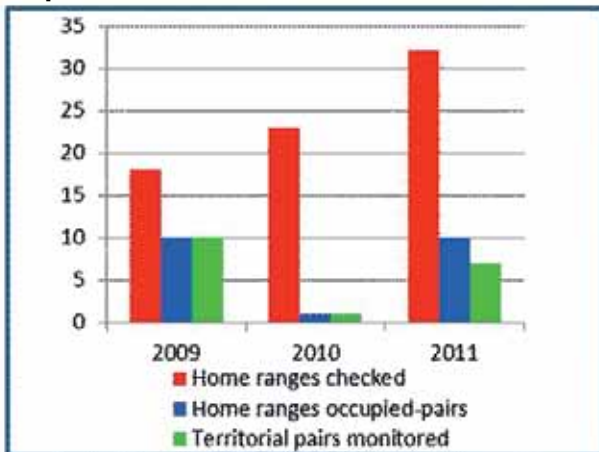
## NERF regional summary

Between 2005 and 2007, successful breeding attempts were recorded in up to 7 different breeding locations spanning 5 NERF study areas (Peak District Bowland, Yorkshire Dales, Cumbria and Northumberland)

There were also occasional successful attempts in low-land habitats in the south of England.

In 2011, successful breeding was only recorded in Bowland. As coverage of former and potential sites from Staffordshire to Northumberland was equal to or better than in previous years it is apparent the species is declining severely. The local breeding extinctions are concurrent with declining numbers of wintering birds.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*



## UK population estimate

12-16 pairs bred in 2010 (RBBP 2012).

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Amber ●  
 European Not of concern  
 Global Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National threat assessment

In Western Europe approximately 75% of Montagu's Harriers nest in cereal crops and whilst this generally allows them to produce more chicks per breeding pair it also leaves them vulnerable to unintentional disturbance. Consequently once located the nests have to be either safeguarded during the harvest season, by enforcing an exclusion zone which has been agreed in advance with the landowner, or alternatively the chicks need to

be relocated to a safer area.

The eggs are especially vulnerable to egg thieves and the location of each nest must be kept a closely guarded secret. The nests may also require protection throughout the season.

## NERF regional threat assessment

Breeding attempts within the NERF recording area are extremely rare, with only one success in recent years. Montagu's Harriers normally breed in cereal fields, however the success on the North York Moors in 2010 is a strong indication that they can adapt to moorland habitats. Offspring from these areas may be habituated to moorland and return in subsequent years mirroring the habitat selection of Hen Harriers in northern England. Unfortunately taking into account the high persecution levels experienced by Hen Harriers this may be a blessing in disguise and may threaten northern populations rather than enhance them. This perception of persecution may have already presented itself in the North York Moors in 2011 after early pairing followed by the male's absence thereafter.

To counter the threats from egg collectors and excessive disturbance it is essential that the location of future breeding attempts is kept confidential and nest protection is activated where required and practically possible.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BMSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NYMRSG	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
PDRSG	0	NR0	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00

## Group Reports

### North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as an occasional breeding species – nest monitored when located.

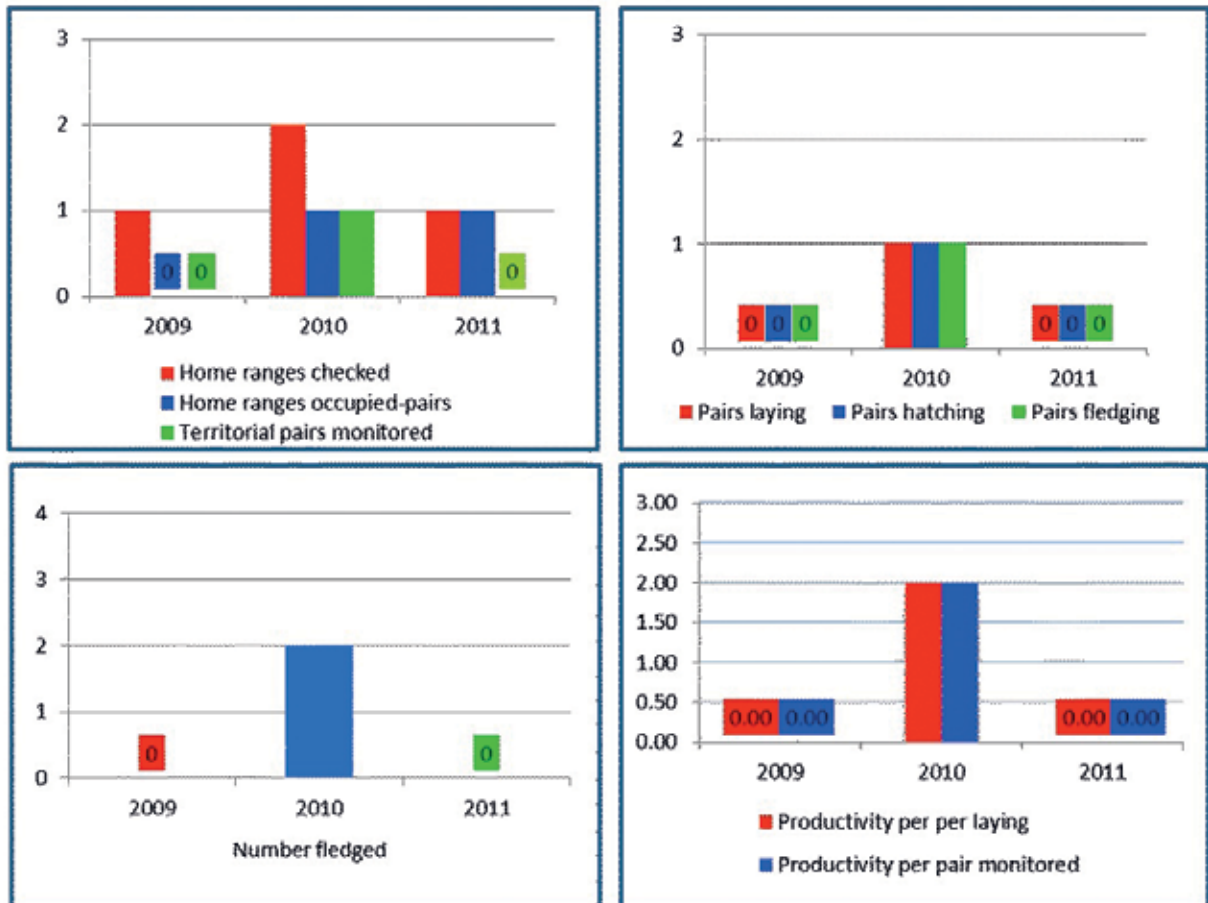
A pair turned up at the 2010 site in early May but the male bird disappeared three days later. This seemed very suspicious as at the time the birds appeared very bonded and in the process of settling-in. A short while later the female was joined by a female Hen Harrier and these two stayed in the area interacting at times until around the end of June when both left the area. There is no direct threat of persecution of any kind at the 2010 site but

foraging birds could easily be at risk on adjacent moorland estates to the west that are kept. A very late immature bird was present at Sleddale in late October.

## NERF regional summary

Montagu's Harriers are rare migrants in the North of England, with only two groups (above and Durham Upland Bird Study Group) recording sightings in 2011, following on from 2010 where 5 of the member Groups reported sightings and one Group, North York Moors, reported a successful breeding attempt. Whilst it is not unreasonable to anticipate that further pairs will breed in the area in the future, whilst the sightings are so sporadic it is difficult to predict when this may be.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*



## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Green ●  
 European Not of concern  
 Global Least concern  
 Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National threat assessment

Nationally Goshawks continue to face persecution in many areas, particularly those areas associated with commercial game shooting. The level of persecution can lead to localised extinctions as well as reducing the ability of core populations to expand and colonise new areas. Egg collecting and theft of young also continue to threaten the species and their activities may have a significant local impact. A growing threat is posed by forestry operations and the felling of occupied territories in the breeding season.

## NERF regional threat assessment

There are large areas of suitable habitat and food availability across the whole of the NERF region which can and should support healthier populations than we currently enjoy. Goshawks thrive in some areas and they are absent from others with very similar habitat and food

## UK population estimate

The population is now believed to be about 400 pairs in summer(BTO) and the RBBP report for 2010 estimated a 5 year mean of 432 breeding pairs.

### NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRS	1	0	1	0	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRS	1	0	0	0	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUB	7	5	1	1	5	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
M	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG*	54	47	1	10	44	33	31	30	62+	1.88	1.41
NYM	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDR	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPR	24	18	NR	6	12	10+	8	8	18+	1.80	1.50
SREY	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUB	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>43+</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>80+</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>1.31</b>

\*NB the NRG coverage includes part of the county of Cumbria

supply. Taking these and other factors into consideration it is very difficult to find any reasonable explanation, other than human interference, to account for these anomalies.

## Group Reports

### ***Bowland Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place

One bird was seen displaying over suitable nesting habitat.

### ***Calderdale Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

The Calderdale Goshawk population continues to give the Group concern. The pattern in 2011 followed that of previous years and there were only 2 sightings recorded in spring. A female was seen on territory on 12th April and a male was seen in the same general area on 13th April. Following these 2 sightings the birds were not seen again and the Group does not believe that the birds remained on territory throughout the year.

The potential breeding site is in a very steep sided valley on the fringe of a heavily kept moor and observations are only possible from some considerable distance. Although no nests have ever been found it is strongly suspected that breeding did take place in 2006 and 2009.

### ***Cumbria Raptor Workers***

**Extent of coverage:** Not monitored by group

**Level of monitoring:** None by group (but a population in Cumbria is studied by NRG and included in their totals)

### ***Durham Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

The majority of reports involve early spring sightings of birds displaying over coniferous plantations in the western uplands. Caution is needed not to associate all evidence of display with territorial pairs since some observations may relate to competing, unattached males attempting to attract a female. Population estimates are based on significant periods of observation offering good evidence for pairs being established although there is usually no definite information on breeding outcomes. A reasonable estimate of 6 pairs is given for the western areas.

A very small number of lowland Durham sites provided a few records although none were firm enough to indicate 'probable' breeding.

Concern remains that the species' breeding success and range expansion may still be restricted by persecution.

### ***Manchester Raptor Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

### ***Northumbrian Ringing Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The Northumbria Ringing Group coverage includes a small section of eastern Cumbria.

In 2011 the total number of occupied sites increased to 47 fledging a record number of 62+ young– the highest ever for the group. The 31 pairs which laid eggs had a very productive year raising 1.8 young each, probably due to a combination of favourable weather and food supplies.

The group works closely with the Forestry Commission to ensure that no breeding attempts are disturbed by forestry operations.

### ***North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Again the project operators on this species elected to keep the records confidential.

It is known however that the species fared well generally although the abandonment of some sites after early season occupation suggested that the hard winter weather had probably prevented some females from achieving breeding condition.

### ***Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage, at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

Occasional sightings of displaying birds early in the season, as usual this resulted in no definite breeding attempts or occupied sites.

### ***South Peak Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

SPRSG report that 2011 was a mixed year for this species. In the Upper Derwent Valley seven sites were checked and four territories were established in early March. Three nests were found and two females began incubation; the third pair vanished. Moulded feathers from the incubating females and buccal swabs from the young produced and ringed confirmed that the same adult Goshawks as in 2010 were breeding at the two traditional sites. Only one nest was successful fledging two chicks. DNA samples were taken should future identification be necessary.

Elsewhere in the SPRSG recording area, 17 sites were detected, 14 were occupied, and at least seven were successful, fledging a minimum of 16 young. At three of the failed sites, persecution was strongly suspected and at a fourth failed site it was thought that persecution was possible.

## Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

It is quite difficult to decide whether any territories have been truly checked as most suitable woodlands in the area are privately owned and with the exception of some Yorkshire Water owned areas inaccessible. There is also the problem of identification, with some doubt at one site of some of the birds' identity.

Area 1 (Upper Washburn) A male seen on one occasion only in the spring

Area 2 ( Wharfedale) Several singles of both sexes reported, some identity issues here and no proof of breeding or indeed a pair being permanently present.

Area3 (Nidderdale) A single adult female seen hunting open moorland on one June date. Interestingly this was within 2km of the last probably occupied woodland.

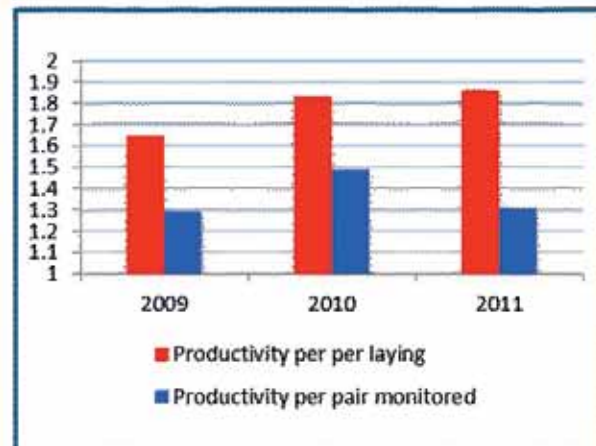
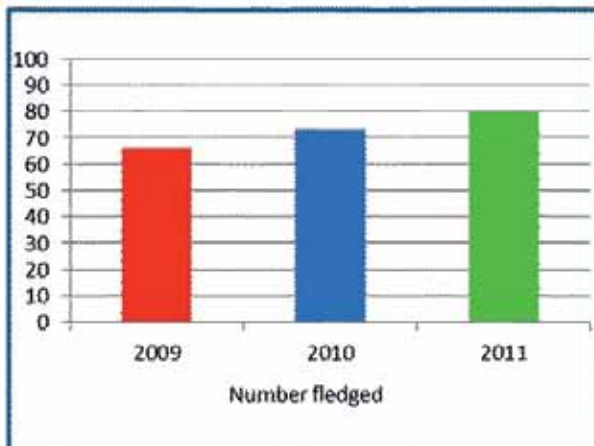
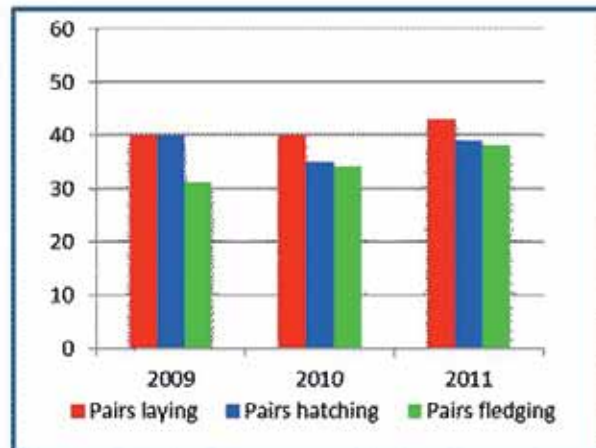
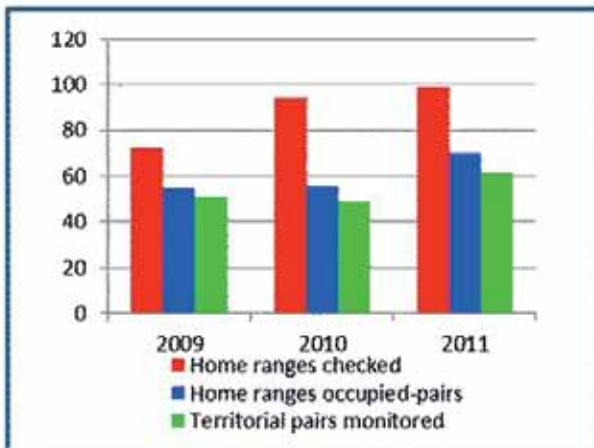
All this is in direct contrast to the situation twenty to twenty five years ago, when all of these areas regularly held displaying birds and pairs, the Nidderdale and Masham area moor edge woods may have held as many as six pairs at that time.

## NERF regional summary

The two main Goshawk study areas for which we have complete data, one in the South Peak area and one in Northumberland [which includes part of eastern Cumbria] contain the majority of the breeding birds in the NERF area. In fact all the pairs recorded as laying eggs were recorded by these two groups, (although the number of birds in the North York Moors is not available for inclusion).

Again, given the numbers of occupied territories and young produced in the Northumbria and South Peak groups' areas the dearth of new territories found outside these two core areas is extremely worrying. There are large areas of suitable habitat between the South Peak and Northumbria areas and the notable absence of birds across much of this area is highlighted by the data from the Peak District RSG. That group reports that of the twelve territories checked where birds have bred in previous years none were found occupied. Single birds were seen displaying although none resulted in a nesting attempt.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011





# Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*



## National and regional threat assessment

Sparrowhawk chicks can be predated by both pine marten and larger raptors such as Goshawk, Buzzard and Tawny Owl. The increase in Buzzard numbers appears to be having an impact at a localised level. Prolonged cold and wet weather also has an adverse effect on the species.

There are two further issues that result in localised threats; firstly there is a belief amongst some pigeon fanciers that Sparrowhawks are responsible for high mortality rates in some lofts, and secondly there is the erroneous belief, held by some people, that Sparrowhawks are responsible for the long-term declines in songbird populations. As a result of these beliefs there are calls from some quarters for the Sparrowhawk population to be controlled, although there is very little scientific evidence to support these allegations

## Conservation status

UK	Green ●
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place

## UK population estimate

The 2000 estimate for this species was 39,000 pairs (summer). (BTO)

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	6	6	0	NR	2	2	2	2	8+	4.00	4.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	16	15	0	3	12	12	11	11	11+	0.92	0.92
NRG	20	12	0	0	12	12	12	7	15+	1.25	1.25
NYMRSR	3	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	3.00	3.00
PDRSG	30	29	0	4	25	25	25	24	76	3.04	3.04
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	75	63	NR	7	52	52	51	45	113+	2.17	2.17

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

The steep-sided and heavily wooded nature of Calderdale makes this species difficult to monitor. Nonetheless Group members reported that 6 territories were occupied by pairs during 2011; however only 2 of these were monitored throughout the season.

These 2 pairs raised 3 and 5 young respectively; representing a 25% increase when compared to 2010.

Observers reported that hunger calls were heard emanating from woodland less than 1km from the pair that raised 5 young and although not verified it is possible that a further pair successfully reared young from that location.

Displaying pairs were also regularly sighted during the spring at 2 other sites and it is likely that breeding also took place at these locations.

Taking into account the large number of separate records received during 2011 it's believed that this species is prospering in the study area and that the population is likely to be far greater than the data would suggest.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part Upland, Part Lowland

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

There is no routine monitoring of this species in the uplands, comments on the population are based on casual observations. The Sparrowhawk is a widespread and relatively common raptor across the whole of the county with the number of reports forwarded to the Durham Bird Club almost matching those of Kestrel in any one part of the year.

Courtship display was noted over two woodlands as early as the end of January.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs through to fledging.

Of 12 pairs recorded breeding and laying eggs, 3 pairs were followed through to fledging producing 8 young.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

These results are for the study in the Border Forest at Kielder. As usual a variable number of territories were checked due to observer effort and the dynamic nature of the forestry environment (with sites felled every year). It is therefore difficult in this study to compare results meaningfully from year to year. However, although there were more nests found in 2011 than in 2010, it is believed that it was probably a poorer year for occupation as some old well used sites were unoccupied and there were fewer birds around (possibly due to high winter mortality).

Despite that breeding productivity was slightly better than 2010 – possibly due to a good cone crop leading to

a high Crossbill population in the forest.

Minimum of 15 young fledged from 7 successful attempts from 12 occupied sites

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent Of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

No records of nesting or probable breeding recorded anywhere in the forests to the SE of the North York Moors. Two sites checked to the north of the area were not occupied and the monitored nest was a fortuitous find to the west of the moors. The species does seem thinner on the ground than 5-6 years ago and it is puzzling that so many apparently suitable conifer and deciduous woods throughout the study area do not hold breeding pairs.

### **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

It is suspected that the increasing Buzzard population is having an effect on productivity and site occupancy.

One site had evidence that young had hatched but the tree had recently been climbed and the nest was empty (this site has a history of persecution).

An average of 3.04 young fledged per pair monitored indicates a good breeding season for Sparrowhawk in our area.

Despite an increase in monitoring activity in 2011 from 2010, the figures reported are lower than pairs monitored historically,

### **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Not studied in detail by SPRSG, but group ringed 11 birds including 3 adults.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Relatively common but no monitoring takes place due to private nature of most woodland.

## **NERF regional summary**

Sparrowhawks occur as a breeding species throughout the NERF region but are not monitored as a matter of course by the majority of the members. The number of fledglings reported is up from 47 in 2010 to 110 in 2011 although this rise probably reflects increased effort in some groups rather than an increase in productivity.

There is a small study in Northumberland [also covering a small area in eastern Cumbria]. Although more nests were found in 2011, the success rate was once again lower than the previous year with just under 50% failing at egg stage.

The South Peak Group reports a stable population whilst the North York Moors Group reports a lack of

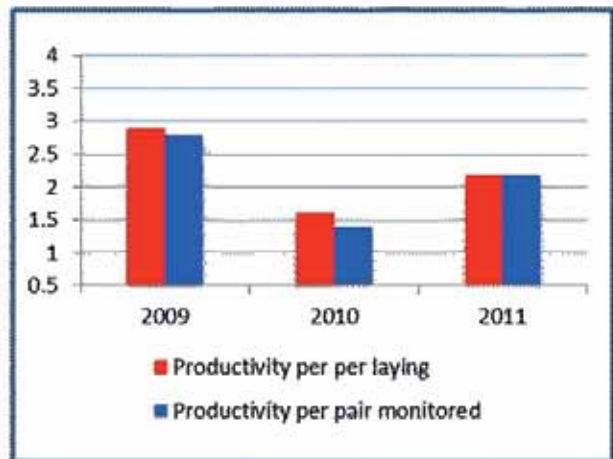
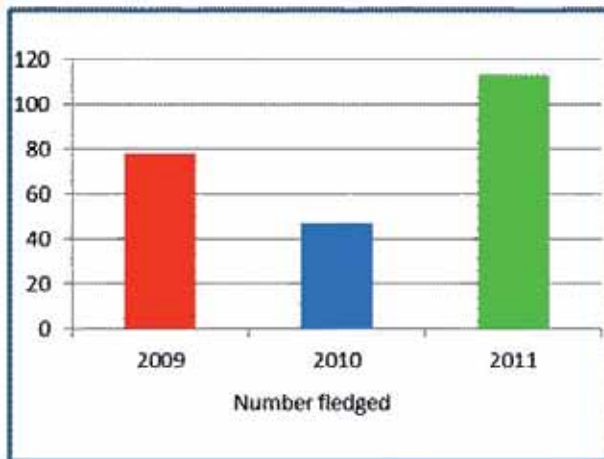
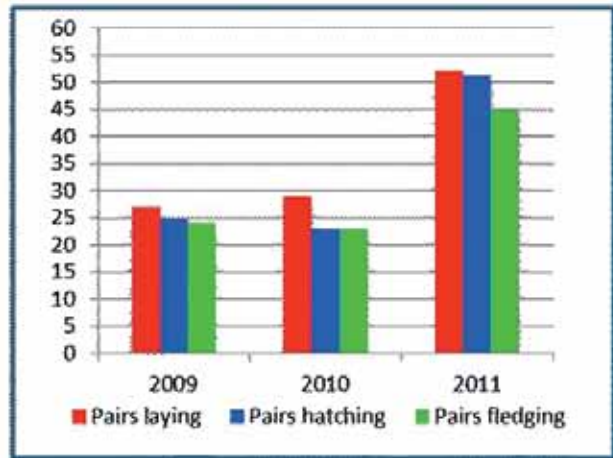
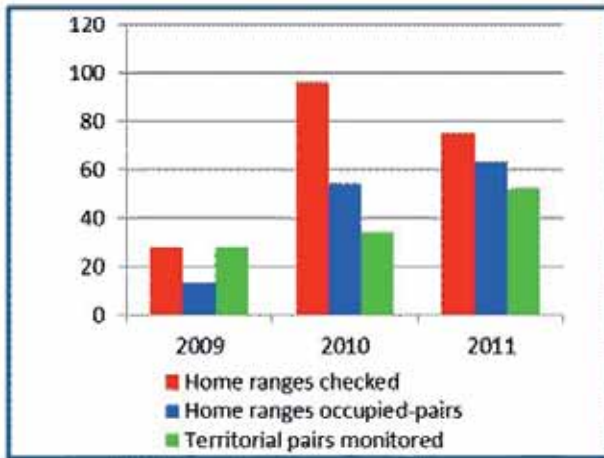
breeding attempts in apparently suitable habitat.

A long-term study by the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group was conducted between 1985 and 2005 and involved c100 pairs. Pairs monitored in 2011 indi-

cated a successful breeding season with an average of 3.04 young per breeding attempt monitored.

Other groups report casual monitoring of a few pairs.

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**



# Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*



## UK population estimate

In 2000 the British population was estimated to be between 31000 and 44000 territories, occupied by 14200 pairs in summer (but see below). (BTO)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Green ●  
 Europe Not of concern  
 Globally Least concern

## National and regional threat assessment

Nationally, Common Buzzard remains the most widespread of the UK's raptors and the range extensions noted

in previous reports, particularly into eastern and lowland England continue.

However, despite the healthy population levels in some counties, which has led to some raptor study groups to no longer monitor this species, persecution does still take place. Four groups reported either a lack of breeding success and/or the absence of adults adjacent to grouse rearing areas where the habitat is otherwise most suitable for this species. Without any evidence to the contrary, this is strongly suggestive of human interference.

Furthermore, gamekeeping interests associated with the rearing of Pheasants for shooting, have also sought to persuade the government to introduce 'controls' on Buzzards. NERF was invited to attend the Buzzard Stakeholders meeting and subsequently submitted that there no evidence to support any such controls. See the Chairman's report in the introduction to this document.

The National Gamekeepers Association, the body behind the request for Buzzard controls to be introduced, used a breeding figure of 61,000 pairs and a total of 300,000 individual birds which it derived from Clements' work published in 2002 [Clements, R. *British Birds* 95: 377-383].

The BTO also continues to use figures based upon Clements' research, although it cites 31-44,000 territories. However, the NGA also contended that Buzzards are at 98% of the species' natural carrying capacity. The detailed local monitoring work carried out by NERF member groups which has identified the absences referred to above, and from large parts of the North Yorks Moors and South Ryedale/ East Yorkshire areas, suggests that this figure considerably overstates the position, and there is clearly space for continued expansion and infilling given the opportunity.

### NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non-breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSBG	6	6	0	NR	2	2	2	2	4	2.00	2.00
DUBSBG	64	64	0	0	64	14	14	14	20+	1.43	0.31
MRG	17	15	NR	NR	9	9	9	9	9	1.00	1.00
NRG	130	130	0	22	78	46+	46	46	26+	0.57	0.33
NYMRSBG	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	1.00	1.00
PDRSBG	44	38	0	3	25	25	25	20	47	1.88	1.88
SPRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSBG	4	4	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>108+</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>0.60</b>

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Buzzards, whilst not formally monitored in Bowland in 2011, are nevertheless widespread, with pairs nesting in all suitable habitats, though at lower densities on the moorland. The success or otherwise of nesting pairs is unknown, though the population has increased markedly over the last 15 years. This is not a priority species for the Group and therefore no systematic monitoring takes place. Nesting usually takes place in tall trees on private land. A single nest in an Ash tree in a moorland gully on the United Utilities estate fledged 3 young from three hatched.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs

The distribution and success of this species continues to improve in Calderdale and the number of pairs located during 2011 increased by 100% from 2010. The nests are invariably located in very steep narrow valleys and therefore it is not surprising that surveying and monitoring nests is very difficult. The actual productivity at all 6 sites is unknown, however based on known productivity it is reasonable to assume in excess of 10 chicks fledged.

There is ample available habitat within the study area and the Group is of the opinion that other pairs avoided detection.

### **Cumbria Raptor Workers**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Although not systematically monitored within the Group's study area, the Cumbria Bird Club's tetrad atlas for the period 1997-2001 estimated the number of breeding pairs of Buzzards in the county at 3,500. It was found to be one of the most widespread species in Cumbria, with 58.3% of all tetrads occupied.

From 2002 to 2010 the population appears to have remained fairly stable, with the proportion of 1km squares occupied in the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey ranging between 50-68%.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

This species continues to consolidate in Durham and this is especially true of the eastern half of the county where it now breeds as low as the coastal denes. Populations in the lowlands are monitored by the Durham Bird Club.

In the upland study area it is still absent from many localities with suitable habitat. However, it was noticeable in 2011 that several new territories were established

close to small settlements, which perhaps ironically may offer them some protection from human persecution.

Because of the difficulties of regularly monitoring all territorial pairs over such a large area, the number of pairs laying and hatching eggs was unknown. Similarly, the number of pairs fledging young and the figure of 20+ fledged young considerably under-record the true position and lies behind the relatively low figure per monitored pair.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole county.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Of the nine pairs known to have fledged young, the actual number was only known in four cases. However, there are probably up to 50 pairs breeding in the county; 20% of BBS squares recorded this species. Between 1994 and 2003, it was only recorded in one BBS square in 2 years, and there is no doubt that this raptor is utilising afforestation schemes initiated in the 1970s and 1980s which are now reaching maturity.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

There are three main study areas in Northumberland – North Cheviots, South Cheviots and Border Forest. Only the latter has any data about the number of young fledged and none have data about the number of pairs laying and hatching eggs.

The breakdown for the three areas can be summarised as:

**Border Forest:** 68 sites occupied, 46 nests of which 22 failed, 24 nests fledged 26 young.

**South Cheviots/MOD:** 32 sites occupied, 32 nests fledged an unknown number of young.

**North Cheviots:** 30+ occupied sites.

Buzzards continue to do well in Northumberland and it is now a very common bird even on the coast. The best monitored area, the Border Forest, has few rabbits and consequently low productivity. It is not therefore representative of the other two upland study areas, or the unmonitored, presumably more productive lowland areas of the county.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of coverage:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

The species continues to consolidate in the study area and is now well established to the south and west of the N.Y. Moors. Anecdotal reports of nesting are increasing.

In addition to the data in the table, the Group ringed two chicks in a nest just to the south of the study area, and a nest found in Dalby Forest within the south eastern boundary held three eggs but was not followed up.

### **Peak District Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Although at least 25 pairs hatched eggs in the study area, it was noted that successful sites adjacent to grouse moors were few and far between. Away from these moors, Buzzards continue to flourish. Human interference was again strongly suspected but not proven.

**South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland area.  
**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

The Group no longer systematically monitors this species as it is so widespread. Seven young were ringed from two nests in the study area. In addition, two sites in the north east of the study each held three pairs in close proximity.

Continued lack of successful breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwent Valley grouse moors is very similar to the position in the Peak District and was considered to point towards persecution as the cause.

**Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.  
**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

This species is considered to be the commonest raptor in much of the Dales despite apparent persecution. Although most birds noted in grouse moor areas are immatures, they seem to fail to mature as some localities contain immatures year after year.

One study area failed to provide any meaningful data;

Upper Nidderdale held at least four pairs but the outcomes were unknown; birds become scarcer in parts of Nidderdale and in most of Arkengarthdale and Swaledale the species is absent.

**NERF regional summary**

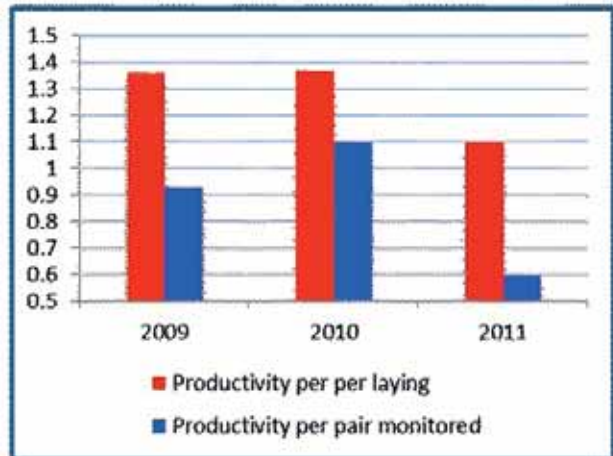
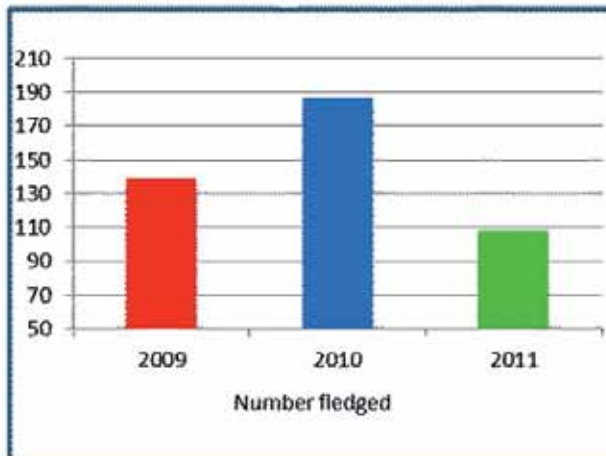
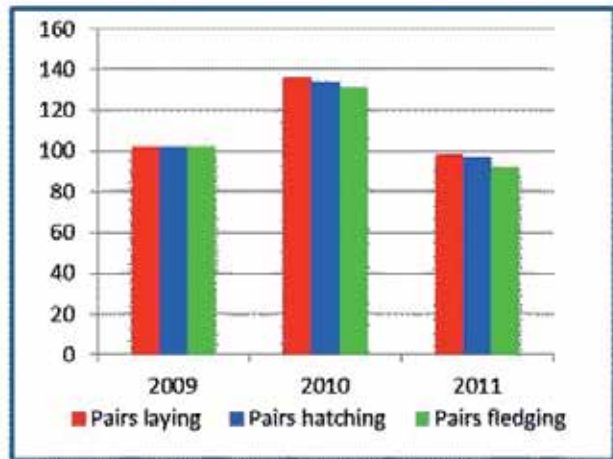
The species continues to reclaim former breeding areas lost through persecution, across the whole of the NERF region and beyond, particularly into eastern England.

Within the individual study areas coverage varies, partly because of the difficulties of regular monitoring of pairs holding territories in some of the large study areas and partly because some groups choose to concentrate their efforts on species which are not doing so well as Common Buzzards.

The total number of fledged young recorded in 2011 across the NERF region at 108 is well below the 187 recorded in 2010 and reflects the limited monitoring in some areas. The Peak District Raptor Study Group recorded the largest number of fledged young with 47 noted from 25 pairs, both figures up from 2009 when 24 pairs fledged 39+ young.

Despite the improving picture there is no room for complacency with Buzzards as the failed attempt to formalise 'control' already described in this Report demonstrated, and this requires that NERF members must remain concerned with this species.

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**



# Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*



## UK population estimate

The species does not breed in the UK; however there are c.70 records of passage and overwintering birds per year (BTO)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Not assessed
Europe	Not a species of concern
Global	Least concern

## NERF status

This species is recorded infrequently as a passage and winter visitor by several groups in the NE. In 2011, Calderdale RSG had separate juveniles at Rishworth 13th Oct. and at Buckstones Moor 16th-17th Nov. Durham Upland Bird Study Group had three lingering during February and March at Lunedale and Baldersdale, and in autumn there were five records 19th-30th Oct. One was recorded several times at a site in November.

## National threat assessment

The main dangers for this species are the same as those facing Common Buzzard, *q.v.*, for which it can easily be mistaken. Collisions with vehicles and overhead power lines are also a hazard, particularly for inexperienced juveniles which will not have encountered these obstacles in their breeding grounds.

# Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*



## UK population estimate

The UK population estimate was 442 pairs in 2003, all but one of which was located in Scotland (BTO)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Amber ●
Europe	3: concern, most not in Europe; rare
Global	Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National threat assessment

The small population of Scottish Golden Eagles is targeted by egg collectors. They are also persecuted in areas where there is perceived conflict with game management. Undoubtedly persecution is a serious problem in some areas and is limiting both population growth and expansion into other zones of suitable habitat. The current drive to increase the amount of renewable energy generated by wind farms is causing concern amongst many conservationists who believe that they pose a serious threat when they are sited inappropriately.

Habitat loss, through upland afforestation and the loss of large tracts of open land for foraging, also increases

the pressure on the species.

## NERF regional threat assessment

Whilst persecution in Scotland continues to limit population growth north of the border the re-colonisation of the North of England by natural expansion is highly unlikely.

With just a single bird in Cumbria and the failure of birds to return to Northumberland a regional threat assessment is largely inapplicable. Members will continue to monitor the situation closely and the threat assessment will be updated if and when the circumstances change and birds occupy breeding territories.

## Group Reports

The only raptor study groups that currently have sites that could be potentially occupied are Cumbria RSG and Northumbria Ringing Group. No other regional groups had any reported records for 2011.

### **Cumbria Raptor Workers**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage, all or most sites receive annual coverage.

A single male occupied the Haweswater territory throughout the year without any sign of other birds.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage, all or most sites receive annual coverage.

**NERF Data**

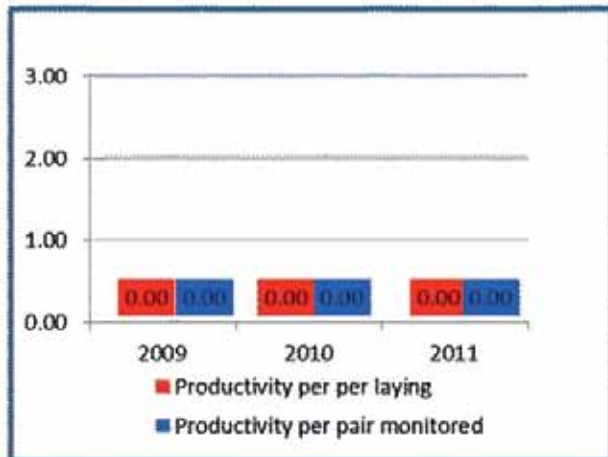
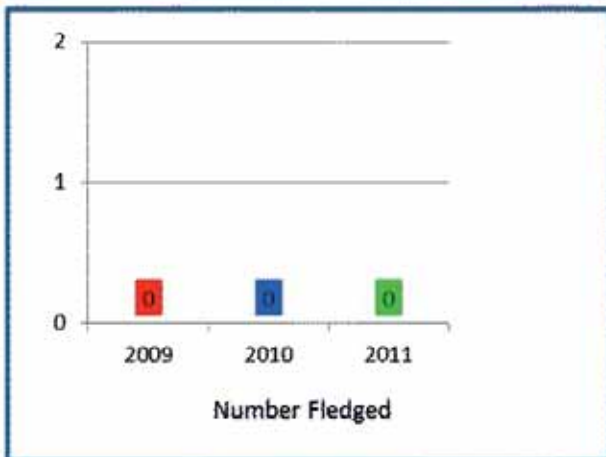
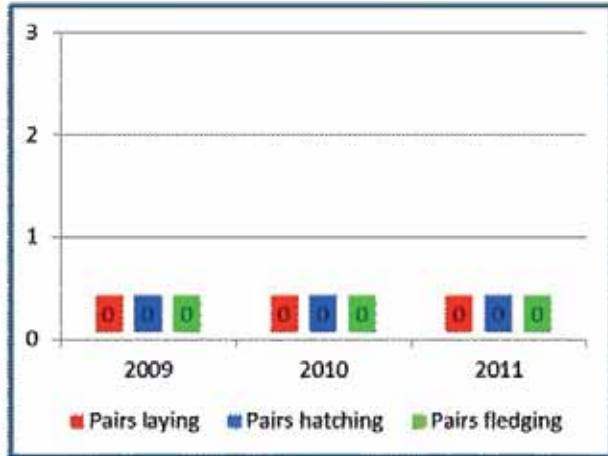
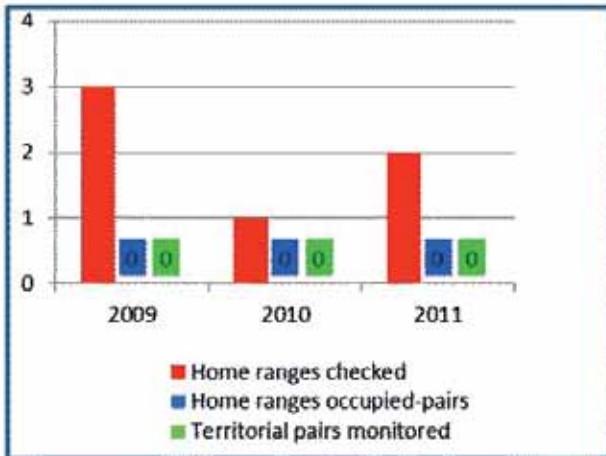
RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Cumbria	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
NYMRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

The only record for 2011 was of a single unaged bird in March in the Cheviots.

**NERF regional summary**

The sad state of affairs for Golden Eagle continues with only 2 single birds reported for the whole of the NERF area. This situation seems unlikely to improve in the near future.

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**





# Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*



## UK population estimate

In 2010, RBBP received records of 181-211 pairs, with 9 pairs nesting in England. (RBBP 2012)

Conservation status (BTO)

UK Amber ●

European 3: Concern, most not in Europe; rare

Global Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National threat assessment

Historically the birds have been persecuted by shooting and by egg collectors and whilst these threats have been dramatically reduced, nests still need to be monitored closely and in some locations they continue to require round the clock protection.

Ospreys can be surprisingly tolerant of regular human activity close to the nest but they are extremely nervous

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Home ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSB	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Cumbria	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2	3	1.50	1.50
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2	3	1.50	1.50
NYMRSB	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSB	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>1.50</b>

of anything out of the ordinary. Consequently there is a threat from disturbance at their breeding sites whilst they are incubating eggs or whilst they are brooding small young. The popularity of these birds with the general public could bring a threat of disturbance; however organised watch points and remote cameras can be used to successfully manage this potential threat.

## NERF regional threat assessment

As the species extends its breeding range within the NERF region there will be an increased requirement for members to monitor nests and provide advice to land owners to reduce any potential conflicts.

## Group Reports

### Bowland Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** No information received

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

There were 4 sightings of passage birds in 2011.

### Calderdale Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

### Cumbria Raptor Workers

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The Cumbrian Osprey population continues to grow with reports suggesting that up to 5 pairs were present

during 2011 along with a number of other individual birds. Two of these pairs are known to have fledged young, a further pair is reported to have bred successfully although this was not confirmed and the remaining 2 pairs, together with other individual birds spent the summer in the area.

For the 11th successive year a pair nested at Bassenthwaite. This pair is believed to be the same adults that used the nest in 2010 when they successfully fledged 3 young. Before leaving to overwinter in Africa the pair exhibited unusual behaviour by started construction of a new nest in an old dying oak tree on the floodplain.

In 2011 they successfully fledged 2 young, both of which left the area in early September to make their way to Africa.

A 2nd pair which had fledged from the Bassenthwaite nest in previous years successfully reared a single chick. A 3rd pair built a nest but did not breed, hopes run high for 2012; interestingly one of these adult is also of Bassenthwaite stock.

### ***Durham Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole county

**Level of monitoring:** Comments made by the DUBSG refer principally to the Durham uplands (defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally laying to the west of Easting NZ10, and extending up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire). Additional comments covering the wider Durham Bird Club recording area are provided where appropriate to explain the wider context for the county as a whole.

Not known to occur as a breeding species in the county. Birds might be seen in upland areas on spring passage from late March though to late May and on return passage in August and September. Occasionally they may linger in autumn as a pair did this year at an upland reservoir during August through to mid-September

Spring passage was particularly strong with 18 separate reports for the county as a whole, the vast majority of these came from lowland sites. The species becomes progressively more common every year and a breeding attempt seems a realistic prospect in the not too distant future.

### ***Manchester Raptor Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Passage birds are regular in both spring and autumn and well recorded at major reservoirs and flashes, and can be tracked across the county, but rarely linger.

### ***Northumbrian Ringing Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

The slow expansion of the breeding population continued with 4 pairs holding territory and 2 pairs going

on to fledge 3 young.

There was a notable spring and autumn passage and single birds summered at various waters throughout the county - leading to speculation that more pairs may become established in the future.

### ***North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

The major reservoirs in the study area, Lockwood Beck, Scaling Dam and Cod Beck just outside the NYMNP to the west act as magnets to passing Ospreys but it is possible to encounter a passage bird almost anywhere in the NYMs in spring, as proved by the appearance of two at Sleddale on 2 April. An individual was regularly seen at both Lockwood Beck and Scaling Dam from 9 May through into August giving rise to hopes of a pair perhaps settling to breed in the area in the not too distant future.

### ***Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

The group recorded sightings of migratory birds on passage outside of the breeding season.

### ***South Peak Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Ospreys are only rarely recorded in the study area during spring and autumn passage.

### ***Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Occurs as a regular passage bird especially in spring throughout the Dales and has in the past summered notably in Wharfedale but no breeding suspected.

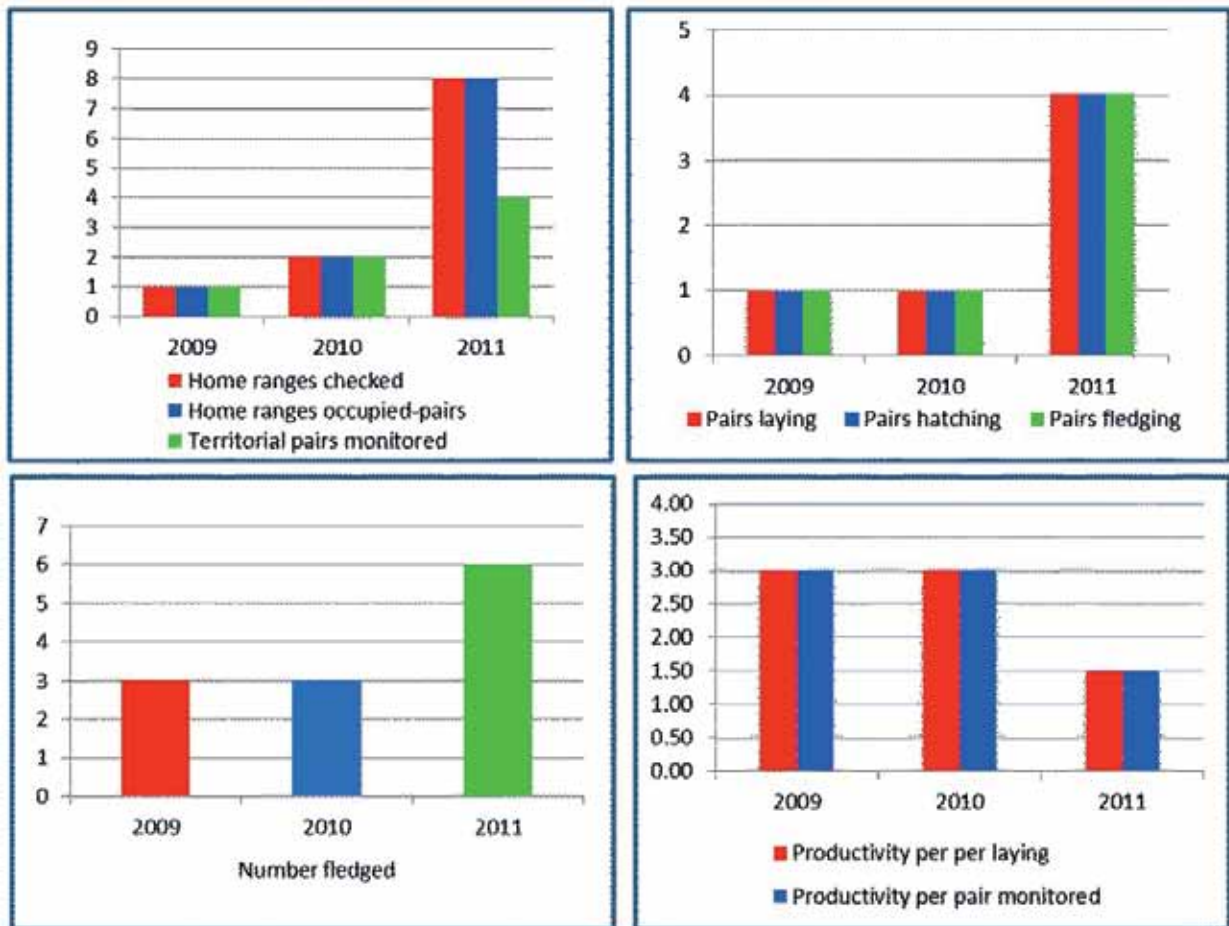
## **NERF regional summary**

The population of the two northern counties continued to rise in 2011 with 8 pairs recorded on territory. Four pairs held territory but did not lay eggs. This is usual behaviour for birds that are too immature to breed – it is to be hoped that they return to breed in 2012.

It was encouraging that all the pairs in both counties that laid eggs successfully managed to fledge young.

Most study areas reported both birds on passage and occasional summering individuals leading to an expectation that new sites within the NERF survey area will be colonised.

## Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*



## National and regional threat assessment

The Kestrel population fluctuates and the fluctuation is linked closely to the availability of prey, largely voles etc., which contributes c75% of their main food supply. When vole numbers are low a significant percentage of Kestrels may not breed. However; the main threat to the species is associated with incompatible farming practices that reduce available habitat and adversely affect food supply. With the rapidly increasing global demand for food this situation is unlikely to change without intervention from the EU and the UK Government.

The Amber conservation status has been awarded because the species is in decline, as evidenced by the 2011 British Breeding Bird Survey which has reported a 32% reduction in the Kestrel population 1995-2010 in the UK, although only a 17% reduction in England.. Ironically the ubiquitous presence of Kestrels seen hovering or perched above grass verges may induce Raptor Workers and birdwatchers alike to divert their attention away from this species whilst concentrating on other more vulnerable species. Consequently a decline in the local

## UK population estimate

In 2007 the British summer population was estimated to be between 53,000 and 58,000 (BTO).

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Amber ●
European	3: Concern, most not in Europe; declining
Global	Least concern

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BMSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	6	6	0	0	6	6	6	6	6+	1.00	1.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	26	26	0	0	16	16	16	16	47	2.94	2.94
NRG	20	11	0	0	11	10	8	8	18+	1.80	1.64
NYMMSG	21	6	1	3	6	3	3	3	14	4.67	2.33
PDRMG	10	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	16	3.20	NR
SPMSG	17	17	0	0	17	17	17	17	63	3.71	3.71
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	100	71	1	3	61	57	55	55	164+	2.88	2.69

population may go unnoticed for some time.

Many NERF member groups do not study this species in detail, and the national decline may be being mirrored within the NERF region and going unnoticed.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Although this species is not monitored, each valley on the United Utilities estate held an estimated two pairs, suggesting an approximate population of ca. 14 – 16 pairs.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Six pairs were proven to have bred during 2011, 1 less than 2010. It is known that 1 pair raised 3 young and another pair raised 2. Information on the number of young raised at the other 4 nests was not passed on to the Group's data recorder. The fledging rates within the Calderdale are very disappointing when compared to the results [2010] of both the North York Moors and the South Peak Groups where fledging rates are c5 times greater. Interestingly both Groups use nest boxes extensively and this may be the key to increasing productivity.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

There is no monitoring of this species in the uplands.

Casual observation suggests a widely dispersed population right across the county. Upland dales and favoured hillsides can attract groups of up to 10-12 hunting birds in the autumn.

A nest box scheme is now in operation in lowland Durham in the north of the county. A pair successfully raised 6 young at one such box.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Kestrels occur throughout the study area and are relatively well monitored. Within the group, Peter and Norma Johnson, who have been conducting a long-term study for several years, had 5 pairs in their box study which produced 26 young (21 ringed). Of the 15 pairs monitored, the number of young was known at 11 sites and a minimum number at one each at 2 further sites. The photo above is of one of the few pairs left in central Manchester and it appears that this species has declined particularly in urban areas, perhaps due to better vermin control and maintenance of buildings. However, the species is undoubtedly under-recorded.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Data is available for two upland areas in 2011. Although in both the areas the birds are not doing well it was a slightly better year in the Border Forest compared to 2010 - with 2 out of 5 nests successfully fledging young (compared to 1 out of 3 in 2010). In the other upland study area there were more successful nests than the Border Forest area with 6 successful nests fledging

14+ young.

**North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

The South Cleveland Ringing Group nest box scheme data shows that those pairs which did breed in 2011 raised good sized broods. However, the number of pairs occupying the same boxes has halved from 6 in 2009 to 2 in 2011, with the third 2011 pair occupying a box at a new location. Possibly the hard weather over the end of 2010/beginning of 2011 caused higher than usual mortality or prevented birds subsequently from achieving breeding condition.

The 5 year band figures (see below) would seem to indicate little cause for concern at present in regard to the productivity of those pairs which actually breed, but whether the fall-off in pairs is indicative of the start of a decline in the local population remains to be seen.

One SCRG recovery from a site not included in the long-term nest box study produced the following information: Ring No. EG05041 Ringed as pullus at Knayton, North Yorks, (just outside the western border of the NYMs) on 7.7.2004; recovered as road casualty near Barnard Castle, Durham on 20.12.2011; movement 49kms North-West; age 2722 days.

**Kestrel Annual Productivity Data – North York Moors: Large Nestbox Scheme**

Year bands	No of sites	No occupied	% Occupied	No successful	No of young ringed	Av. per successful nest	Av. all nests
1977/81	202	10	4.95	8	32	3.84	3.35
1982/86	174	12	6.90	11	53	4.86	4.50
1987/91	169	22	13.0	21	90	4.09	4.00
1992/96	150	20	13.3	19	83	4.50	4.25
1997/01	109	17	15.6	16	68	4.32	4.16
2002/06	128	19	14.8	15	62	4.10	3.15
2007/11	127	21	16.5	19	84	4.42	4.00

**Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

The Group only casually monitored this species in 2011. A number of historic sites remained unoccupied.

The species warrants further study given reported national and apparent local declines.

**South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no detailed monitoring takes place.

Kestrels were only casually monitored in 2011; the species warrants further study given reported national and apparent local declines. 17 pairs fledged 63 young in the group’s study area.

**Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

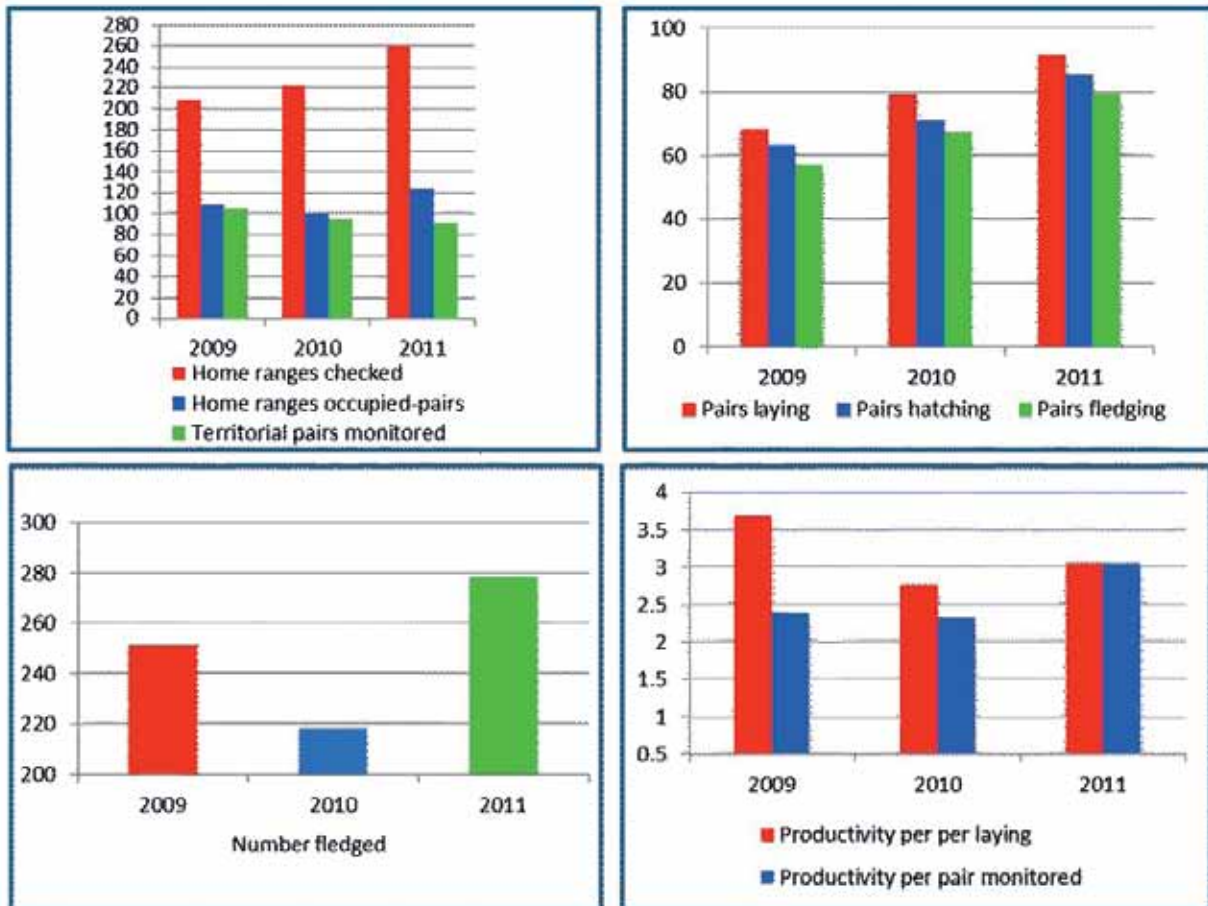
**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

The Kestrel is a relatively common species that is not monitored.

**NERF regional summary**

Nationally the Kestrel population is known to be declining. However; from the data collected across the NERF region it appears that the species is faring reasonably well in some areas. All Groups report Kestrels present in their respective study areas, however only three Groups undertake any detailed monitoring with the best results being produced by Groups with nest box schemes. It is, therefore, difficult to assess the current status of this species without comparative quantitative data from all areas, and perhaps this is an issue that needs to be addressed by all NERF members.

## Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Merlin *Falco columbarius*



## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 1160 breeding pairs (2008 survey)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Amber ●
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

As with most raptors the species has recovered well from organochlorine pesticide poisoning over the 1950/60's. Nonetheless addled eggs and corpses of Merlin are routinely tested for such poisons along with other birds of prey at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Lancaster.

Shooting and egg collecting/brood-robbing are problems still with us though not to any worrying extent. Perhaps the aspect of Merlin biology which most concerns raptor workers in some areas is the decrease in numbers of principal prey items such as Meadow Pipits, Skylarks and Starlings which can affect survival rates of young.

Another trend of the last few years that has serious potential implications for the welfare of chicks is that of un-seasonal heavy rainfall – some spells of which can last for hours sometimes days. If these occur when chicks are still in down and too big to be brooded effectively, death is likely to ensue from hypothermia.

Overall, the future does not look too rosy for the species in northern England. If global warming continues

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
Bowland	14	8	1	2	6	6	5	5	21	3.50	3.50
CRSG	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2	7	3.50	3.50
CRW	23	8	0	2	6	6	6	6	14	2.33	2.33
DUBSG	65	30	0	3	27	27	25	24	95+	3.52	3.52
NRG	75	26	0	7	19	19	17	15	53	2.79	2.79
NYMMSG	38	17	1	1	16	16	15	13	41	2.56	2.56
PDRMG	19	14	2	1	8	8	8	7	27	3.38	3.38
SPRSG	9	9	0	7	2	2	2	2	4	2.00	2.00
YDUBSG	14	8	1	3	5	5	5	5	16	3.20	3.20
<b>Totals</b>	261	124	5	28	91	91	85	79	278	3.05	3.05

apace, the Merlin as a sub-Arctic species might well be forced eventually to retreat northwards leading to the extinction of populations on the southern limit in of its geographical range in Britain.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least 2 monitoring studies or large representative study area

The study area is monitored as two discrete areas – terrain within and without the borders of the United Utilities Estate. Outside the Estate, raptor workers survey known Merlin sites. Four territories were checked, 2 were occupied by pairs, 1 by a single bird. Only one site produced fledged young – a brood of 4. Within the UUE, sites are monitored by RSPB staff and volunteers. Of 10 territories checked 6 were occupied by pairs, 5 of which produced clutches and of these 4 fledged 17 young - an average brood size of 4.25.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least 2 monitoring studies or large representative study area

During 2011 2 pairs in the south of the study area collectively raised 7 young, an increase of 133% when compared to 2010. Another pair located in the north-east failed, possibly as a result of an extensive moorland fire. A similar outcome was experienced in 2010. A pair was known to be on territory in the north-west in March and April. However, the Group has limited access to this moor and the independent raptor worker monitoring the Merlin refuses to share his data with the Group.

### **Cumbria Raptor Workers**

Two pairs were found on territory at the beginning of the breeding season but no further monitoring was undertaken and the outcome at these sites is unknown.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring.** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Monitoring was again extensive and provided near complete coverage of suitable habitat. Locally some moors appeared to be less successful than normal but in general this was a productive season with excellent fledging success from large clutches. The adult female condition had perhaps been aided by the warm April.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

A regular wintering species on the mosslands and eastern moors.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

The number of territories in 2011 did not as the figure might suggest, dramatically increase over 2009/10 levels. The significant improvement results in fact from improved data accumulation compared to the two previous years rather than greater monitoring effort in the field.

2011 was a much more successful year for both occupied territories and fledgling success, especially in the north of the area. The Border Forest however, proved an

exception to this trend and experienced its worst year ever in 30 years of monitoring.

### North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

The basic NYM data for the last 25 years when examined, at face value suggests the population is fairly stable. However, that is not the impression some fieldworkers have been getting over the last decade or so. Problems for the species seem to arise on two possible fronts – prey availability, and female breeding condition: habitat degradation/unsuitability is not a factor, neither is clutch size nor brood productivity when nesting occurs. Low prey availability seems to affect high ground nesters, female conditioning perhaps, pairs on sites below 300 mtrs. There has been a significant number of instances where birds have turned up on low northern territories, paired up, appeared well settled, but have simply failed to nest. On the higher moors above 300 mtrs some broods have apparently starved. At one site where two chicks died the whole area in one recent season was littered with Northern Eggar, Drinker, Emperor and Fox Moth wings but hardly any prey feathers.

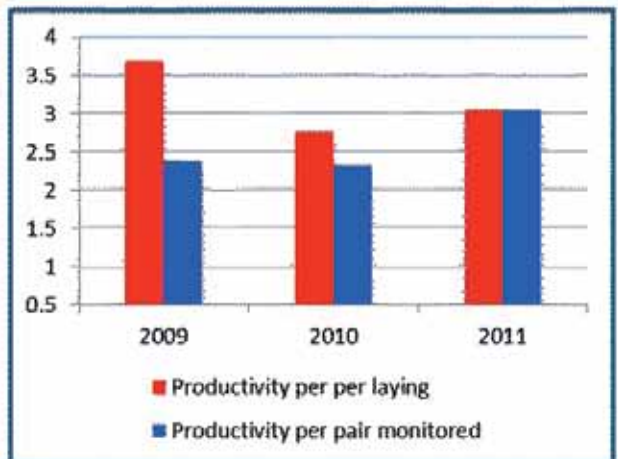
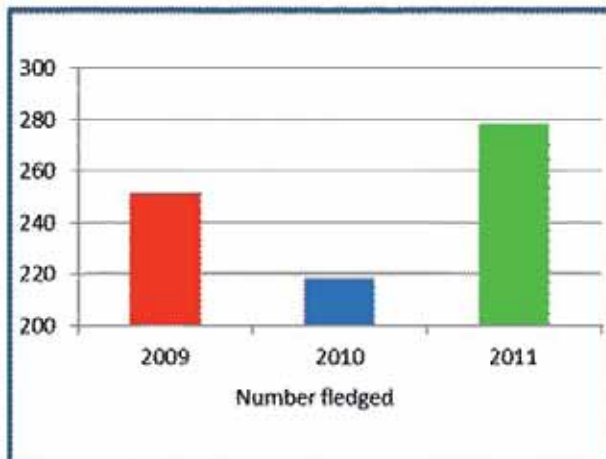
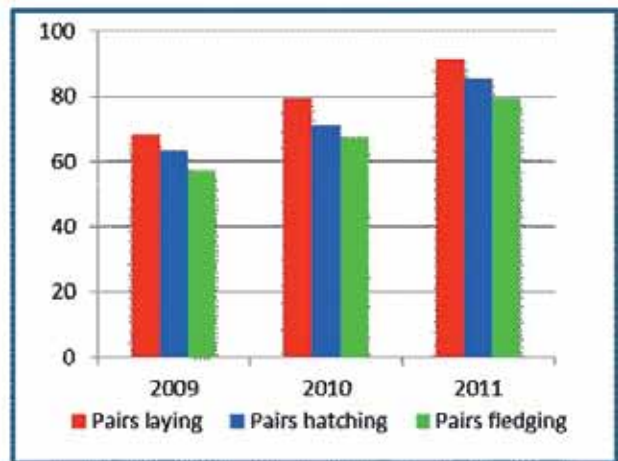
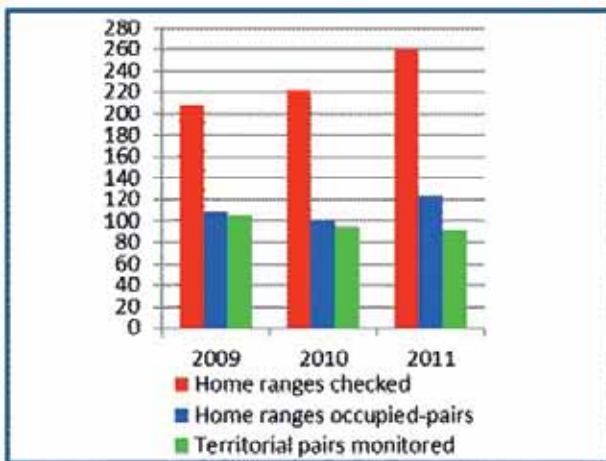
In 2008 a joint RSPB/National Park wader survey was

carried out which covered a wide spread of 1km squares over the NYMs. Fieldworkers also kept count of the number of Meadow Pipits recorded in each square. The variation between numbers recorded to the north and east of the NYM against those counted in the west was very marked, with those logged over the latter being far higher. The NYMs generally slope downwards from the higher moors in the west (max 454mtrs) towards the east coast (min. c.150mtrs). The implication of a potential link here was fairly obvious.

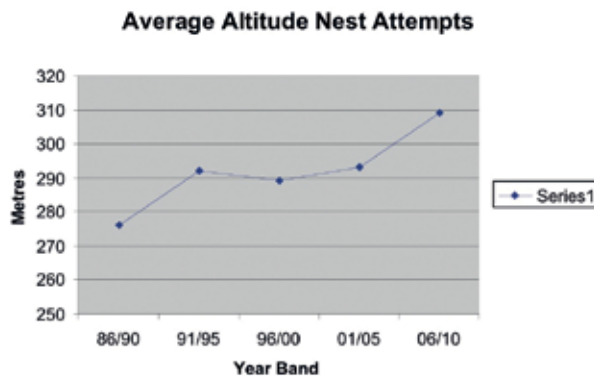
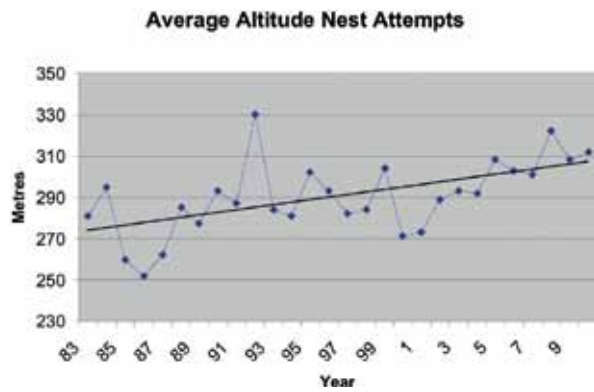
As a result the nest altitude data for occupied sites from 1983 to 2010 was examined recently, (a) year-by-year and (b) in 5 year bandwidths. The results appear below, and show quite clearly that there was an appreciable average increase (around 30 mtrs) in the height of nests over the 28 year period. Other analyses of the general Merlin data have indicated a shift in emphasis of nesting from below to above 300mtrs from the early 2000's onwards. In short, in the NYMs the species range is apparently contracting to core sites on the higher moors.

This situation may of course turn out to be just a relatively short-term blip in the dynamics of the population. It is to be hoped so, otherwise, if this pattern persists, the future of Merlin as a breeding species in the NYMs could be seriously at risk.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011







### Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study

Occupied sites continue to cause concern, particularly the number failing at an early stage of the nesting cycle. In addition, some traditional sites seem to be suffering due to intense habitat management.

### South Peak Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Nine territories in total were located and monitored. Nesting however, was attempted at just two of them. Both were successful, two young fledging at each site. Pairs were in occupation early in the season and copu-

lation was seen at most sites. Inexplicably all but two of the females departed the area in early May, leaving males in occupation for a few more weeks until they too quit their sites. A similar situation was found in some other areas on the eastern side of the country from the Pennines in the South to Deeside in the North. The only known common factor was the exceptionally dry Spring on the eastern side of the country and this may have had a debilitating effect on the breeding condition of females, or possibly had a detrimental effect on the availability of prey species.

### Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Overall 14 sites were checked by fieldworkers covering four discrete areas. Three sites were checked in Area 1 of which 1 was not occupied, a male bird only was recorded at another whilst the third produced the first successful nesting there since 2004, 2 chicks being fledged. Five sites were covered at Area 2, 3 were occupied, 2 failed early in the cycle and 1 produced 2 fledged young. Three territories were checked at Area 3, all were occupied, 1 pair failed, the other two raised 7 young successfully and at Area 4, of 3 sites checked only one was occupied producing a brood of 5 which fledged.

## NERF Regional Summary

The overall productivity figures for 2011 in the NERF region actually show an improvement over 2010 - 3.05 against 2.76 for pairs laying and 2.44 against 2.36 for territorial pairs monitored. These mainly result from the inclusion of Cumbria and Bowland data in this season's table.

Clearly the NYMs, South Peak, Peak District and to a lesser extent Northumbria Raptor Groups all have worrying concerns regarding their birds. Only the Durham population offers some degree of reassurance. It would be useful and enlightening to know if altitude is a possible factor behind problems elsewhere as appears to be the case in the NYMs.

# Hobby *Falco subbuteo*



## UK population estimate

In 2000 the UK population was estimated to be 2,200 pairs (BTO) and the 5-year mean estimated by RBBP, 2006-2010, is 1017 breeding pairs.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Green ●

European Not of concern

Global Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

There are no specific threats associated with this species at the present time, however whilst the population

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
DUBSBG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	3.00	3.00
MRG	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1+	1.00	1.00
NRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1+	1.00	1.00
NYMRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSBG	8	8	0	0	8	8	8	8	17+	2.12	2.12
SPRSBG	51	37	4	0	37	33	33	33	70+	2.12	1.89
YDUBSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	63	48	5	0	48	44	44	44	92+	2.09	1.92

has increased significantly in recent years it still remains relatively low and fieldworkers should be mindful of the continuing threat posed by egg collectors.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur as a breeding species. A bird was seen repeatedly during May and June in the same area, and with breeding not uncommon in other areas of Lancashire, hopefully colonisation will occur within the next few years.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

The actual status of this elusive species in Calderdale is not fully understood. Sightings continue to increase with 23 records being received between 13th Mat and 4th October. Interestingly there was a higher than average number of sightings on both 9th June and 7th July.

Despite the number of sightings and an increase in observer effort, breeding was not confirmed. However, the Group believes it is only a matter of time before a successful breeding attempt is recorded.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Confirmation of breeding at a lowland site in the county was obtained for the third successive year by members of the Durham Bird Club. The pair was first seen on the 12th May and had fledged three young by

late August. Elsewhere, juveniles were seen towards the end of August at six other sites which may have signalled local breeding.

Spring passage birds first appeared along the coastal strip from the 2nd May. Up to 20 adults were seen at different eastern locations during late August and early September.

There were no reports from upland locations during the year.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

At long last a nest was found on the mosslands in the west of the county. This was the first time breeding was definitely recorded in the county.

Possibly five to ten pairs breeding in the county/MRG area. One pair breeds annually just over the border.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Although Hobbies are seen in small numbers in Northumberland each year, with occasional unconfirmed accounts of breeding, up to 2011 there had been only confirmed breeding record, in 1968.

It was therefore very exciting when a newly fledged brood was found in mid county, with an adult and young seen flying around

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a

breeding species.

Once again raptor workers were unable to obtain any evidence of breeding in the NYMs. Individuals were recorded aerial hunting for insects regularly over moorland areas but not one ever indicated it might have been a breeding bird.

Migrating birds are often recorded passing through the NYMs, especially in spring.

### Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Ten young were ringed from four successful nests, with a further four successful nests in areas just outside their study area in South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire and Cheshire, fledging at least seven young.

### South Peak Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Ant Messenger, Mick Lacey and Roy Frost continued their extensive studies of this elusive species and the majority of Hobbies recorded were from these three observers. 51 sites were checked, 41 were occupied, 33 were successful fledging a minimum of 70 young, of which 18 were colour ringed. Overall, the occupancy was high, but productivity was slightly lower than usual,

(2.125 per successful nest, compared with an average of 2.4 per successful over 20 years).

### Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species, but no monitoring takes place. Seen annually during the breeding, notably in Wharfedale and Nidderdale with 2011 being no exception but no real evidence of breeding noted or apparently followed up.

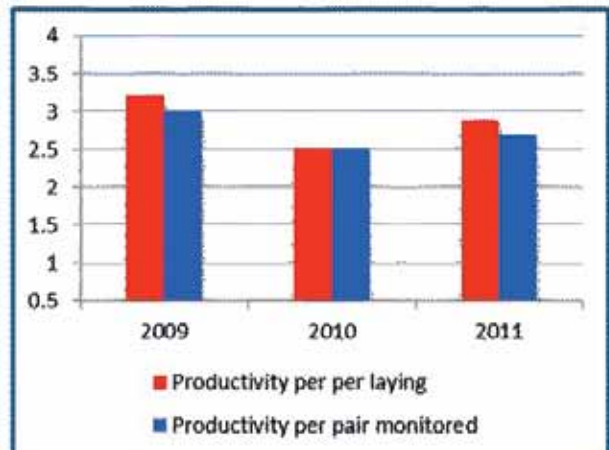
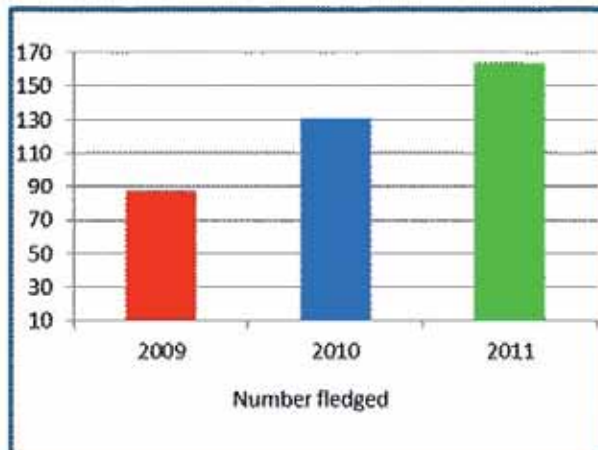
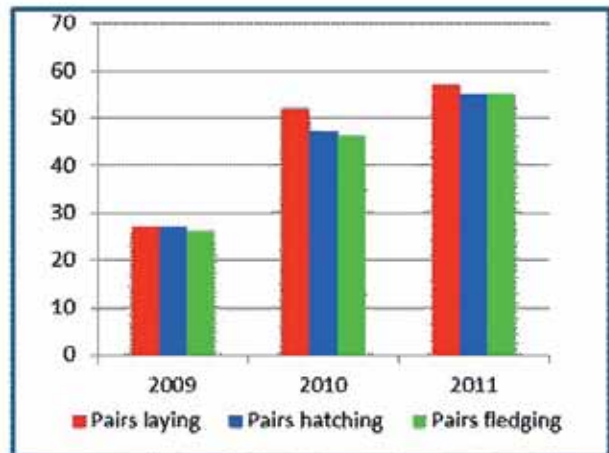
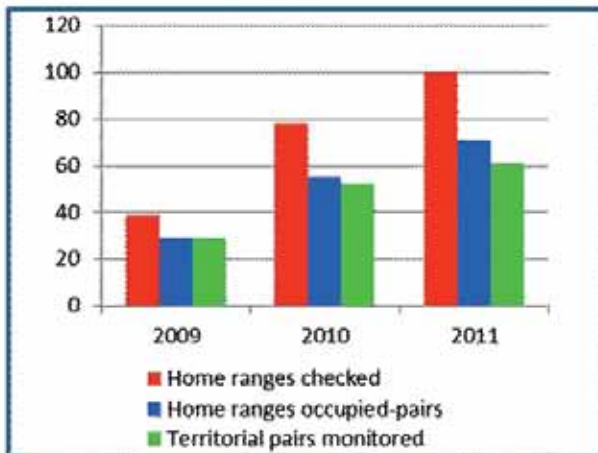
## Colour- ringing scheme

A colour ringing scheme was in operation for this species from 2004 until 2010 and to assist with this project Raptor Workers are requested to report all sightings of colour ringed birds via the website at [www.ring.ac](http://www.ring.ac) or alternately the information can be passed by email to Jim Lennon at [lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk).

## NERF regional summary

A considerable amount of work is undertaken by NERF Group members, particularly in the South Peak. Hobbies were observed across the region and known to have bred successfully in 3 study areas, and this species is undoubtedly colonising new areas as it extends its range further north, as evidenced by first proved breeding in Greater Manchester and recolonisation after 43 years in Northumberland.

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*



## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 1530 pairs (summer) Source: 2002 survey.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Green ●  
 European Not of concern  
 Global Least concern  
 Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

## National and regional threat assessment

The greatest threat to this species was undoubtedly the use of DDT in the 1950s. When this chemical was

banned that particular threat was removed. Regrettably this is not the case with persecution, which is now the largest threat faced by Peregrines. They are targeted by four groups: egg collectors; gamekeepers; those taking eggs on the point of hatch or chicks, sometimes to be smuggled overseas, and pigeon fanciers. Over the last two years this last threat has been increasing at a significant rate. Whilst research shows that racing pigeon losses to Peregrines are extremely low, in some parts of the country, particularly at sites close to the urban fringe, it is apparent that pigeon fanciers are responsible for persecuting Peregrines. However, those pairs nesting in boxes or trays on public buildings in city centres are generally safe from interference.

The threats faced by Peregrines on some grouse moors, in some NERF areas, continues unabated and it is clear that the large number of breeding attempt failures can only be attributed to human interference. Raptor workers must remain vigilant in the face of these on-going problems if Peregrines are to go unmolested across the whole of their natural range.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage

The data relates solely to the United Utilities estate, monitored by RSPB. Within this area it was a poor year with failures during the egg laying/ incubation and chick stages.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	9	7	0	0	7	7	5	2	4	0.57	0.57
CRSG	8	5	0	0	5	5	5	4	7	1.4	1.4
DUBSG	6	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
MRG	11	7	0	1	6	6	5	5	16	2.67	2.67
NRG	32	23	1	5	18	16	13	11	26+	1.63	1.44
NYMRSBG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	4	2	2
PDRSG	8	4	NR	2	2	2	2	2	7	3.5	3.5
SPRSG	32	27	0	0	27	27	21	20	55+	2.04	2.04
YDUBSG	27	10	0	2	8	8	6	6	14	1.75	1.75
<b>Totals</b>	135	86	2	10	76	74	60	52	133+	1.80	1.75

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

This species is somewhat of an enigma in Calderdale. The numbers of sightings continue to increase however; they are not translating into breeding attempts. The fledging rates also remain persistently low when compared to historical data. In 2011, only seven chicks fledged from four successful attempts. This rate would have increased to 1.75 if all of the chicks hatched had gone on to fledge.

A pair of chicks 'disappeared' from a kept area after they had been ringed and both parents also 'disappeared' on the same day. This is particularly suspicious and human interference cannot be ruled out.

The Group commenced a PIT [Passive Integrated Transponder] tagging project in 2011 when each of the fledglings was fitted with a specially modified 'G' ring. It is hoped that the results from this study will greatly improve the Group's knowledge of the local population in the coming years. For further information about a similar project please refer to the excellent article, 'Peregrines & PIT Tags' by George Smith & Mike McGrady published in the 2009 NERF Annual Review.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Comments made by the DUBSG refer principally to the Durham uplands (defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally lying to the west of Easting NZ10, and extending up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire). Additional comments covering the whole Durham Bird Club recording area are provided where appropriate to explain the wider context for the county.

All traditional eyries were once again the subject of repeat visits at the start and during the breeding season. A lone male was present at one site and a pair at another went on to lay eggs but these were lost for unknown reasons and the birds did not relay. None of the other sites were occupied. Breeding performance at these sites has been exceptional poor for over a decade. The majority of the sites fall within the north Pennine SPA.

In lowland Durham (figures not included in the above dataset) Peregrines are fairing somewhat better but they are not without threats. Four out of five sites raised a total of seven young. More generally there were regular reports of one or two birds from favoured lowland sites over the autumn and winter months.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Ravens prevented one pair from breeding at Bolton Town Hall, and the pair at Dovestones RSPB reserve was not successful – the warden could not say whether they got as far as laying eggs. Another regular site in a quarry

could not be checked due to the site being mothballed and locked up. A further site that is occasionally used, was empty this year and the pair used an alternative site over the border in Lancashire. Broods of three, four, four, four and one were all ringed and Darvic'd with red rings and a white letter and number. At the site with only one young, there was also an egg with a fully-formed embryo.

One of the young from the Manchester city centre nest was killed in a traffic accident in Birkenhead, 31st Aug.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

2011 was a poor year for breeding success - this was down to a storm on 23-24th May which decimated many nests at the small young stage. Most nests on high ground failed resulting in the worst year in the Border Forest for fledged young since the mid 1980s.

Of concern, one in a heavily kept area used to be occupied every year until the mid 1990s, but has not been occupied since that time. Unfortunately, there is no alternative nest site in the surround area. A dead adult was found on the site once (long dead).

### **North York Moors Upland Bird**

#### **(Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage, casual monitoring of a few pairs.

The two successful sites in 2010 were again occupied. The two chicks at one site were ringed with an added egg retrieved and sent to CEH. The other site was thought too difficult to reach and also too publicly visible. Both these locations are well away from moorland areas. Suitable sites for the species are available on grouse moors throughout the North York Moors and one is forced to conclude that the likely reason for non-occupation is direct persecution.

### **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Low site occupancy and success rates give real cause for concern.

### **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

In the SPRSG area the species continued to enjoy good breeding success in 2011 away from moorland areas, with the situation in the Upper Derwent Valley continuing to give major concern: of five sites monitored, none were successful and no breeding attempts were made. At the traditional Alport Castles site, bird sightings were few; at a second, previously successful site, an occasional bird was seen, and at the three remaining sites, where birds had been successful at times in previous years, immature birds only were seen at one site. The group mon-

itored a total of 32 sites in 2011. Breeding attempts were made at 27 of these sites (i.e. at all except those in the Upper Derwent Valley); these included the pair which bred successfully again on the Roaches in Staffordshire, fledging four young, the pair on Derby Cathedral, which raised four young, and two pairs in lowland North Derbyshire, which raised a total of five young.. A pair was found at a new site in the Buxton area of the White Peak, and was successful in fledging four young. Human persecution was suspected to be the cause of failure at a site in mid-Derbyshire, where birds had been successful for the previous three years: despite close incubation by the birds throughout April, the nest site was deserted, presumed robbed, at the beginning of May. At a further site in the Buxton area, where persecution has been rife in past years, the pair failed again in early May. However, a total of at least 55 young fledged from 20 nests, known to be successful. Results from five previously successful nests were unavailable due to time constraints, although all sites had breeding pairs early in the season.

### Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

There is now a depressingly familiar pattern of site occupancy in the Yorkshire Dales with none of the traditional Peregrine nest sites on managed grouse moors found to be occupied. Only those sites away from grouse moors are regularly successful with six successful nests

in 2011.

Breeding failures included a pair on the opposite side of the valley to a grouse moor, where a pair were present in at least late March and early April but were not seen subsequently. Elsewhere, a site was occupied by an adult and immature up to early May, but they also 'disappeared' with a gas gun in use around the time of the disappearance. One of the very few sites that are occupied close to a grouse moor has fledged a single young bird in each of the last seven years, a remarkably consistent number of fledged young.

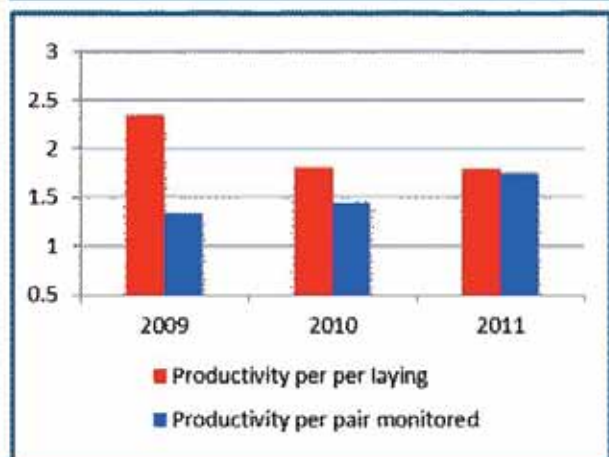
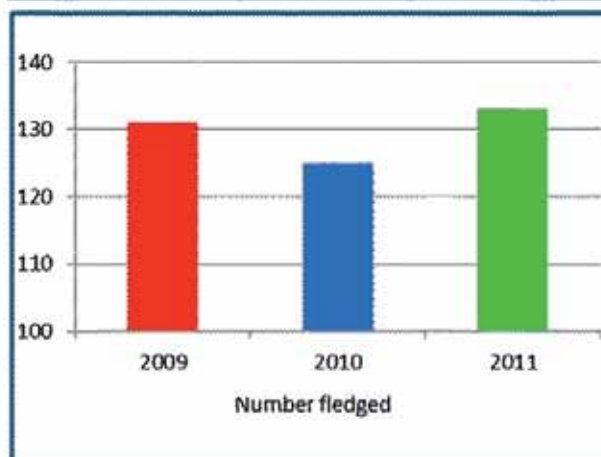
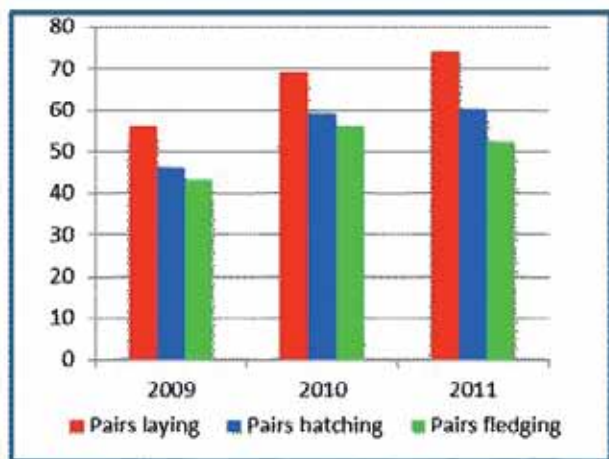
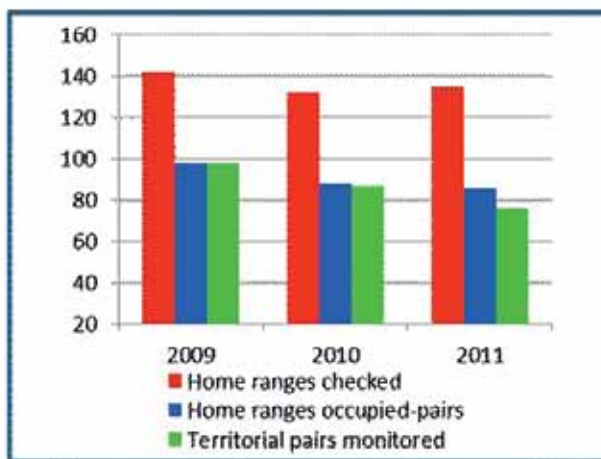
Natural failures included one failed pair at one site and a clutch that was deserted at another due, most likely due to the presence of breeding Raven.

## NERF regional summary

The increase and population of Peregrines across northern England is a real success story, but one that masks what is happening in many upland areas. The monitoring results from a number of different areas clearly show that in areas managed for grouse shooting, there is very low occupancy of traditional Peregrine nest sites. In areas where birds do remain into the breeding season, the number of successful breeding attempts and number of fledged young remain lower than in areas close by.

These data indicates that the only areas of northern England where the population continues to struggle are those that are managed for grouse shooting. Despite claims to contrary by some shooting organisations,

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



the data in this report support the conclusions found by Amar *et al.* (2011) still hold true with productivity of Peregrines on grouse moors much lower than those breeding on non-grouse moor, and that without immigration, Peregrine populations on grouse moors are not sustainable. This strongly suggests that illegal persecution remains a significant problem in many areas.

It is not clear how many more studies need to be undertaken, or research papers published to show the irrefutable links between low Peregrine site occupancy

and breeding productivity and grouse moor management. There is an urgent need for the Government to review measures to address this problem.

**Reference:**

**Amar, A., et al.** Linking nest histories, remotely sensed land use data and wildlife crime records to explore the impact of grouse moor management on peregrine falcon populations. *Biol. Conserv.* (2011), doi:10.1016/j.biocon.2011.10.014

## Barn Owl *Tyto alba*



### UK population estimate

The current population estimate is in excess of 7448 birds (RBBP, 2005) and the BTO estimated 3000-5000 pairs following a study in the years 1995-1997 [Toms, M. *et al* (2001) *Bird Study* 48 :23-37].

### Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Amber ●
European	3: Concern, most not in Europe; declining
Global	Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Barn Owls cannot be released into the wild without a licence from DEFRA.

### National and regional threat assessment

As stated in our two previous reports, loss of habitat and therefore reduced food supply are the greatest threat to this species. With the current economic crisis, agri-environmental schemes such as HLS have been cut, so that farmers wishing to introduce measures which would benefit this and other raptors are penalised. Global warming, which appears to be making summer rainfall heavier and more unpredictable, will make farmers' profit margins even tighter, thus restricting any spend on conservation. As old brick-built barns disappear

through dereliction or conversion, new ones are often metal sided, but nearly all have a wooden framework. This can be used for the installation of a nest box, which most farmers are pleased to have.

The human threat to breeding Barn Owls should not be overlooked. There have been instances of theft of chicks from nests in Cheshire and Greater Manchester recently, although most instances relate to thefts from aviaries. There is a large population of Barn Owls in captivity as they breed easily; however, many captive Barn Owls are released or escape, only to die as they have no hunting skills.

### Group Reports

#### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** The figures in the table above are for the SE of the study area only, and there are believed to be in excess of 30 pairs in the group's area.

**Level of monitoring:** Partial only. Some monitoring from a ringer not part of the BRSG, who found a pair had bred three young on the floor of a barn.

#### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Calderdale MBC area.

**Level of monitoring:** 2011 was a turning point for this species in Calderdale. After hanging on by a thread for a number of years they became extinct as a breeding species. The demise is believed to have been exacerbated by a lack of nesting opportunities. In an effort to redress this problem the Group has purchased and installed 9 nest boxes across the study area at locations where historical data indicates that birds had been present in the past. In an effort to maximise the potential of the nest box scheme research was undertaken prior to installation to ensure that the habitat and potential food supply had not been adversely affected by changes in farming practices. In addition to the nest box scheme the Group also monitors all planning applications and will make representations for mitigation measures that will benefit Barn Owls where appropriate.

#### **Cumbria Raptor Workers**

No information received specifically for 2011. At the time of fieldwork carried out for The Breeding Birds of

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BMSG	17	17	0	0	17	17	17	17	75	4.41	4.41
CRSG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	43	18	5	0	18	18	16	14	39	2.17	2.17
NRG	247	40	3	5	35	35	28	27	88	2.51	2.51
NYMMSG	36	3	2	0	3	3	3	3	10	3.33	3.33
PDRSG	1	0	1	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	10	10	0	0	10	10	10	9	28	2.80	2.80
YDUBSG	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.00	1.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>2.87</b>

Cumbria - 1997-2001' – the population was estimated at 150-300 pairs, and monitoring since then has indicated a re-colonisation of some former breeding areas, although productivity appears to have been relatively low in recent years. Nest box schemes, carried out by various individuals, have assisted the recovery from the low ebb of the 1980s and compensated for the loss of old farm buildings through conversions and of old or dead trees. It is unclear what effect the two cold winters of 2010 had on the population.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Unfortunately there is no monitoring of any sample populations in the uplands, and comments are based on general observations and casual records. It is understood that an owl box monitoring scheme is to be initiated in a lowland area of Durham in 2012.

Observers across the county as a whole reported that following one of the coldest ever Decembers on record (2010), the numbers of sightings in the breeding season were down considerably from the highs of around 2008-09.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole county.

**Level of monitoring:** Regular breeding sites checked annually; at less regular sites owners contacted or visited every 3-4 years. Ringing of pulli carried out wherever possible. Two other ringing groups also cover a few boxes.

18-21 pairs bred this year and 3 pairs were known to have second broods. This compared with 17-19 pairs in 2010. Our county does not seem to have been as badly

affected as other NERF areas by the extreme winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11, and one reason for this may be the availability of landfill sites with a supply of rodents, and old grassed-over tips whose tussocky grass, harbouring good vole populations, rarely gets completely covered by snow here in the milder west.

There was evidence of some colonisation of upland habitats and some boxes have been erected at farms showing evidence of use.

A juvenile ringed 26th June on the mosslands was recovered dead 3.5km to the SE 18.7.12; enquiries revealed it to be a breeding bird and supplementary feeding was introduced for the three young.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage. Following the bad winters of 2009 and 2010 the Barn Owl population has massively decreased (with only 40 occupied territories compared with 71 in 2010). As expected it is the upland study areas which have suffered the greatest reduction in occupation, for example, in the Border Forest a population of 10 breeding pairs in 2010 was reduced to only 2 in 2011. The difference between the upland and lowland study areas was also illustrated by the number of young fledged: 63 in the lowlands but only 5 in the uplands, with a further 20 fledged in areas which were intermediate.

The NRG wishes to place on record the help given by Phil Hanmer in the compilation of data 2009-2011.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; three monitoring



studies. Since the last report, a third monitoring study has come to light, operated by the Tees RG. This means that areas in the north, south and west of the North York Moors are now covered. In the table above, the totals of the three studies are summed.

The appalling early winter weather hit Barn Owls very hard in this area and was undoubtedly the cause of heavy mortality, dealing the species a severe blow. Certainly in the north of the moors birds were being found dead in an emaciated condition. In the south, 5 dead ringed birds found together in a barn were thought to be the entire brood from an adjacent farm. Hopefully the much more clement weather over the 2011/12 winter will enable a high survival rate of the few young produced in 2011 leading to significantly improved productivity in 2012.

**Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.  
**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

One Barn Owl was observed hunting in New Mills in the winter/spring 2010/2011 and there were increased sightings in the spring of 2012, including roosting owls in some nest boxes. We are optimistic that the species could soon return to traditional upland sites.

**South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one monitoring study. Lower numbers were found in 2011, no doubt due to the severe winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11. A total of 23 young and 3 adults were ringed.

**Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.  
**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

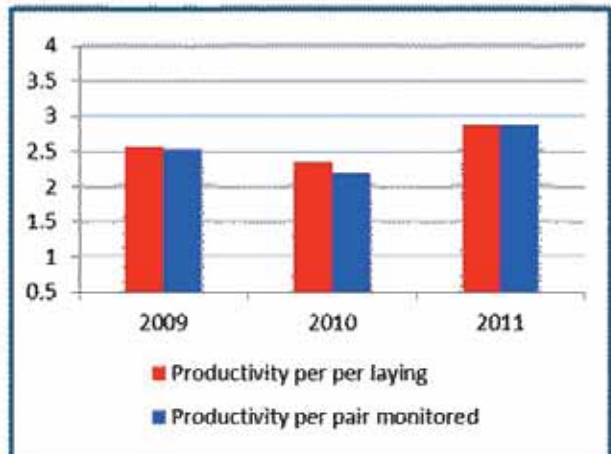
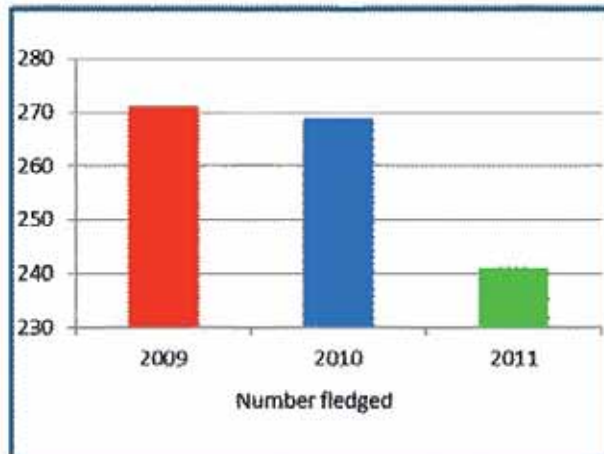
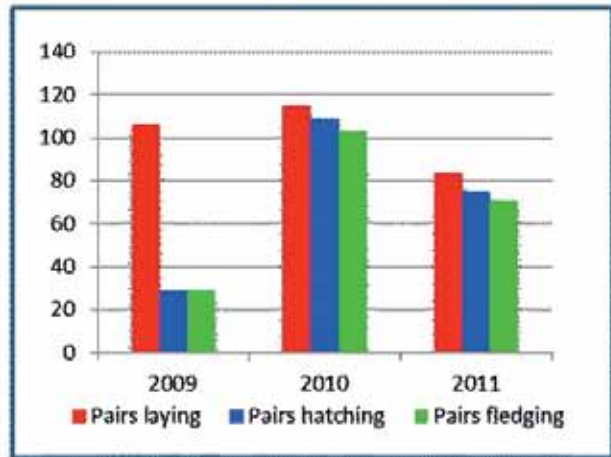
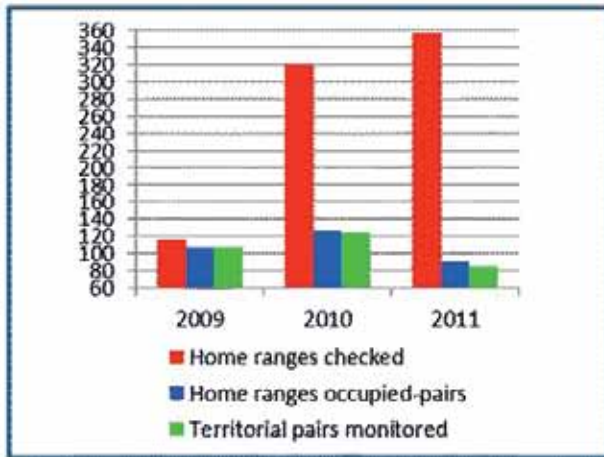
One pair was located in a box but apparently did not lay; another pair in a stone barn reared at least one young.

**NERF regional summary**

The effects of the two cold winters 2009/10 and 2010/11 were particularly marked in the Northumbrian RG area where territory numbers were down nearly 50%. The North York Moors Upland Bird Study Group and South Peak Raptor Group also noted declines (see above). Elsewhere the effects were unclear, mostly due to lack of monitoring, though mortality was suspected. In the milder west, vole survival appeared good, perhaps protected by snow cover, and numbers were not noticeably down.

The good news from Calderdale, where a box scheme has been inaugurated, hopefully will produce better data from this area and perhaps some surprises: Barn Owls can be present in the most unlikely areas!

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**



# Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*



## UK population estimate

The current UK population is unknown, but is likely to be small.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK No category as not on the British List.  
 European 3: Concern, most not in Europe; depleted  
 Global Least concern  
 Listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Eagle Owls cannot be released into the wild without a licence from DEFRA

## National threat assessment

Eagle Owls are under threat from persecution where they come into conflict with Game Managers. It is perhaps no coincidence that, in the uplands, it appears that Eagle Owls only breed regularly in areas that are not managed for grouse shooting.

There is evidence to show that an Eagle Owl was responsible for killing Hen Harriers in 2008 in the Forest of Bowland, although this is disputed by some Raptor Workers. There is further evidence that they were responsible for causing the desertion of a Hen Harrier

nest containing 4 eggs in 2010. However; in both of these years Hen Harriers still produced enough young to maintain the population. There is no evidence that Eagle Owls were responsible for poor Hen Harrier productivity in 2009.

Nonetheless the biggest threat to the species in England is likely to come from the Government Departments, including Natural England, and some conservation groups who believe that these birds pose a threat to native species, principally the Hen Harrier.

Any threat to nesting Hen Harriers is of serious concern given the perilously low breeding population. However; the Forum believes that conservation efforts should be focused on increasing the breeding range and numbers of Hen Harriers away from United Utilities land, rather than considering capturing or culling another protected species. Scapegoating Eagle Owls and removing them from the wild will not resolve the over-riding problem limiting the number of Hen Harriers, i.e. persecution on grouse moors.

Following the consultation process, undertaken by Defra, the proposal that all birds currently in the wild should either be reduced into captivity or culled is not being actively pursued by Government at the present time.

Eagle Owls are very susceptible to disruption when rearing young and they are likely to abandon eggs or young chicks if disturbed during this period. Adding the species to WLCA, Schedule 1 would afford them special protection under the Act. It would also enable Natural England and the BTO to control access to the nests of this very sensitive species during the breeding season, through licensing.

## NERF regional threat assessment

The threat assessment for Eagle Owls in the NERF region is identical to the national threat assessment.

Potentially the most significant threat to this species is the proposal, by Defra, to reduce all of the 'wild' Eagle Owls into captivity or to cull them. These proposals are currently on hold until further research had been carried out. NERF will continue to monitor the situation closely and will make the appropriate response to Gov-

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4	4

ernment if, or when, the proposals are reconsidered.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage.

Despite several successful seasons only one pair is known to breed on a regular basis. However, due to difficulties associated with monitoring this species it is reasonable to suspect others may occur in other remote of Bowland.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

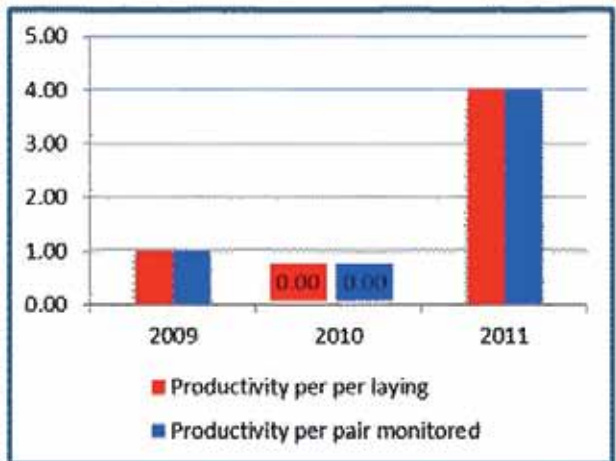
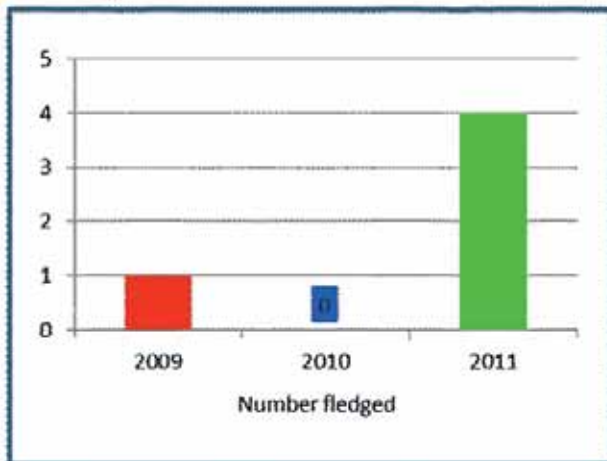
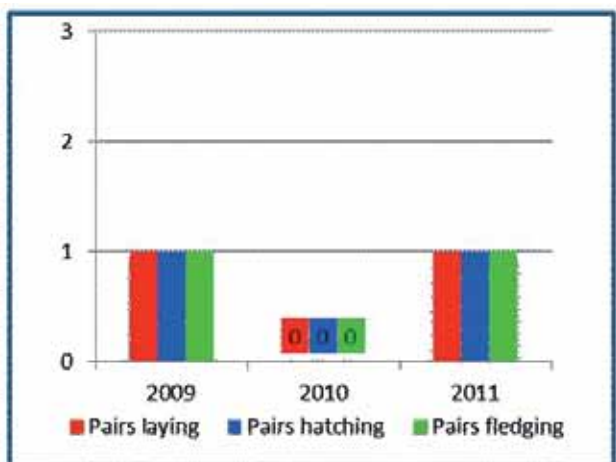
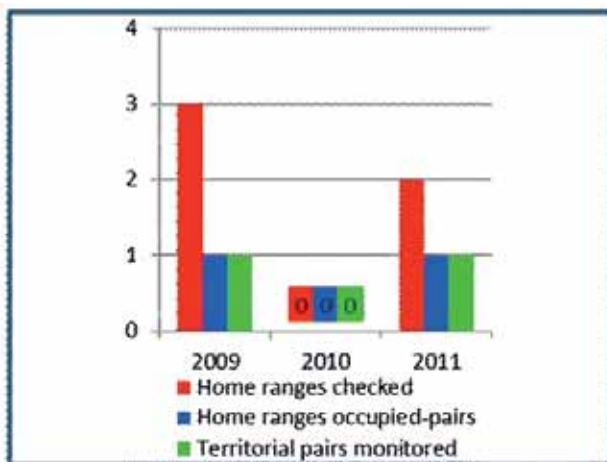
There was one record of an escapee in late autumn near South Shields, which received local press publicity.

No other group recorded this species in 2011.

## NERF regional summary

There is ample habitat for Eurasian Eagle Owls to prosper across the NERF region. However, there are not believed to be any other breeding pairs, although there may be several single birds living in the wild. (Tim Melling, RSPB, *pers.comm.*)

### Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Little Owl *Athene noctua*



## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 7,000 pairs (summer) with a declining trend (BTO)

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Not assessed (as introduced, and on Category C1 of the British List)
European	3: Concern, most not in Europe; declining
Global	Least concern

## National and regional threat assessment

Agricultural intensification presents the greatest threat to Little Owl populations. Year on year severe winters

also adversely affects numbers. Changing farming practices are perhaps the most significant long-term threat to this species. Severe winters are likely to reduce local populations most especially those at highest elevation.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas  
**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs

There are no specific studies of this species in the area. The species is under-recorded but one pair was known to raise 5 young.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole area.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Fourteen pairs were found in spring occupying breeding territories although with other commitments RSG members were only able to monitor 2 pairs during the season.

In an effort to better understand the status of this species in the study area a RSG member undertook the task of collating sightings reported on the Calderdale Bird Conservation Group blog during 2011. The results revealed that Little Owls were widespread throughout Calderdale in every month. In total, there were 87 reports from 49 different locations. We are grateful to the bloggers who willingly contributed. The data has been uploaded to Bird Track.

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00
CRSG	18	14	4	0	2	2	2	2	3	1.50	1.50
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MARG	36	29	4	3	11	11	11	11	NR	NR	NR
NRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NYMRSBG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4.00	4.00
PDRSG	10	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
SPRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	6	3.00	3.00
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	68	47	8	3	17	17	17	17	NR	NR	NR

The information gathered far exceeded that which could be ascertained by the dedicated but relatively few members of Calderdale RSG and the approach has merit for future 'table top' studies of other, less well monitored, species.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

There was no targeted monitoring in the Durham UBSG study area in 2011. The population for County Durham as a whole was recently estimated to be in excess of 300 pairs (Bowey *et al*, 2012, The Birds of Durham), with a clear bias towards central and eastern areas. There had been some evidence over the last decade of the species expanding its range into the western upland fringes with pairs having been recorded at two elevated sites (400 and 430 metres asl). However, it is now speculated that the last two consecutive hard winters may have reduced the general population and especially affected higher altitude sites.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

The species is under-recorded. In chosen study areas at least 29 pairs were known to have held territory in spring of which 11 pairs were monitored through to the stage where fledged young were confirmed. The precise

breeding outcomes were largely unknown. Two sites had broods of just 2 and 1 young respectively.

There is some suggestion that the population may have been impacted by the two recent hard winters.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place

There were no specific reports for this species.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird**

#### **(Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Little Owls are thinly distributed in the North Yorkshire Moors, up to the moorland fringes. No specific monitoring takes place but a pair fledged 4 young at one site on the southern edge of the study area.

### **Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland and part lowland areas.

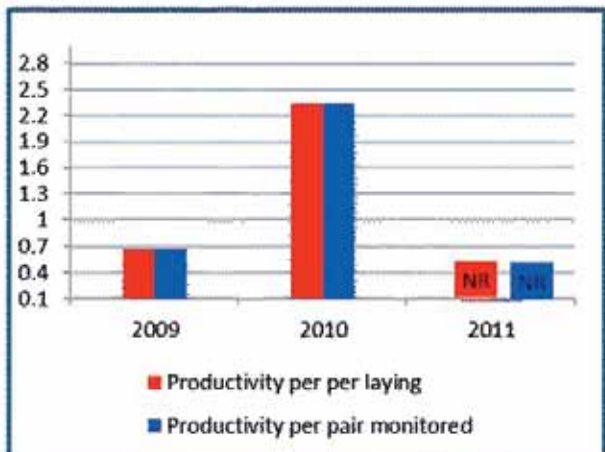
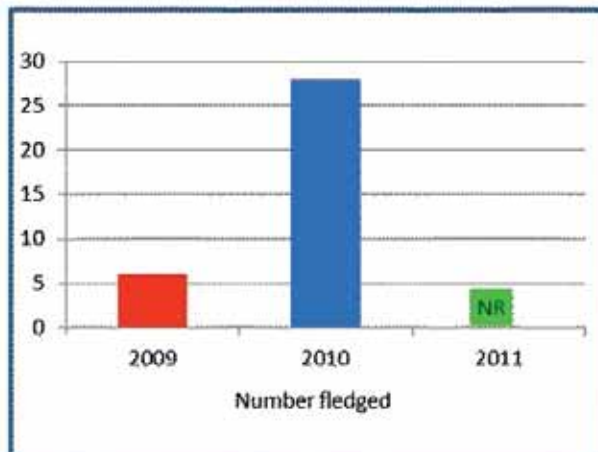
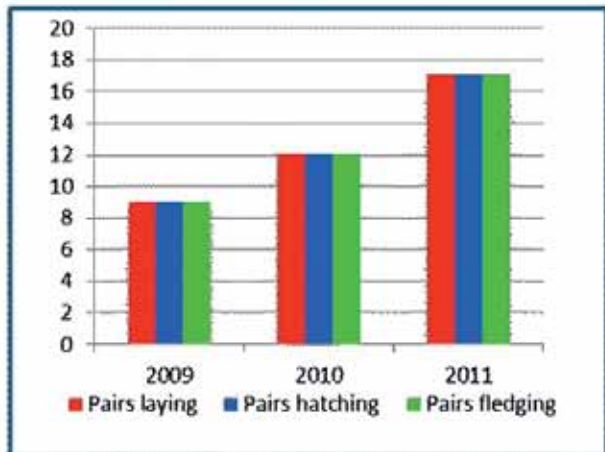
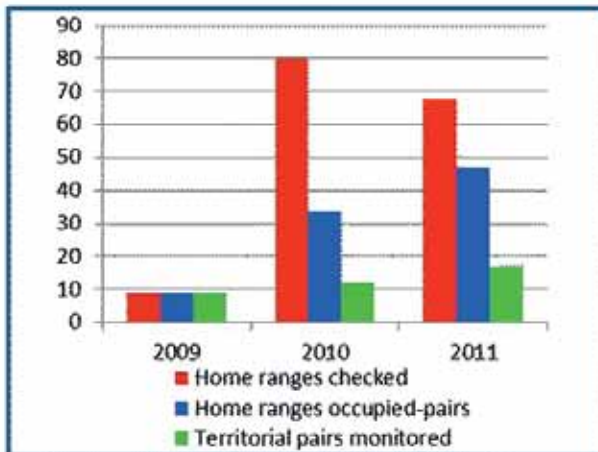
**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

Several historical sites were checked and none were found to be occupied, possibly as a result of the recent hard winters.

### **South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

### **Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**



**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

There was no specific monitoring of this species in 2011. Six young were ringed from two nests.

Numbers appeared down overall.

### **Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.

The species is not currently monitored. It remains not uncommon in the Dales at lower altitudes especially where dry stone walls and stone out-buildings provide suitable roost and nest sites.

## **NERF regional summary**

Little Owls prefer lowland, open arable habitat with old trees, mature hedgerows or farm out-buildings for nesting. The species remains quite common in the NERF re-

cording area at lower elevations. It is recognised that the focus of attention for raptor fieldworkers is towards species in upland areas and as such Little Owls are generally under-recorded. With the exception of Manchester RG, no local RSG monitors Little Owls on a dedicated basis although several groups acknowledged that more ought to be done if resources allowed. The study undertaken by Calderdale RSG in 2011 is commendable and shows how finite resources can be used more effectively to extend our knowledge for this and perhaps other poorly monitored species. The request from the Nest Record Scheme for additional data this species should also prompt further attention in the future.

Four member groups commented on early signs of possible population decline so clearly this is a species that merits closer study. The absence from historically reliable sites in the Peak District was perhaps the clearest indicator of a local decline.

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# **Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*



## **UK population estimate**

The current estimate is 19,000 pairs (summer) {BTO}

Conservation status (BTO)

UK	Green ●
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

## **National and regional threat assessment**

Tawny Owls have little to worry about on the persecution front in this day and age except that the depredations of some individuals on game birds at rearing pens can result in their illegal demise and the predation of both adults and young by Goshawks in forests is likely to prove an increasing problem. However, perhaps the most significant potential threat to the welfare of the species is that of poisoning from present-day rodenticides. The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology is the lead-

ing Government body currently monitoring this situation from analysis of dead specimens. Of some concern are the numbers of young found on the ground by well-meaning members of the public, who do not realise that this is a normal part of behaviour, and take them into care.

## **Group Reports**

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place

Whilst Tawny Owls are found within the study area no formal monitoring takes place.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Calling birds were reported from 13 sites during the breeding season. Whilst this equates to a fall of 28% when compared with 2010 the reduction is in fact a result of reduced observer effort, due to other commitments, rather than a fall in the local population. Two pairs were known to have each produced 2 young each. Taking into account the number of pairs initially heard calling at the beginning to the season there is little doubt that more than 4 chicks were produced across the study area during 2011. In addition to the 11 pairs that were not monitored throughout the season there is a large amount of un-surveyed habitat in Calderdale and the Group believes that many other pairs went undetected. Clearly there is scope for further study of this species in future.

## Durham Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

There are currently no specific monitoring studies for this our most common owl species. Casual observation suggests that the population remains high in both upland and lowland Durham with few if any threats to its stable or slightly increasing numbers.

## Manchester Raptor Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Peter and Norma Johnson monitored 25 pairs which produced 46 young – much better than 2010 when 27 pairs produced 33+ young. Two pairs had fledged young before the end of March this year.

## Northumbrian Ringing Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

These results are from four study areas (a mixture of upland and lowland sites) spread throughout the county of Northumberland and one upland study in Kershope forest in Cumbria.

Vole monitoring was carried out by Aberdeen University in the two study areas in the Border Forest - the 2011 vole population was found to be undergoing a downward trend. This was reflected in breeding success with an average year for productivity in those studies.

One unusual 'subterranean' nest at the bottom of a 60cm vertical hole at the base of a tree was monitored. The nest successfully fledged 2 young despite the whole plantation being clear-felled around them.

## North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two representative monitoring studies over a large area.

All pairs recorded in the South Cleveland Ringing Group's nest boxes in scheme (A), managed to breed successfully in 2011, albeit most managing only a single chick. The 5 year productivity figure for 2007/11 reveals a slight drop from the very consistent averages over the preceding 15 year period: hopefully not the precursor of further future decreases. Productivity from the Forest Enterprise Box scheme (B) run by Pawl Willet in the forests to the SE was again very poor. Due to operational changes within Forest Enterprise, this project is likely to be terminated next season.

## Tawny Owl Annual Productivity Data – North York Moors

### South Cleveland Ringing Group Large Nestbox Scheme

Year bands	No of sites	No occupied	% occupied	No successful	Young ringed	Av. successful nests	Av. all nests
1977-81	202	55	27.2	29	69	2.4	1.25
1982-86	174	46	26.4	34	72	2.1	1.57
1987-91	169	54	31.9	41	83	2.0	1.57
1992-96	150	33	22.0	29	51	1.8	1.55
1997-01	109	24	22.0	18	32	1.8	1.33
2002-06	128	38	29.7	28	50	1.8	1.32
2007-11	154	44	28.6	40	68	1.7	1.55

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	13	13	0	0	1	2	2	2	4	2.00	4.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	44	44	NR	31	44	31	31	31	56	1.81	1.27
NRG	266	97	NR	NR	97	97	97	97	144	1.48	1.48
NYMRSR	61	13	0	0	13	13	13	13	17	1.31	1.31
PDRSG	25	7	0	0	7	7	5	5	11	1.57	1.57
SPRSG	17	17	0	2	15	15	15	15	33	2.20	2.20
YDUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
<b>Totals</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>1.61</b>	<b>1.50</b>

**Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

A female sat on addled eggs for at least 42 days, at another site the female was predated (wing found close to the nest box)

The group are hoping to resurrect a detailed study of this species after a period of only casual monitoring.

**South Peak Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

This was as usual the most noticeable owl (both heard and seen) recorded by the group. Most of the 33 young produced were ringed.

**Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland part lowland areas.

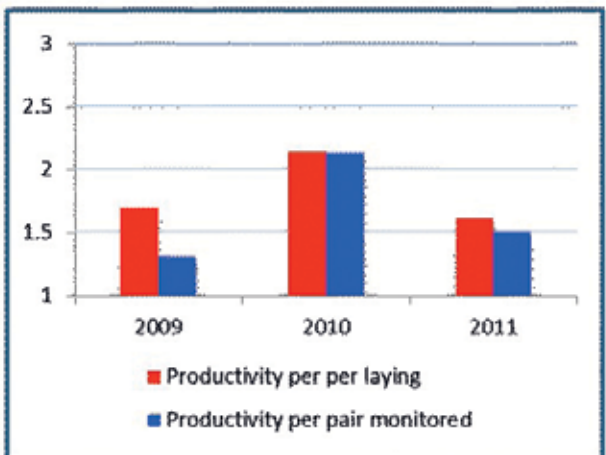
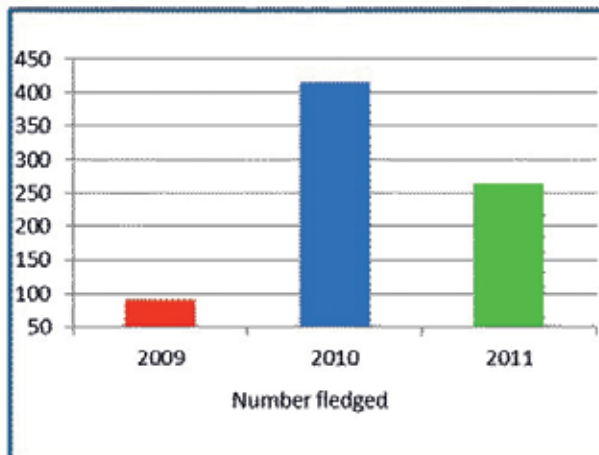
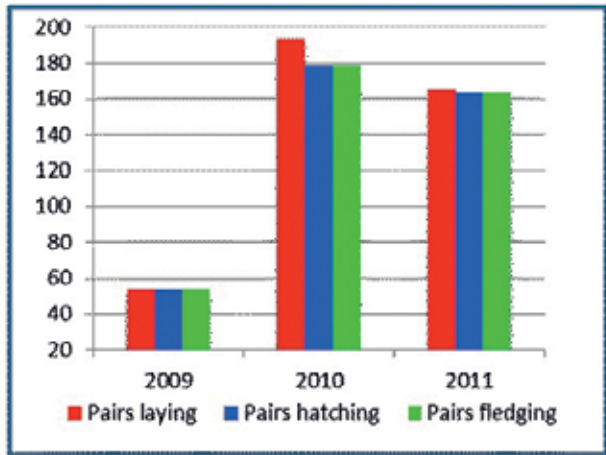
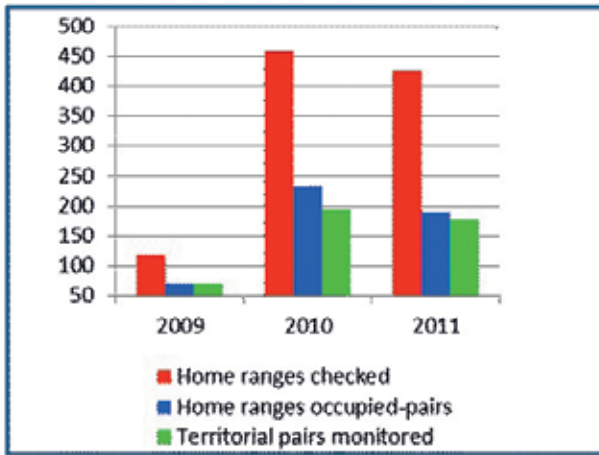
**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage, casual monitoring of a few pairs.

This species is almost certainly widespread in the Dales but no structured monitoring takes place.

**Summary**

Regionally Tawny Owls seem to have had a fairly average breeding season. Birds have fared better in some Raptor Group areas than others – perhaps a reflection of varying stages of the field vole breeding cycle across northern England.

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**





# Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*



of adults do not breed and those that do breed produce smaller clutches.

## Group Reports

### Calderdale Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Calderdale MBC

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

During 2011 4 pairs were found on territory with 3 pairs proven to breed successfully, raising a total of 6 young. The outcome of the 4th pair was unknown but this is a historically successful site and there is no reason to suggest that this pair failed.

Three other traditional sites were also regularly checked with negative results. It is not known why these sites were unoccupied; however the nests are located in the same area that has seen Short-eared Owls, Peregrines, Tawny Owls and Hen Harrier 'disappear' under suspicious circumstances in the past; therefore persecution cannot be ruled out.

### Durham Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

There are currently no specific monitoring studies in the uplands. Members of the Durham Bird Club have in recent years provided a focused coverage in the lowlands. This has served to confirm this elusive species' status as an uncommon but widespread resident. Recorded more commonly in the east during autumn passage though the very notable influx of Short-eared

## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 2,400 pairs (summer) [BTO]

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Green ●

Added to the RBBP monitoring list from 2010 owing to a lack of a national overview, and a belief that the population is below the RBBP threshold for inclusion.

European Not of concern

Global Least concern

## National and local threat assessment

The main threat to Long-eared owl appears to be competition for habitat with Tawny owls and predation from larger raptors. Breeding attempts are affected by prey availability and in poor vole years large numbers

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	1	1	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	7	4	0	0	3	3	3	3	6	2.00	2.00
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	14	14	NR	2	12	12	12	12	20	1.67	1.67
NRG	20	5	0	0	5	5	4	3	3+	0.60	0.60
NYMRSR	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
PDRSR	12	8	0	0	8	8	4	4	4+	0.50	0.50
SPRSR	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	12	12	0	4	6	6	6	5	10	1.67	1.67
<b>Totals</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43+</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.26</b>

Owls from the continent in 2011 did not produce unusually high numbers of this their close relative. Several favoured wintering sites are now known, including the RSPB reserve at Saltholme.

### ***Manchester Raptor Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole county

**Level of monitoring:** Other than one study, poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Robert Kenworthy's study site in Rochdale continued to produce excellent results with 4 pairs breeding in a 60 hectare area, and fledging 9 young.

### ***Northumbrian Ringing Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part of upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

With a decrease in the vole population the LEO once again had a poor year with few occupied territories. One nest failed on eggs in a May storm, whilst the another nest failed at small young stage. The remaining three nests had small broods going on to fledge young. Unusually no broods were predated by Goshawk this year.

### ***North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

This species continues to be something of an enigma in the NYMs and like Little Owl could certainly do with some significant focused research. It occurs at very low densities and any nests that are found tend to be found in the course of routine Goshawk operations. An adult was flushed from a crow nest in early spring at the site successful in 2010 but when checked several weeks later, the nest was found to be empty. Human/avian persecution was considered most unlikely and it is possible the bird was a female that had lost its mate during the severe winter weather.

### ***Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland part lowland areas

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Long-eared Owl are almost certainly under recorded

in the area, 2 of the sites fledging young were only discovered post fledging (at least 1 young). Of a total of 8 pairs laying eggs, 4 pairs went on to fledge a minimum of 4 young.

### ***South Peak Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

SPRSG fared a little better than in 2010 with two successful nests, c700m apart, fledging three and at least one chick respectively; at least two juveniles fledged at another site and an adult was alarm calling in June at a fourth site. At one further traditional site, a pair bred and reached the young stage, when unfortunately the male disappeared and the nest failed. At another well-used traditional site, no birds were present.

### ***Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

**Timble area:** 4 pairs of which three failed, with one pair fledging 3 in a provided basket.

**Denton area:** 3 pairs of which one failed and the others reared 5 young.

**Norwood area:** 2 pairs seen displaying and food carrying observed at another site.

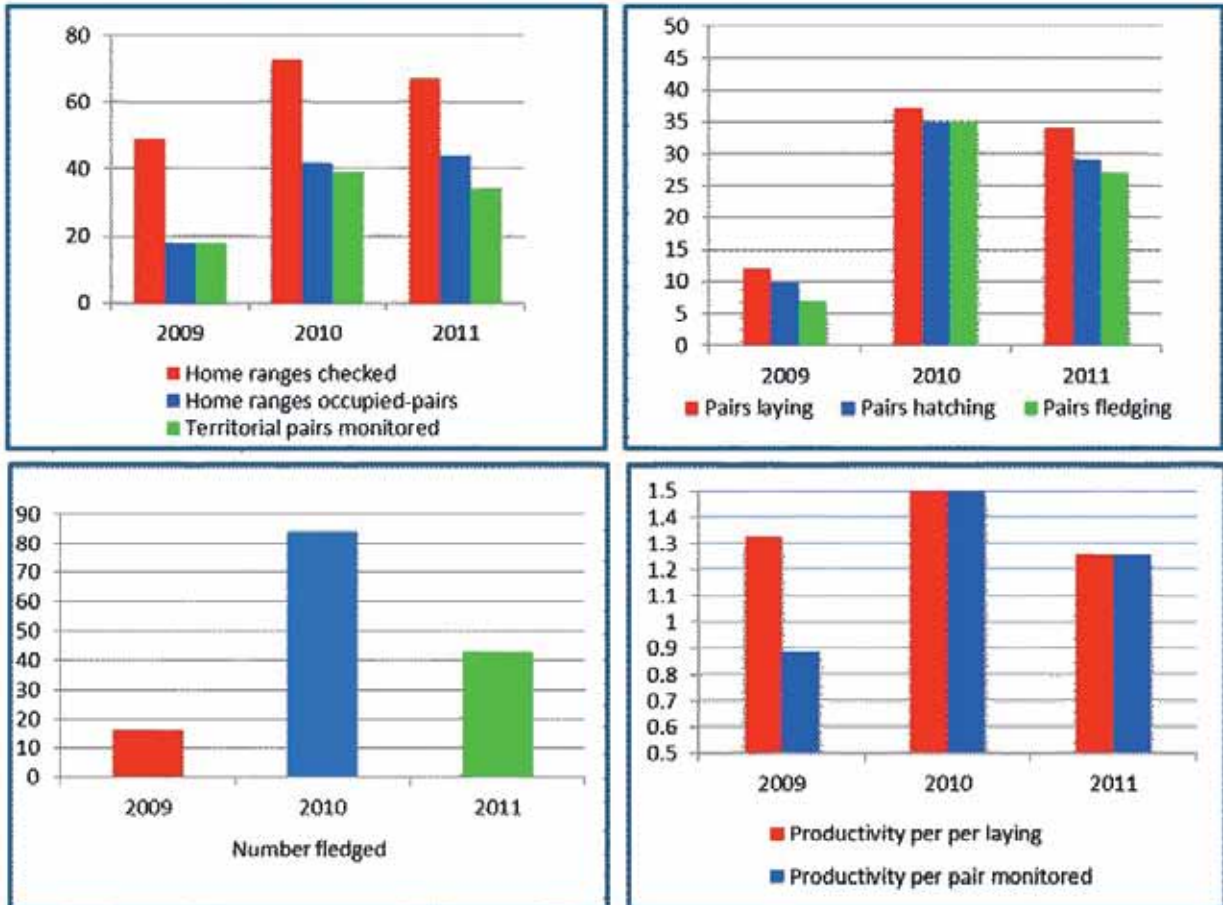
**Hoodstorth area:** at least 2 pairs fledged young.

Outside any NERF group area there were at least 3 pairs in the Rombalds moor area of mid Wharfedale.

## **NERF regional summary**

Although Long-eared Owls are notoriously difficult to monitor there are several studies undertaken within the NERF region. In 2011 some groups reported that they were experiencing a particularly poor vole year this was confirmed by the poor productivity rates. Taking into account that the NRS only receives an average of 17 records annually and that 34 pairs were monitored by NERF in 2011 it would appear that members are ideally placed to add much needed data to the BTO Nest Record Scheme.

## Comparative Data 2009 – 2011



# Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*



## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 2300 pairs (summer) [BTO]. The 1988-91 atlas estimated a breeding population of 1000-3500 pairs.

## Conservation status (BTO)

UK Amber ●  
 Added to the RBBP monitoring list from 2010 owing to a lack of a national overview, and a belief that the population is below the RBBP threshold for inclusion.  
 European 3: Concern, most not in Europe; depleted  
 Global Least concern

## National and regional threat assessment

Short-eared Owls prey on rodents and small birds with the Short-tailed Field Vole being their primary food source. Breeding success invariably fluctuates with vole abundance. Their failure to fully exploit suitable habitat and the current suggestions of decline are not fully understood. Prey abundance is likely to be the dominant

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSBG	7	7	0	1	3	3	3	3	10+	3.33	3.33
CRSG	7	4	2	NR	3	3	3	3	11+	3.67	3.67
DUBSG	7	5	2	0	5	2	2	2	2+	1.00	0.4
MRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
NRG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	2+	1.00	1.00
NYMRSBG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	5	4	NR	0	4	4	4	3	12+	3.00	3.00
SPRSG	5	5	0	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
YDUBSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	2+	1.00	1.00
<b>Totals</b>	35	29	4	1	19	16	16	15	37+	2.31	1.95

factor but winter survival and even persecution may play a part.

Four member groups independently expressed concern that with populations obviously at a low ebb, any human persecution may could have a marked impact.

## Group Reports

### **Bowland Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Not all pairs were monitored through the season but those that were showed reasonable productivity at 3.3 young per pair laying.

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole area

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage: most sites are monitored annually

Four pairs were found on territory although only 3 pairs were proven to successfully raise young. Two of these were in the south of the study area and the third in the north east. Another pair in the north east was present throughout the season but breeding was not proven.

The previous stronghold for this species has been in the north west of the study area and although birds were present here early in the season, despite considerable observer effort, breeding could not be proven. Persecution cannot be ruled out.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or a large representative study area.

Despite considerable observer presence through the

monitoring of other species there were just two instances where adult behaviour in June suggested that fledged young were present and that breeding had occurred.

October saw the arrival of large numbers at the coast as part of the influx to eastern England. Records suggest at least 80 birds were involved and the effects were felt even in upland areas where one gamekeeper reported the largest presence in late autumn for many years.

### **Manchester Raptor Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Whole county.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

There were no specific records of territorial pairs. A bird spent the late winter period on the constituent mosslands of Chat Moss.

### **Northumbrian Ringing Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

The Short-eared Owl is now a scarce breeding bird in Northumberland. They have not bred in the Border Forest for a number of years although in 2011 the first record in five years came by way of one being taken by an avian predator. Elsewhere, casual monitoring revealed two nesting pairs which were both thought to have fledged young.

They occur regularly on passage and as winter visitors. There were exceptionally high numbers seen during the autumn of 2011 with about 100 birds subsequently wintering in the county as a whole with 13 birds roosting at one lowland site.

### **North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Occurs as a breeding species, nests monitored when located

No displaying birds or breeding attempts were recorded. There were notably few observations of even single birds in suitable habitat even in the south west where birds were seen in 2010. The species' status is of obvious concern.

### Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland and part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

Fluctuations in numbers and location make this a difficult species to quantify but 2 pairs in the Goyt Valley area were successful as was at least one of two at other sites.

There is concern that persecution may in part be responsible for the limited success of Short-eared Owls in the study area. Serious consideration should be given to offering this species Schedule 1 status.

### South Peak Raptor Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

Suitable habitat was checked as part of monitoring for other raptor species and 5 pairs were located in early spring. Time and resource constraints meant that their breeding outcomes could not be followed up

Up to 6 birds on Eastern Moors Estate in north Derbyshire during the autumn and winter months were evidence of the influx of continental birds to eastern England.

### Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland areas .

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

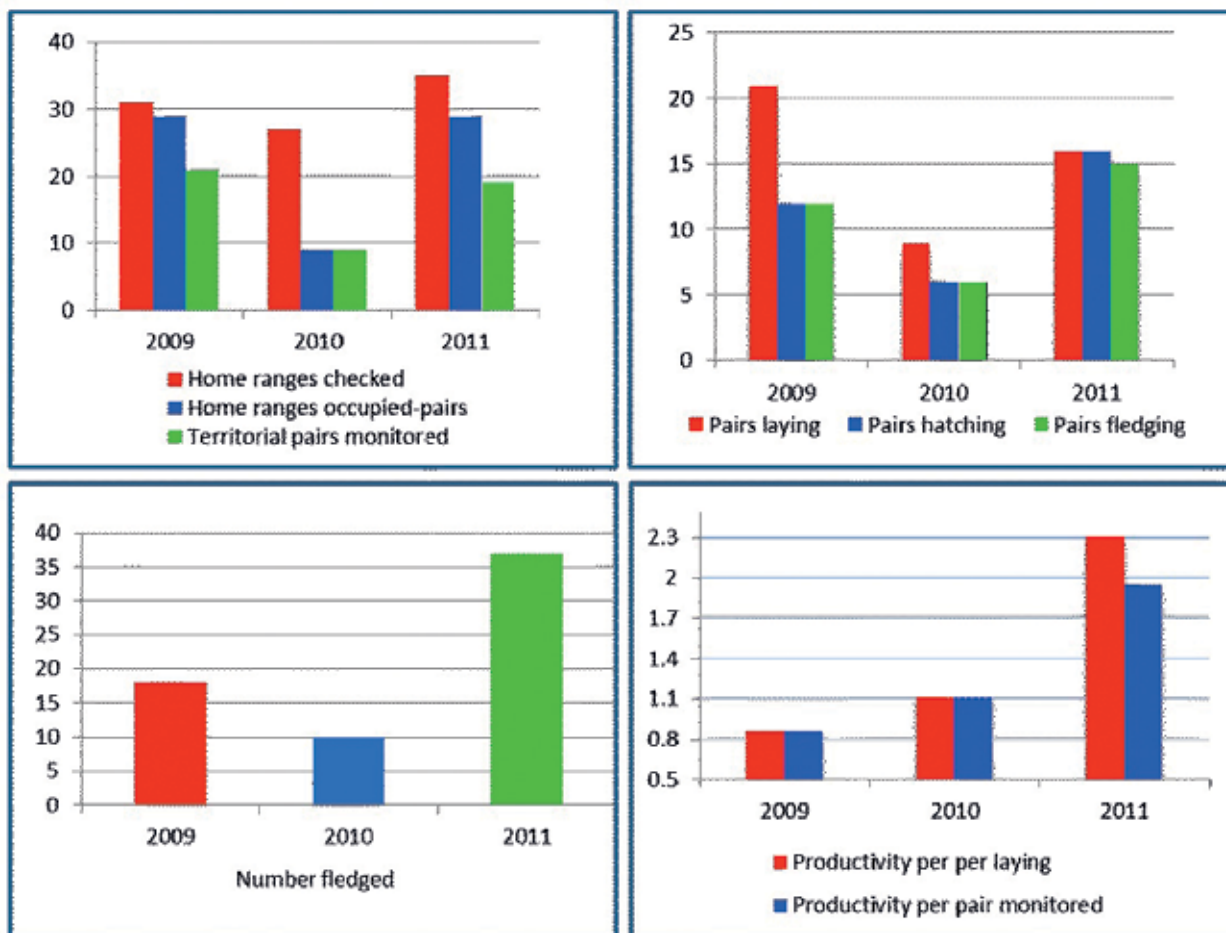
There were reports of 2 pairs successfully rearing an unknown number of young in the Washburn area. No birds were seen in the Nidderdale or Colsterdale areas during the breeding season.

## NERF regional summary

Most groups monitor Short-eared Owl in tandem with other survey work but the general trend has been towards the discovery of fewer displaying or breeding pairs despite many experienced observers providing near-constant effort monitoring year-to-year. That birds are now absent or scarce from several traditional areas of apparently still suitable habitat is of considerable concern.

The species is clearly a strong candidate for a more co-ordinated approach to monitoring across our region, even with the known problems of having an appropriate survey methodology.

The RBBP adoption of the Short-eared Owl is welcomed and will hopefully provide a stimulus for more detailed data collection. NERF would also recommend that consideration be given to adding the species to the Schedule 1 Annex .



# Common Raven *Corvus corax*



ing Ravens to climbers and may lead to breeding birds abandoning nesting attempts.

## Group Reports

### **Calderdale Raptor Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

Calderdale recorded a slight improvement in the number of young fledged; increasing from 4 in 2010 to 5 in 2011. Two pairs are known to have successfully reared clutches of 2 and 3 respectively. A family party of 6 was recorded in the west of the study area on 11th July and it is likely therefore that a 3rd successful nest went undiscovered during the breeding season.

Overall the species appears to be doing reasonably well, with in excess of 100 separate sightings being reporting during 2011.

### **Durham Upland Bird Study Group**

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.

The pattern for Raven occurrence in the county's uplands now seems sadly predictable with regular winter and early spring sightings in favoured areas consistently failing to lead to any breeding, despite the availability of large areas of suitable habitat. The Raven remains a very rare breeding bird in the county with just 1 known nesting attempt in the last decade. The reasons for the failure of breeding pairs to occupy suitable terrain re-

## UK population estimate

The current estimate is 12,000 pairs (summer) [BTO]  
Conservation status (BTO)

UK                    Green ●  
European        Not of concern  
Global            Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

Whilst the persecution of the Common Raven has reduced, the threat remains a clear and present danger in some areas, particularly where they come into conflict with the game shooting community. In some parts of the NERF region they are both shot and poisoned.

In October 2009 the British Mountaineering Council [BMC] opened a discussion within the Cave and Crag Access Advisory Group to consider the BMC's position on voluntary climbing restrictions on crags with nesting Raven. Any withdrawal from the current voluntary restrictions, by the BMC, could open up crags with nest-

## NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored through the season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSRG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
CRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	5	2.50	2.50
DUBSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	6	3	0	NR	2	2	2	2	5	2.50	2.50
NRG	29	24	1	3	23	18+	17	16	43+	2.39	1.87
NYMRSG	0	NR	NR	NR	0	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
PDRSG	13	5	NR	0	5	5	5	5	15	3.00	3.00
SPRSG	37	37	NR	NR	11	11+	11+	11+	41+	3.73	3.73
YDUBSG	24	11	0	2	9	9	9	8	29	3.22	3.22
<b>Totals</b>	111	82	1	5	52	47+	46+	44+	138+	2.94	2.65

quires more detailed study but may well be linked to persecution.

Early winter produced the usual reports of between 3 and 6 birds at several locations in the western uplands and fringes further east but there were no subsequent reports of any attempted breeding. Reports became scarcer during the summer with 1 - 2 birds typically seen on the higher ground before sightings increased once again in the late autumn.

### ***Manchester Raptor Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Whole County.

**Level of monitoring:** Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Two pairs were monitored throughout the season. From these 2 pairs 4 young were ringed at Montcliffe Quarry and 1 young fledged on the pylon site at Carrington. A third pair was observed periodically at Wigan Town Hall but it is not known how many young fledged, so no data has been entered into the table.

Other territories were held at Bolton Town Hall, Ludworth Moor and on the Dovestones RSPB reserve, but no information about the number of young fledging from these sites was received.

### ***Northumbrian Ringing Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The Raven is slowly increasing in the study area and starting to colonise lowland quarries.

Although we have no direct evidence that birds are persecuted, the population growth has been very slow compared with other English counties.

### ***North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Upland areas only.

**Level of monitoring:** Not known to occur as a breeding species.

Not as regularly or frequently observed in the NYMs as in 2010 and there was no evidence of territorial pairing / display anywhere during 2011.

A bird was observed at Sleddale in May being mobbed by Buzzards.

### ***Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.

Once again the number of traditional sites unoccupied leads us to believe that persecution is the main factor limiting the success of Raven in the study area. In 2011 only gritstone crag areas with good public access once again proved to be the most successful sites.

Another apparently successful pair was monitored by a couple in the Hayfield area; unfortunately no details are available.

### ***South Peak Raptor Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

In the SPRSG's study area at least 37 sites were occupied, although the total population may be nearer 60 pairs.

Of the 37 sites known to have been occupied in 2011; 19 pairs were in quarries, 6 pairs were on natural rock faces, 11 pairs were located in conifers, mainly Scots Pine and Larch, 1 pair nested in a Yew, and a 12th tree breeding pair nested in an Ash tree.

Across the study area 11 pairs successfully fledged a minimum of 41 young.

### ***Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group***

**Extent of coverage:** Part upland & part lowland areas.

**Level of monitoring:** Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The slow increase in the number of occupied territories in the YDUBSG area continues with 1 additional nesting pair in 2011 when compared to 2010. There were 3 breeding failures with 1 territorial pair not making any nesting attempt and another presumed not to have made a nesting attempt due to the presence of Peregrines. At a 3rd site 4 nearly-fledged young were found dead in the nest in early May. This site is only 1.5km from a nest site where 3 young on the point of fledging were found dead in the nest in 2010. Given the success rates of Raven in the Yorkshire Dales, the failure of 2 nests at such a late stage in the breeding season, in consecutive years, is highly unlikely to be the result of natural causes.

There was a single tree nesting pair for the second year in succession that fledged 4 young.

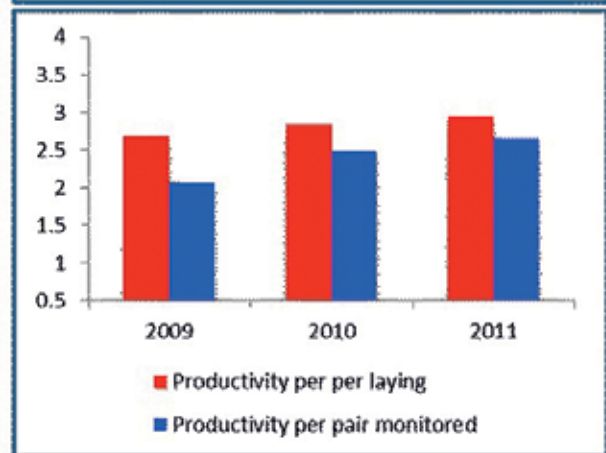
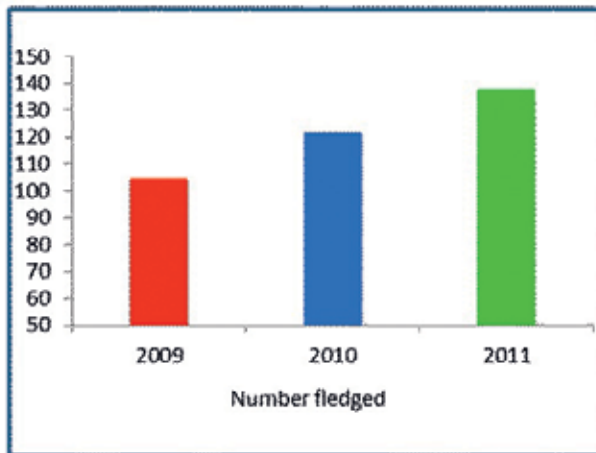
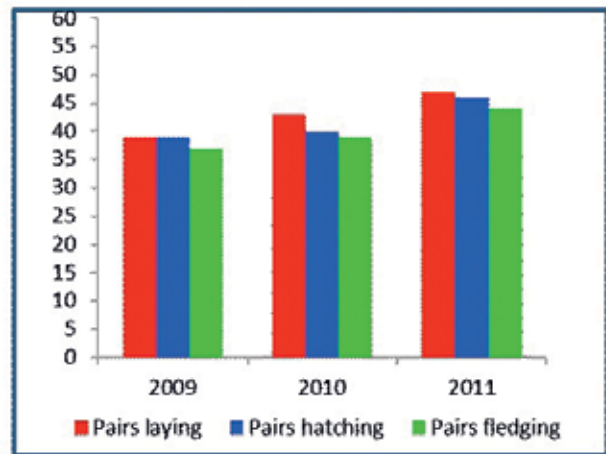
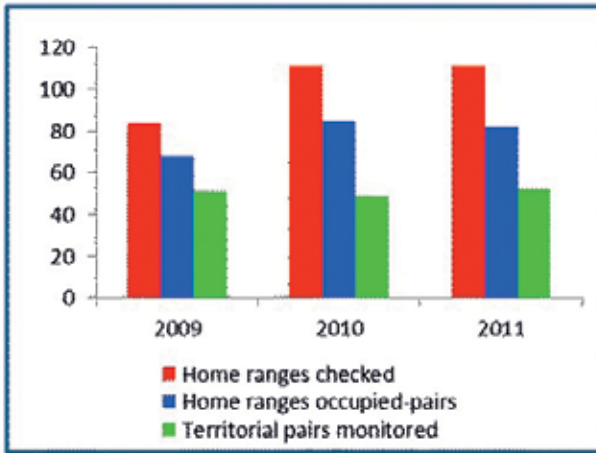
There continues to be widespread records of birds outside the breeding season from most areas of the study area, which are presumed to relate to non-breeding birds. Despite this apparently large non-breeding population, a number of prime Raven nesting sites remain unoccupied within the YDUBSG study area and the population is well below the natural carrying capacity of the area.

## **NERF regional summary**

There are mixed fortunes for Raven across the NERF recording area. In some areas they are prospering, in some they are slowly increasing whilst in others where there is ample suitable habitat the population is lower than would perhaps be anticipated.

The reasons for these regional variations are unknown at the present time, however it may be linked to persecution and the species is worthy of a more detailed study

**Comparative Data 2009 – 2011**







# Species reports from non- NERF members

## Cumbria

### **Eagle, Golden** *Aquila chrysaetos*

A single male spent a lonely summer occupying the Haweswater territory during 2011.

**Source:** Dave Shackleton

### **Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

During 2011 Cumbrian Raptor Workers checked 23 territories of which only 8 were found to be occupied. Six pairs went on to raise a total of 14 young. The cause of the failures at the other 2 sites is unknown.

Overall the breeding success recorded falls into the following categories:

- average number fledged per site where exact number known = 1.75
- average number fledged per successful site where exact number known = 2.33

**Source:** Dave Shackleton

### **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

The Cumbrian Osprey population continues to grow with reports suggesting that up to 5 pairs were present during 2011 along with a number of other individual birds. Two of these pairs are known to have fledged young, a further pair is reported to have bred successfully although this was not confirmed and the remaining 2 pairs, together with other individual birds spent the summer in the area.

For the 11th successive year a pair nested at Bassenthwaite. This pair is believed to be the same adults that used the nest in 2010 when they successfully fledged 3 young. Before leaving to overwinter in Africa the pair exhibited unusual behaviour by starting construction of a new nest in an old dying oak tree on the floodplain.

In 2011 they successfully fledged 2 young, both of which left the area in early September to make their way to Africa.

A 2nd pair which had fledged from the Bassenthwaite nest in previous years successfully reared a single chick. A 3rd pair built a nest but did not breed, hopes run high for 2012; interestingly one of these adult is also of Bassenthwaite stock.

**Source:** Dave Shackleton

## Lancashire

### **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

In East Lancashire, one pair raised 2 young.

**Source:** Craig Bell

### **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

There were 12 active sites, of which 10 were successful, fledging 30 young. Of the other two, one probably had the chicks taken, and the other failed because three full-grown young were shot on the nest ledge.

**Source:** Craig Bell

### **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

Two pairs were known in the East Lancashire area, one raising 4 young. The number of young in other nest was not known.

**Source:** Craig Bell

In the SW Lancs area, a long-running scheme there ringed 38 pulli and 4 adults from 11 sites.

**Source:** Tony Duckels

In the Fylde, 28 pairs produced 125 eggs, 80 of which hatched and 66 fledged.

**Source:** Bob Danson

### **Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

In East Lancashire, 5 pairs raised 16 young.

**Source:** Craig Bell

## West Yorkshire

### **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba*

Three pairs bred in the Bradford Ornithological Group (BOG) area; one was infertile, 4 young were ringed at a second nest and no details were available at the third.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

Six pairs fledged 15 young and another pair possibly failed.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Fourteen pairs bred, fledging 40+ young  
19y ringed Washburn valley from 4 nests, 4 of b/6 ringed Denton Moor, 4 of b/5 ringed Swinstry Resr

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Little Owl** *Athene noctua*

Eight pairs fledged 11 young.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*

5+ pairs fledged 13+ young

5y ringed in 2 nests

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Merlin** *Falco columbarius*

Two pairs fledged 5+ young.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus*

Three pairs bred, one fledging 4 young, one fledging 3 young, and one bred on an inaccessible chimney.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*

Three pairs fledged 4+ young.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

### **Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

Two pairs fledged 5 young.

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)

**Tawny Owl** *Strix aluco*

Five pairs fledged 7 young, and in addition 14 young fledged from 8 broods in the Washburn Valley (cf. 19 young in 2010)

**Source:** David Barker (BOG)



Peregrine chicks at an urban site

# Articles

# A 15-year study of the diet of urban-nesting Peregrines

Nick Dixon and Edward J.A. Drewitt



**I**N RECENT years, Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* have appeared in many towns and cities across much of England (Banks *et al.* 2003). Some urban sites, such as St Michael's Church, Mount Dinham, in Exeter, have had different Peregrines in residence for over twenty years. During this time there has been a growing interest and commitment by individuals, groups and organisations to observe and share with the general public the comings and goings of Peregrines that may be nesting in their local city centre. The Exeter Peregrines have been watched by a worldwide audience, following the installation of a camera to watch the nest by the wildlife surveillance company, Eco-watch Ltd; this was in use between 2001 and 2007. They have also been part of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' (RSPB) 'Aren't Birds Brilliant' Campaign between 2005 and 2008.

Urban nesting Peregrines provide a unique opportunity to study different aspects of their lives and behaviour in close detail, and, in particular, their diet. When they bring prey back to buildings, fallen remains of their prey end up on the ground, and on the roof and in the gutters (Drewitt & Dixon 2008). This provides an opportunity (not generally available at traditional cliff nest sites), to regularly collect prey remains with no disturbance to the Peregrines, and to discover whether these urban falcons just eat pigeons (as is often the general assumption) or take other species of bird as well. ND has been collecting prey remains since June 1997 at St. Michael's, and has been investigating the diet of the Peregrines, with the help of ED. This study covers the period 1997 to 2011, and is the largest single-site study of prey by Peregrines in the UK.

## A brief history of the Peregrines at St. Michael's Church

Peregrines have been associated with St. Michael and All Angels Church at Mount Dinham in Exeter City Centre since July 1988, when a second summer male first took up residence. He was joined by an adult female in the

spring of 1989 and the pair was often observed hunting over the city, feeding and perching on the many stone pinnacles on the church tower. They continued to occupy the church throughout the 1990s, and there were also occasional sightings of other birds. This behaviour is typical of Peregrines and how they colonise urban areas over time (the pattern of urbanisation) (Taranto 2009).

A pair of Ravens *Corvus corax* had previously been nesting in tall cedar trees to the west of the church and, in 1997, built a stick nest on an eighteen inch wide east-facing ledge at the base of the spire, about 30m above ground level. When the ravens completed the nest, the peregrines ousted them, laid eggs and successfully reared three young, in what was the first record of urban nesting on a man-made structure in Devon.

During the following winter, the lightning conductor, upon which the ravens had constructed their nest, had to be replaced. The stick nest was in poor condition, having been flattened by the three juvenile Peregrines during their development, and subsequently fell apart and was removed. During the works, it was replaced by the Devon Birdwatching & Preservation Society with a purpose-built shallow tray containing loose substrate, with sticks wired around the exterior to replicate the original nest. The falcons immediately took to the new nest tray and in 1998, again fledged three young, and continued to use this site in the following years.

In 2001, the wildlife surveillance company Eco-Watch Ltd designed and installed a camera to film the birds at the nest, enabling all to watch the developments via the Worldwide Web. The RSPB, Devon Wildlife Trust and Exeter City Council also ran guided watches for the public from a tall car park overlooking St. Michael's Church during many of the breeding seasons.

In 2008, the camera became obsolete when the Peregrines opted to use an alternative site on the southern face. This new site required the falcons to enter a wide stone trefoil, 2m above the south-facing ledge, to access an internally mounted nest box set within the bell chamber. This nest box had been installed by DBWPS in 1989, when the pair first occupied the church, but had never been investigated or used until 2008. The falcons have used this south-facing nest site ever since, but can still be seen perching occasionally on the edge of the original tray on the east ledge.

The Peregrines at St. Michael's have bred every year since 1997, rearing 42 young over the period, with all but two successfully fledging into the wild. In 1997, one juvenile came down to the ground prior to fledging and was taken into care by a rehabilitator (later reported as released into the wild), and in 2008, a newly fledged female became entangled in anti-bird netting on a nearby roof, damaging its wing and many primary feathers. This bird was also taken into care and is still in captivity.

## Methods

Over the past 15 years, prey remains have been collected at least once a week from the ground beneath St Michael's Church by ND. Collections have also been undertaken from Exeter Cathedral and another church within the city from 2006, with careful comparisons of dates and species caught, so that the same individual prey items remains are not counted twice – sometimes prey may be plucked at one site and then taken to another site to be eaten. Since 2009, local residents have been helping to collect feathers and, also in 2009, an MSc student from the University of Exeter, Lin Chen Yu, undertook daily collections for three months as part of a more detailed study (Chen Yu 2009). This close scrutiny retrieved dropped or discarded material, including whole or part carcasses, feathers, heads/skulls, wings, legs, rings and pellets (López-López *et al.* 2009; Oro & Tella 1995). Every autumn, the gutters have been cleared by steeplejacks and the remains from this (mainly skulls and carcasses) have been dried and identified. Searching for remains on the ground requires a thorough scan close to the church and up to 20m away to find feathers that have been blown down paths and alleys. A wider search (up to 50m from the roost/nest site) was carried out after strong winds.

Remains were dried after each collection and bagged for subsequent analysis. Prey species were identified from experience and with the help of reference material (chiefly Jenni & Winkler 1994, Brown *et al.* 2003, and a Dutch feather website, [www.michelklemann.nl/verensite/start/index.html](http://www.michelklemann.nl/verensite/start/index.html)). Occasionally, items were confirmed by comparison with museum specimens, either at the Natural History Museum (Tring) or at Bristol's City Museum & Art Gallery. Average weights were taken from Snow and Perrins (1998).

Some prey is cached by Peregrines and eaten over a period of time, so that the remains of individual items were sometimes found over a number of days. The minimum number of individual prey items was established by checking, for example, for duplication of the same wing feathers or legs as well as for feathers from birds of

a different age or sex class. Feather condition and weather-related damage was important in assessments of how fresh the remains were.

## Results

Since the study began we found the prey remains of 3,910 individual birds from 102 species. We also recovered parts from six different mammals of three species (Appendix 1).

The most important prey type was the Feral Pigeon *Columba livia*, comprising 36% of prey by frequency (Figure 1) and 55% by weight. After Feral Pigeons, Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (11% by frequency and 4% by weight), Redwings *Turdus iliacus* (5% and 7%) and Blackbirds *Turdus merula* (5% and 3%) were the most common prey species (Figures 1 and 2). Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* (3% and 6%), Teal *Anas crecca* (3% and 5%) and Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* (4% and 5%) were also important in the diet by weight.

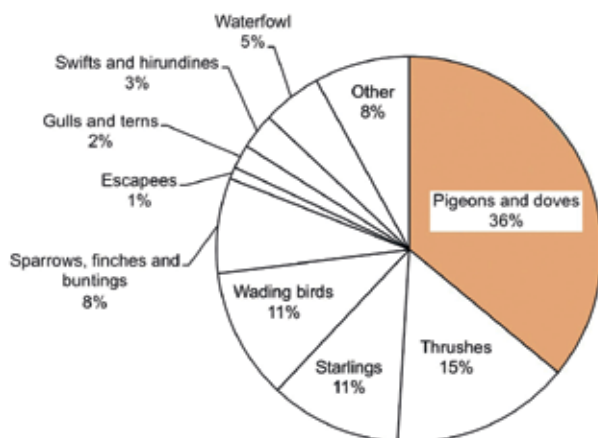
However, diet varied seasonally, and between May and August Swifts *Apus apus* were the third most common prey item (2.5% by frequency; 0.55% by weight) (Figures 3 & 5). During the winter months Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* became an important prey item alongside Teal and Woodpigeon (Figures 4 & 5). Feral Pigeon was the most frequent prey species in every month. June saw a sharp rise in Feral Pigeons, Starlings and Swifts in the diet, dropping off thereafter. In November however, there was a sudden increase in Feral Pigeons and Redwings in the diet and a modest increase in Starlings (Figure 5).

## Discussion

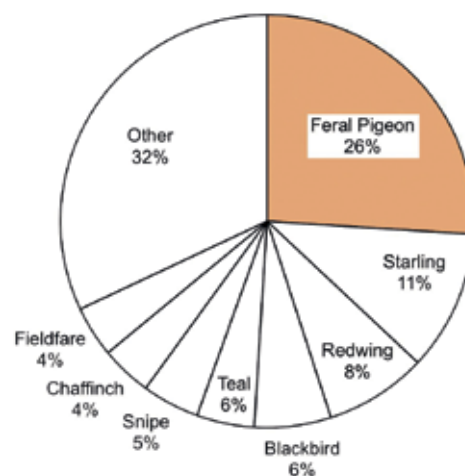
This is the longest running study at a single site investigating the diet of Peregrines in the UK, and reveals fascinating insights into their behaviour and their prey species, reinforced by other studies and evidence across Britain and the World (Mebs 2009; Drewitt & Dixon 2008).

The cross-section of prey reflects the species present in the local habitats, such as the Exe estuary, river,

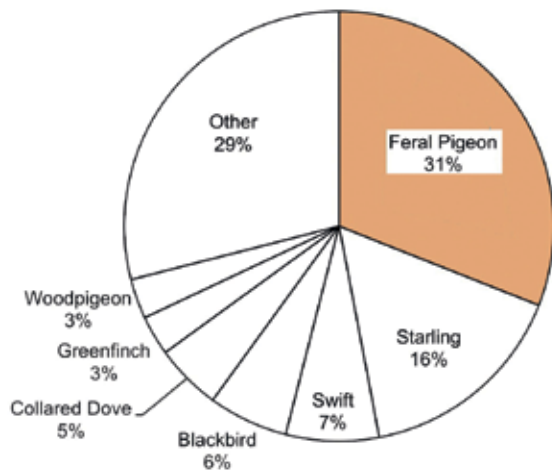
**Figure 1. Prey of Peregrines in Exeter, 1997–2011 (n=3,916).**



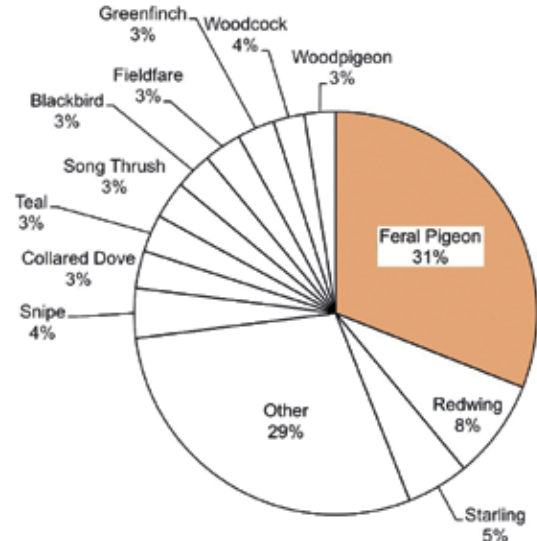
**Figure 2. Prey of Peregrines in Exeter, January–April 1997–2011 (n=1,038).**



**Figure 3. Prey of Peregrines in Exeter, May–August 1997–2011 (n=1,243).**



**Figure 4. Prey of Peregrines in Exeter, September–December 1997–2011 (n=1,122).**



farmland and urban environments. However, there are also species found in the diet which are rare in the local environment (as indicated by Tyler (2010) and information from the County Bird Recorder). The Peregrines are probably catching prey both locally near the church and also further afield (Drewitt & Dixon 2008)

The popularity of the Feral Pigeon is consistent with most other studies and shows that they form an important part of the diet throughout the year (López-López *et al.* 2009; Drewitt & Dixon 2008). Whilst pigeons form a significant part of the diet and are important in the Peregrines' breeding performance, it is the other, non-pigeon, prey that provides some fascinating insights into the behaviour of the falcons (López-López *et al.* 2009).

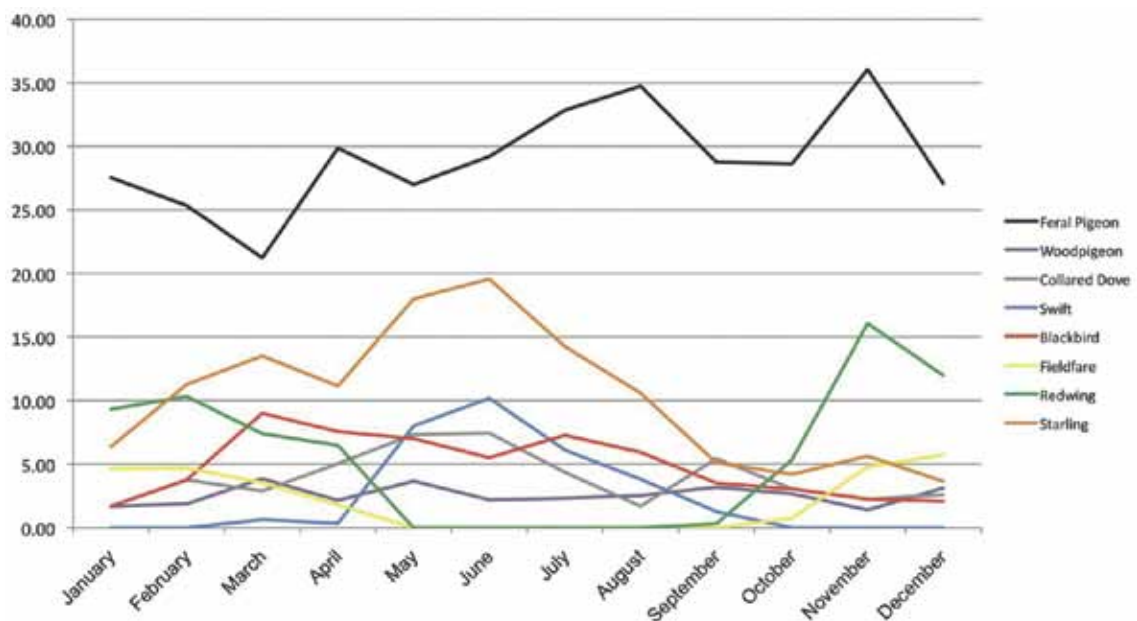
The evidence on the ground is just a record of what the Peregrines have brought back to the church in Exeter, and does not take into account prey eaten at unknown

roosting or feeding sites. Some remains will also get lost through the weather, street cleaning, scavengers, and in building crevices and gutters (Drewitt & Dixon 2008). Every effort has been made to collect both very small feathers of passerines and the body feathers of larger birds. There is, however, likely to be a bias towards the larger feathers and other remains of birds being found (López-López *et al.* 2009).

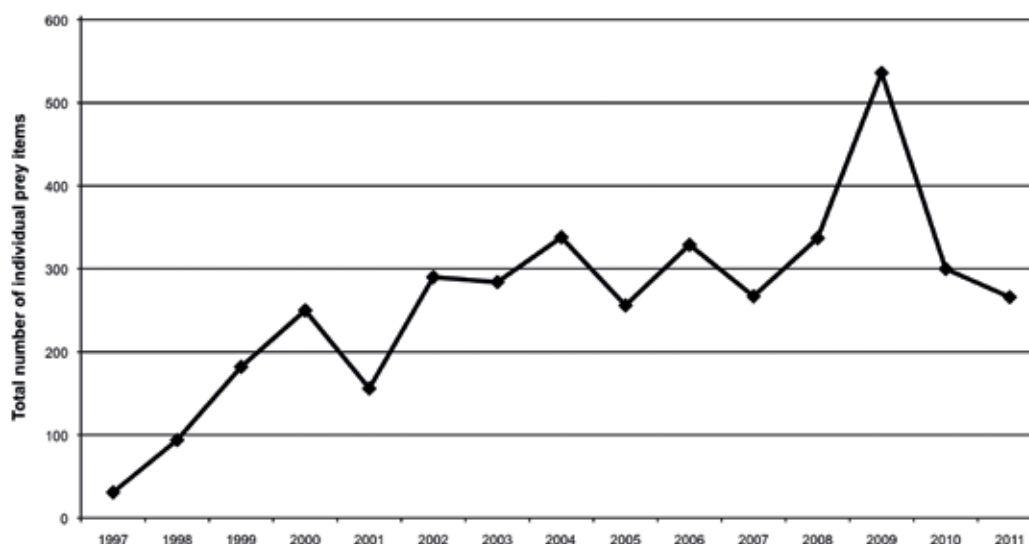
**Nocturnal hunting**

This study, supported by evidence from other sites, helped reveal in 2008 that Peregrines can and do hunt for food at night (Drewitt and Dixon 2008). The high concentration of artificial lighting at night in Exeter provides an ideal opportunity for the falcons to hunt migrating birds flying over the city after dark. Birds such as Woodcock, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* and Little

**Figure 5. Seasonal variation (%) of selected species eaten throughout the year by Peregrines in Exeter, 1997–2011.**



**Figure 6. Annual totals of prey taken by the Exeter Peregrines, 1997–2011.**



Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* all migrate under the cover of darkness. As they fly over urban environments, their pale underparts reflect the light and show up as they fly overhead. Redwings, also a nocturnal migrant, appear in the diet in large numbers in the autumn, and peak in November (Figure 5) just when the majority of this species enter Britain for the winter (Wernham *et al.* 2002). In place of their traditional hunting methods of stooping onto prey from above or behind, Peregrines need only to fly a short distance up from their perch to grab prey flying overhead (Mebs 2009; Drewitt & Dixon 2008; Drewitt 2008). In 2004, Nick Dixon observed the resident female Peregrine leaving the church after dark and returning with prey, which was then plucked and eaten. Since the Drewitt & Dixon 2008 paper was published in *British Birds*, fellow Peregrine enthusiasts Nick Brown and Nick Moyes, have used an infra-red camera in Derby to record one of the Peregrines returning to Derby Cathedral with a live Woodcock in the middle of the night ([youtube.com/watch?v=rtiWWr3e8-U](http://youtube.com/watch?v=rtiWWr3e8-U)).

### **Estuary birds**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, wading birds and seabirds, such as terns, feature extensively in the diet of the Exeter Peregrines. The close proximity of the Exe Estuary means that the Peregrines have a relatively short flight to an abundance of food. Many of these prey species probably fly over the city on migration or during short local movements. The Exe Estuary is likely to be used by both resident and non-resident Peregrines, which can sometimes be seen flying over, standing on the sand banks or the pylon line that runs across Exminster marshes, or uniquely, perching on the M5 motorway bridge (Peter Exley, RSPB *pers. comm.*). Some of these may be the 'Exeter' Peregrines but without the individuals being colour-ringed, we cannot be sure. Many species of the wading birds that inhabit the estuary have been caught by the Peregrines. Some suddenly appear in the diet in abundance – for example, in August and September 2008, the remains of four *Sanderlings* *Calidris alba* were found. These had not previously been recorded, and have not been since. Such appearances in the diet often

coincide with the sudden presence of a species moving through on migration. This happened when huge numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* appeared on the south coast in April 2011, and subsequently appeared in the diet of Peregrines in Exeter, Bath and Bournemouth as identified by ED.

### **Scarce species**

One of the most fascinating insights from this study is what it tells us about the birds that the Peregrines are catching. There are the expected species, from common city birds to estuary waders, but amongst the long list of prey taken, there are also surprises. In the past five years, Corncrakes *Crex crex* have appeared in the diet, with at least one being taken each autumn. Turtle Doves *Streptopelia turtur* have been found as prey in the spring and autumn of different years, and in October 2011, the feathers of a Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* were discovered. These birds are all very scarce in Devon and are rarely, if ever, seen by birders in the region. All three species are nocturnal migrants so it is likely they are taken at night while migrating overhead (Mebs 2009; Wernham *et al.* 2002; Rejt 2001). Corncrakes last definitely bred in Devon in 1987 (Tyler 2010), but those travelling south, from Ireland and the Western Isles, may take a route across the south-west of England before travelling over the English Channel. The Turtle Doves are often juvenile birds and may be from areas where there are healthier populations in England or other parts of Europe. The Devon population is now very low, probably comprising fewer than 20 pairs (Tyler 2010). Spotted Crakes come to England from the colder parts of Europe and the reed beds close to the river Exe may offer refuge and food or they may just be passing through the area on migration (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Annual Devon totals for this very secretive species are generally in single figures (Tyler 2010). Where these species exist in greater abundance, for example in countries of mainland Europe such as Poland, they are common prey species for Peregrines (Mebs 2009; Rejt 2001).

### **Ringed birds**

During this study, five ringed wild birds have been re-



corded, four with British rings and one from Sweden. In 2000, a Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* was taken that had been ringed as a nestling near Dublin four years earlier, and the following year the Peregrines took an overwintering Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* ringed as a nestling in 1998 in Sweden. In 2005, a Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* was caught a year after it was ringed 2 km away in Alphington. Another Black-headed Gull was taken in January 2008, having been ringed in Bedfordshire three years previously, and in November 2008, a Starling was taken that had also been ringed locally, in Alphington, two years earlier.

### Quantities of prey

The changes in quantity of prey and the type of birds eaten throughout the year appear to be determined by the seasonal abundance of these species alongside the demand for food required by the nestlings during the breeding season (Drewitt 2009). Figure 5 shows a slight rise in the selected species during March and April, when many of these species are flocking and leaving the southwest for the summer (Wernham *et al.* 2002), and when the female Peregrine is laying and incubating eggs (Ratcliffe 1993).

There is a broad increase in the quantity of prey taken in the summer months when the parents have nestlings to feed, and another peak in the autumn when thrushes and other birds return for the winter (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Young Starlings leave their nests in May and June and this no doubt accounts for the peak during these months when they are easily snatched by the Peregrines for their own broods (Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 2011). The peak in Feral Pigeons taken in the autumn may be a reflection of how many pigeons are available after their own breeding success, with Peregrines taking advantage of this glut and stocking up on food. Peregrines will store excess prey in a cache such as a crevice or corner of a flat roof (Ratcliffe 1993). While it is difficult to prove, it seems that different individual Peregrines may have had different food preferences. For example, one male who was present throughout the last decade often brought back Swifts. When a new male arrived in 2005, Swifts become less common in the diet. Whether this was related to the changing abundance of Swifts or the difference between individual Peregrines is unknown. However, it is common for Peregrines, whilst being opportunistic, to focus their efforts on certain species (López-López *et al.* 2009; Ratcliffe 1993).

In the years when brood sizes are high, there is naturally a greater demand for food. When there are four nestlings instead of two, in theory twice as much food for the young would be required to feed them (Drewitt 2009). Although it does not work for every year (e.g., 2001 and 2011), there is generally a slightly higher peak in prey found when there are more nestlings than when there are just one or two. In years when this does not correlate, weather and collecting effort may be factors to consider in explaining the amount of prey found. Direct observations of parental feeding provide a more accurate method for quantifying the amount of food brought to the nestlings (López-López *et al.* 2009). The large

amount of prey retrieved in 2009 relates to the daily collections made over a three month period by a student, Lin Chen Yu at the University of Exeter (Chen Yu 2009) and strongly suggests that the amount of prey retrieved is dependent on the effort and time put in to looking for remains.

### Mammals

Mammals are rarely taken and make up less than 0.12% of the diet. However, the skulls of two Noctule Bats *Nyctalus noctula* have been recovered as well as remains of Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* and Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus*. It is not uncommon for Peregrines to hunt Noctule Bats at dusk when they are flying high (Macdonald & Barrett 1993). In Germany, Peregrines take large numbers of Noctule Bats as they migrate south (Peter Wegner pers. comm.). How rats and squirrels are taken is less certain – they may be caught on the ground or taken from another predator or scavenger (Zuberogitia *et al.* 2002).

## Conclusion

The Exeter Peregrines have provided us with the largest single site study of the prey of this species in the UK. The results provide an insight not only into what the Peregrines themselves are eating but also into the bird species that are occurring locally around Exeter. With the collection of prey continuing, the study will no doubt reveal more about the Peregrines' nocturnal hunting habits and the presence of other prey species moving through the region.

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### Summary of the number of prey species taken each year by Peregrines in Exeter, 1997 - 2011.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total number of items
Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>								1								1
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>														1		1
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>			7	7	6	8	2	3	6	13	4	6	11	14	4	91
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>														1		1
Quail <i>Coturnix coturnix</i>												1	6	2	1	10
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>				1	2						2	2	1	1		9
Manx Shearwater <i>Puffinus puffinus</i>													1			1
Leach's Petrel <i>Oceanodroma leucorhoa</i>													1			1
Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>									1	2	1					4
Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>						1										1
Water Rail <i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				1			1				2	2	5	5	2	18
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>															1	1
Corncrake <i>Crex crex</i>											1	1	1	1	1	5
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					2		1	2		6	10	1	5	4	6	37
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>						1										1
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>									1				1	1	1	4
Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>								1	1	1	1	2				6
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>						2		1	1	1	1		5	2		13
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			1	3	6	4	4	3	1	1		6	9	10	6	54
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			1	2	4		2	4	3	10	4	5	13	4		52

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total number of items
Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>				1		1						2	1	2	1	8
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>													4			4
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>				2	1	1	1	2	2	4	1	3	4	5	8	34
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>							1					1		2		4
Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>			2	2	5	8	2	6	11	3	6	13	25	12	5	100
Woodcock <i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	1		2	3	2	1	5	6	6	3	3	7	6	6	1	52
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		1		1	1			2	1		1	2	1		2	12
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>												1				1
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>				1		2	2	2	2	6		6	1	2	4	28
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>				2	1							1		2	1	7
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>															1	1
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>										1				1		2
Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>												1			1	2
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>						2	1			1	1	4	4	4	4	21
Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>													1			1
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	1	1		3	1		1	2		2	2	8	10	1	3	35
Little Tern <i>Sterna albifrons</i>											1					1
Sandwich Tern <i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>						1	1	1	2	3	1			1	1	11
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>							1			1	3	2	2	2	3	14
Roseate Tern <i>Sterna dougallii</i>				1												1
Arctic Tern <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>												1				1
Feral Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	11	83	89	106	60	141	121	163	101	124	73	88	123	67	73	1423
Stock Dove <i>Columba oenas</i>													2			2
Woodpigeon <i>Columba palumbus</i>	1			1	1	4	4	5	5	7	5	6	29	12	11	91
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			3	15	15	15	17	26	8	4	3	9	16	10	5	146
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		1		1			1					3	2	1		9
Cuckoo <i>Cuculus canorus</i>		1					1		1	3	2		2		2	12
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>			1						1						1	3
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	2		4	11	5	5	8	9	4	14	4	9	11	6	6	98
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>				1		1	1						1	1	1	6
Green Woodpecker <i>Picus viridis</i>		1	1				1	1								4
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	1		1			1	4	3	3	9	2	5	6	5	2	42
Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>								2	1		2	5	7		2	19
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>							2									2
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>										1	1	1	1			4
House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i>						1	2	1		1			1	1	2	9
Meadow Pipit <i>Anthus pratensis</i>						1	1			3	3		4	1		13
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>							1									1
Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>			1				2	4	2	1	3	4	1	2	1	21
Dipper <i>Cinclus cinclus</i>										1	1			1		3

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total number of items
Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>											1					1
Dunnock <i>Prunella modularis</i>						1	2	2	1	1	1	3	2		1	14
Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>													1	1	1	3
Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>						1						1		2	1	5
Blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>	3	1	5	11	7	12	15	12	14	7	15	16	28	16	18	180
Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>			1	4	3	1	3	3	7	6	11	6	11	8	4	68
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	2		3	3	2	4	4	3	3	7	5	6	12	5	4	63
Redwing <i>Turdus iliacus</i>			19	11	2	13	7	8	12	11	14	26	37	15	9	184
Mistle Thrush <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>						1				4		4	3		2	14
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus shoe-nobaenus</i>													1			1
Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>								1			1	3		2	1	8
Whitethroat <i>Sylvia communis</i>				1	1											2
Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i> / Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>											1	1				2
Goldcrest <i>Regulus regulus</i>											1					1
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>												1	1			2
Blue Tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				1		1	1			1	1	2	2	1	1	11
Great Tit <i>Picus major</i>							2	2	2	1	2	5				14
Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			2	1		1	1	1	4	1			2	3		16
Magpie <i>Pica pica</i>				1		6	1	6			2	4	3	2	2	27
Jackdaw <i>Corvus monedula</i>	2		1		1			2		1	1	2	8	3	5	26
Rook <i>Corvus frugilegus</i>							1									1
Carrion Crow <i>Corvus corone</i>					1	1				1		1	1	2	1	8
Raven <i>Corvus corax</i>													1			1
Starling <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	7	4	23	31	17	30	27	25	27	40	26	30	43	23	28	381
House sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>			3	1		2	4	6	3	3	11	3	11	9	5	61
Chaffinch <i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				2	2	4	3	3	4	4	13	7	16	4	6	68
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>											1					1
Greenfinch <i>Carduelis chloris</i>			6	9	3	3	9	7	10	10	8	5	17	5	5	97
Goldfinch <i>Carduelis carduelis</i>			2		1	1	4	3	1	2	4	1	5	4	4	32
Siskin <i>Carduelis spinus</i>										2						2
Linnet <i>Carduelis cannabina</i>						1	1									2
Lesser Redpoll <i>Carduelis cabaret</i>											1					1
Bullfinch <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>					1	1	2		1	1			2			8
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>							1					1				2
Reed Bunting <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				1									1			2
<b>Escaped Cagebirds</b>																
Cockatiel <i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>		1	1	2	1	2	3	3			1		1			15
Budgie <i>Melopsittacus undulates</i>			2	2	1	1	2	1	1							10
Canary <i>Serinus canaria</i>						1										1

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total number of items
Ring-necked Parakeet (blue) <i>Psittacula krameri</i>						1			1		1					3
<b>Unidentified Birds</b>																
Unidentified passerine												1	2		5	8
Unidentified wader				1	1				1				1	2		6
<b>Mammals</b>																
Brown Rat <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>			1	1												2
Grey Squirrel <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>				1												1
Noctule Bat <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>				1							1					2
<b>Totals</b>	31	94	182	250	156	290	284	338	256	329	267	337	536	300	266	3916
No of species	10	9	25	38	29	42	48	40	37	45	52	54	59	51	46	102

### About the authors

**Nick Dixon** grew up in Sussex, London and in the South Hams, where his interest in birds of prey began by monitoring the local barn owls, buzzards and kestrels. Nick has been involved in raptor research since 1993, working firstly for the Hawk and Owl Trust on a variety of projects including Barn Owl road mortality in Somerset, and Peregrine predation of domestic pigeons. Peregrines have always been a passion of his and, in 1997, he started investigating the increase in urban colonisation. This coincided with his return to live back to Devon and the first successful breeding of the Exeter peregrines. He continues to monitor the increasing trend of peregrines nesting on man-made structures and in urban environments across the UK, provides advice on nest box installation and mitigation, and is currently writing the history of the St. Michael's church peregrines. He would be keen to hear from anyone currently monitoring peregrines breeding or in residence on any man-made structure

(buildings, bridges, pylons, masts, etc) in their region. All information will be treated in strict confidence.

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# Is the increase in the Raven population a threat to breeding Peregrines?

Judith Smith

ON 5TH June 2004, I visited a working quarry in Greater Manchester which is a regular breeding site for both Ravens and Peregrines and which was being assessed for possible inclusion in the BBC's Springwatch programme. By chance I was the last person to leave. Just before I did so, I decided to have another look at the Peregrine nest through my scope – it was on the opposite side of the quarry to the car park, situated in a recess in the cliff face. As I watched, one of the resident Ravens forced the sitting female off the nest, landed and began to eat the Peregrine eggs. I could clearly see albumen dripping from its bill! The distressed female screamed for her mate and both birds tried to dive-bomb the Raven, but the recess prevented them from hitting the bird. Eventually the Raven left the nest, and examination of the nest shortly afterwards under licence revealed that of the four eggs, two had been eaten, one was cracked, and the remaining one untouched. This egg went on to hatch and fledge successfully. After that, the Peregrines chose a more open nest, but in 2007, when they used the old Raven nest (not used that year by the Ravens), there was circumstantial evidence from quarry workers that the eggs had again been predated, and the Peregrines re-laid in an adjoining quarry.

The received wisdom at that time, as stated in Ratcliffe's *The Peregrine* (1980) was that whilst skirmishes were common amongst the two species, which frequently nest in close proximity, actual strikes involving adults were rare and normally the Peregrine was always superior, occasionally taking juvenile Ravens as prey. Predation of Peregrine eggs or young by Ravens was not mentioned at all, nor was it in BWP. I therefore wrote a Short Note on my observation for *British Birds* which was published in April 2005.

The failure of Peregrines to breed on Bolton Town Hall in 2010, following success on a purpose-built tray in 2008 and in an old Raven nest in 2009, due to harassment by Ravens, reawakened my interest in the interaction between these two species. The remarkable increase in breeding Ravens in the UK – 134% on the BTO's Breeding Bird Survey between 1994 and 2007, representing an estimated 12900 pairs - involving colonisation of town centres and other man-made structures such as pylons and bridges, meant that they were increasingly coming into contact with urban-nesting Peregrines. These had been encouraged in many cases by the provision of nest boxes or trays on secure town centre buildings or similar structures. The number of Peregrine pairs increased to 1402 in 2002 from 1283 in 1991, in the BTO's 10-year survey.

Urban nesting Peregrines appear to enjoy a much higher success rate than those breeding in inland rock situations, where persecution by eggers, chick thieves, sporting interests and pigeon fanciers has meant that some raptor groups in NERF area have not seen chicks fledge for many years. It is the opinion of some that, were it not for the recruitment of the urban-bred juveniles to the national population, the Peregrine population in the UK would be in free fall. At present the species is on the Green list of BoCC:3 (2009). This small research project, therefore, set out to investigate whether the Raven explosion is a threat to breeding Peregrines, and in particular, to urban birds. It is also possible that, away from secure urban sites, humans may have been blamed for what was actually Raven predation.

Requests for information about interactions between the two species were made to members of NERF and on the website of the Association of County Recorders and Editors, as well as to selected individuals whom I knew might have information, or were suggested to me by others.

## **Confirmed episodes of Raven predation**

**Cliff site in Lancashire, 2011:** after 14 days' incubation, the female left the nest and took prey brought in by the male to another plucking point on the other side of the quarry. A Raven came in and took 4 eggs, one at a time. Neither of the Peregrines reacted. They re-laid and the same thing happened again. The observer has been watching the site for 10 years, with Ravens always nesting there, and this is the first time this has happened. He considered the male at least to be a new and inexperienced bird. (*per* John Wilson)

**Crag in Cheshire:** in 1994 harassment by Ravens breeding nearby caused the abandonment of the nest; a re-lay was successful in a small cave nearby. In 1995, at the first nest site, an egg or small juvenile was lost to Ravens. In 2010 3 eggs were abandoned due to harassment by Ravens, and in 2011 4 eggs were systematically taken and eaten by Ravens – this was filmed. (Bernard Wright)

**Brecon Beacons, Black Mountains and SE Wales:** there is some predation of Peregrine eggs by Ravens, but some juvenile Ravens are also taken by Peregrines. (Andrew King)

**Islay:** Ravens have almost certainly predated Peregrine chicks at hatching in 3 of the last 4 years at one site. (Gordon Yates)

**Yorkshire Dales, 2011:** Peregrine eggs abandoned half-way through incubation due to harassment by Ravens (Paul Irving)

### **Probable or possible Raven predation:**

**Cliff site on a new RSPB reserve in Greater Manchester, 2011:** The warden also thought the presence of a third bird may have been instrumental in the failure, as well as Raven harassment.

Almost all respondents reported squabbling between the two species but most said that they bred in the same quarry or cliff face successfully, tolerating each other. The point was made that old Raven nests were often a boon to Peregrines when ledges previously used became unusable due to rain.

### **Magpies**

Interestingly, in 2010, the well-watched site in Manchester city centre was deserted, after eggs were believed to have been laid, following constant harassment by a pair of Magpies *Pica pica* nesting nearby. The Peregrine pair re-laid in a hitherto unused box in the CIS tower, fledging two young, neither of which survived due to collisions with high buildings in the vicinity.

## **Conclusion**

Ravens are clever birds, quick to exploit situations where the Peregrines (one or both) are inexperienced, or where the nest site is vulnerable. Once a Raven has successfully predated eggs at a site one year, and established its superiority, it will probably try again in following years. There is not enough evidence yet to say whether Ravens will be a threat to urban-nesting Peregrines, but their expansion into town centres suggests that this may be a problem in years to come.

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# **The effect of two severe winters on Barn Owls in East Yorkshire**

**Robin Arundale BSc. MSB**

Wolds Barn Owl Group

**O**VER THE last three decades we have become accustomed to comparatively warm wet winters with little long lasting snow cover other than in upland areas such as the Pennines and the Lakeland Fells. The severe winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11 were something that quite a number of people reading this article will therefore have had no previous first hand experience of. During this period there was considerable coverage in the press concerning the adverse effect of the extreme weather on our Barn Owl populations following a large increase in reported mortality.

During our usual peak monitoring period of June-September last year, I fell ill and had several stays in hospital which meant that I was out of action at a critical time and therefore any estimate I could give of the fall in our local Barn Owl numbers would be, of necessity, anecdotal. We will have to wait until the autumn of 2012 to have an idea of how the birds that our group monitor have been affected based on empirical evidence. However, communication with Colin Shawyer of the Barn Owl Conservation Network revealed that mortality during the winter of 2010/2011 was in the range of 15-75% nationally depending on the region. In the East Riding Colin reported that, of five of his occupied boxes in my immediate area, only two were utilised in

2011. The artist and naturalist (and member of WBOG) Robert Fuller reported many of his pairs missing up on the high Wolds. As would be expected the losses on his patch where the average height above mean sea level exceeds 150 metres, appeared to be greater than to the east of the Wolds in the area of the Hull valley. In this low lying area snow melted more quickly, possibly aided by a likely higher ambient air temperature around the Driffield and West Becks and the River Hull. On a more positive note, the severe winter last year was followed by a warm dry spring when surviving birds bred early and were able to take advantage of a peak vole year. One of the few sites I managed to visit in 2011 had a larger cache of Short-tailed voles than I have ever found before in a large pyramid in one corner of the box! Due to the early and positive start to the breeding season it appears that more pairs than usual attempted a second brood and, with the generally fine autumn, we may find that a higher percentage than usual of these late produced young may have survived.

However, it may be of interest to consider why our Barn Owls have been more severely affected by these harsh winters than our other native owl species.

The Barn Owl is one of the most widely distributed birds on the planet occurring on every continent other than Antarctica. However, throughout most of its range it is, perhaps surprisingly to us, a tropical/sub-tropical bird. Natural selection has therefore produced a bird

which is well adapted for warmer climes but which is ill equipped for our cold, wet, maritime climate. Its plumage is soft and loose and does not repel water very effectively. This ensures that, particularly when wet, the Barn Owl's plumage has poor insulation properties. In addition, studies have found that European Barn Owls have fat deposits of only 5.5% of their body weight compared to 10% in Tawny Owls and 13.4% for Long-eared Owls (Piechoki 1960). As a result of these factors, the Barn Owl has a thermal neutral zone of between 25°C and 33°C (Johnson 1974). Because of this it has been determined that, on anything other than a very warm summer's day, if these birds are inactive and fasting they would need to metabolise up to 25g of their own body weight per 24 hour period. This amounts to around 5% of the body weight of an average bird! Barn owl energy budgets are therefore extremely critical. Prolonged periods of cold wet weather or, worse still, periods of unremitting snow cover under which their prey may remain hidden are highly detrimental to them.

Up to the end of 2009 we estimate that there were

probably between 225-275 pairs of Barn Owls in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Anecdotal evidence suggests that losses over the two recent bad winters were severe though perhaps not quite as bad as we feared.

As I write, we are having a period of several weeks of cold wet weather with no end in sight (despite an earlier week of Mediterranean heat and sunshine!) This, coupled with a year in which we may expect vole numbers to have crashed, doesn't augur well for a good start to the 2012 breeding season. The winter of 2011/12, despite some snow cover and sub-zero temperatures which were mercifully brief, was a definite improvement on the previous two. We therefore look forward to the 2012 monitoring season with our usual mixture of excitement and trepidation.

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# North east Red Kite breeding report for 2011: Red kites victim of harsh winter?

**Ian Kerr and Ken Sanderson (on behalf of FoRK)**

**T**HE HARSHEST and most prolonged winter weather for three decades may have affected the breeding success and expansion of the region's re-introduced Red Kite population.

The result was a 'standstill year' with no increase in breeding pairs or fledged young and successful nesting once again confined to the 'core' area around the Derwent Valley, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, and the Causey and Beamish district, just over the County Durham boundary.

There was no indication of a spread into surrounding districts and, for the first time since breeding recommenced after a gap of 170 years, no evidence of nesting within Northumberland although birds were seen regularly in some localities, particularly along the Tyne Valley.

However, the encouraging news was that three pairs of kites succeeded in fledging broods of three young, compared with only one set of 'triplets' in 2010.

2011 was the second year in which responsibility for monitoring was undertaken by the Friends of Red Kites (FoRK), the organisation made up of former volunteers with the Northern Kites project which released 93 kites from the Chilterns over a three-year period. Ringing, wing-tagging, completing BTO Nest Record Cards and

reporting to the Rare Birds Breeding Panel was also undertaken by FoRK.

Early season survey work indicated around 19 active territories, 17 in the re-introduction area and two in the closely adjoining area of County Durham. Disappointingly, no active sites were found in Northumberland or elsewhere in Durham, despite much hard searching by the monitoring teams.

Eighteen pairs produced eggs and of these 12 pairs went on to fledge a total of 24 young. This was very similar to 2010 when 13 pairs fledged 24 young. In our report for 2010 we suggested that was a very good result in view of the severe winter of 2009-10. However, the monitoring team felt that the even harsher and more prolonged freezing conditions which faced the kites last winter may have resulted in the loss of some birds and have left others in a poor state to face the rigours of the breeding season.

During June and July 12 young were ringed and nine, which were sufficiently developed, were wing tagged by Keith Bowey and Ian Kerr and Ken Sanderson. 12 other young were not ringed or tagged because they were too large to handle safely and could have 'jumped', or were already out of the nests.

The 2011 youngsters were fitted with white tags with black lettering on their right wings with the normal Northern project tag of pink on the left wing. Anyone





Red Kite at Harewood House (Ivan Ellison)

seeing a tagged kite can report it through the FoRK website, [www.friendsofredkites.org.uk](http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk) or via their county bird recorders.

Six pairs failed during incubation or when they had small chicks. At one of these nest a female died whilst incubating and the body was eventually blown down and recovered. However, because of its condition no cause of death could be established. At the final site, a successful 2010 nest was refurbished and then deserted without eggs being laid.

There was no indication of the cause of the failures which were probably due to natural causes. It is worth mentioning that during 2011 some Peregrine sites in Northumberland failed during to bad weather so our kites may have suffered too. Careful examination of the failed sites showed no evidence of deliberate human interference. However, one was under a well-used foot-path and another appeared to suffer regular disturbance from youngsters using a mountain bike route.

Several other pairs displayed and showed some territorial behaviour but no nests were found. During the late winter of 2011, when trees are bare, co-ordinated searches are to be made of the areas involved to check for any nests which were missed so that they can be visited during 2012.

Among the 2011 pairs, both successful and unsuccessful, some birds appeared with new partners, perhaps a sign that others may not have survived the winter.

As in previous years, various odd items of decoration were found at nests, the most unusual being the head of a toy seal in one of the nests containing three chicks.

As in 2010, a rather worrying aspect was that almost all the successful breeding took place in the 'core' re-introduction area with little sign of birds spreading out to colonise new districts, apart from the two pairs in the

Causey and Beamish area. This raised fears that as well as winter mortality further illegal persecution could be involved. For example, in west Northumberland where kites bred in earlier years, a total of five poisoning victims have so far been found in areas with game-bird shoots. It appears that area remains a 'black hole' for kites trying to move into otherwise ideal nesting habitats.

The situation led FoRK to organise a series of talks to various organisations in the area culminating in a public event in Hexham in March to launch a 'Think Kite – Act Right' campaign, which resulted in a lot of positive publicity in both the local and regional press and on radio and television.

During the event much information was received from local residents and farmers who believed they had seen kites in the district. One of the monitoring teams spent long hours checking out all of these reports and although they located many pairs of Buzzards no kites were found.

**2011 results at a glance (2010 figure in brackets)**

- 19 (27) known active territories
- 18 (19) known incubating females
- 12 (13) nests successfully fledging
- 24 (24) young
- 6 (6) failures, 3 at the egg stage and 3 early after hatching.
- 1 nest not used following refurbishment.
- 17 of the known active territories were in Gateshead.

County Durham held the other two territories in the Causey and Beamish area, with pairs successfully fledging five young (broods of 3 and 2).

# Birdcrime 2011

## Guy Shorrocks,

Senior Investigations Officer with the RSPB, reviews its latest 2011 Birdcrime report and outlines some of the wider political issues affecting UK raptors.

**I**N OCTOBER 2012, the RSPB launched its 21st annual Birdcrime report looking at offences against wild birds in 2011. Whilst overall reports were down slightly compared with 2010, there were still 280 reported incidents of bird of prey persecution in the UK. This included the confirmed shooting of at least 30 individual birds of prey and 52 confirmed incidents of pesticide abuse involving the poisoning of at least 70 individual birds or animals.

Confirmed incidents in the north of England included:

- Shooting of a red kite and poisoning of another in Cumbria
- Shooting of a marsh harrier in County Durham
- Shooting of a buzzard, plus poisoning of a buzzard and red kite in North Yorkshire.

Nationally, poisoning also resulted in death of another 15 red kites, seven peregrines, four goshawks, numerous buzzards and a golden eagle. The report produces a map of confirmed raptor persecution incidents over the last 20 years (see attached) which emphasizes the continued widespread nature of these offences.

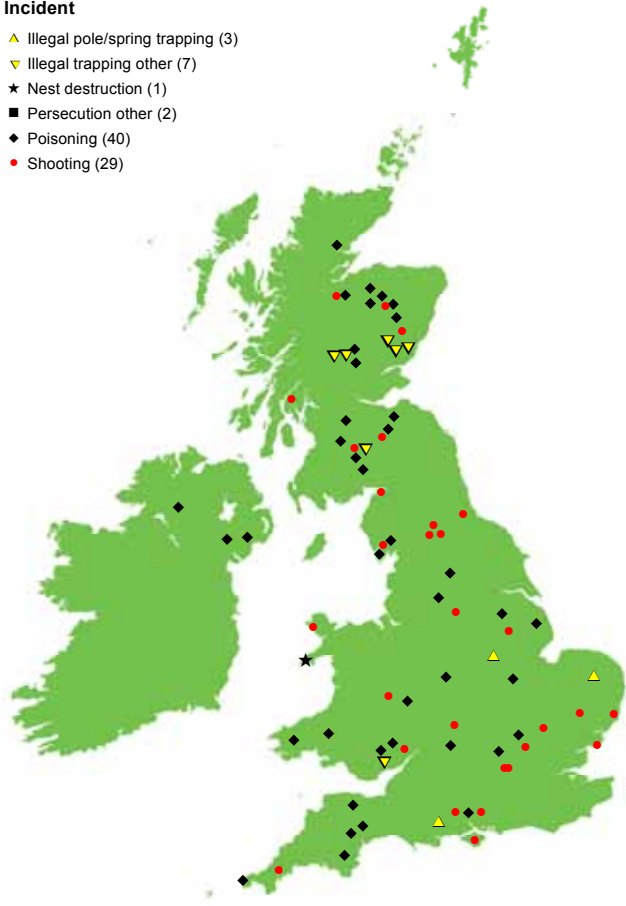
The report features a number of prosecutions brought about by work by the statutory agencies in conjunction with bodies such as the RSPB. The Dark Peak side of the Peak District will be well known to many raptors workers. In recent years there have been catastrophic declines in breeding productivity of goshawks and peregrines across large areas. Following a protracted investigation by the RSPB in 2010, evidence was gathered which led to the conviction in 2011 of gamekeeper Glenn Brown on the National Trust's High Peak estate. This involved seven charges relating to the use of a live pigeon in a cage trap to take birds of prey, the taking of a sparrowhawk and animal welfare offences. He received community order of 100 hours of unpaid work and £10,000 in costs. Following his conviction, a lengthy appeal took place in January 2012 during which the defence launched a blistering attack on the integrity of the RSPB Investigations Section. The case showed how fiercely some in the shooting industry are prepared to fight these cases and an insight into the financial resources that are available to them to defend such cases. However, Brown's appeal was unsuccessful and he received an order for a further £7000 costs. Interestingly, Brown was later dismissed from his employment, something that very rarely happens in such cases and which the RSPB would like to see more widely if the shooting industry want to show they are serious about tackling this issue.

The Birdcrime report also outlined a manifesto for change outlining what the RSPB believes is necessary if we hope to improve the conservation status of many raptors across the UK. With just one successful breed-

## Confirmed bird of prey persecution incidents 2011

### Incident

- ▲ Illegal pole/spring trapping (3)
- ▼ Illegal trapping other (7)
- ★ Nest destruction (1)
- Persecution other (2)
- ◆ Poisoning (40)
- Shooting (29)



ing pairs of hen harriers in the whole of England this year it is clear that serious challenges remain. There are 13 recommendations within the report, two of the ones most relevant to raptors include: -

## The Introduction of an offence of vicarious responsibility

This has recently come into force in Scotland and seeks to make managers and employers criminally accountable for the illegal actions of their staff. The RSPB believes this is long overdue and would wish to see similar provisions across the rest of the UK. Meaningful pressure needs to be brought on the significant criminality within the shooting industry as it appears that the prosecution of a few gamekeepers every year has acted as little deterrent so far. Interestingly, incidents of confirmed poisoning in Scotland have been very low so far in Scotland during 2012. Whether this is just a 'blip' in the annual figures or whether the introduction of vicarious liability has made some individuals think more carefully about what they expect their staff to undertake remains to be seen. It would be encouraging if this was the start of a genuine long-term trend leading to an overall reduction in illegal poisoning.

## Modernise regulation of game shooting

The UK is almost unique in Europe and North America in having no form of, or potential for, the regulation of game shooting by individuals or service providers. Given its potential to reduce populations of species of conservation priority, and the serious and organised nature of crimes committed against birds of prey, consideration of stronger sanctions is merited. An option to withdraw the “right” of an individual to shoot game, or businesses to supply shooting services, for a fixed period following conviction for a wildlife or environmental offence, should be considered.

Significant changes in the enforcement world were the appointment of Chief Constable Stuart Hyde from Cumbria as the ACPO lead on wildlife crime. Inspector Nevin Hunter, a long experienced Wildlife Crime Officer, also took up as post of the head of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU). Their contributions to the comments section of the report highlight that both are aware of the challenges ahead to tackle raptor persecution. It is hoped that these changes will start to develop meaningful work on the UK Wildlife Crime priority of raptor persecution in England and Wales. Progress has been pitifully slow since work commenced at the start of 2010.

Whilst crimes against birds of prey often hit the headlines, it is the core long-term population studies have proved essential in highlighting the real impact of perse-



**Marsh Harrier found shot near Barnard Castle and later released**

cution for a range of species. No better example is the recently published paper in the journal *Biological Conservation* which looked at peregrine nest data collected by raptor study group workers in northern England. More than a thousand nest histories were studied in the north of England, over nearly 30 years between 1980 and 2006. The study found that peregrines on or close to intensive grouse moor areas bred much less successfully than those in other habitats. Dr Arjun Amar, the paper’s lead author, said, “I was shocked at just how low the bird’s breeding output was on grouse moors; they were significantly less likely to lay eggs or fledge young.” He added, “The few birds that did lay eggs or fledge young on grouse moors did just as well as those breeding off

### RSPB statistics 2011 : Bird of Prey persecution in NERF area (per counties in below table)

2011	Cumbria	Northumbria	Durham	East Riding of Yorkshire	North Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	South Yorkshire	Lancashire	Greater Manchester	Tyne and Wear	Derbyshire
Reported BOP persecution incidents - shooting, trapping, nest destruction excluding poisoning (Confirmed incidents)	5(2)	3	4(2)	0	14(2)	4	3(1)	18	1	1	5
Reported BOP poisoning. Includes BOP victims and/or baits targeting BOP (Confirmed incidents)	2(1)	0	1	0	6(3)	4(1)	0	0	0	1	0

In total, 72 cases of BOP persecution (including poisoning) were reported in the area defined, of which 12 were ‘Confirmed’.

#### Definitions

**Incident:** An incident may involve more than one bird or species or victim/bait within the same 100 metre grid square, and is defined as an offence or an alleged offence that has occurred at a distinct place and time.

**Reported:** All ‘Confirmed’, ‘Probable’ and ‘Unconfirmed’ incidents are included.

**Confirmed:** Circumstances indicate an illegal act has taken place. Substantiated by evidence such as post mortem or toxicological analysis or reliable eye witness evidence.

**Probable:** Circumstances indicate that by far the most likely explanation is that an illegal act has taken place, but not strong enough to put in the ‘confirmed’ category.

**Unconfirmed:** The circumstances indicate an illegal act has possibly taken place.

grouse moors, which suggests that a shortage of food supplies can be ruled out of the equation. The only logical explanation for these differences is that persecution is rife on many driven grouse moors.” Performance was so bad that peregrine populations would be unable to sustain themselves on grouse moors without immigration of birds from other habitats”.

It is to be hoped that other data gathered by raptor workers across the UK can be published in a similar manner to highlight the serious levels of persecution that remain and help encourage the government and decision makers to take the necessary levels of action. By way of example, in the last couple of years the RSPB has received good quality intelligence alleging the extensive shooting of short-eared owls on several grouse shooting estates in the north on England. Whilst this species is very difficult to accurately monitor, the new

2007 to 2011 BTO breeding atlas is due out shortly and it will be interesting to see how this species is faring. RSPB would welcome any information from raptor workers about any concerns they have about short-eared owl populations.

It is important to remember the RSPB remains the only agency with long term datasets of persecution incidents and that these are important in highlighting that problems are still occurring and widespread. As usual we would ask all Raptor Study Group Workers to report all incidents to the Investigations Section (see “Useful telephone numbers” section elsewhere in this report) Any sensitive information can be reported in the strictest of confidence.

The Birdcrime 2011 report can also be downloaded from the RSPB website [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk).



Photo: Ivan Ellison

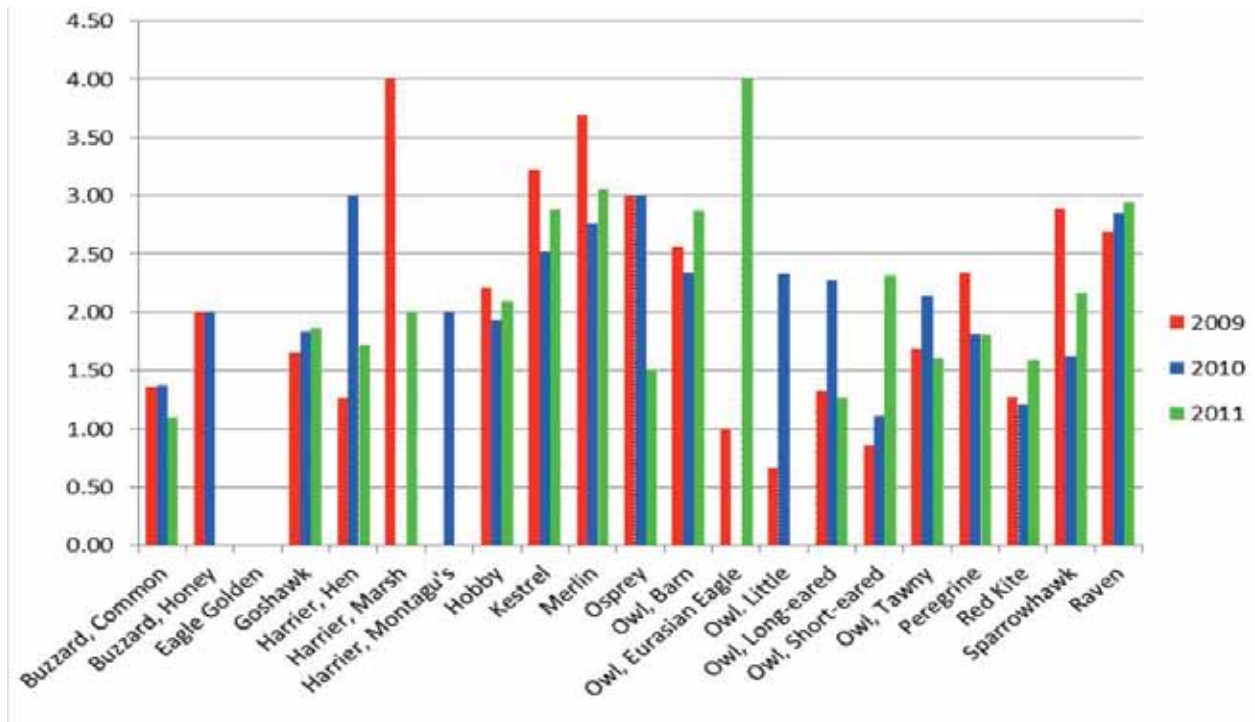
# Appendix

# I. Combined NERF data

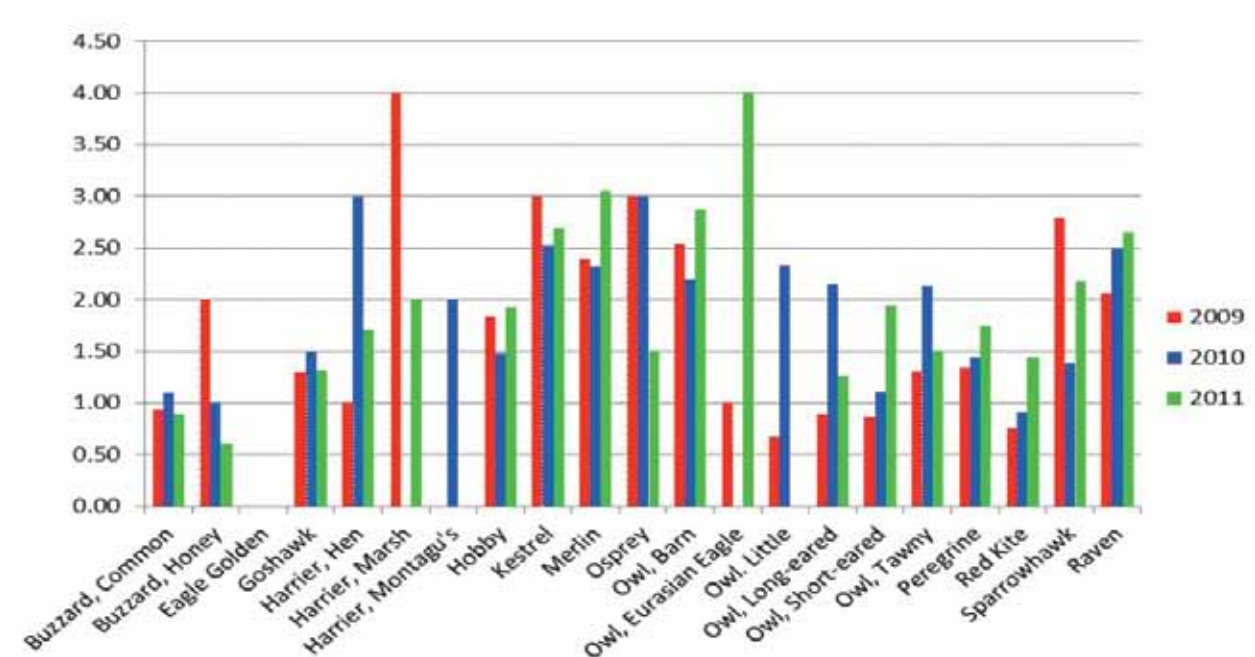
Species	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
Honey Buzzard	4	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Red Kite	47	35	0	5	32	29	25	22	46	1.59	1.44
Marsh Harrier	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Hen Harrier	32	10	1	3	7	7	4	4	12	1.71	1.71
Montagu's Harrier	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goshawk	99	70	3	17	61	43	39	38	80	1.86	1.31
Sparrowhawk	75	63	NR	7	52	52	51	45	113	2.17	2.17
Buzzard	267	259	0	25	180	98	97	92	108	1.1	0.6
Golden Eagle	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Osprey	8	8	0	4	4	4	4	4	6	1.5	1.5
Kestrel	100	71	1	3	61	57	55	55	164	2.88	2.69
Merlin	261	124	5	28	91	91	85	79	278	3.05	3.05
Hobby	63	48	5	0	48	44	44	44	92	2.09	1.92
Peregrine	135	86	2	10	76	74	60	52	133	1.8	1.75
Barn Owl	357	90	11	6	84	84	75	71	241	2.87	2.87
Eagle Owl	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4	4
Little Owl	68	47	8	3	17	17	17	17	NR	NR	NR
Tawny Owl	426	191	0	33	177	165	163	163	265	1.61	1.5
Long-eared Owl	67	44	1	6	34	34	29	27	43	1.26	1.26
Short-eared Owl	35	29	4	1	19	16	16	15	37	2.31	1.95
Raven	111	82	1	5	52	47	46	44	138	2.94	2.65
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2161</b>	<b>1262</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>998</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>812</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>1762</b>		

## II. Combined productivity graphs

a) Young fledged per pair laying 2009 - 2011



b) Young fledged per territorial pair monitored 2009 - 2011





# III. Ring recoveries

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age (days)	Distance from ringing site	Direction from ringing site	Comment
	Red Kite	GC81510	12.06.09	Hampshire	14.1.11	North Yorkshire	1y 7m 2d	322km	N	Long dead
	Red Kite	GN51648	24.07.02	Harewood nr Leeds	04.11.03	Dyfed	1y 3m 11d	231km	SW	Alive (colour marks seen)
	Red Kite	GN51640	24.07.02	Harewood nr Leeds	03.10.03	Gigrin Farm Powys	1y 2m 9d	223km	SW	Alive (colour marks seen)
	Red Kite	"	"	"	06.11.03	"	1y 3m 13d	"	"	Alive (colour marks seen)
<b>SPRSG</b>	Red Kite		21.06.10	Northamptonshire	03.04.11	Matlock/Rowsley	0y 9m 13d	116km	SE	Alive (colour marks seen)
<b>NYMMSG</b>	Kestrel	EG05041	07.07.04	North Yorkshire	20.12.11	nr Barnard Castle, Durham	7y 5m 13d	49km	NW	Road casualty
	Kestrel	EW29376	29.05.08	Boston, Lincs	21.09.11	Howden, Humberside	3y 3m 23d	105km	NW	Road casualty; long dead
<b>DUBSG</b>	Merlin	EX47757	24.06.11	Durham	05.11.11	Puddletown, Dorset	0y 4m 12d	449km	S	Dead; natural causes
	Merlin	EL61901	14.06.11	Derbyshire	18.08.11	Staithe, N Yorkshire	0y 2m 4d	145km	NNE	Road casualty
	Merlin	EL88778	27.06.08	North Yorkshire	15.11.11	Baumber, Lincs	3y 4m 19d	138km	SE	Freshly dead
	Hobby	EL13188	04.08.07	Derbyshire	25.09.11	Monks Wall NR, Kent	4y 1m 21d	272km	SE	Freshly dead (cold weather)
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	GF51673	08.06.95	Northumberland	22.04.05	Lothian	9y 10m 14d	100km	N	Retrap
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	"	"	"	30.04.06	"	10y 10m 22d	"	"	Retrap
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	"	"	"	14.04.07	"	11y 10m 6d	"	"	Alive (colour rings seen)
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	"	"	"	13.04.08	"	12y 10m 5d	"	"	Retrap
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	"	"	"	24.04.09	"	13y 10m 16d	"	"	Retrap
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	"	"	"	22.04.10	"	14y 10m 14d	"	"	Alive (transponder tag)
	Peregrine	"	"	"	17.04.11	"	15y 10m 9d	"	"	Alive (transponder tag)
	Peregrine	GC05788	30.05.06	Lancashire	01.05.09	Borders Region Scotland	2y 11m 1d	230km	N	Retrap
	Peregrine	"	"	"	17.04.11	"	4y 10m 18d	"	"	Alive (transponder tag)
	Peregrine	"	"	"	25.08.11	Dun Law Wind Farm Borders	5y 2m 26d	234km	"	Freshly dead (hit building)
<b>NRG</b>	Peregrine	GC73395	09.06.10	Northumberland	30.01.11	Inglewhite, Preston, Lancs	0y 7m 21d	154km	S	Road casualty
<b>MRG</b>	Peregrine	GR05788	18.05.11	Manchester city centre	31.8.11	Birkenhead	0y 3m 14d	55km	WSW	Road casualty
	Barn Owl	GN22970	07.07.00	Cumbria	19.05.11	Cumbria	10y 10m 12d	6km	S	Retrap
	Barn Owl	GR00689	04.08.10	Lothian	20.7.11	Doveridge, Derbyshire	0y 11m 16d	349km	S	Road casualty
	Barn Owl	GR21394	04.06.11	Burnley, Lancashire	14.10.11	Huby, North Yorkshire	0y 3m 10d	74km	ENE	Road casualty
	Little Owl	EG93272	01.06.03	Pilling, Lancashire	05.07.11	Winmarleigh, Lancashire	8y 1m 4d	2km		Road casualty
	Tawny Owl	GH28475	06.05.95	Stalmine, Lancashire	26.06.11	Stalmine, Lancashire	16y 1m 20d	0km		Freshly dead, drowned
	Long-eared Owl	GN76898	06.05.10	Glossop, Derbyshire	16.05.11	Salford, Oxfordshire	1y 0m 10d	169km	S	Long dead

## IV. List of acronyms

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers	NYMRSG	Abbreviated acronym used in tables for NYMUB(M)SG
ASL	above sea level		
BMC	British Mountaineering Council	NYMUB(M)SG	North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group
BRSR	Bowland Raptor Study Group	PBMS	Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology	PDRMG	Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
BBRC	British Birds Rarities Committee		
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television	PIT [Tag]	Passive Integrated Transponder
CEH	Centre for Ecology & Hydrology	RAS	Re-trapping Adults for Survival
CI	Confidence Interval	RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
CRSG	Calderdale Raptor Study Group	RSG	Raptor Study Group
CRW	Cumbria Raptor Workers	RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
DEFRA	Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs	SEO	Short-eared Owl
DUBSG	Durham Upland Bird Study Group EO Eagle Owl	SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
EBCC	European Bird Census Council	SPA	Special Protected Area, under EC Wild Birds Directive [79/409/EEC commonly referred to as The Birds Directive]
FoRK	Friends of Red Kites		
HHRP	Hen Harrier Recovery Project	SPRSG	South Peak Raptor Study Group
IUCN	International Union for Conservation	SREYRSG	South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group
JNCC Committee	Joint Nature Conservation	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
LDOP	Lake District Osprey Project	TO	Tawny Owl
LEO	Long-eared Owl	UU	United Utilities
MRG	Manchester Raptor Group	WCA	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
NE	Natural England	WCO	Wildlife Crime Officer [Police]
NERF	Northern England Raptor Forum	WIIS	Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation		
NR	Not Recorded [in the NERF Species Tables]	WLCA	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981
NRG	Northumbrian Ringing Group	WTE	White-tailed Eagle
NRS	Nest Record Scheme	YDUBSG	Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
NWCU	National Wildlife Crime Unit	YNU	Yorkshire Naturalists' Union
NYM	North York Moors		

# V. Northern England Raptor Forum contact list

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## Northern England Raptor Forum

Paul Irving, Chairman

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