Northern England Raptor Forum

Annual Review 2012

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Buzzard: Pauline Mellor Greenhalgh
Osprey: Pauline Mellor Greenhalgh
Common Kestrel chick: Judith Smith
Merlin feeding brood: Bryan Nellist
Peregrine: Adrian Dancy
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Eagle Owl chick: Mick Demain
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Short-eared Owl: Ivan Ellison
Young Raven being ringed: Judith Smith

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
Cleveland Police 01642 326326
Cumbria Constabulary 0845 330 0247
Derbyshire Constabulary 0345 123 3333
Durham Constabulary 0345 606 0365
Humberside Police 0845 125 3545
Lancashire Constabulary 0845 125 3545
Manchester Police 0161 872 5050 (General Enquiries). Acting County Wildlife Crime Officer Randy Lyle: 0161 856 5578/07774016688
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 833722
Crimestoppers 0800 555111
RSPB Investigations Dept. 01767 680551
RSPB North of England Investigations Officer (Alan Firth) 07568103445
RSPB Investigations Officer (Howard Jones) 07834534142
Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme 0800 321600
Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme 01524 5959830

Please report Hen Harrier sightings to:
Stephen Murphy, Natural England 07973 911 594

Foreword

Bob Elliot
Head of Investigations
RSPB

'Actions speak louder than words'.

During my career in conservation I have seen some positive changes in the breeding distribution of some of our most iconic and protected raptor species. The fact that I can now watch Red Kites in my old home county of North Yorkshire, view Sea Eagles whilst out and about in Scotland and have been able to witness the return of the Common Buzzard as they re-colonise their historical haunts in the lowlands of the UK, all something very much to be celebrated.

We do still face major challenges however, particularly in the uplands of Northern England where the intensive management for red grouse dominates vast swathes of our countryside and in the lowlands where large numbers of pheasants are reared and released. In these areas we see the biggest ecological traps (or black-holes) for birds of prey. It is shocking that we are looking at the potential extinction of the Hen Harrier as a breeding species in England. In the upland areas we continue to see poor productivity for peregrine and other raptor species with poisoning, trapping, shooting and disturbance offences still occurring.

The RSPB Investigations team has been fighting on the frontline of crimes against wild birds for at least 40 years. Indeed, it should be noted that the RSPB has been working at this since its creation in 1889. Since 2000, out of 35 convictions in England and Wales for Bird of Prey persecution related offences the RSPB has had a significant involvement in 28 of these cases (80%); RSPB initiated 22 (63%) of these cases through a combination of information, intelligence and evidence gathering; RSPB covert surveillance helped secure 15 of these prosecutions (43%).

We would not be able to undertake any of this work without the data, expertise and support from raptor study groups. NERF is at the forefront of raptor monitoring and protection and this resolute approach, across the whole of the North of England, ensures that the outcomes produced by the Forum far exceed the total sum of the parts generated by each individual member. The Peregrine paper produced jointly by the RSPB and NERF, which proved beyond doubt that persecution of the species on moorland managed for grouse shooting is having a significant impact on the northern upland population, epitomises the advantage working collaboratively for the benefit of birds of prey.

I really feel that the phrase 'partnership working' is rather an overused one at times, with normally little being done regarding the co-ordinated enforcement of raptor offences. The relationship and information sharing between NERF members and the RSPB has always been strong; not only on a day to day basis but through long-term objectives such as the Hen Harrier Winter Roost Project in which NERF has a fundamental role to play. We are all aware that the English Hen Harrier population is in dire straits at the present time and we all know the cause, persecution. Traditionally Hen Harriers have both bred and over-wintered in the northern uplands and this puts NERF in the vanguard working to return them to their home ranges at levels consistent with the carrying capacity modelled by Professor Steve Redpath.

There is doubt that our relationship is strong but raptors are under threat throughout the North of England, this is not the time to be complacent and we will continue to build on that relationship.

We have a pretty good idea how the persecution of birds of prey could and should be tackled, through improved enforcement, improved legislation and wider use of techniques such as diversionary feeding. And yet on the ground we have collectively failed to get a grip of the issue. The RSPB will continue to do all it can, but we also need others to do more. The challenge is twofold. Firstly, to grouse moor owners and managers, to respect the law, allow birds of prey to flourish and demonstrate sustainable land management. The second challenge is to the UK Government, to demonstrate real commitment and action to tackling illegal persecution, not just in words, but through actions. NERF's contribution to achieving both of these objectives cannot be over-stated. Through membership of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime and participation in the Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group and the recently disbanded Hen Harrier Dialogue and Buzzard Stakeholder Group NERF is well placed to influence Government policy.

So, once again, my thanks to NERF members for all the help and support. I very much welcome this latest report; it is the culmination of many thousands hours of dedicated fieldwork and something government and their advisors must take note of. We must all continue to work hard to influence decision makers using the best possible evidence.

Chairman's Report

In this, our fourth Annual Review, we report on the status and fortunes of birds of prey, owls and Raven in northern England during 2012. A picture quickly emerges to suggest that the dedication of individual field-workers who make up our member groups has never been more important. Whilst some of the species we monitor closely are holding their own or even increasing, the breeding status of Hen Harrier nationally and Peregrine at eyries on or close to grouse moors have both become critically endangered. Peer reviewed studies show that illegal persecution is the dominant factor explaining this abhorrent situation. NERF continues to be active in seeking to inform the debate and influence policy makers and legislators to reverse the fortunes of these iconic species. Our evidence-based data provides the most

detailed and rigorous assessment of trends and absolute numbers of breeding raptors in our region.

Ospreys continue to do well and we all look forward to further expansion in both range and numbers. Red Kites also continue to do well nationally despite a worrying number of poisoning incidents and apparent constraints in some upland areas. However Short–eared Owl, a species for which we desperately need more and better data, appears to be in decline and is a serious cause of concern.

NERF remained committed to the Environment Council's Hen Harrier Dialogue process for as long as it possibly could, despite frustrations and challenges along the way. Unfortunately we found it necessary to withdraw during late 2012 believing that no tangible progress had been made in over 5 years, whilst at the same time English breeding Hen Harriers had plummeted to near extinction.

We now hope that a DEFRA-led initiative, stemming from their Upland Stakeholder Group, for an Emergency Action Plan will be accepted and gain some credible and early traction. The loss of Hen Harrier as an English breeding species would not only be a national disgrace but would be contrary to the Government's aims for its national Biodiversity Strategy, whilst for sites like the North Pennines and Bowland SPAs, designated under the EU Habitats Directive for this species, it would be a wholesale failure.

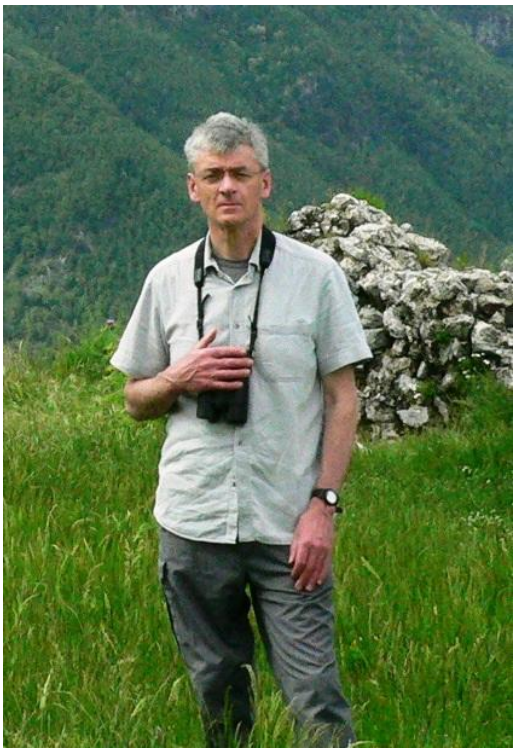
NERF was also represented on DEFRA's Buzzard Stakeholder Group (BSG). To be clear, this involved some very challenging and at times uncomfortable concepts yet NERF felt that it must be involved to ensure decisions were science led. Despite claims from the shooting lobby that the presence of Buzzards near pheasant release pens was having a significant economic impact on game-shooting estates the BSG ultimately collapsed when tellingly none of the game organisations was prepared to financially support joint research. In perhaps the most depressing event of the year, NERF and its individual members were shocked and saddened at the granting of a licence by Natural England, which allowed one estate to destroy buzzard nests near pheasant release pens. In the absence of the required research this seemed an appallingly cavalier decision. The destruction of nests of a native bird of prey, which for decades has been limited in its distribution by illegal persecution, in favour of artificially reared game for shooting is contrary to common sense and all we stand for.

NERF was also disappointed that the Government failed to adopt the quite reasonable recommendations of Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee review of wildlife crime. In particular we would support vicarious liability, the licensing of shoots and making the storage of poisons for which there is no legitimate use illegal.

More positively, NERF is pleased to announce that funding has been secured to enable the extension of raptor research programmes through our member groups. These will serve to protect and conserve raptors in our region.

Paul Irving
Chairman, Northern England Raptor Forum
October 2013

Secretary's Report



The Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF) represents the combined field-work and conservation interests of ten regional raptor study groups covering the upland areas of the Forest of Bowland, the North York Moors, East Yorkshire and the vast majority of the Pennine chain from Northumberland to Derbyshire. Our members' core activity is to monitor the breeding success and year-round distribution of target species. NERF is now in its seventh year but many member groups bring a wealth of experience with detailed research studies dating back 25 years or more. NERF holds the most comprehensive data-set for the breeding success of raptors, owls and Raven across the uplands of northern England. This has only been possible thanks to the many hours of fieldwork from dedicated volunteers whose efforts, year after year, provide such powerful, evidence-based results.

Each raptor study group is represented within NERF by two members. Formal meetings are held twice per year (February and September). Where necessary, business and decisions are progressed in-between meetings through email or the work of sub-committees. Representatives from the RSPB, Natural England and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel regularly attend meetings in an advisory capacity. The Cumbria Bird Club has formally stepped down from NERF membership but will continue to have close links. NERF would welcome applications from other raptor study groups in the region.

Our intention to launch the NERF website has unfortunately met with some delays. This is now expected before the end of 2013.

Increasingly, NERF activities have extended beyond the primary objective of collating and interpreting field data and we have moved into the role of advocacy wherever our expert views might positively influence species conservation and protection. Representation on outside bodies and written submissions to a variety of organisations now occupy a large part of the work of NERF. Since our last report, NERF's presence on DEFRA's Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW) has continued and members have also represented

NERF on DEFRA's Buzzard Stakeholder Group and with the Environment Council's Hen Harrier Dialogue. Our chairman's report summarises recent developments with the latter two bodies. We have also met with RSPB regional and national officers to discuss subjects of common interest. A presentation was given to the newly formed Northern Upland Chain, Local Nature Partnership highlighting the parlous state of Peregrine and Hen Harrier breeding populations within the North Pennine SPA.

Written submissions were provided on a number of public consultations and topical issues including:-

- The Law Commission's review of wildlife statute
- The threat to funding of the national Wildlife Crime Unit
- The granting of licences by DEFRA to remove nests of Buzzards adjacent to pheasant poult pens.
- The National Trust's "High Peak Moors" vision plan
- The Yorkshire Dales National Park management plan

Whilst all members make a telling contribution we are especially grateful to Judith Smith for again acting as editor to this, our Annual Review, which we see as an important showcase of our collective efforts. Special thanks are also due to the Northumbrian Ringing Group who hosted the 2012 Northern England Raptor conference in Newcastle in November. Widely regarded as one of the most successful of our annual conferences, delegates were rewarded with a range of stimulating presentations: the current status of Goshawk and Common Buzzard in eastern Scotland were described, respectively, by Mick Marquiss and David Anderson whilst Rhian Evans talked on the reintroduction of White-tailed Sea Eagle in that area. Aly McCluskie brought the conference up to date with the Hen Harrier project in Langholm and Bob Elliot reviewed some case studies from the RSPB's Investigation unit. Richard Evans presented the historical evidence for eagles in Britain & Ireland and Simon Elliot held everyone's attention with recordings of raptor calls.

Our efforts will continue to monitor key species and to use this information to press for the conservation and well-being of raptors in our uplands.

David Raw
Secretary, Northern England Raptor Forum *October 2013*

NERF: geographical coverage

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of 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

Extent of 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

Extent of coverage: In this report the Durham Upland Bird Study Group's comments refer principally to the Durham uplands [defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining valley systems all laying 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

Extent of 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 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, whose other main field of interest is Peregrines.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of 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.

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

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of 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

Extent of 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. Glossop 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. Website: www.pdrmg.co.uk

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of 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, 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

Extent of coverage: Everything south of the North York Moors to the Humber estuary, east of the A1.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of 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.

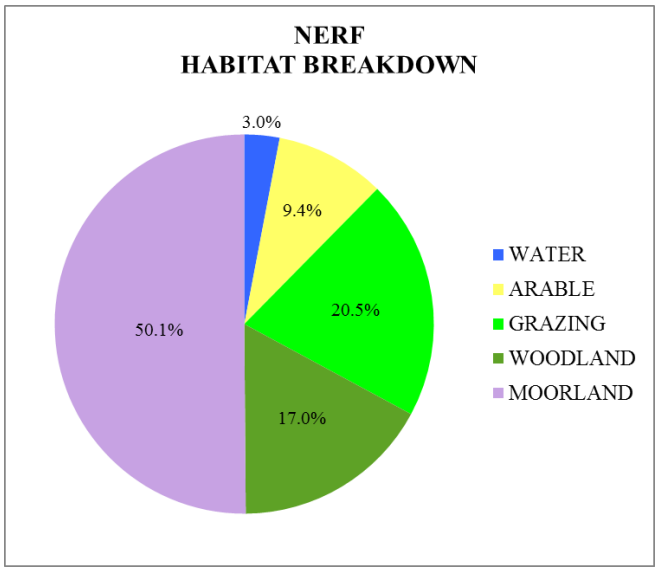
Annual Review

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 2012 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 fourth NERF Annual Review, combines all of the available data from each Group in one document.

Data gaps are shown as 'NC' [no counts] in the NERF species tables. This notation merely indicates that no counts were made 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 criterions also apply to persecution data. The numbers in the persecution pie-chart refer only to evidence-based cases recorded by the members, during 2012, in respect of both species and type of persecution categories. Once again the figures in each sector 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.

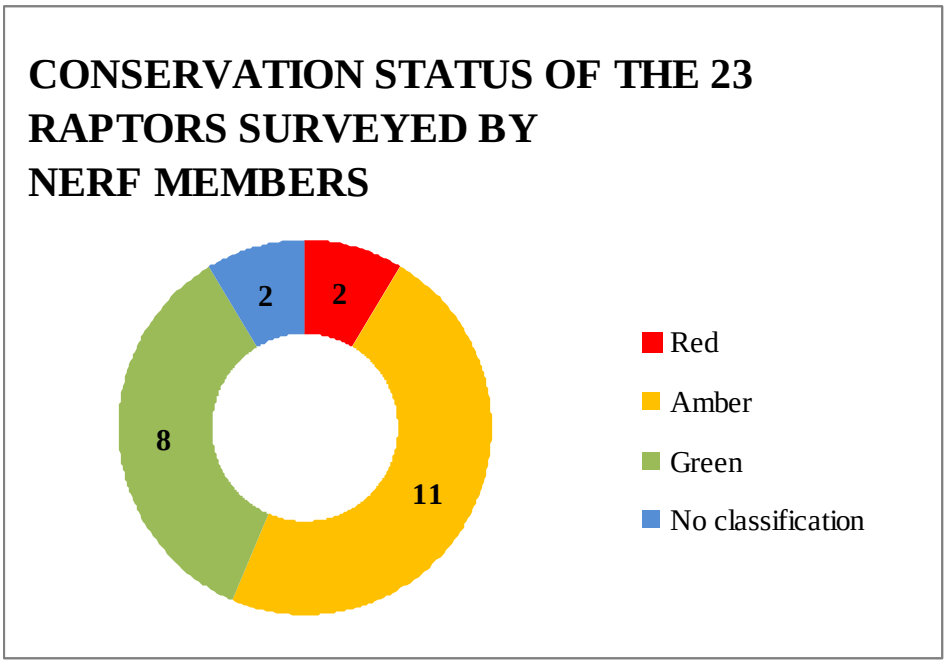
NERF regional habitat coverage

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-bye'. It is evident that very little, less than 10%, of the monitored habitat is arable land.

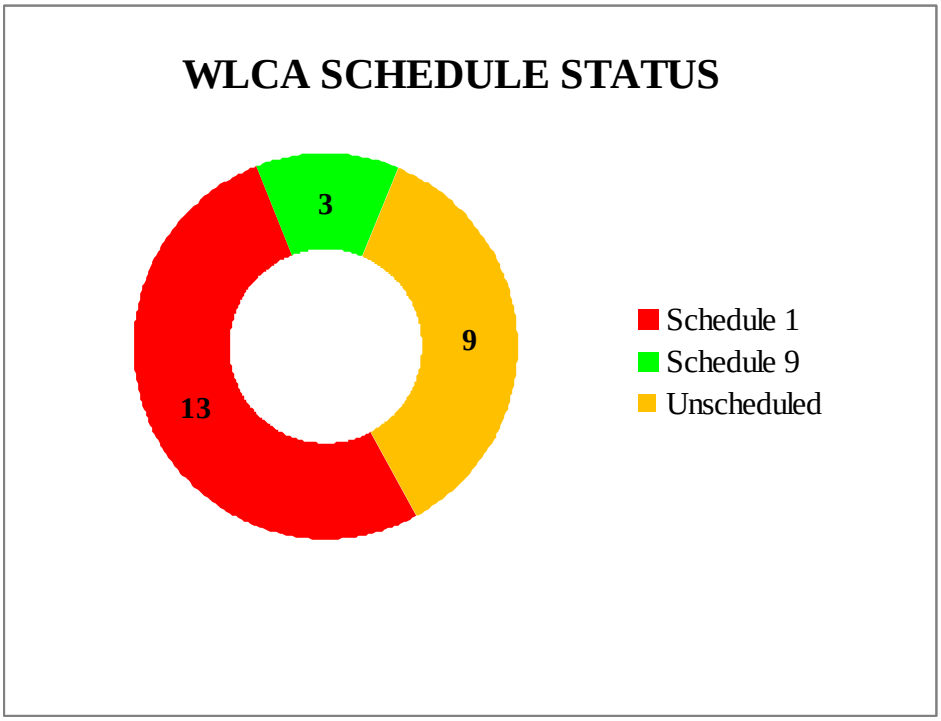


From the data supplied by the individual Groups it is clear that if the species monitored by NERF are to prosper they are dependent on sensitive management of moorland, moorland fringe and forestry. Whilst many of the upland SSSIs are not in 'favourable' status, overall upland land management practices 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, Kestrels and Ravens breeding on buildings.

Conservation status of raptors in the NERF Region



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.

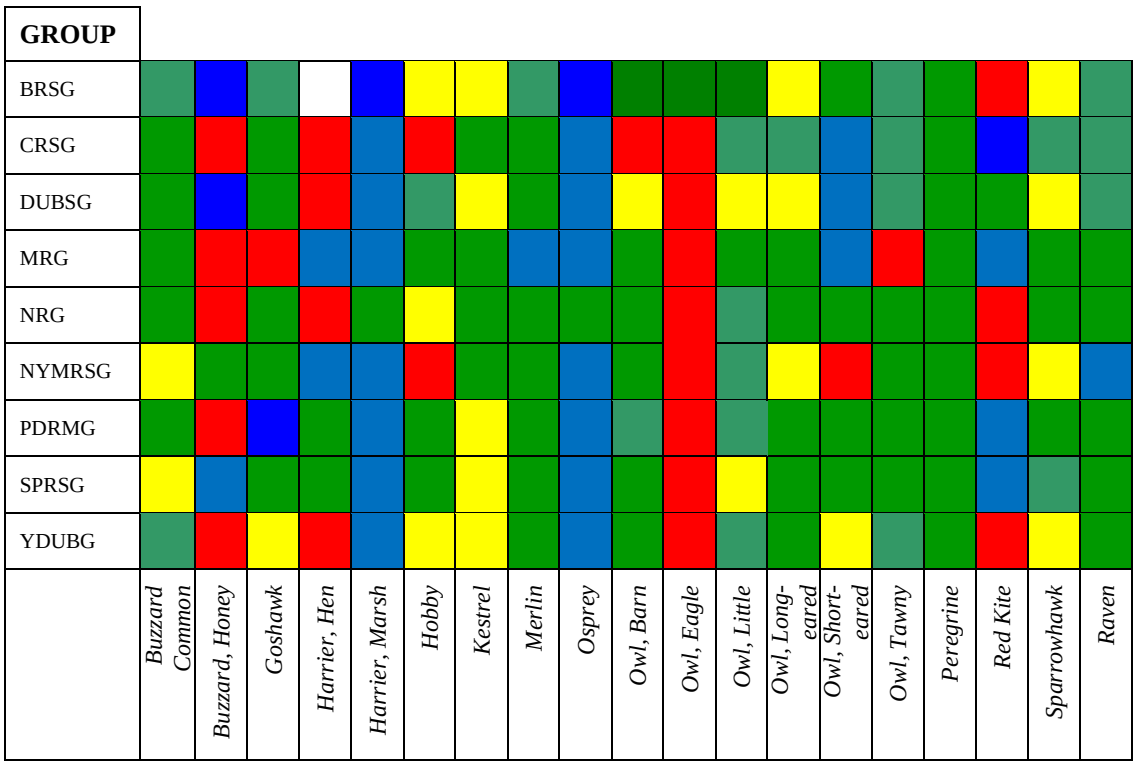


Thirteen of the species studied are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and work on these species is undertaken under the appropriate licence issued by Natural England or the BTO.
Barn Owl, Eagle Owl and White-tailed Eagle are listed on Schedule 9 and cannot be released without 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, yellow and red were used with red being used to identify the species that were absent as breeders from individual study areas. In Reviews since 2011 blue has been added to represent birds that are only observed regularly 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.
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 2012 has increased from 2 to 4 and in relation to Sparrowhawks the number of

Species monitored by NERF

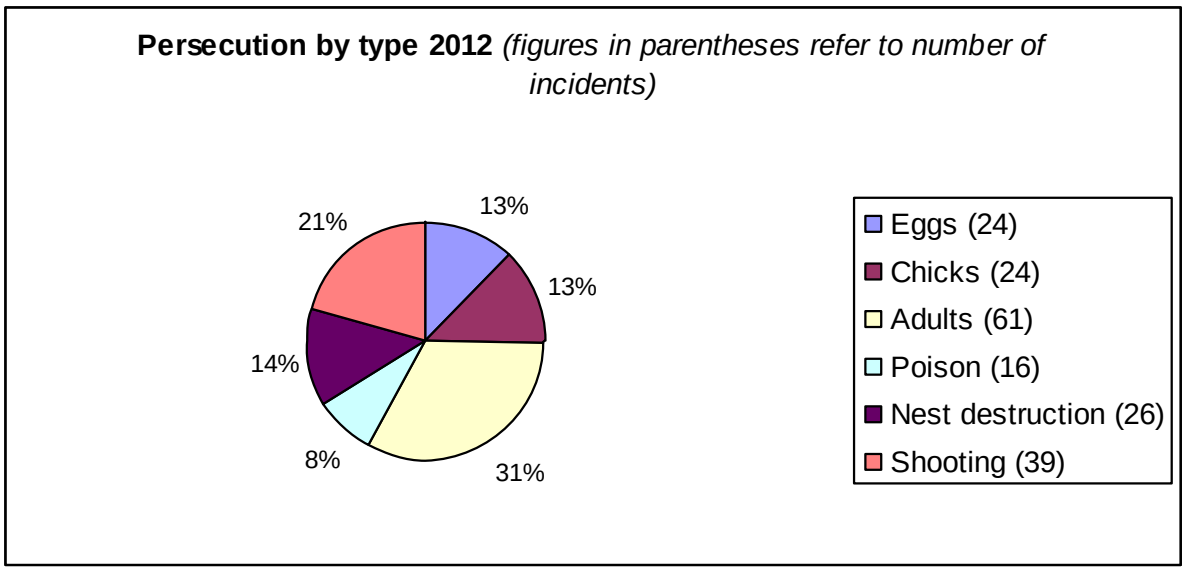


Green Breeding and monitored
Yellow Breeding and not monitored
Red Absent as a breeder
Blue Passage only

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 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 1500 breeding pairs in the UK and are therefore deserved of more extensive monitoring. With regard to the expanse of suitable habitat within the NERF region it is possible that these species are under-recorded; if not, they 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

NERF regional persecution data

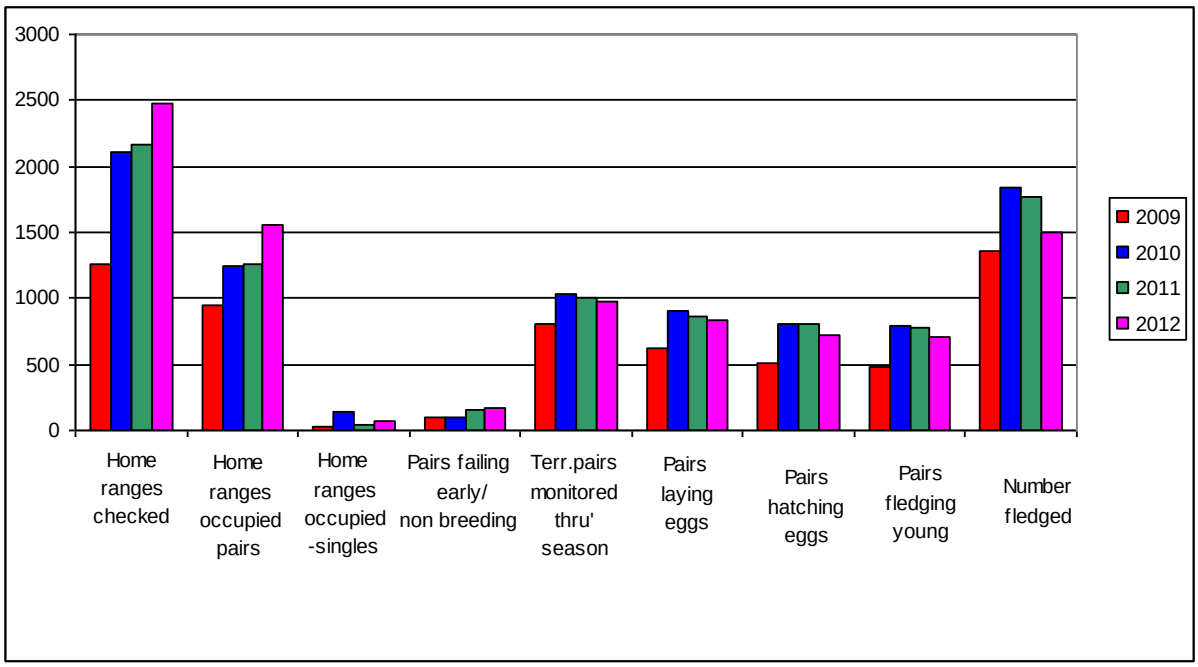
Of all the data gathered by Raptor Workers the number of persecution cases consistently invokes discussions in relation to the claims. Proven persecution is relatively easy to assert in cases where birds have been shot or poisoned or in cases where traps have been recovered adjacent to nests.
It is self-evident 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 total of incidents is 190, a massive increase of 132% over 2011 when there were 82 recorded. That figure of 82 was a 46% rise over 56 in 2010. In 2009 119 incidents were recorded, albeit some historical data was included then.
The biggest rise in 2012 was in egg theft or destruction – 24% compared with 16% in 2011. Destruction of adults was also up 8% over 2011. Other than a surprise nest in Cumbria, no Hen Harriers bred in England – a fact which has received national publicity, repeated again in 2013 when no Hen Harriers bred successfully. Once again, species occupying moorland habitat predominate.

Summary

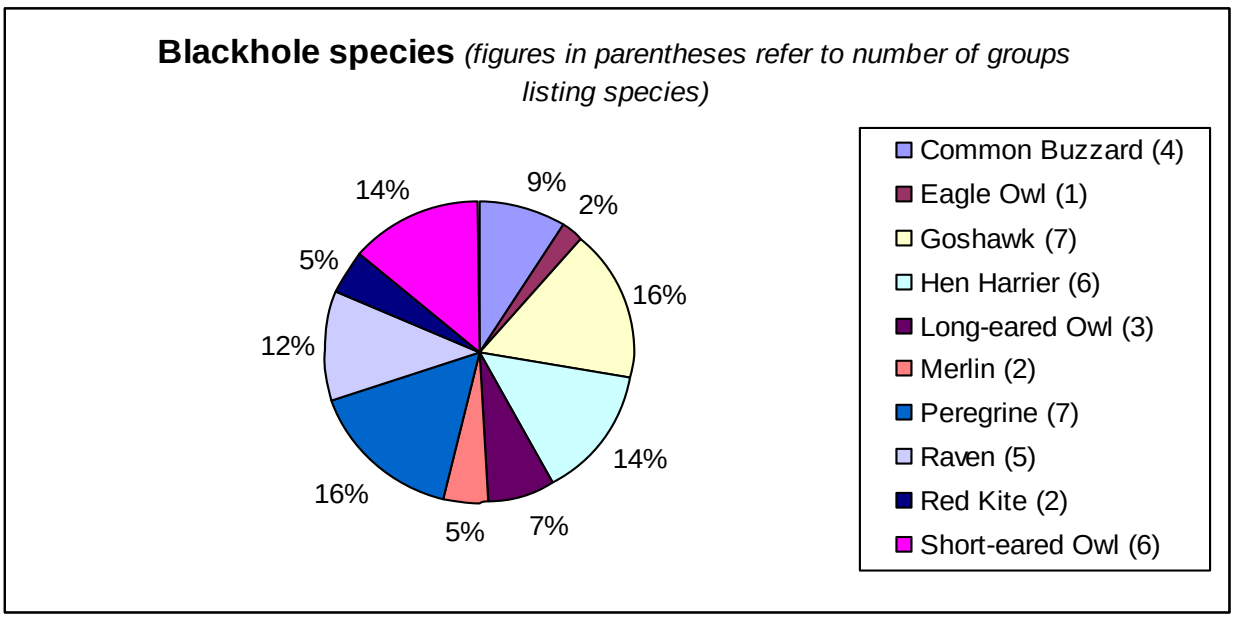
Within the NERF region 19 of the 23 raptor species were monitored and / or recorded by Group members during 2012. There were no records, or no records in the breeding season, for White-tailed Eagle, Montagu's Harrier, and Rough-legged Buzzard. The only Golden Eagle in England is the solitary bird at Haweswater, Cumbria, not included in the NERF region. 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 1.
For ease of comparison the overall statistics for 2009 - 2012 are presented in the table below.



Collectively NERF members checked 2480 home ranges in 2012 – 17% more than in 2011, 18% more than in 2010 and 197% more than in 2009. However, 3 additional groups have joined over the years.
Of these, 1562 were occupied by pairs of birds and 976 pairs were monitored throughout the season, very slightly more than 2011. A minimum of 709 pairs are known to have fledged in excess of 1506 young birds. This was down on 2011 by 5% and 16% respectively, due in part to the appalling wet weather.

Comparisons between the 2009 and 2012 fledging rates for pairs laying eggs and pairs monitored are provided in Appendix 2.
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 two 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 49000 hours to monitoring and protecting raptors during 2012. 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 2012 breeding season is valued at approximately £925,000 – a small increase on 2011.
Although NERF members completed an extraordinary amount of monitoring during 2012 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 2009-2012 datasets and these base-line 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 19 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 2012 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.

Species accounts: as explained previously, there are no accounts for the following species:

White-tailed Eagle – no sightings in the NERF region in 2012

Montagu's Harrier – no sightings in the NERF region in 2012

Rough-legged Buzzard – no breeding season sightings in the NERF region in 2012

Golden Eagle – no sightings in the NERF region in 2012; the only bird in England is the solitary Haweswater bird.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

UK population estimate

The five-year mean (2007-11) is 42 breeding pairs (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554)

Conservation status

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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
NYMRSG	(7)	(4)	NC	NC	(4)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(4)	(2)	(1)

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland areas
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species
Birds have been recorded over the years with actual display witnessed at one site although as far as is known, this did not lead to a breeding attempt. No birds were seen in 2012.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Once again there were no records of this species crossing the Group's study area during 2012.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
There has been no record of Honey Buzzards breeding in the county for more than a century. 2012 proved to be typical year with members of the Durham Bird Club gathering just 9 records, mainly in the eastern lowlands, between late May and late August.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
No record of passage birds known this year.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
No records this year.

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.
Information received from the regular source conflicts significantly with data revealed in a recently published book on this species' nesting history in the North York Moors. The results arise from two groups of fieldworkers operating independently of each other and with no subsequent co-ordination of data. Source A maintains only 6 different individuals were recorded in 2012 - 4 males and 2 females – in one main forest area, and that there was no evidence obtained of nesting activity there. Source B considers one pair bred successfully in that area fledging 2 young, another pair probably bred and there was another non-breeding pair present. The latter Group also maintains a pair bred, successfully fledging probably 2 young, in another forest area. The figures in the table are therefore enclosed in parenthesis as an indication of the doubt that exists on one side regarding the validity of the data.
The author of the book referred to has worked for decades on this species along with a handful of chosen aides. The considered intrusion of Group A members working on the species also over a considerable number of years has apparently always been resented and offers of fieldwork assistance and liaison refused. Security of nest sites has been the professed priority for reticence in sharing information so it does appear contradictory that the book reveals in some detail the locations of nest sites within the particular North York Moors forest areas, a fact which would seem to put future nests of this species at greater risk than had the sites been coded or generalised in some way. The author, however, maintains the majority of the sites referred to in his book are well-known within the bird-watching community and therefore egg collectors will also undoubtedly be fully aware of if not familiar with them, thus little would be achieved by secrecy of presentation.

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 and there were no reports of birds within it in 2012.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

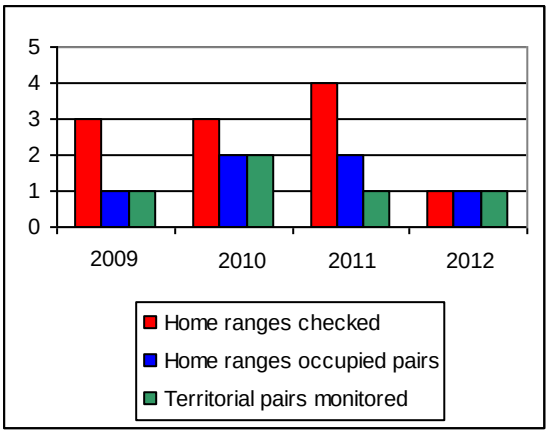
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Honey Buzzards are only recorded as passage birds in spring and autumn.

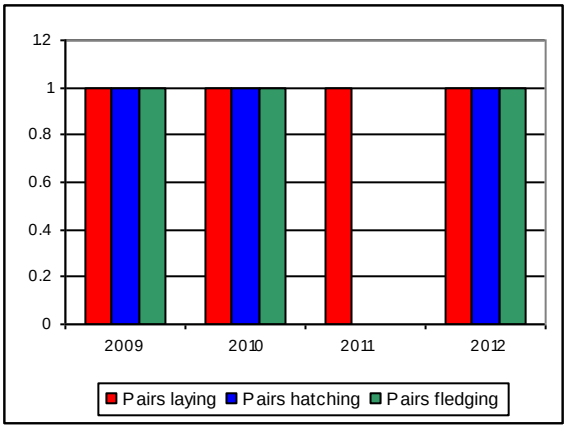
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
This species does not occur here as a breeder; no records of passage birds reported during 2012.

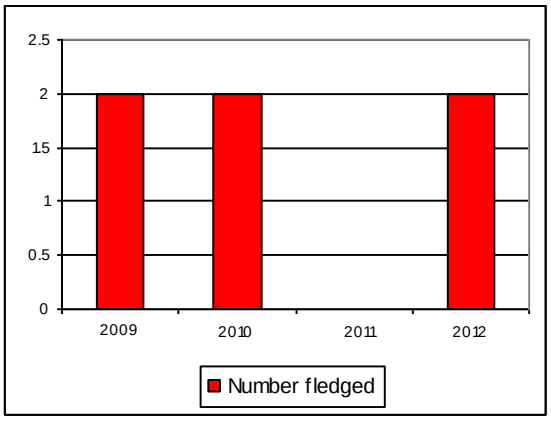
NERF regional summary

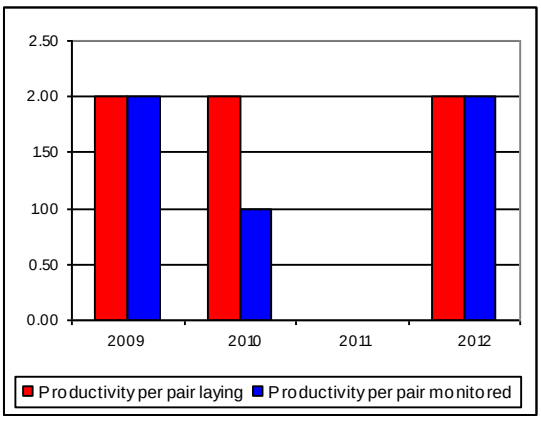
The unprecedented protracted wet weather over the whole of the 2012 breeding season had a calamitous effect on productivity not only regionally but nationwide with many nests failing elsewhere. Wasp and bee numbers were well below normal in most areas with the result nests of larvae were at a premium and birds must have had great difficulty in provisioning young adequately using that food source.
Steve Roberts, a recognised authority on the species commented that of 23 pairs on territories elsewhere in Britain and to all intents and purposes following normal nest cycle routine, only 4 bred successfully – one in Kent, one in Sussex and two in Hampshire. Where known nests failed, this was invariably at the egg stage. In view of these statistics it seems the North York Moors has been fortunate indeed to produce young, a claim viewed with reservation by Group A fieldworkers there.
Despite the disappointments of the season, the North York Moors forests remain the stronghold of the species in northern England.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

UK population estimate

The latest estimate is 1600 pairs, estimated 2006-2010 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3 *British Birds* 106 February 2013),whilst the five-year mean from RBBP reports 2007-11 is 1191 breeding pairs (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554). The BTO's BBS Report 2012 for England shows that there was an increase of 11260% in the period 1995-2011, augmented of course by introductions.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

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

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
DUBSG	31	27	0	8	20	19	19	14	23	1.21	1.15
NRG	8+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SREYRSG	11	8	NC	0	8	8	8	8	17	2.1	2.1
YDUBSG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	56	35	0	8	28	27	27	22	40	1.48	1.43

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Odd birds are seen every year and a nest was built at a site some years ago; this was not successful. Breeding is suspected in areas close to but outside the study area. Breeding by this species within the study area is anticipated soon.

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 number of sightings throughout the study area continues to increase with 20 records being received 16th March – 26th October.
On 3 occasions 2 birds were seen soaring together during the spring at 3 different sites. It must only be a matter of time before breeding takes place.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Comments refer principally to the Durham uplands which are defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally to the west of Easting NZ10, up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire.
The Durham Upland Bird Study Group is grateful to the Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) for allowing NERF to reproduce their summary data.
The exceptionally wet spring and summer had a marked effect breeding success. One nest was lost at egg stage due to disturbance form nearby timber clearance and unusually four nests were lost due to the very wet conditions when the young were quite near to fledging. In one nest two of the young were blown out of the nest, one died but the other was taken into care and later released with apparent success. Five nestlings were wing tagged (Right wing – red tag with white alpha-numeric lettering; Left wing – pink).
Once again the vast majority of nests were close to the original release area. The population here can be described as stable over the last three years, but its failure to expand into adjacent areas, that are eminently suitable, is a concern. Clearly poor breeding success due to the weather will have a bearing on this.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
There were 25 records reported to a private website in 2012, distributed as follows:

J	F	M	A	M	J	Jy	A	S	O	N	D
	1			10	1	1		7	5		

Thirteen of these were seen at locations in the east, 11 in the west and one over Stretford in the centre of the county. The origin of only one was known, seen at Dovestones 27th May – this had a wing tag indicating it had been ringed in the East Midlands.
There is no suggestion of breeding, or even of birds holding territories, in the county.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Known sites in SE Northumberland receive annual monitoring.
Coverage of the rest of the county relies on casual records.

The Northumbrian Ringing Group is grateful to the work of Friends of Red Kite (FoRK) for its monitoring and data summary.

For the second successive year there were no confirmed breeding attempts or established pairs in south Northumberland adjoining the Durham original release area. This heightens concern that the core population seems constrained and unable to expand into eminently suitable habitat, as would be expected.

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.

Not only was the now regular pattern of wandering individuals repeated throughout the year but an unconfirmed late-season report of an apparent "pair" frequenting a particular moorland edge area gave rise to thoughts of a possible nesting attempt having occurred. However, hopes proved misplaced as the area concerned is well wardened by a more than competent fieldworker who found no evidence of the birds or nesting activity. Nonetheless, two birds together is an encouraging sign that the species is perhaps slowly moving this way towards achieving breeding status.

A bird was found poisoned in the Pickering area in March – subsequently taken into care. The incident was covered in the local press and condemned by the police. No culprit was identified.

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. The Group have increasingly recorded sightings of Red Kite in recent years, including several in 2013. Hopefully this species will breed within the Group's study area in the near future as there is no shortage of suitable breeding and feeding habitat.

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 of Red Kites in the study area are increasing and successful breeding remains a distinct possibility in the future within Derbyshire and the Peak District, both areas having plenty of suitable habitat. Red Kites bred in western Nottinghamshire in 2012 adjacent to our study area.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Good coverage of a large representative study area.

Despite one less territorial pair than 2011 there was an increase in the number of young fledged. This was despite finding one nest where we had been monitoring 3 young, then during high winds, the nest slipped and one of the young was found dead beneath the nest. There have been fewer sightings to the north but more to the north west taking them out of our area, and more sightings to the east. 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 are many more breeding pairs that we aren't aware of, so unfortunately this is not a truly representative study. A maximum of 45 birds at the communal winter roost and consecutive successful breeding seasons indicate that there are an estimated 50 to 60 Red Kites in this area.

2012 Yorkshire overall breeding figures are shown in the table below:

AREA	PAIRS FOUND	PAIRS BRED	PAIRS SUCC.	YOUNG
West Yorkshire	54(44)	53(39)	44 (33)	81 (66)
North Yorkshire	32 (29)	31(27)	26(19)	47(41)
East Yorkshire	8(9)	8(8)	8 (6)	17 (12)
Totals	**94(82)**	**92(74)**	**78 (58)**	**145 (119)**
Average number of young raised per successful pair = 1.86 (2.10) 2011 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. There are no records of Red Kites having bred in the YDUBSG area in 2012, whereas we have had several pairs in the past (with up to six pairs in Wharfedale). The disappearance of breeding pairs coincides with birds having been confirmed as primary poison victims in those immediate localities, as well as others no great distance away.

Poisoning in 2012

On 30/04/12 a live kite was found in a distressed state at Pateley Bridge with suspected alphachloralose poisoning. A blood sample was taken by a Harrogate vet at the request of NE but showed only rodenticide in an analysis performed by FERA (difenacoum, bromadiolone and brodifacoum). Failure to find alphachloralose was attributed to the delay between finding the bird and sampling.

On 12/05/12 a dead kite was found on Fountains Earth Moor adjacent to Lofthouse Moor cattle grid on a small rabbit bait. Both the bait and the kite tested positive for carbofuran, isofenphos and bendiocarb. (Interestingly this distinctive combination of poisons was also found in May 2008 in a poisoned male White-tailed Eagle on the Glenquoich Estate, Angus.) The bird also tested positive for the rodenticides difenacoum, bromadiolone and brodifacoum.

Fountains Earth Moor Red Kite

On 06/11/12 a dead Cumbrian kite was found dead near Blubberhouses, poisoned with alphachloralose. The bird also tested positive for the rodenticides difenacoum, bromadiolone and brodifacoum.

These are the thirteenth to fifteenth poisoned Red Kites found in the Nidderdale and Washburn areas since 2000. That all birds also contained second generation rat poisons, is of considerable ongoing concern.

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.
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.
In 2012 there are four known cases of poisoning to report, with more just outside the NERF study area, one in the North York Moors and three in the Yorkshire Dales (see above).
It is clear that the tradition of using illegal poisoned baits is alive and well in grouse moor areas in North Yorkshire. However, the confirmation of the presence of the three commonly used second-generation rodenticides in three of four NERF area birds tested in 2012 is a cause for serious concern, especially brodifacoum which is currently licensed for secure indoor use only. The licensed usage of rodentices is currently under review - one expectation being that whilst brodifacoum might be licensed for outdoor use, it would, in common with difenacoum and bromadiolone, only be permitted for use around buildings. This would preclude gamekeepers using it in their game crops - a common source of rats and, it is believed, sources of poisoned rats which are eaten by kites (and also other scavenging species) (1)
There also remains 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.

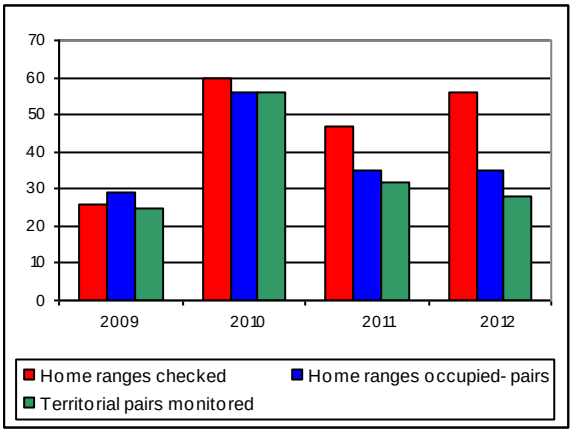
WARNING:

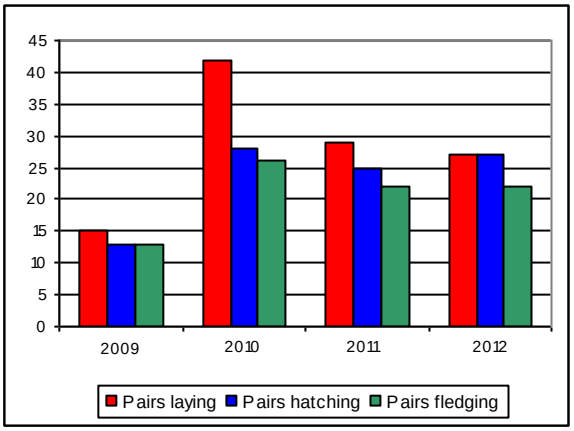
Some poisons are exceptionally toxic and can be absorbed directly through the skin. Raptor Workers finding a dead Red Kite, or any other species suspected to have been poisoned, should exercise extreme caution before handling a carcass. Butyl gloves offer some protection and may be used. However standard, 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.yorkshireredkites.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=13

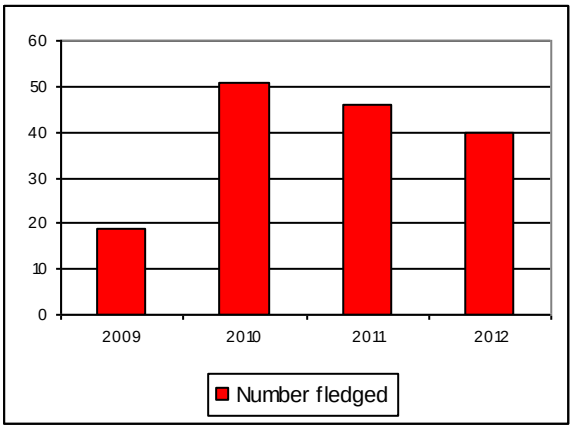
It is essential that all suspected poisoning incidents are reported to the local Police and that an incident number is obtained. The cause of death will be determined by either the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [PBMS], telephone 01524 959830 or the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme [WIIS] telephone 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 0845 466 3636 at other times. Sick or injured birds can be reported to the RSPCA, telephone 0300 1234 999.
All telephone numbers correct at 1 April 2013.

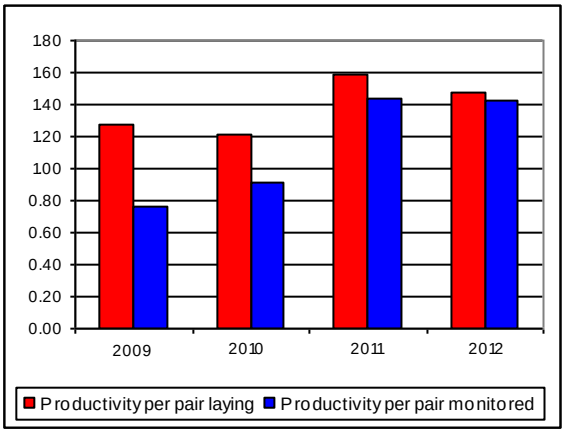
(1)Information supplied by Doug Simpson, Project Leader of Yorkshire Red Kites.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

UK population estimate

The latest APEP estimate is 320-380 pairs, 2006-2010 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3. *British Birds* 106 February 2013). A five-year mean of 381 pairs (2007-11) was reported to RBBP

(Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554).

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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored thru' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
NRG	1	1+2nd F	0	1 + poss 2nd F	1	1 + poss 2nd F 1	1	1	2	2.00	2.00
Totals	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2

See below for clarification

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Several sightings of this species usually occur each year in spring. Notably these are mainly females.

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. With 10 sightings 2012 was a record year for his species in Calderdale.
There was just one sighting in spring with the remainder, believed to involving 8 individuals, occurring in autumn. One juvenile remained in the vicinity of Walshaw Dean from 28th August through to the 1st September.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Almost all records referred to lowland sites, especially the North Tees Marshes, as collated by members of the Durham Bird Club. There was an isolated breeding record for the county in 1996, though with over-wintering recently established and in excess of 50 records this

summer it must surely now be only a matter of time before breeding becomes established on a consistent basis. Birds do occur in upland areas and a 2nd calendar year male was seen hunting an area of moorland for a few days in late April.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of Coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
For the third year running, an elusive female appeared to summer on the constituent mosslands forming Chat Moss, but as this bird was considered to be a 2nd calendar year, it was probably not the same individual as in previous years. There were 5 passage records in spring, and 6 in autumn, with a December bird moving between a large former coal mining site and Pennington Flash in mid December.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
One male had two females. Due to weather conditions the second female (who had probably laid eggs) failed just before hatching time. The 'A' pair hatched 3 young from 4 eggs and fledged 2 young (one died before fledging).

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.
Passage individuals mirrored the usual pattern of occurrence of this species throughout the study area but birds are being recorded more regularly into the summer period now and Group members genuinely believe that confirmation of a nesting pair in the North York Moors will be obtained 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.
This species is not known to breed within the Group's study area. The Group did however 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.
Birds on spring and autumn passage were again noted from the study area, mainly in April and May and from late July through to September. There remains little likelihood of any breeding in our study area, yet it is interesting that the upland areas are used on migration.

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.
Recorded on passage in both Wharfedale and Nidderdale with at least five different birds in the latter area during autumn.

NERF regional summary

Only the Northumbrian Ringing Group reported a successful breeding attempt in 2012. However, most other NERF Groups observed passage migrants in spring and autumn.

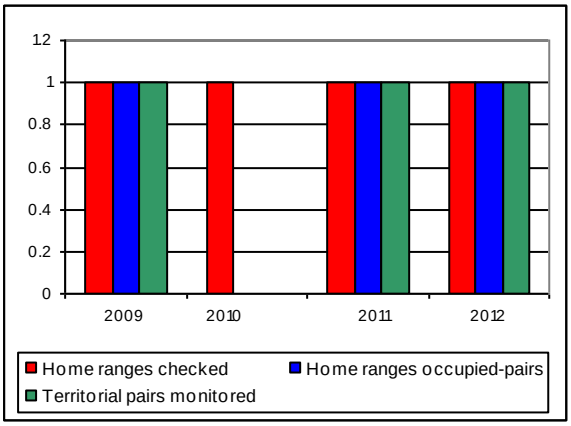
Wing-tagging project

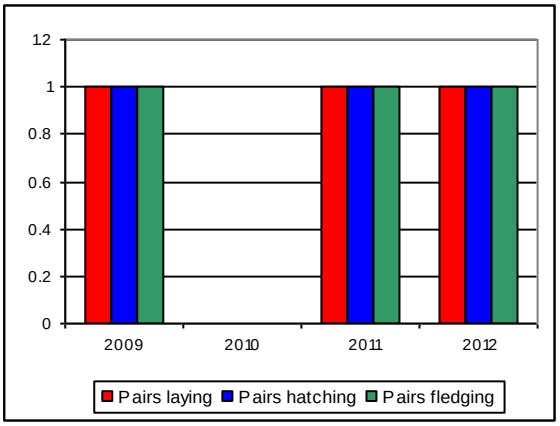
In 2011 Phil Littler commenced a wing tagging project in Norfolk where the current population is estimated to be in excess of 100 females. During the first season 14 birds were fitted with green wing tags from which there have been 3 confirmed sightings; a success rate of c.22%.

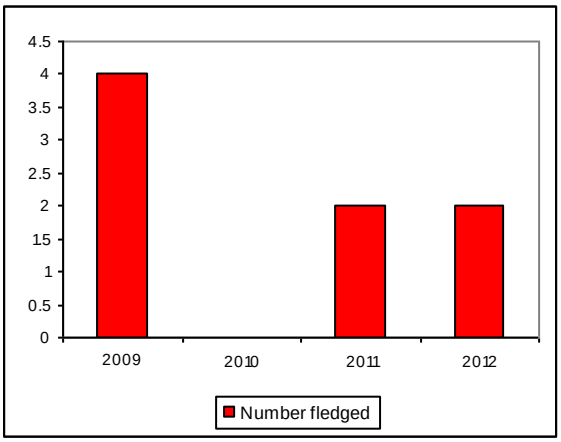
Following on from this success there are plans to expand the research area to include both the Norfolk Broads and the north Norfolk coast.

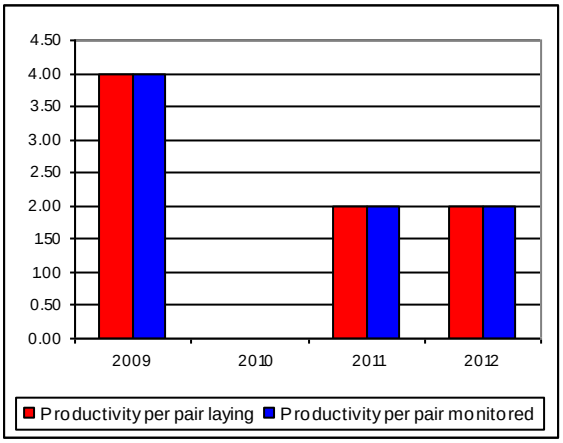
Phil would welcome sightings of any birds seen in the NERF region. Sightings should be forwarded to Phil at phillittler10@yahoo.co.uk , or by mobile on 07748 556758. Please include the tag number, letter and number, time and date, location, including the grid reference if possible, age and sex in the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

Comparative data 2009-2012









Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

UK population estimate

The latest estimate is 630-660 pairs with a declining trend. The vast majority of the population is in Scotland with much smaller numbers in Wales and the Isle of Man. (NE survey 2010, Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013)

Conservation status

UK	Red
European	3: Concern, most not in Europe; depleted
Global	Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

The principal factor which determines the breeding range and population across the moorland of northern England is persecution. Studies suggest the moorland habitat is capable of naturally carrying in excess of 300 pairs and yet, with the underlying ecology remaining favourable the species has been all but eliminated. Unless and until persecution by individuals associated with the grouse shooting industry is brought to a halt there is little, if any, possibility that the English Hen Harrier population will return and be rightfully enjoyed by future generations.

The collapse of the Environment Council-led Hen Harrier Dialogue means that future prospects now lie formally and entirely with Natural England and DEFRA's Upland Stakeholder Group, which is due to publish its Emergency Recovery Plan. The issues with the grouse shooting industry are deep rooted but surely the UK government cannot preside over the eradication of a species from EU designated Special Protection Areas in the northern uplands. The Hen Harrier is listed as a citation species for the North Pennine SPA and its loss would also infringe UK Biodiversity objectives.

Meanwhile the RSPB are pursuing a Hen Harrier recovery initiative which is to be applauded.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSG	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRMG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YDUBSG	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage, all or most sites are monitored annually.
Several males and females (including the bird christened "*Bowland Betty*") were seen at several sites in the early part of the season, and some remained throughout, but no pairs were formed and there were no breeding attempts. Sky dancing was witnessed at just two locations, for only one day each, after which the males moved on. Large areas of suitable and traditionally productive habitat within the study area remained void of any breeding attempt.
The United Utilities Bowland Estate has been the only area within the study range, and indeed across the whole of northern England, to have regularly held breeding Hen Harriers in recent years. 2012 therefore marks a particularly low ebb in the fortunes of this charismatic raptor which rightfully should grace our upland landscapes.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas
Level of monitoring: Good annual coverage but not known to occur as a breeding species.
Hen Harrier activity in Calderdale is indicative of much of that exhibited across other uplands in England. There are vast swathes of eminently suitable heather moor habitat in the study area with sufficient prey to hold several pairs. However; the breeding population here remains steadfastly at zero and there were no records for the late spring and high summer periods.
This species only occurs as an autumn passage migrant and an occasional winter visitor. During 2012 there were 20 records during autumn and winter with a minimum of 2 birds occupying a traditional roost on 3 dates in November.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage, all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.

Despite extensive monitoring of large tracts of suitable habitat for this and other species there were no reported nesting attempts nor any evidence of pairs or single birds trying to establish territory in spring or summer.
Birds still present from the late winter of 2011 remained in the eastern coastal strip during the first quarter of the year with 5 or more birds counted. There were occasional sightings of single birds in the uplands at this time. Autumn brought reports of one to 5 birds from three upland areas and their presence appear to hold until at least the year end.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage but not known to occur as a breeding species.
All records related to migrant ringtails. The visible migration watch point in the Winter Hill / Smithills Moor area provided a useful indication of movements throughout the year with single birds passing on 13th Jan and 15th Apr and seven reports between 22nd Sep and 21st Oct, each involving singles except for 2 seen on 12th Oct. Elsewhere, individuals were reported on 3rd Feb and 7th May and there were four further autumn reports of singles between 3rd and 26th Oct including a bird which hunted a finch flock in un-harvested oilseed rape at Barton Moss over 10th-11th.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study
The only reports came from the Border Forest area where single ringtails were seen on one date in May and another in July.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Good coverage; a large representative study area monitored.
As well as the four past breeding sites, known from the 1990's, almost 70% of suitable habitat in the North York Moors was visited with no positive outcomes. Casual sightings of birds outside of the breeding season, mainly in late autumn and winter are becoming less frequent which seems to underline the current parlous state of populations in northern England.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.
Given the breeding status of Hen Harrier in England, all sightings of single birds were diligently followed up with repeat visits; unfortunately no breeding behaviour was noted.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.
All suitable territory was checked in the study area and the locations of any sighting of individual birds were revisited as a matter of priority. No breeding behaviour was noted. A second-summer male frequented the north Staffordshire moors, roaming far and wide and was last seen in late June.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage.
There were no reports to suggest any breeding was attempted

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.
All areas where harriers have bred since 2000 were checked and none were seen. Estimates suggest the Dales have enough habitat to support at least ten pairs. A few birds had wintered, including "Bowland Betty" which returned to the area in early summer only to be found dead in early July on the Swinton Estate.

NERF regional summary

NERF's very first Annual Review covered the 2009 breeding season, although its foundation was the experiences and knowledge of individual raptor study group members, most of whom had studied this and other species in their own areas for 20 years or more. The 2009 review noted that "*the Hen Harrier was probably the most persecuted bird of prey in the UK. In England there was just a tiny stronghold left on the Bowland Fells with sporadic isolated pairs elsewhere, leaving it perilously close to extinction as an English breeding species*". Move forward a mere 3 seasons, and this prediction seems depressingly closer still. With no breeding attempts in Bowland in 2012 (compared to 6 pairs in 2011) and only one successful English nest the downward spiral has continued. The pattern of birds failing even to display and form bonds in the early part of the breeding season is typical of a species whose population is under stress. Recruitment rates into the potential breeding populations of northern England have fallen to dangerously low levels.
The only successful nest in England occurred in Cumbria, outside of the NERF recording area. Four young were fledged, two of which were followed through satellite tracking. Their signals were lost in two areas, both within Wensleydale, North Yorks, in early September 2012 and October 2012 respectively.
The fate of 'Bowland Betty' found shot on a Yorkshire moor in the summer of 2012 was a prominent but almost certainly not an isolated incident. Using ground breaking techniques scientists at the Zoological Society of London, together with support from the UCL Institute of Orthopaedics and Musculoskeletal Science proved unequivocally that 'Bowland Betty' had been shot. Despite the evidence, some members of the shooting community continue to deny the fact that the bird had been shot. Denials of this nature do nothing to lend hope that a solution to Hen Harrier problem of persecution will be found in the near future.
Whilst the sad demise of 'Bowland Betty' served to raise the profile of Hen Harrier persecution there is no doubt that this persecution was not an isolated incident and birds present in to the NERF study area remain very vulnerable.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

UK population estimate

The five-year mean reported to RBBP 2007-11 is 445 breeding pairs (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554). This is in excess of the latest population estimate from APEP: 280-420 pairs, 2006-2010 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106: February 2013).

Conservation status

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 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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	NC	NC	NC	NC
CRSG	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	-
DUBSG	7	5	1	2	3	3	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NRG Northumberland	50	35	0	10	25	21	14	11	19	0.90	0.76
NRG Cumbria	6	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2.00	1.00
PDRSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-
SPRSG	11	11	0	5	6	6	4	4	9	1.50	1.50
Total	81	56	2	18	38	32	20	16	30	0.94	0.79

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage
At least one pair attempts to breed in the study area each year, usually without success. A pair was seen carrying prey into a large forest block which was in the process of being felled. We were unable to enter the site due to health and safety issues but the forestry agreed to fell the trees in the area of the nest last, which they did. The outcome of the breeding attempt was unknown. Breeding at this site is prevented usually before eggs have been laid.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
Geographically the territory, formed by the junction of two very steep, rocky and heavily wooded valleys adjacent to a grouse moor, favoured by Goshawk in the Group's study area is extremely difficult to survey. Consequently monitoring takes place from a vantage point approximately 1.5 kilometres away and despite many hours of searching, over a number of years, the nest(s), if they exist, have not been found.
Between 18th March and 18th May 2 or 3 birds were occasionally seen together over this territory with a 4th individual being sighted on 1 occasion. The resident party of 3 consisted of an adult male and female together with a 2nd calendar year male. The adult male and female were seen displaying on 21st March and the young male was observed displaying on 8th April. The 4th bird, an un-aged female, was observed displaying, unsuccessfully, on 13th May. Despite a constant effort being maintained there were no sightings of any of these birds reported after 18th May and the outcome of these early season displays remains unknown.
This pattern of birds returning in spring and displaying mirrors previous years when the birds have subsequently 'disappeared' mid-season for no discernible reason. In previous years adults have been seen in the same area with asymmetrical wing damage, which is indicative of having been shot. Therefore without evidence to the contrary persecution cannot be discounted.
There were 2 other records from different parts of the study area of birds passing through.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Most records involve aerial display in springtime over coniferous forest blocks. There appears to be 3 small centres of population in the west of the county. In some cases the display appears to be associated with juvenile birds which do not go on to attempt to breed. The evidence from concerted periods of observation suggested 5 "possible" breeding pairs but of these only 3 pairs "probably" bred although in each case the final outcomes were not clear. Some parts of the population may be subject to persecution.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
No breeding records known, but it could be possible that some are withheld.

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 for Goshawk includes a small section of eastern Cumbria in addition to study areas in Northumberland. As usual the group worked closely with the Forestry Commission to ensure that no breeding attempts were disturbed by forestry operations.
In 2012 the total number of territories checked by the group was 56 with 38 occupied sites. Unfortunately, due to the very wet summer, productivity was very low - the 34 pairs monitored throughout the season only raised 0.81 young each. The exceptionally wet conditions meant that chicks were recorded as dying even at an age of 25 days plus – unusually late for chick mortality to occur.

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.
The fieldworkers who undertake the monitoring of this species in the North York Moors do not wish their data for 2012 to be published. Evidence that the species is starting to spill out from its forest strongholds in the south-east was obtained from a pair that nested successfully in a relatively small conifer wood some miles to the north of the study area.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
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.
In Upper Derwentdale three pairs were present. At the first site eggs were laid but the nest was pulled down from the tree and the eggs were found on the ground. At a second site the pair failed in strange circumstances; after failure was confirmed, the nest was visited and found to contain nine eggs; these were analysed and found to come from the same female. It would appear likely that this bird had 'lost' two male partners during the season, a probable sign of persecution. At the third site a pair was present early in the season and display was seen, but no nesting attempt was discovered and the birds were not seen later in the season.

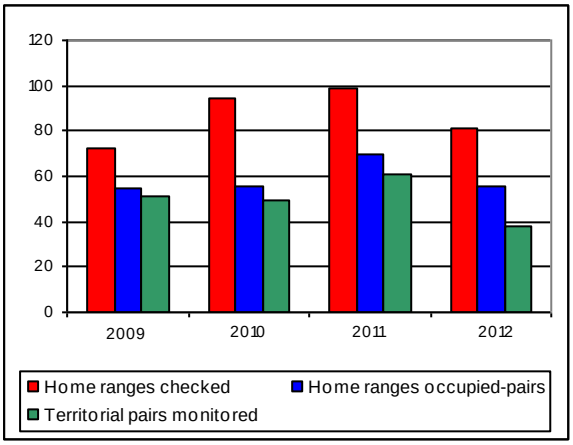
Elsewhere in the SPRSG recording area four pairs fledged nine young, but birds were unsuccessful at four further sites, including one where unwitting forestry operations during the spring and summer appear to have contributed to the failure of the pair, which was present early in the year.

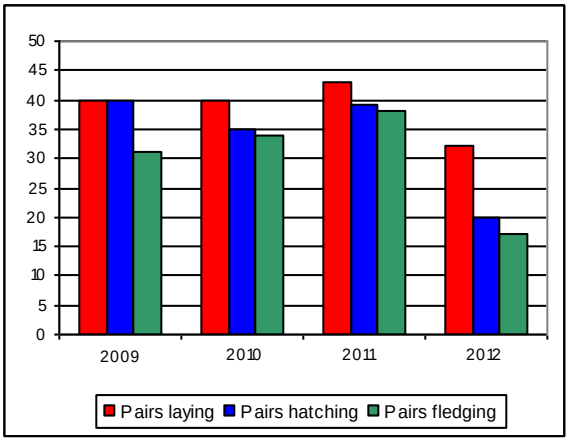
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland
Level of monitoring: Occurs here as a breeding species.
This species has never been properly monitored within the Dales, although casual records of display and birds carrying prey later in the season would suggest that there was a peak of 9-11 pairs displaying in the late eighties and early nineties with a subsequent decline. Most nesting woods were small and were often between grouse moor and lower land. In 2012 a male and female were seen throughout the season at a site in mid Wharfedale but there was no evidence of breeding success. In Upper Nidderdale a single female was reliably seen on one date in late August in the same territory as birds were seen in 2011. A bird or birds were reported from a third site in the Upper Washburn but records from this site are dogged by the problem of misidentification and are not considered wholly reliable.

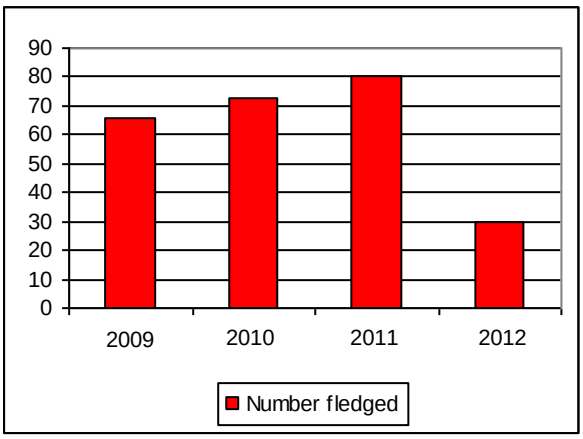
NERF regional summary

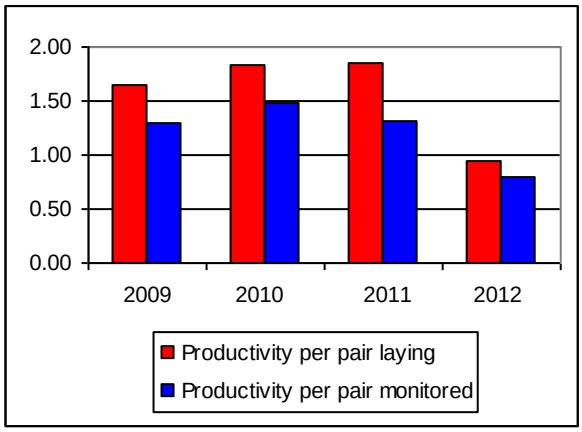
Once again the two main Goshawk study areas for which we have complete data, one in the South Peak area and one in Northumberland (which includes part of eastern Cumbria), contain the majority of the breeding birds in the NERF area (although the number of birds in the North York Moors is not available for inclusion).
NERF groups checked fewer territories in 2012 that the previous year but about the same proportion, 69% (71% in 2011) were occupied by pairs. Productivity was drastically reduced with only 30 young fledging compared with 80+ in 2011. The low numbers of birds fledging in the NRG area was attributed to unfavourable weather conditions however, persecution and disturbance of nesting birds, were contributory factors in SPRSG study.
The poor success of Goshawk in Bowland, CRSG, PDRSG and YDUBSG is strongly suspected to be as a result of persecution with birds' absence from territories completely or disappearing from territories early in the nesting season.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

UK population estimate

In 2009 the population was estimated at 33000-35000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3 *British Birds* 106 February 2013). The BTO's BBS report for 2012 in England showed a 27% increase 2011-12, but a 4% decrease in the period 1995-2011.

National and regional threat assessment

Sparrowhawks can be predated by both pine marten and larger raptors such at 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

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
CRSG	9	6	NC	NC	0	1	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	75	75	NC	NC	25	25	25	17	15*	0.6	0.6
NRG	20	14	NC	3	11	NC	8	4	7	NC	0.64
PDRSG	18	18	NC	5	18	13	12	12	28	2.15	1.56
Total	122	113	0	8	54	39	45	33	50	1.28	0.92

* *Minimum number of fledged young, actual number not recorded*.

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.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
At the start of the season 9 territories were checked by Group members and 6 of these were found to be occupied by pairs and observed making display flights. One of the Group's members reported 7 birds soaring together at one traditionally occupied site.
Unfortunately due to other commitments only one of these nests was monitored during the early part of the season. From the behaviour of this one pair they are believed to have laid eggs; however the number is not known. No further monitoring took place and it is not known whether any Sparrowhawks in Group's study area successfully fledged young.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland, part lowland
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
This species is not subject to any particular monitoring in the Durham uplands. There were widespread reports via the Durham Bird Club including display in the lowlands first being noted on 19th January.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs through to fledging
An analysis of 523 sightings taken from BBS, a private website, MRG members, and Leigh OS Newsletters revealed an estimate of 74 territories (i.e. sites where there were records in the period April to July and which were considered to contain suitable habitat for breeding). Of these, 24 were known or considered to have laid eggs, and 16 were known to have fledged young, although the actual number of young was only known in 6 cases and the young fledged per pair was probably far more than 0.6. One pair fledged 5 young.

Northumberland Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Again only one study area, the Border forest of Kielder - a very poor year was recorded with only 7 young fledging. This was put down to the very wet summer with rain most days in the study area during the breeding season. Of the pairs which nested, most failed early but at least one failed on chicks 18-22 days old and another nest had its tree felled at the egg stage.

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.
Although no monitoring of this species takes place, it is something of a mystery why Group members do not lock-on to breeding pairs in the course of their normal fieldwork routines. Birds are observed with enough frequency at other times of the year to remove any concerns as regards the health of the North York Moors population. Most certainly Goshawks have to a large extent forced Sparrowhawks out of the body of the forests but there is still habitat available to the smaller species around the fringes. Pairs undoubtedly nest in both conifer and deciduous woodlands.

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.
The weather played a major part in limiting both the monitoring activity and the success of the breeding birds with a number of attempts failing at egg/small young stage.
Two recoveries were reported in 2012:
A male Sparrowhawk ringed near Wharncliffe, South Yorkshire on 8th July 2012, one of a brood of 3 (DD47894**)** was recovered dead on 1st October 2012 (85 days after being ringed) 3km from the nest site. Cause of death – Road collision.
A female Sparrowhawk ringed near Haigh Greave, South Yorkshire on the 30th June 2012, one of a brood of 6 (EY19901**)** was recovered dead on 4th October 2012 (96 days after being ringed) near Thurlstone, South Yorkshire, 11km from the nest site. Cause of death – Hitting glass.

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 down from 110 in 2011 to just 45 in 2012; this is partly due to reported difficulties for both the breeding Sparrowhawk and difficulties for fieldworkers monitoring nests and counting fledged young in an unusually wet summer. These difficulties have had a severe impact on the accuracy of the table data particularly for young fledged per pair laying eggs and pair monitored.

The wet weather in 2012 certainly seems to have resulted in a less productive breeding season for Sparrowhawk, but we don't believe it was as unsuccessful as the table suggests.

A long-term study by the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group was conducted between 1985 and 2005 and involved c.100 pairs.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

UK population estimate

In 2009 the population was estimated to be between 56000 and 77000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3 *British Birds* 106 February 2013). The BTO's BBS report 2012 for England shows a 12% increase 2011-12 and a 167% increase 1995-2011.

Conservation status

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 Stakeholder Group meeting and subsequently submitted that there is no evidence to support any such controls. However, the NGA also contended that Buzzards are at 98% of the species' 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 York 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)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
CRSG	8	7	1	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	64	56	NC	NC	21	NC	NC	19	23	NC	1.09
MRG	114	114	NC	NC	23	23	21	21	25	1.09	1.09
NRG	154	129	NC	NC	66	NC	NC	46	69	NC	1.05
NYMRSG	3	3	4	NC	0	3	3	3	NC	NC	NC
PDRSG	34	34	NC	8	26	26	18	18	32	1.23	1.23
YDUBSG	21	14	NC	0	6	5	5	4	5	1.00	0.83
Total	399	358	5	8	143	58	48	112	156	2.69	1.09

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs
Many unmonitored pairs breed mainly on the in-bye land surrounding the core monitored area, and appear to be doing well. A lack of pairs breeding in the hills could relate to persecution but there is no direct evidence to substantiate this.

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 group did not undertake a breeding survey in 2012 however 168 reports were received across Calderdale. The majority of these records came from the uplands in the study area but interestingly the number of sightings in the south east lowlands increased. Generally records were mainly of 1 or 2 birds but 4 were noted from several sites on a number of occasions and 5 were together over Elland Gravel Pits in mid-April.
In spring, birds were seen carrying food into woodland near Hardcastle Crags and displaying over Elland Park Wood and Walshaw. Although no display was noted at Castle Carr the regular pair was present.

Whilst the species was not surveyed in 2012 and it is impossible to quantify the breeding success, the indications are that breeding did occur and overall the numbers are increasing. There is ample suitable habitat, the threat from persecution is relatively small and there is no reason why the species should not continue to prosper.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study
Although the number of recorded territories with birds was only slightly down on last year, the exceptionally wet spring and early summer had an impact on monitoring activity by observers and on the pairs which went on to breed. Little data was collected regarding egg laying. Late summer groupings of up to 10 birds in a few sites suggested that the actual numbers of fledged birds exceeded those which had been picked up through monitoring in those localities.
Reports from the uplands only constituted c.26% of all the Buzzard reports submitted to the County Bird Club in 2012 [c.800 in total] confirming the species' continued consolidation in the lowland east of Durham.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs
The data in the table was derived from 850 records from the ornithological societies of Manchester and Leigh and the BBS, and territories were assigned where there was at least one sighting in the period March to August. Nest histories were known in very few cases because of the difficulties of detailed observation. Proof of breeding was assumed when family parties were seen after fledging. Most pairs whose full history was known only managed to fledge one young this year.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only
Level of monitoring: Good coverage: at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.
There are three study areas in Northumberland :-
In the Border Forest – 71 sites were occupied. 51 nests were found of which 17 failed and 34 nests fledged 44 young.
In the South Cheviots/ MOD land – 15 sites were occupied. 12 nests fledged 25 young.
In North Cheviots – 43 sites were occupied but no further details were submitted.

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
It is difficult to assess the species' current breeding status as no specific monitoring is carried out. Reports received indicate birds being seen with increasing frequency in virtually all parts of the study area but particularly across the southern and western parts. Fledging was recorded at 3 sites but the numbers were not noted.
A gamekeeper was arrested by police in late October after a Buzzard was found in a trap and a pigeon as bait in another. The incident received wide coverage in the local press and was roundly condemned by the police.

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.

The wet weather resulted in a number of nests failing. Notably at some nests adults were recorded present but the young were dead in the nest. Successful sites adjacent to grouse moors were again few and far between. In these areas Buzzard is a "black hole" species but away from the grouse moors it continues to do well.
Two ringing recoveries occurred, both involving 2012 pulli: one was hit by a train 75km WNW 89 days after being ringed; another bird was found 2km from the nest site 131 days after ringing.

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
The detailed results are from the one long-term study based in the south east of the recording area and the number of territories checked represents a minimum figure. Elsewhere 5 pairs held territory in Upper Nidderdale with 3 vacant, and 3 around the Masham moors with 4 vacant. The outcome of any breeding in those areas is unknown. Birds remain relatively scarce in much of the north of the study area notably Swaledale, Arkengarthdale, Walden and Bishopdale.

NERF regional summary

Although no significant change in status within the Study Groups' respective areas was noted in 2012, it is still considered that localised persecution lies behind otherwise inexplicable absences from eminently suitable habitat or sudden disappearances from previously productive sites. In some areas there is an apparent correlation between these gaps and proximity to grouse moors.
Regionally, further consolidation into the lowland areas of northern England into the species' historical range areas continues.
NERF continues to be represented on the national Buzzard Stakeholder Group and maintained its position in respect of any proposal to 'control' Buzzards in any area – ie. that any derogation should be based on agreed tests and would require sound science to demonstrate that a problem existed.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

UK population estimate

In 2011, RBBP received records of 189-225 pairs, with 12 pairs nesting in England (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554).
APEP 3 estimates 200-250 pairs, 2006-10 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013)

Conservation status

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 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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
NRG	3	3	0	1	3	2	2	2	3	1.5	1

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Ospreys are seen in small numbers every year passing through. Odd birds stay to feed on Stocks Reservoir, (the largest body of water in the study area), for a day or two before moving north. In 2012 there were several sightings reported and a tagged bird was observed from 3rd - 21st July and then again from 14th -18th August.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Osprey only occurs in the Calderdale study area as a passage migrant in spring and autumn.
There were two reports of migrants flying over Calderdale in 2012, both heading to their breeding grounds in the north. The first was sighted on 1st April nearby Crimsworth Dean. The second was observed 9 days later crossing the study area via Lee Mount on the outskirts of Halifax.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur as a breeding species in the county
Birds were again seen quite widely on spring passage across the whole county with over 20 records, the first being 29th March. A pair was briefly present at a potential breeding site at an upland reservoir in the spring. A single bird lingered at this same site during the summer.
Autumn saw evidence of return passage from more northerly breeding sites.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
All records referred to migrants, with 20 sightings in the spring period relating to 17 birds, and just 2 in the early autumn. The first bird was seen 24th March and the first week in April accounted for 7 records with 4 on 3rd, almost certainly different birds. One stayed at Pennington Flash 3rd-7th, and a bird seen at Horwich early on 20th May heading SE was probably the same at Elton Resr 20 minutes later. A bird which was either a late migrant or an early returner was at Lower Bredbury 7th July.
In the autumn, one was on the Greater Manchester/ Derbyshire border for 2 weeks in mid to late August, spending most of its time at Arnfield Resr in Derbyshire. The last was at Dovestone Resr 4th September.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Three territories were occupied by pairs in Kielder Forest, although one pair did not lay any eggs. Both the other two nests had nest cameras installed. Although both pairs laid and hatched three eggs they both suffered brood reduction with young chicks dying due to the sustained very wet weather. One nest fledged one young and the other two.
The now usual good passage of migrants during spring and autumn was noted across 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.
There was the usual occurrence of passage individuals in both spring and autumn at the prime sites of attraction – Scaling Dam and Lockwood Beck reservoirs. Two birds were recorded together at the latter site in August. Individuals have been known to summer in the North York Moors in the past, but not for some years now.

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.

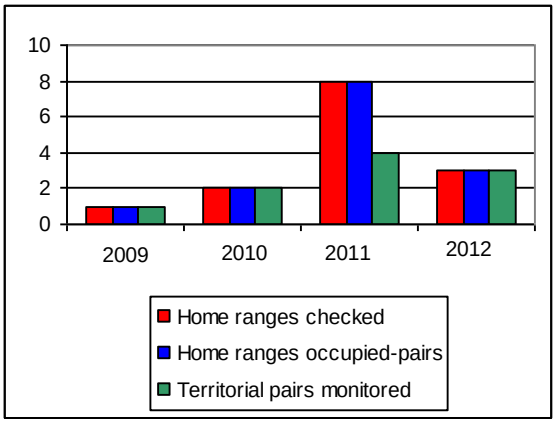
South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Ospreys are only rarely recorded in the study area during spring and autumn passage.

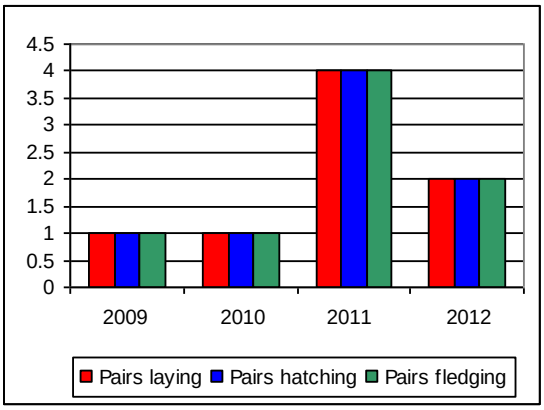
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Occurs as a regular passage bird especially in spring throughout the Dales.

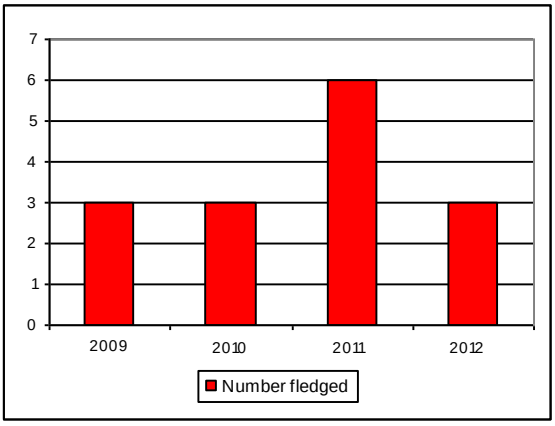
NERF regional summary

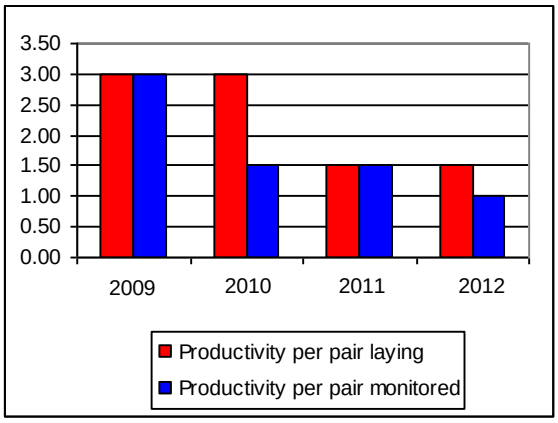
The breeding birds in Northumberland were the only ones monitored by NERF in 2012 (previous reports contain information from Cumbria).
Despite prospects of an increase in breeding pairs in Northumberland during 2012 this did not materialise. Two pairs successfully bred and another pair occupied an artificial nest but failed to breed (as in 2011).
Again as in 2011 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 2009-2012









Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

UK population estimate

In 2007 the British summer population was estimated by BTO to be between 53,000 and 58,000. The recent UK population estimate of the species reported in APEP 3 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013) was 46,000 individuals, the second most numerous raptor after the Buzzard, whose population was estimated to be between 56,000 and 79,000. This would equate to a decline of between 12% - 20%. The 2012 BBS Report showed a decline in England of 23% in 2011-2012, and a 15% decline 1995-2011.

Conservation status

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

National threat assessment

The Kestrel population fluctuates and the fluctuation is linked closely to the availability of prey, largely voles etc., which contributes c.75% 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. 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 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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	8	4	4
CRSG	12	10	NC	1	4	4	4	4	8	2.00	2.00
MRG	93	93	NC	1	28	28	25	25	59+	2.11	2.11
NRG	37	16	0	0	12	12	11	11	39+	3.25	3.25
NYMRSG	22	3	1	0	3	3	3	3	14	4.66	4.66
PDRSG	12	8	0	1	8	8	4	1	5	0.63	0.63
Total	178	132	1	3	57	57	49	46	133	2.33	2.33

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.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
Although 10 pairs were known to occupy territories at the start of the breeding season the group was only able to monitor 4 pairs throughout. Whilst extrapolating data has pitfalls, the group is confident in predicting that the number of chicks fledging within the study area would have been double the actual number recorded in the overall table.

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, which are defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally to the west of Easting NZ10, up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire.

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. The number of territories (93) was estimated from 656 records garnered from a private website, BBS, Leigh O.S. newsletters, and members. Peter and Norma Johnson monitored 9 pairs in their long-running box study (5 pairs in 2011) which produced 30 young, but one clutch of 4 was predated. The number of young is undoubtedly an under-estimate as many nest sites could not be checked and the apertures were usually too small to see the full number of young present. The species is however undoubtedly still under-recorded.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
The Border Forest had a very poor year with only 2 nesting pairs fledging 2 young; the South Cheviots / MOD area had 4 pairs fledging 7+ young, while in the Lowlands 7 pairs fledged 30 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 RG nest box scheme (data shown in table below) shows results from this study which were very similar to those for 2011. It is however rather worrying that the species has not shown any recovery from the 50% loss of pairs from 2010.
A separate nest box scheme (the G. Myers nest box scheme) is a gradually expanding scheme to the west of the moors extending on to the Tees Plain. These latter boxes are actually outwith the study area of the NYMMSG. However, results from them were as follows: 6 boxes available, 3 occupied, 3 pairs laid eggs, 2 pairs fledged young, one brood failed and 8 young fledged.

Kestrel Annual Productivity Data – North York Moors

Large Nestbox Scheme

Year Band	*No. Sites*	*No. Occ*	*% Occ.*	*No. Succ*	*Young Ringd*	*Avg Per succ nest*	*Avg 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*
2012	*22*	*3*	*7.3*	*3*	*14*	*4.70*	*4.70*

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.
Common Kestrel was not monitored in detail in 2012, although a number of historic sites were noted as unoccupied. However 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.
SPRSG does not monitor the species in any widespread way but accepts that further study is warranted given the national decline suggested by the awarding of Amber conservation status.

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 by the group.

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 two groups undertake any detailed monitoring with the best results being produced by 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.

NERF regional threat assessment

The population is in decline nationally. However, because many of the NERF member Groups do not study this species in detail, the national decline may be being mirrored within the NERF region and going unnoticed.
There are no additional specific threats associated with this species in the NERF region, other than those experienced at the national level.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

UK population estimate

The 2008 population estimate was 900-1500 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013). Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011, *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554 gave a figure of 1160 breeding pairs based on a study by Ewing *et al*. (2011).

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

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 unseasonal 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 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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	15	10	0	4	6	6	6	3	6	1.00	1.00
CRSG	6	6	NC	1	2	2	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	75	31	1	0	31	31	30	25	85+	2.75	2.75
NRG	67	21	0	4	20	17	15	11	30	1.76	1.50
NYMRSG	37	14	3	3	14	11	10	10	35	3.18	2.50
PDRSG	14	12	0	1	5	4	4	3	10+	2.50	2.00
SPRSG	9	9	0	5	7	4	4	4	10+	2.50	1.43
YDUBSG	9	6	0	0	2	2	2	2	8	4.00	4.00
Total	232	109	4	18	87	77	71	58	184	2.39	2.11

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage

Some territories on the private estates were not checked this year because of poor weather conditions for long periods in the fells. Two broods of 4 failed due to heavy rain and low temperatures that persisted for several days at a critical time. The disappearance of pairs from some sites on private estates is ostensibly suspicious and suggests persecution may have been involved. One pair was predated by Crows but re-laid successfully.

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
Merlins rarely fare well in Calderdale and when they do the number of successful pairs and the numbers of young fledging fluctuate considerably. In 2010 just a single pair fledged 3 young. The following year productivity across the study area increased by 133% with 7 young fledging.
2012 started optimistically with a 50% increase in territories occupied by pairs, then the weather pattern deteriorated and in common with both other species and other study areas disaster struck. One pair deserted their nest early in the season. Only 2 of the 5 remaining nests were monitored and both of these failed when they abandoned eggs following days of torrential rain.
There was a glimmer of hope when a male was seen at a new site on 2nd May, carrying food to a female that was seen to leave a heather bed to take it from him. Unfortunately this nest was not located and outcome is unknown.
What started as an apparently good season, with 6 occupied territories, ended badly and the fluctuating fortunes of Calderdale's Merlin population continued.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring. Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
The exceptionally wet spring and early summer undoubtedly suppressed site occupancy and breeding success at several locations and yet, surprisingly, the species fared quite well overall with the final number of pairs breeding and young raised both being just less than the recent running average. Most pairs which failed appeared to lose small young to rain in early June. Sixty-four young were ringed.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Occasionally breeds; not monitored by group.
There were 55 records of wintering birds and migrants, the majority of the former occurring mostly on the western mosslands. Probable migrants were recorded from the viewpoint on Winter Hill on 14 days in September and October.
The only possible territorial birds were in the Winter Hill area where there were 3 sightings in the first half of April, and on Holcombe Moor on 30th April.

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.
Slightly fewer sites were checked this year - 67 - (75 in 2011) with 21 occupied compared to 26 in 2011.
Generally a poor breeding season with nests recorded as failing in all areas as a result of persistent wet and cold weather.

However, the border forest fared better than in 2011 when just 4 young fledged with 11 fledging this season.
Unusually, the adults at one traditional site were forced to vacate it due to constant harassment by Carrion Crows.

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.
Occupation of sites by pairs was down by 18% against 2011 and the number of pairs fledging young down by almost 24%, yet the average brood size per nesting pair was actually the highest for the region. The number of young produced, (35), was on reasonable par with totals for the previous 4 years which supports the fact that when pairs do nest, they almost invariably perform well in productivity terms. Worryingly, the abandonment of lowland sites continued with 3 regularly productive ones on a particular moor not occupied. Elsewhere 3 sites held single birds only, and another 3 were occupied by pairs that failed to nest. However, on the plus side of things one successful site was re-occupied after an absence of 9 years – so a crumb of encouragement. Surprisingly only one nest was considered to fall victim to the dreadful wet weather conditions – this at the egg stage.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study
The low number of occupied sites continues to cause concern, particularly those where promising early-season activity ceases for no obvious reason. Some traditional sites also seem to be suffering from intense habitat management.
In addition to the data in the table above, two unmonitored pairs were seen at known sites with at least one fledgling at each, the exact brood sizes not being determinable.
The poor weather conditions over much of the breeding season had a negative impact on both monitoring activity and breeding productivity.

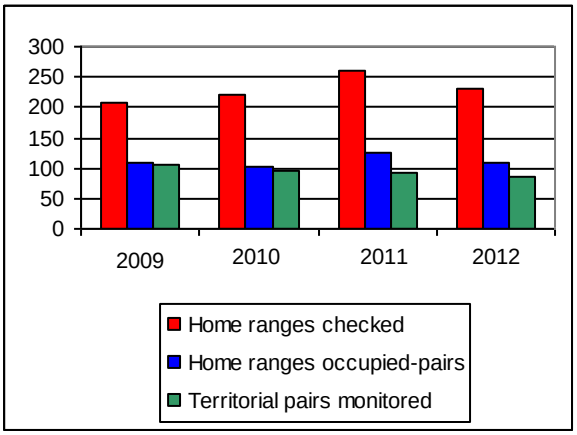
South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Pairs occupied 3 sites in the Upper Derwentdale area, 2 of which failed to nest: the third pair was successful but the actual number of fledged young could not be ascertained. In other parts of the Group's recording area, 6 sites were monitored, of which 3 were successful, with 9 young fledging. However, although birds were recorded sporadically at 2 of the 6 sites no breeding attempts were made, and at the third site the breeding attempt failed.
An immature male bird wearing a ring was photographed at a site in Staffordshire. The photo revealed some of the ring details which suggested the bird had been ringed at a site in Upper Derwentdale in 2011.

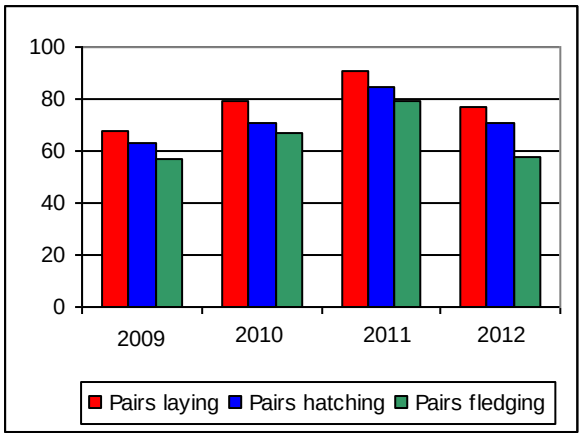
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Weather played an important role in that three sites in one study were occupied but were not revisited due to the inclement weather. In the other study area two territories were occupied (out of five checked) but only one nest monitored.

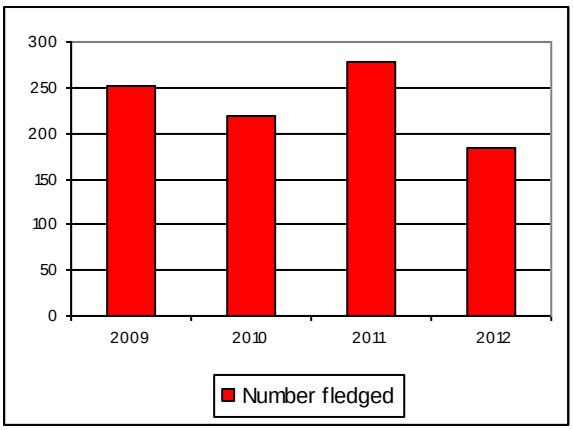
Summary

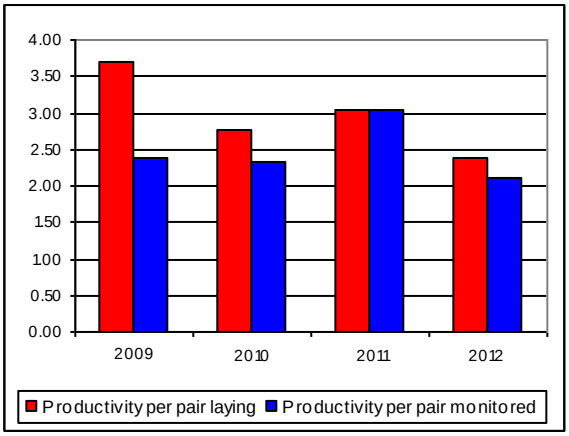
Considering the difficulties presented by the challenging weather over the breeding season, it is surprising Merlins coped as well as they did overall. However, concerns still exist over the general ongoing welfare of the species in some Groups' areas.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

UK population estimate

In 2009 the population was estimated at 2800 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013). However, RBBP submissions in 2011 were only 324-879 pairs, but the five-year mean was 1038 breeding pairs (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2011. *British Birds* 106: September 2013 496-554).

The BTO's BBS report for 2012 shows a 12% increase for England in 2011-2012, and a 19% increase 1995-2011.

Conservation status

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

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
CRSG	3	NC	2	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2.0	2.0
MRG	7	7	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	3	1.5	1.5
PDRSG	17	15	NC	NC	13	13	11	10	21	1.62	1.62
SPRSG	56	42	2	NC	37	37	37	37	73	1.97	1.74
Total	84	65	4	0	53	53	51	50	99	1.87	1.87

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.
Hobbies are known to be breeding in very small numbers on the in-bye land with some birds coming up into the hills to hunt hirundines.

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 16 records for this species during 2012, all of which occurred during the summer and early autumn.
One bird remained in the same valley in the south of the study area for 3 weeks from 18th June to 10th July. A juvenile was seen in the Luddenham Valley on 31th August. It is possible therefore that breeding did take place but went undiscovered.

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 was once again obtained by members of the Durham Bird Club. This site has now been successful for 4 consecutive years since recording the county's ever confirmed breeding in 2009.
Spring passage was evident from 8 May with the vast majority of subsequent records coming from lowland areas in the east. There was at least one report of an adult hunting open heather moorland in the west in July. It seems likely that breeding elsewhere in the county occurs without detection.

Comments refer principally to the Durham uplands which are defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally to the west of Easting NZ10 up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
No nests were found this year, and figures above for confirmed breeding are based on a family group seen over several days in an area where breeding has almost certainly occurred before, and a bird with prey in July in an area where there were other sightings in the breeding period. Other territories were determined by sightings at specific sites throughout the breeding season.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place.
The 2011 nest site was not checked in 2012 because of the constant wet weather.

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.
Fewer birds than in recent years were reported in summer in potential breeding areas. However, individuals were recorded regularly at one site to the west of the moors where they have been recorded in previous seasons. It is intended to erect several artificial nest platforms at the site in readiness for the 2013 breeding season in the hope of encouraging a nesting attempt. Historically Hobbies have bred in the past and given the inexorable northern expansion of their range in Britain in recent years, there must be pairs breeding undetected somewhere in the study area. Given that the Hobby is not a dedicated study species of the NYMMSG, proof of nesting, if, and when obtained will most probably be as a result of either fortuitous circumstance or success of the artificial nest platforms rather than targeted observation
Small numbers of migrants were recorded passing through the North York Moors in spring as usual.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Good coverage; at least 2 monitoring studies or large representative study area.
Two study areas outside of the Peak District, one in South Yorkshire and another in Cheshire. Both areas offer lowland mixed farmland habitat. The number of sightings in the upland areas continues to rise, but proving breeding for this elusive species is difficult.

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.
Anthony Messenger confirms that in his study area 26 sites were occupied by pairs, plus two sites apparently occupied by single birds. Of the 26 pairs, 21 were successful in fledging a minimum of 43 young (2.05 young per successful pair, slightly below the average of 2.30 for the previous 22 years). There was one definite failure, but the outcome for the remaining four pairs was uncertain, although it remains likely that one or two of these were also failures. A further 12 sites received insufficient coverage to be able to confirm whether these sites were occupied or not. 17 young were ringed from seven of the successful broods.

Over the past few years Anthony has strongly suspected that Hobbies have increased in density as well as spreading northwards. In a 100 sq km core area the mean number of pairs for the three years 1999, 2000, 2001 was 3.67 compared 8.67 for the three years 2010, 2011 and 2012, thus confirming his observations.
In North Derbyshire, Roy Frost, Mick Lacey and Mick Taylor found a further 16 pairs breeding and at least 30 juveniles were seen at these sites during late August and early September. An adult pair was seen at another site with no proof of breeding.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species, but no monitoring takes place.
Hobbies have probably bred in the Dales in recent years, based on occurrence pattern. However during 2012 birds were only seen on passage in spring and autumn, and breeding was not suspected. Indeed, passage was the poorest for some years

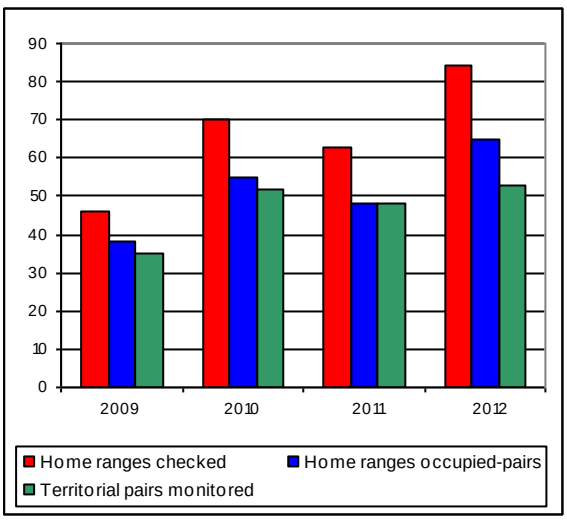
NERF regional summary

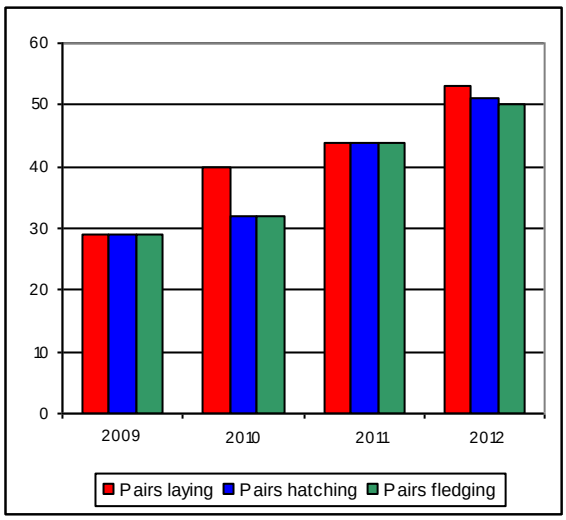
A considerable amount of work is undertaken by NERF Group members, particularly in the South Peak. Hobbies were observed across the region and known to have bred successfully in 3 study areas.

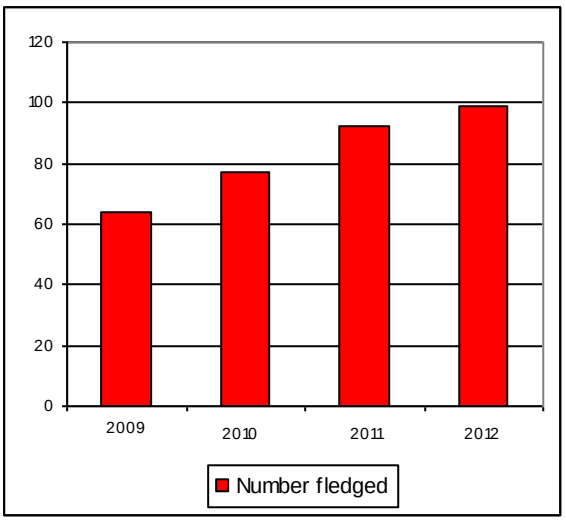
Colour ringing

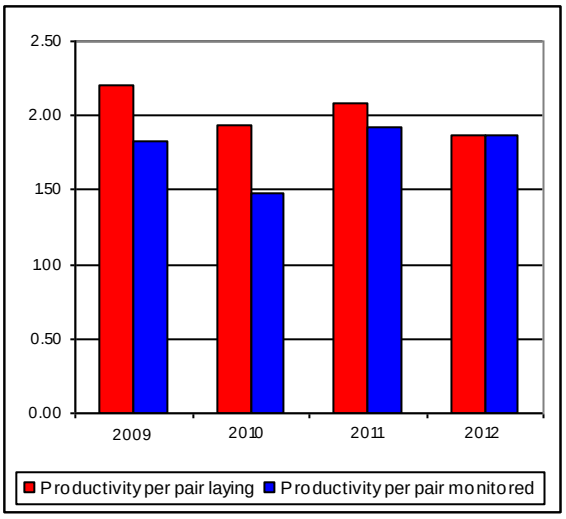
A colour ringing scheme was in operation for this species from 2004 until 2010 and to assist with this project Raptor Workers are requested to report all sightings of colour ringed birds via the website at www.ring.ac or alternately the information can be passed by email to Jim Lennon at lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

UK population estimate

The current estimate is 1530 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013, Banks et al. 2010. The breeding status of Peregrine Falcons in the UK and the Isle of Man in 2002. *Bird Study* 57: 421-436).

Conservation status

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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	19	13	1	6	13	7	4	2	3	0.4	0.2
CRSG	7	6	1	2	4	2	2	2	4	2.00	1.00
DUBSG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	8	7	1	0	7	7	6	5	15	2.14	2.14
NRG	38	19	2	8	19	18	13	9	19	1.05	1.00
NYMRSG	2	2	0	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
PDRSG	7	6	NC	2	4	4	4	1	NC	NC	NC
SPRSG	28	23	0	NC	23	8	8	7	14	NC	0.61
YDUBSG	22	8	0	0	8	4	4	4	10	NC	1.25
Total	137	84	5	18	78	50	41	30	65	1.30	0.83

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage
Peregrines had very poor breeding success in 2012 due to a combination of persecution and very poor weather conditions. On the private estates, pairs persist year after year at the same sites only to be thwarted, with pairs disappearing early in the season and empty scrapes being found. It is extremely concerning that some sites previously considered to be safe from interference have now started to fail.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
The local population has been falling for a number of years and there are no obvious reasons. Whilst persecution cannot be ruled out the territories are very well monitored and therefore it is unlikely to be the main driving factor.
2012 was another poor year however it is clear that the terrible weather during the breeding season had very serious negative impact on productivity. Hopefully the weather during the 2013 season will be more stable and the species can recover.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Comments and data included in the table refer principally to the Durham uplands which are defined here as the North Pennine SPA and adjoining main river valley systems generally to the west of Easting NZ10, up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire.
All traditional eyries were subject to careful checks which began early in the season. A sadly consistent feature was the complete absence of even prospecting birds and none of the sites were occupied. The stark reality now is that none of the traditional sites falling within the Durham portion of the North Pennine SPA have supported successful nests for over a decade and in recent years even those residual strongholds falling just outside the SPA boundary have failed to offer any success.
Additional comments covering the remainder of the county excluding Teesmouth, as recorded by the Durham Bird Club, are relevant to provide context and obvious contrast to the account given above for the uplands. In the eastern lowlands six sites were occupied by pairs of which five went on to breed. One pair failed at egg stage for unknown reasons and did not relay but the remaining four pairs fledged a total of seven young (three, two, one and one).

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole County.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Of the 15 fledged young, two were discovered dead at the same site in July (foul play not suspected) – one had been returned to the nest tray four times. One nest hatched an unknown number of chicks but had been robbed or predated by 19th May. Another pair at a RSPB reserve was sitting but did not hatch eggs.
Ringing recovery: On 8th January, a bird with the Darvic CJ was found dead at Raskelf, York, ringed 2011 at Rochdale Town Hall. Distance: 72 miles NE

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Many nests failed due to the wet weather; in the north Cheviots area it was the worst in 30 years. One nest failed due to adult female being predated by either a mink or feral cat, the young from one nest were stolen and two traditional sites were not checked. On a more positive note a brood of four young fledged in the border forest.

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.
Although these two sites were monitored through the very early stages of the nesting cycle this was not followed through so the outcome of both nesting attempts is not known. There are numerous sites of suitable nesting habitat for this species throughout the North York Moors and it is difficult to arrive at any conclusion for non-occupation other than birds are being actively "dissuaded" from setting up territories.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
Site occupancy and success rates give real cause for concern with none of the hatched young fledging; this is thought to be due to the weather causing either slow development or failure at small/large young stages. One site had three young at the point at the point of fledging when

found. Unfortunately once again the wet weather played a part in limiting our monitoring attempts and the breeding success.

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 main Peak District recording area 26 sites were monitored this year. Of these, five sites were unoccupied, including three sites in Upper Derwentdale, although at the Alport Castles site a pair was observed copulating on 27 March, but not subsequently seen. At the 21 sites where pairs were present and bred, only six sites were successful, raising 11 young. Of the remaining 15 sites most failed because of the poor weather conditions, although at one site in mid-Derbyshire the birds were again robbed when two small young were in the nest, and at a second site with a long history of presumed disturbance, the adult pair was again unsuccessful. In lowland NE Derbyshire, two sites were occupied, one raising three young, whilst the other site failed. Four of the seven successful sites raised only one young each, whilst the remaining three sites raised four, three and three respectively. A paper published this year by Sarah Pye, a volunteer at the successful Roaches site, for the Open University, entitled *Relationship between Peregrine Falcon breeding success and April precipitation rates in the UK*, to which SPRSG provided substantial data, supported the thesis that the relatively poor success in our area this year was primarily caused by poor weather. Included in the totals above was a new natural site in Derbyshire, where an adult male paired with an immature female; the pair was unsuccessful, but remained in the area for the remainder of the season. A nesting attempt was made at the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust East Mill site in Belper, but was unsuccessful; the male bird was retrieved dead from the River Derwent at Belper and after scientific examination it was found to have succumbed naturally due to starvation; a second male was seen later in the season at the site, but no further clutch was laid. This record is not included in the above totals.

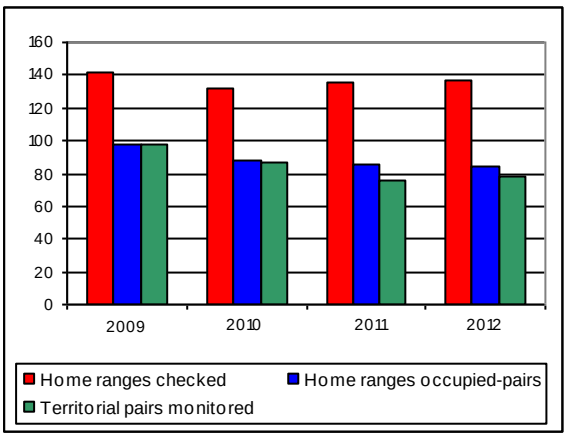
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
It was a poor year in the Yorkshire Dales with the lowest number of sites occupied and total number of successful nests in a decade. Yet again, none of the traditional sites on grouse moor were even occupied and it is now 15 years since any of the monitored sites on grouse moors have fledged any young.

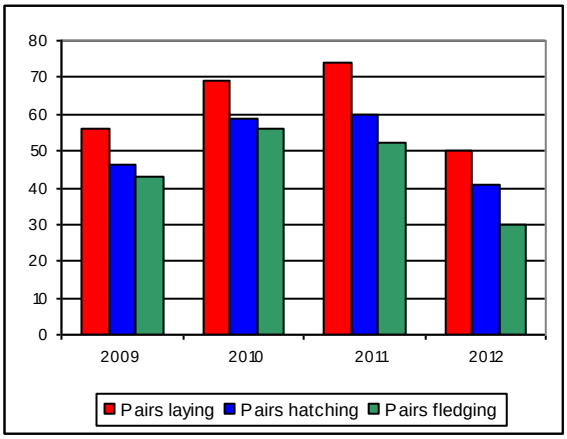
NERF regional summary

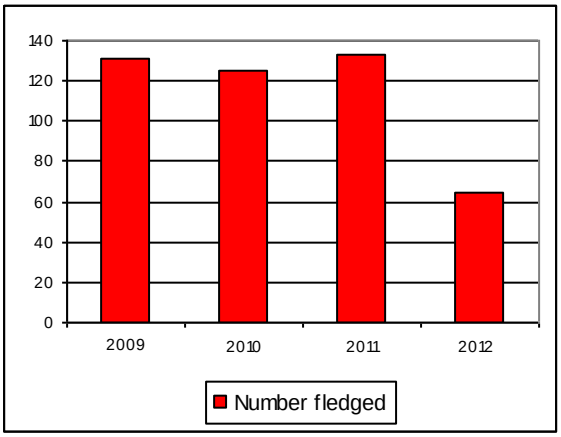
The status of Peregrines in upland areas of northern England gives real cause for concern. The poor weather throughout the 2012 breeding season has had a detrimental impact on breeding birds across the region resulting in a number of nest failures. However, the weather conditions cannot explain the continued absence of birds from a large proportion of the grouse moors in northern England. There are no known occupied Peregrine sites in the grouse moor areas of Durham and the Yorkshire Dales, both protected landscapes and part of the North Pennines Special Protection Area (SPA), designated under the European Birds Directive for a number of species including Peregrine. The data in this report clearly shows just how widespread the problem of persecution is in grouse moor areas from the Peak District to Northumberland, with data from the Scottish Raptor Study Groups showing that the problem is just as bad north of the border. Despite the overwhelming evidence of the problem and with Hen Harrier and Peregrine virtually absent as breeding species across most grouse moors

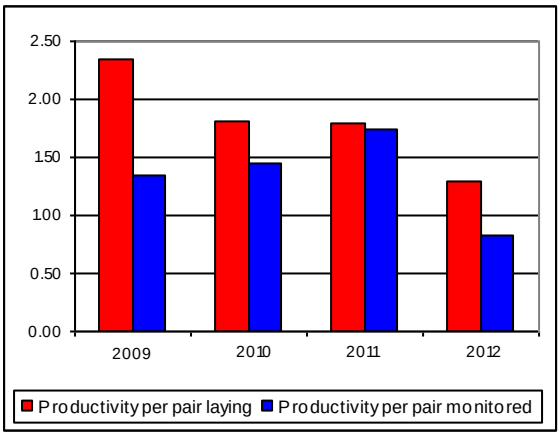
in northern England, Defra continues to ignore the issue. There is an urgent need for the problems faced by Peregrine and other raptor species on grouse moors to be addressed.

Comparative data 2009-2012









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

UK Amber List
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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	8	8	0	0	5	8	5	5	13	1.6	2.6
MRG	69	23	2	6	17	15	14	14	30	2	1.76
NRG	210	64	5	1	58	58	54	48	118	2.03	2.03
NYMRSG	51	21	2	3	18	18	18	16	60	3.33	3.33
PDRSG	1	1	NC	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	9	9	NC	NC	9	9	9	9	24	2.66	2.66
SREYRG	42	18	NC	1	17	17	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
YDUBSG	8	8	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Total	398	152	9	12	125	125	100	92	245	1.96	1.96

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: At least 20 pairs breed within the study area, not all are able to be accessed. Some sites were checked early with eggs, but the outcome could not be checked. Some farmers reported that nests had failed, probably due to prolonged and heavy rain. Barn Owls have increased significantly in the last 10 years in the study area.
Level of monitoring: Partial only. Some monitoring from a ringer not part of the BRG, who found a pair which laid 4 eggs, 2 of which hatched and one fledged, on the floor of a barn, the third year this has happened.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Calderdale MBC area.
Level of monitoring: The only traditional site was checked and again found not to be occupied. There was only sighting: of one on 19th March crossing moorland at c.500m a.s.l.
The nest box scheme begun in 2011 continued.

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 none more generally in the county. Reports from Durham Bird Club indicate it to be uncommon and thinly spread in the eastern half of the county. It is, of course, somewhat under-recorded.

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.
Despite the wet summer, pairs laying eggs were only 3 down on 2011 and this year's figure is probably on the low side, as the excellent March weather meant many pairs started early and had fledged their young before we could check the boxes. Some pairs made late attempts with 3 birds on eggs in August – one was a 2nd attempt (failed), one a first attempt and at the other, just outside Greater Manchester, it was not known if a first attempt had been made, but 2 chicks were ringed on 24th October. Two ring recoveries, due to traffic accidents, were both local birds, and had both been recovered about 3km from their ringing site. Another moved 30km NE into Lancashire.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Again excellent coverage, with records received from 7 areas. Most areas had a poor fledging rate, with many reduced broods because of the wet summer. There are still very few pairs nesting in the uplands after the hard winters of two years ago.
The NRG wishes to place on record the help given by Phil Hanmer in the compilation of data 2009-2012.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group
Extent of coverage: Good.
Level of monitoring: Three schemes are in operation in this area:

Scheme A: South Cleveland RG nestbox operation. A welcome improvement in the fortunes of the species over the previous two seasons. Fortunately a relatively much milder winter by comparison allowed better survival of birds and they responded well in nesting terms. Clearly rodents were in good supply as indicated at one box holding two young chicks where 25-30 voles and mice were strewn across the box floor on first visit. One successful new site was added to those regularly monitored.
Scheme B: Operated by G. Myers mainly to the west of the North York Moors. This operation also extends out on to the Tees plain. Results from these boxes (not included in the above table) were: 19 available, 3 occupied by pairs, 1 by single bird, 3 pairs laid eggs and produced 8 fledglings.
Scheme C: Box study operated by Pawl Willet in the forests to the SE of the North York Moors - his birds also enjoyed a much needed successful season.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Not recorded as a breeding species in the study area for approximately 20 years. However, an early visit to a Tawny Owl nest box found that it was occupied by a pair of Barn Owls. The birds were present throughout 2012 but no eggs were laid.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: In one part of the recording area, only 75% of regular sites were checked because of the poor weather; 6 broods were ringed (11 chicks ringed out of 14 which fledged); in addition 5 adults were also ringed. Two further broods of 4 chicks were ringed in another area, whilst at least 2 young fledged from the same natural nest hole in an Ash tree as in 2011, in mid-Derbyshire.

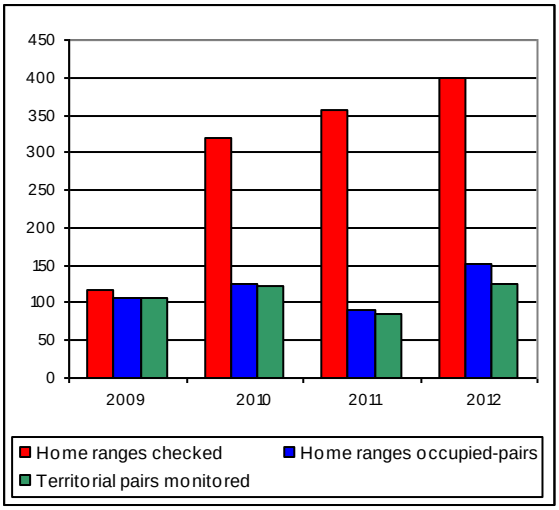
South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Monitoring curtailed early due to torrential rain making access to most sites almost impossible. Season started early and there was a great deal of disparity in timing of clutches with some still on eggs when other broods were nearly fledged. At least one of our pairs successfully raised a second clutch of two pulli .

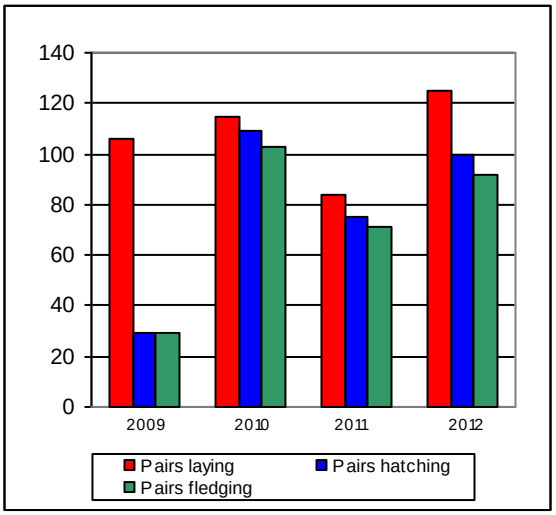
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
Only casual monitoring again this year, although it is clear that despite recent harsh winters birds are spreading back into the Dales. In the National Park 6 sites were occupied (no further details) and in the southern part of the Nidderdale AONB a pair was not found until they had fledged young (number not reported) and at another site a bird was carrying food during June.

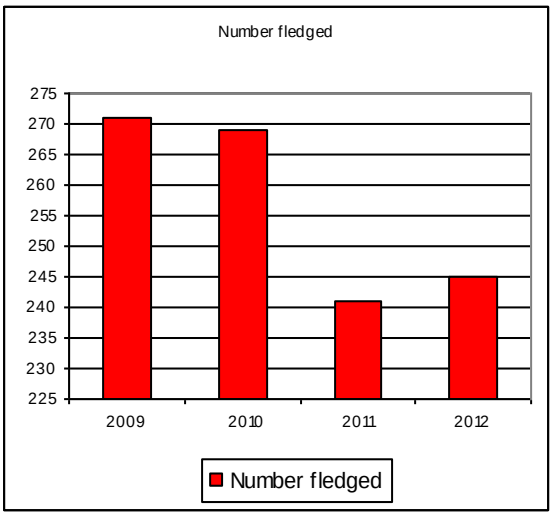
NERF regional summary

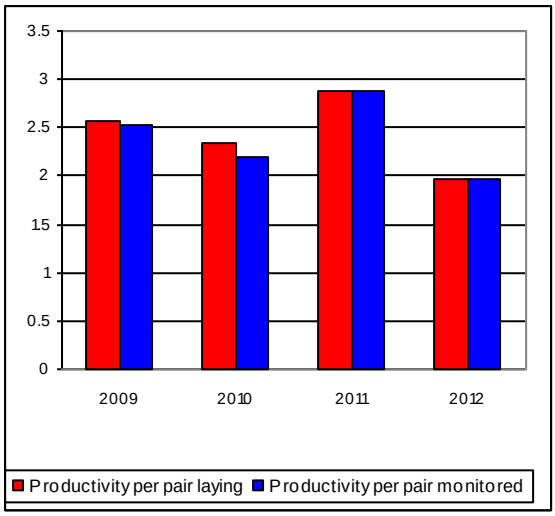
Five groups reported that the exceptionally wet summer prevented visits to check sites, as of course Barn Owls are not waterproof. It is therefore inadvisable to disturb them on rainy days, of which 2012 had far too many! Despite this, the North York Moors schemes had a good season with evidence of plenty of prey, and both Manchester RG and South Peak RSG were only slightly down on 2011. In general, the Barn Owl is not a bird of uplands, which is where many NERF groups concentrate their work, and the report above includes studies and nest box projects from adjoining areas, particularly in the North York Moors.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

UK population estimate

The UK population is unknown at the present time but is still likely to be small.

National and regional threat assessment

The biggest threat to wild Eagle Owls breeding in the UK is at present from government departments and the result of an ongoing study. If the results are not favourable, a cull or capture scheme may be implemented. If it is decided that Eagle Owls are to be added to the British List then persecution will become the main threat. Within the UK there are many areas which could support this species where persecution would not be an issue and Eagle Owls seem to be very tolerant of humans working and using the area within their territory for recreation. They are however susceptible to disturbance in the early stages of the breeding cycle and later can become very aggressive in defence of young. There would be a need to afford this species special protection (Schedule 1) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. At the only known breeding site in the forest of Bowland where monitoring takes place, disturbance by birdwatchers wanting to get close has been a problem and the nest has been searched for in some years by unknown individuals and in 2012 eggs disappeared from a nest. The threat assessment for Eagle Owls in the NERF region is identical to the national threat assessment. Nerf will continue to monitor the situation and act accordingly when the government bodies make a decision based on the ongoing study at the site in Bowland. This however is on hold (2012) due to the lack of breeding Hen Harriers in the Bowland Fells.

Conservation status

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.

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only..
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage of all known sites.
In 2012 one pair bred at the usual site on the United Utilities Bowland estate; the female was a new bird. The first clutch mysteriously disappeared, but the birds relocated and laid again. Two young fledged from the second attempt, one of which was rung.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species. One bird was seen at an undisclosed location on 11th and 15th October.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.
Moulted feathers and pellets all positively identified as belonging to this species were found at a location adjoining western moorland in midsummer. The pellets were somewhat aged. There was no evidence of breeding and it appears that a bird spent several weeks in the late

spring at this site which lies adjacent to keepered land. Subsequent careful checks have not revealed any evidence of renewed occupancy.
Elsewhere in the county a known falconer's escaped bird was occasionally reported from the South Shields area.

All other groups reported nil sightings for this species.

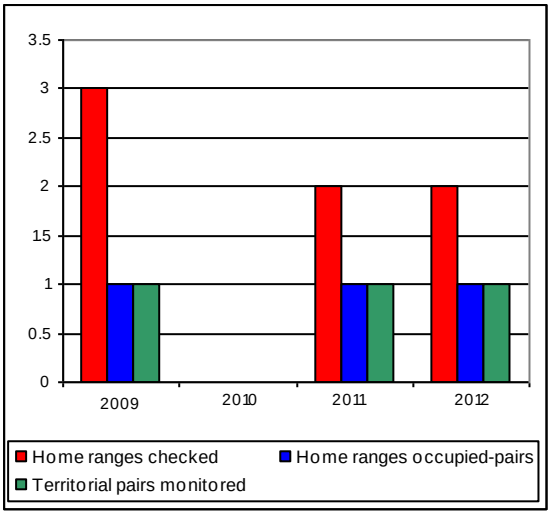
NERF regional summary

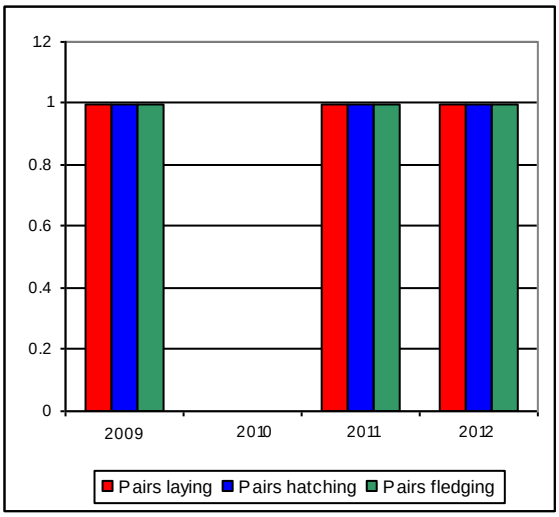
There were no records of breeding by Eagle Owls from any of the regional study areas apart from Bowland. A pair has been breeding at the Bowland site for seven years and a change of female occurred in 2012. There are several reports of sightings away from the main breeding site every year which would suggest there may well be at least one other pair within the study area, but given the secretive nature of the species and remoteness of habitat, pairs could easily be overlooked. This could also apply to other study areas. There is enough suitable habitat within the NERF regional area to support many pairs, and given the number of young successfully fledged in Bowland, and sightings reported from other areas, one would expect a natural growth in numbers. Perhaps persecution could explain this.

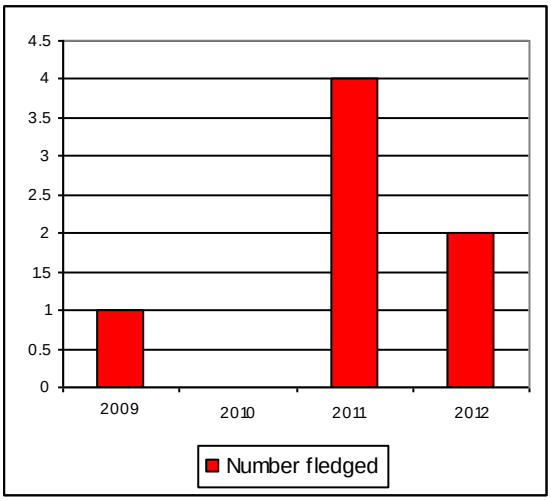
Comment by M. Demain, Bowland Raptor Group

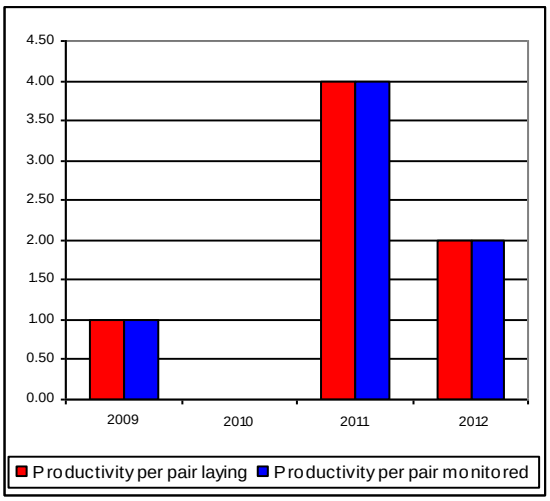
In the UK debate rages on as to whether the Eagle Owl should be removed or accepted as a wild breeding species. Some conservationists argue that it was never a native species in the UK but evidence, although sparse, suggests otherwise. It is not clear whether the current population is derived from escapees from falconers' birds, birds deliberately released into the wild (illegal) or from natural colonisation, and until this is clear a decision on culling or capture would be wrong. One of the main arguments against this bird reaching our shores naturally is that Eagle Owls will not migrate over water; however, there have been reports of Eagle Owls landing on fishing vessels in the North Sea and it would be relatively easy, one would think, for a bird to cross the channel from France or Belgium where there are breeding populations. It is known that the birds will travel widely, as a chick which was rung in Bowland was found dead twenty miles south of Edinburgh in Scotland. In Bowland, where the species has been breeding since 2006, there are concerns that the Hen Harrier has been a prey item and that the small and vulnerable population could be affected. Although this, if fact, is a serious concern there is little evidence to suggest this is happening and an ongoing study is underway which includes pellet analysis and a nest camera recording prey items being brought into the nest. From observation by raptor workers it would appear that the main prey item is the Rabbit of which there is a large population within the territory, followed by Voles, Hedgehogs and game birds, mainly Pheasant and Red Legged Partridge. To say that the Eagle Owl would not take a Hen Harrier would be wrong as it is an apex predator and is known to take Goshawk and Buzzard, both more powerful than the Harrier, but from observation of hunting birds over several years it seems more likely this would happen only by rare chance rather than the harrier being actively sought. In 2011 a pair of Hen Harriers and a pair of Short-eared Owls bred successfully within a few hundred yards of the Eagle Owl's nest on the United Utilities' Bowland estate. Only if and when the main threat to Hen Harriers (persecution) is eradicated will we get a true picture as to whether the Eagle Owl is a serious threat to this species. Eagle Owls were first proved to be breeding in the Forest of Bowland in 2006 but birds have been seen since 1985. Other frequent sightings in the study area suggest that other pairs may be breeding undetected in the more remote areas of the Bowland AONB.

Comparative data 2009-2012









Little Owl *Athene noctua*

UK population estimate

The current estimate is 5700 pairs (summer) as at 2009 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013)

Conservation status

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

Long term changes in farming practices, particularly with agricultural intensification, present the greatest threat to the UK's Little Owl population. Year on year severe winters are likely to reduce local populations, most especially those at higher elevation, and given the harsh weather in recent winters it seems probable that this factor may currently be having an impact on northern England birds. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey 2012 report shows a 42% decline in England over the period 1995-2011, which itself is part of a longer term downward trend evident from a population peak in the mid-1980's.

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 but a few pairs can be found occupying the in-bye land. The species is under-recorded but one pair was known to raise 4 young.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Whole area.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
There were 86 general reports for the whole area made throughout the year (compared with 87 for 2011).
RSG members were able to check several traditional territories at the beginning of the breeding season when occupancy by pairs appeared low. Of those pairs monitored throughout the season, the resulting fledging success was particularly poor.

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) though the succession of recent hard winters is thought to have had an adverse impact. The species is uncommon on the fringes of the western uplands but is more widespread, and certainly better recorded, in the remainder of the county particularly in eastern and southern farmland habitat.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
The species is widely reported throughout the year though relatively few breeding pairs are monitored to a known nest outcome. Three pairs did raise 3, 3 and 1 young and a fourth known nest was abandoned at egg stage after predation by grey squirrel.

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

There were no specific population studies, though a Barn Owl nest box scheme produced records of 2 pairs raising 2 and 1 young. Relatively scarce in upland fringes, the species is more widespread in the southeast and coastal strip.

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 very thinly distributed in the North Yorkshire Moors study area. No specific monitoring takes place but a pair fledged a single young at a site in the west. A nest box scheme being established just outside the Group's area, towards the Tees plain, resulted in all 3 available boxes being occupied and all 3 pairs being successful, raising a total of 6 young. These initial results, with an apparent greater success in the lowlands, affirm that conditions here are simply more favourable than those found in the upland areas.

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 again checked the vast majority found to be unoccupied. One pair was known to have laid eggs but the outcome was not determined.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
There was no specific monitoring of this species in 2012. Population levels were thought to be down.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
The species is not monitored except for part of the south Nidderdale AONB where 2 pairs laid eggs, one of which was successful in raising 4 young. The species is judged to remain reasonably common in the lower land of Dales.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4.0	4.0
CRSG	22	6	13	3	3	3	3	3	3	1.0	1.0
MRG	NC	NC	NC	NC	4	4	3	3	7	1.75	1.75
NRG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	1.5	1.5
NYMRSG	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.0	1.0
PDRSG	5	1	0	0	1	1	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
YDUBSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	1	4	2.0	2.0
Total	34+	13	14	3	14	14	11	11	22	1.57	1.57

NERF regional summary

The Little Owl's preference for lowland, open arable habitat with old trees, mature hedgerows or farm out-buildings for nesting produces a bias away from it being seen and reported by RSG field-workers whose activities focus them into upland terrain. Nevertheless, the species can be found in the NERF recording area at lower elevations though not at any great density. The few nesting attempts followed throughout the season by RSG members pointed to some low fledging rates

A majority of member groups commented on a sense of population decline and certainly for RSG fieldworkers the discovery of Little Owl at upland fringes sites is today a relatively uncommon and therefore noteworthy event. The BTO's Nest Record Scheme has requested additional record cards for this species.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

UK population estimate

In 2005 the population was estimated at 50000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013).

Conservation status

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 leading 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 upland part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place
All suitable areas of woodland are occupied by Tawny Owls and pairs also utilise barns in the in-bye land. There appears to a healthy population. No structured monitoring of the species 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.
Observations during the early part of the breeding season revealed that birds were present at 9 sites. No further monitoring took place and therefore it is not possible to quantify the outcome at any of the sites that were first located in spring.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
There are no sample population studies undertaken in areas in and adjacent to the uplands where the species undoubtedly remains common in suitable habitat. Reports from the Durham Bird Club similarly indicate the Tawny Owl is widespread in the county as a whole.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Once again, almost all the monitored pairs came from Peter and Norma Johnson's long-running nestbox study. In this 5 pairs had a total of 8 abandoned eggs, and 3 pairs failed to hatch any young at all. One pair had just a single dead chick. On the plus side, 1 pair fledged 4 young and 3 pairs fledged 3 youngsters each. The same number of boxes were checked (25) and the number of young produced, (42) compares well with 2011 (46). Elsewhere, two monitored nests produced broods of 3 and 2.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Good coverage; at least two representative monitoring studies over a large area.

The data shown in the table above separates that resulting from nest-boxes sited in west Northumberland (A) and those situated just across the border into Cumbria, (B), the latter comprised of two studies - Kershope 36 boxes 18 occupied 27 fledged
and
Grisdale 75 boxes 17 occupied 16 fledged

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.
Scheme A is run by the South Cleveland Ringing Group within the North York Moors study area. 2012 was generally a better than average breeding season for the species – it certainly appeared to be a good year for voles.

Scheme B is another nestbox scheme for the species being established to the west of the moors by G Myers. This one also extends beyond the study area of the Group out on to the Tees Plain. Results from these boxes, (not included in the table above), were as follows: 6 boxes available, 1 occupied, the pair fledging 2 young.
Scheme C refers to the long-running forestry scheme operated by Pawl Willet. Regrettably, this project was terminated at the end of the breeding season with the removal of all nestboxes.
The table below is included primarily for continuity, as the data for 2012 alone cannot be compared validly with the averages of the preceding 5 year bandwidths.

Tawny Owl Annual Productivity Data – North York Moors

Large Nestbox Scheme (A)

Year Band	No. sites	No. occ.	% occ	No success	Young ringed	Avg per succ. nest	Avg 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
2012	29	8	27.6	6	14	2.3	1.75

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
18+ young were ringed, from 9 sites. The weather and domestic commitments played a major part in limiting 2012 efforts to monitor this species. It was noted that development of young proceeded slowly in some broods. A late visit to a nest where fledged young were expected provided a surprise with a 39 day old nestling still in the tree hole looking no more than 25 days old!

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, but no monitoring of the species took place in 2012.

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.
A few pairs in the south of the Nidderdale AONB are the only birds monitored although the species is almost certainly widespread throughout Dales woodland.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
CRSG	9	9	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	65	65	0	NC	36	36	31	30	57	1.58	2.11
NRG A	234	131	0	41	97	97	87	81	169	1.74	1.74
NRG B	111	35	0	7	32	32	27	26	43	1.34	1.34
NYMRG A	29	8	0	0	8	8	7	6	14	1.75	1.75
NYMRG B	12	7	0	0	7	7	6	6	8	1.14	1.14
NYMRG C	25	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	8	1.60	1.60
PDRSG	40	22	0	0	13	22	13	13	18+	0.81	1.38
YDUBSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	3	4	0.80	0.80
Total	530	287	0	48	194	212	181	170	321	1.51	1.65

Summary

The species appears to have experienced a reasonably successful season across the northern region although box occupation rates among the different schemes vary considerably. It is on the face of it puzzling why boxes sited in the Northumbrian/Cumbrian forests achieve an appreciably higher occupation rate (48.1%), than those in sited in the North York Moors forests, (20%). In all three situations boxes are sited similarly adjacent to clearings or along forest edges in order to provide the birds with nearby hunting terrain.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

UK population estimate

The latest estimate produced during 2007-11 is 1800-6000 pairs (Musgrove *et al*. 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013). The large spread of this estimate illustrates the difficulties of adequately censusing this species.

Conservation status

UK	Green.
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 of adults do not breed, and those that do breed produce smaller clutches. Theft of young is a threat in some areas, as this owl does not breed well in captivity and chicks command high prices.

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring:
Pairs are known to breed in some hill shelter belts and some of the larger forestry plantations. This species is not monitored by the group

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Calderdale MBC
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

Four pairs occupied breeding territories at the beginning of the season; however only one pair was known to have fledged 2 young. It is highly likely that the persistent cold and wet weather was the cause of the early failures.

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 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.
2012 was a disastrous year for this species, due to the unremitting rainfall in May and June when unfledged young were in the nest. Five pairs in Bob Kenworthy's study area were known to have young in at least 4 nests. On 11th May all these were bringing food to nests, but within 5 days had deserted, due to the weather. By 13th June only one adult could be found. A pair further west was more fortunate with 3 young branching in June. Another monitored territory failed to provide any evidence of breeding although adults were present throughout; the ground here was badly flooded thus reducing mammal prey. Elsewhere, 2 pairs produced at least one young each.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
One study in the Border forest at Kielder: a very poor breeding season with only two nests fledging one young each - no doubt the continuous wet weather made hunting very difficult.
Two breeding adults were found predated by Goshawks at two different sites causing early failure.

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.
A species which only receives incidental monitoring effort during Goshawk operations when any old nests, dreys etc found will be checked for owl occupation. The only two recent known sites were not occupied this season. This again is not a target study species of the Group. It is considered to be only sparsely distributed across suitable NorthYork Moors habitat.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
The weather played a large part in the lack of success for Long-eared Owl in the study area; one attempt failed due to high winds felling surrounding trees.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Despite visits to many areas that historically held successful pairs of breeding Long-eared Owls, the group had little luck locating active nests and there was no evidence of successful breeding in 2012.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Pairs not fully monitored included 4 pairs displaying in the Washburn Valley but no nests were located although 2 or 3 young were calling in this area later in the season. In the National Park calling young were reported from one site.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
CRSG	7	4	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
MRG	14	14	NC	NC	9	10	7	3	5	0.50	0.55
NRG	20	9	NC	5	9	4	2	2	2	0.50	0.22
NYMRSG	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	2	2	NC	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
YDUBSG	8	8	0	0	3	3	2	1	2	0.67	0.67
Total	53	37	1	9	24	19	12	7	11	0.58	0.46

NERF regional summary

Although Long-eared owls are notoriously difficult to monitor there are several studies undertaken within the NERF region. Thought to be due to the weather conditions experienced in 2012, most groups reported low occupation rates at historic breeding sites and all groups reported that Long-eared Owl experienced a poor breeding season with both low success rates and low productivity. Taking into account that the BTO Nest Record Scheme only receives an average of 17 records annually and that 24 pairs were monitored by NERF in 2012 it would appear that members are ideally placed to add much needed data to the BTO Nest Record Scheme.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

UK population estimate

The current estimate (2007-11) is 610-2180 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013)

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

Breeding success invariably fluctuates with vole abundance. A failure to fully exploit suitable habitat and the current indication of decline in the uplands are not fully understood. Prey abundance is likely to be the dominant factor but winter survival and perhaps even persecution may play a part. A specific adverse factor in 2012 will have been the exceptionally wet spring and early summer which will have either deterred breeding or caused nest failure.

The principal long term threat to this species appears to be related to the fluctuations in vole numbers. In some areas, pairs will sometimes be seen on territory in spring but then fail to go on to breed without a satisfactory explanation.

Conclusions must always be tempered by the recognised difficulties of surveying this particular species.

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage, most sites receive annual coverage

A very untypical year! Birds were seen at several regular sites in springtime but subsequently appeared to move away without any definite breeding activity being noted. One pair on the edge of the area probably laid eggs but no young were seen. Elsewhere, large areas of suitable habitat remained unoccupied where, in a normal season, several pairs might be expected.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; most sites are monitored annually
The majority of moorland areas were occupied between mid-March and late October with some sites holding 3-4 birds throughout the summer. Seven individuals were seen at one location on 2nd May.
Despite this showing, evidence of breeding was rather scarce. Display was noted at 2 sites during the spring but confirmation of breeding eventually came from just one of these with adults seen carrying food into the nest area in mid-July. The adverse weather will of course have been a factor for this ground nesting bird with a reduction from over 11 young raised in 2011 to an unknown number at just one nest representing a disappointing trend.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Good coverage; several large representative study areas surveyed each year.
The exceptional influx in the autumn of 2011 continued to account for relatively high numbers in the first quarter along the coastal strip and further inland. However, birds seemed to depart in spring and the favoured uplands had an unremarkable breeding season with only a very limited number of cases of proven breeding despite the usual considerable observer effort across surveyed moorland. Breeding was confirmed at 4 locations and was thought possible at 3 others. In all cases the precise outcome couldn't be ascertained. The wettest spring and summer for 100 years no doubted limited breeding success.
A desk-top study (*per* John Strowger) drawing together data from all sources over recent years resulted in the following summary for upland areas:-

	2009	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**
Confirmed breeding	6	8	2	4
Possible breeding	4	2	3	3
Singles seen elsewhere in spring/summer	15	14	7	14

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole County.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
The species is only an occasional breeder in the area. The first quarter brought a modest influx with 51 records from 12 sites (max. 4 birds). Most appear to have dispersed by early April leaving just a single pair on a possible breeding territory but unfortunately they were disturbed by heather burning and did not linger. The autumn and final quarter brought reports of 16 birds from 8 sites.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland areas .
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study.
Unlike some other areas in the north of England the influx of autumn 2011 did appear to benefit breeding numbers in the following year, at least in the formation of territories. Pairs were found at an impressive 18 sites though poor weather may have subsequently affected breeding success. Three of 4 nests followed through the season were successful though the fledging rate was low. Fifteen of the original 18 pairs were in the North Cheviots; such local concentrations can be typical of the species. Overall, a stronger showing than in 2011.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage, monitoring of pairs when located

Birds were recorded in spring over a wide area of the North York Moors but particularly along the northern edge. This tentatively suggests a reasonable breeding season though just one pair was tracked to a successful outcome

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.
Five breeding attempts were recorded in the area, unfortunately none of these were successful. Three nests were confirmed as containing eggs but all failed after the apparent disappearance of the adult male. Two further nests were not located but activity stopped in similar circumstances. All failures occurred early in the season before the weather deteriorated.
There is concern that persecution may in part be responsible for the limited success of Short-eared Owls in the study area.

South Peak Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one monitoring study.
Suitable habitat was checked and on the north Staffordshire moorlands 3 pairs bred but only one with any success. Two pairs were present in upper Derwentdale but there was no evidence of young being fledged.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring only
There were no specific records of territorial pairs.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas .
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
More birds were seen casually during the season than for some years with 12 locations in the National Park producing sightings. There were 6 reports from Nidderdale. An adult carrying food provided the only indication of confirmed breeding.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	9	1	4	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
CRSG	14	9	5	NC	1	1	1	1	1+	1.0	1.0
DUBSG	9	7	1	3	4	4	4	3	NC	NC	NC
MRG	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	18	18	0	NC	4	4	4	3	4	1.0	1.0
NYMRSG	4	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.0	1.0
PDRSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	1	1	1+	0.2	0.2
YDUBSG	NC	NC	12	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Total	65	47	25	8	21	21	11	9	7+	0.3	0.3

NERF regional summary

Most groups monitor this species in tandem with other, often very comprehensive survey work. The dearth of breeding birds found by fieldworkers, who amass considerable hours in suitable habitat each season, points strongly to the seriously low ebb of this species as breeding bird. That birds are now absent or scarce from several traditional areas of apparently still suitable habitat is of considerable concern as is the extremely poor fledging rate seen in 2012. The exceptionally wet spring and summer will have played a large part but even this cannot mask the underlying the vulnerability of its status as breeding bird in the northern uplands.

The RBBP's adoption of the Short-eared Owl is welcomed and will hopefully provide a stimulus for more detailed data collection. NERF would also recommend that active consideration be given to adding the species to the Schedule 1 Annex .

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

UK population estimate

In 2009 the population was estimated at 7400 pairs in the UK (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013). The 2012 BBS annual report showed an 88% increase 2011-12 for England, but a 9% decrease 1995-2011.

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 nesting Ravens to climbers and may lead to breeding birds abandoning nesting attempts.

Conservation status

UK	Green
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
This species has increased over the last few years but pairs continue to be persecuted with nests being destroyed while in use and before use. The number of non-breeding pairs frequenting the area has risen pointing to successful breeding in areas close by. One female which is distinctive has been with us for three years now and bred successfully in 2012.

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.
The local Raven population is stable at c.2 breeding pairs. However annually we have large numbers of sightings and there is a possibility that the population will expand.
There was a total of 87 separate records for this species during 2012, mainly from the uplands within the study area. The highest gathering contained 6 birds at Walshaw on 9th October. Productivity was up slightly on 2011 but this is not statistically significant.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group
Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.
Level of monitoring: Good coverage; at least two monitoring studies or large representative study area.
Despite large areas of the Durham uplands being surveyed for a variety of species, there was once again no evidence of breeding. Several historic sites were checked. Breeding attempts by Raven are exceptionally rare in the county with just one occurrence being recorded in the last decade or more. Upland expanses offer very suitable habitat yet despite regular reports in early spring of typically 2-6 birds, maximum 8, none apparently went on to breed. Records were much scarcer during the summer months but had increased again by late autumn and early winter.
The breeding population appears to be heavily constrained by factors such as persecution. The Durham Bird Club reported birds lingering at a lowland quarry site.

Manchester Raptor Group
Extent of coverage: Whole county.
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.
One regular nest site on a pylon was disturbed by workmen this year, and a new territory on a mill also failed due to maintenance work. There was no information from a regular site on a RSPB reserve. Other territories were deduced from the 145 records obtained. Monitored sites were at Bolton and Wigan Town Halls, and a quarry. A family with 3 begging young were discovered in east Manchester, near a possible nest site.
Good weather early in the year contributed to a successful season for this corvid, and from the number of sightings there must be several undiscovered nests. One such was a nest discovered on a gasometer in central Rochdale in June 2012, well after fledging, but in early 2013 a pair was adding sticks to it, suggesting that breeding had in fact taken place unnoticed.

Northumbrian Ringing Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

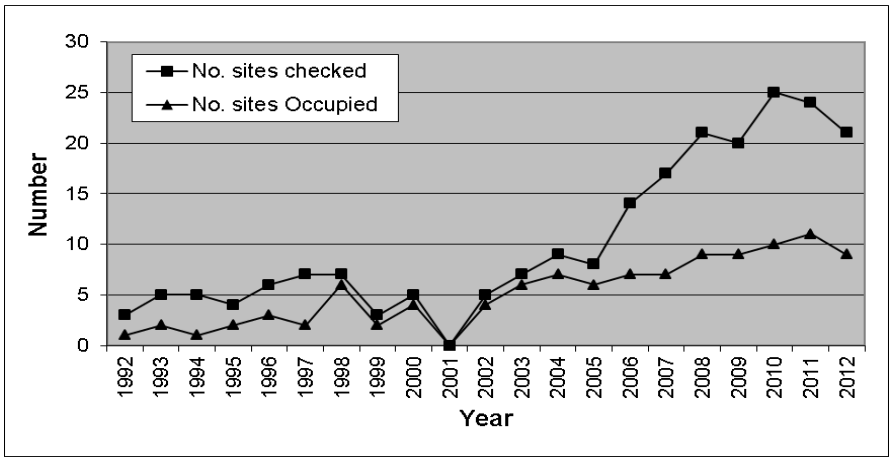
A good breeding season was recorded. Although one less nest was found, more young fledged than 2011. Two traditional sites were not checked and one pair moved off a crag site into a tree because of climbing.
The border forest population continues to increase.

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.
Fewer records were noted of wandering birds than in previous years. It is difficult to know whether this was the result of natural reduced frequency or from more sinister causes! (The game-keeping fraternity are well aware birds have moved into the National Park area.)

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.
Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.
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, with gritstone crag areas with good public access once again proving to be the most successful 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.
In the SPRSG area the species appears to be expanding, including in the north-eastern lowland areas where two sites were monitored, with successful breeding at one site and a pair at a second site, where breeding was not proved. In the south of the recording area two new tree nest sites were located, indicating a further increase in this part of mid-Derbyshire. In the Upper Derwentdale area a pair was successful at Alport Castles and raised one, possibly two, young. In the Dovedale area two regular sites were unsuccessful due to the heavy snowfall in early April: at one regular site the nest tree, an old Larch, fell down and at a second regular cliff site the nest, which had grown over the years to more than one metre high, collapsed and fell onto the river bank. At a site in a DWT reserve, young birds were heard calling from the nest which was seemingly covered by snow in early April; four youngsters subsequently fledged from this site.

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 number of occupied nest sites in the Dales in 2012 was slightly lower than in the previous two years [see graph].



All the nesting pairs that were located successfully fledged young with the mean number of fledged young per year remaining relatively stable. Given that productivity of pairs in the Dales is relatively high, and the reports of presumed non-breeding birds also appears to be on the increase it is not clear why the breeding population remains relatively low and why so many potentially suitable nest sites are not occupied.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Known pairs laying eggs	Known pairs hatching eggs	Known pairs fledging young	Known number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	5	3	0	2	1	1	1	1	3	3.00	3.00
CRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	6	3.00	3.00
DUBSG	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	15	15	NC	NC	3	4	4	4	13	3.25	4.33
NRG	29	23	1	1	23	22	22	22	59+	2.68	2.57
PDRSG	6	5	NC	1	5	5	5	3	12	2.40	2.40
SPRSG	8	8	NC	NC	8	7	7	5	8+	1.14	1.00
YDUBSG	21	9	0	0	9	9	9	9	31	3.44	3.44
Total	91	65	1	4	51	50	50	46	132	2.64	2.59

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.

Species reports from non-NERF members

Cumbria

All information from Dave Shackleton

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*
Breeding: At the established Bassenthwaite site the female arrived on 30th March and the male on 9th April. The female was thought to be the same as in 2011 but the male was ringed White YV and had been hatched at Bassenthwaite in 2007. The pair again used an old dying oak on the valley floodplain first used in 2011. Three eggs were laid and one chick hatched, fledging successfully on 16th July. It left the area on August 26th, recorded by satellite. (Unfortunately its satellite stopped working in early 2013 whilst the bird was on the east coast of Spain and its fate is unknown.) Remarkably this was the 12th consecutive successful breeding attempt at the site since first breeding in 2001. The female vacated the site on 29th August and the male was last seen on 1st September. Elsewhere two other sites fledged one and two chicks successfully and at another site a nest was built but there was no indication of a breeding attempt.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*
The male Golden Eagle remained in lone occupation in the Lake District

Lancashire

All information from Craig Bell

Buzzard *Buteo buteo*
Three pairs monitored; one pair raised 2 young, and 2 pairs failed due to the wet weather.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*
One pair had 3 pulli.

Peregrine *Falco peregrines*
Seven pairs produced 18 young. One of these pairs nested at St. George's Church, Chorley, and hatched 3 chicks which perished when they were washed out. They then moved to a nearby quarry where they raised one chick. Darvic ringing proved it was the same pair.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
Two pairs had 5 young.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*
Six pairs produced 20 pulli.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*
15 pairs were located but only 3 of these bred successfully, due to the weather. These produced broods of 7, 3 and 2.

West Yorkshire

Peregrine *Falco columbarius*
Source: Steve Downing CRSG

A pair of Peregrines successfully reared two young at a quarry site on the northern border of the Calderdale Raptor Study Group area. Whilst this is a traditional site and is occupied annually success is sporadic.

Bird Crime 2012

Guy Shorrock, Senior Investigations Officer with the RSPB, reviews its latest 2012 Birdcrime report and outlines some of the wider political issues affecting UK raptors.

In November 2013, the RSPB launched its 22nd annual Birdcrime report looking at offences against wild birds in 2012. The overall number of reports for the categories of crime recorded was the lowest over the last six years, and correspondingly the reported incidents of bird of prey persecution in the UK was also lower at 442 (last five year average of 610). This included 208 reports of the shooting and destruction of birds of prey, and while slightly lower than the last five year average, there were 69 confirmed incidents (last five year average 53) including the shooting of at least 33 birds of prey. Overall there were 78 poisoning reports (last five year average 134), with 34 confirmed incidents (five year average 70) involving the poisoning of at least 29 birds of prey. There has been some speculation that the reduction in levels of recorded poisoning, particularly in Scotland, may be linked with the introduction of vicarious liability in Scotland at the start of 2012, which may have encouraged a reduction in this type of activity. Figures from a single year are not statistically reliable to make any meaningful analysis and it will be interesting to see whether a real reduction will be sustained over the next few years.

Confirmed incidents in the north of England included: -

Shooting of a buzzard, trapping of a buzzard and sparrowhawk, and poisoning of a buzzard in Cumbria

Shooting of a buzzard, destruction of a goshawk nest in Derbyshire

Shooting of a buzzard in Lancashire

Trapping of 3 buzzards, in Northumbria

Shooting of a sparrowhawk and a hen harrier, poisoning of 3 red kites in North Yorkshire

Shooting of a marsh harrier, trapping of a buzzard in West Yorkshire

One of the most high profile incidents was the discovery of a shot hen harrier on a grouse moor in North Yorkshire, in a year when there was just one successful pair in the whole of England. In 2011, a satellite tag was fitted by Natural England (NE) to a hen harrier chick in Bowland, Lancashire. Christened 'Bowland Betty', the satellite tag showed her ranging as far north as Caithness, Scotland. On 22 May 2012, she returned to Bowland then three days later moved east into the moors of North Yorkshire, mainly in the Nidderdale and Colsterdale areas. In late June, the satellite data indicated she was stationary and raised concerns she had died. With the co-operation of Swinton Estate, Stephen Murphy of the NE Hen Harrier Recovery Project recovered the body of the bird on 5 July 2012.

A post-mortem examination by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) showed it had a fractured left leg which would have lead to its death either through blood loss or inability to hunt. Detailed radiographs showed three small radio-dense foreign bodies embedded in the fractured bone and it was suspected the bird had been shot. In co-operation with the UCL, Stanmore, it was decided to use a new technique involving scanning electron microscopy (SEM) equipped with an energy dispersive x-ray analyser (EDX). By fixing the fragment in

resin and incrementally grinding & polishing down just a few microns at a time, one of the particles was reached. This showed the particle had entered the exterior surface of the leg bone and that its composition was primarily lead. This is believed to the first time this technique has been used in the UK. A police press appeal failed to provide any more information as to who was responsible.

In the last ten years there have been only 11 recorded hen harrier breeding attempts in North Yorkshire. All of these have been within just a few miles of where this bird was found and only three of these attempts were successful. Of the eight that failed, seven were in circumstances suggesting human persecution was the most likely cause of failure.
RSPB data and government poisoning data shows the Yorkshire Dales is a black spot for persecution. Between 2007 and 2011 (inclusive), figures compiled by the RSPB confirm the illegal poisoning, shooting or trapping of at least 20 birds of prey.

House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee report on Wildlife Crime

This was the most politically significant event in 2012 relating to crimes against birds of prey and other wildlife. Amongst a number of measures, it called on government to introduce vicarious liability for raptor persecution across the UK and to enact a possession of pesticide offence similar to that previously introduced in Scotland.

Encouragingly both NERF and the Scottish Raptor Groups both made written contributions to the process.

The report quoted data gathered by the RSPB annual Birdcrime reports again highlighting the lack of any centralised government recording of these crimes. The NWCU are no longer recording incident data for wildlife crime and it is therefore vital RSPB continue to record raptor persecution incidents alongside the government wildlife poisoning data.

Whether the current government will actively pursue the recommendations of the EAC does not seem overly encouraging. They have indicated they are not willing to pursue vicarious liability until its value in Scotland has been demonstrated.

'Buzzardgate'

One of the most controversial events in 2012 started when on 23rd May Defra announced a £375,000 research scheme to explore management techniques to curb the supposed predation of pheasant poults by buzzards. The proposals which would have tested methods to control buzzards including destroying nests to prevent birds breeding and catching and relocating buzzards to places such as falconry centres. On 30th May 2012, Defra Wildlife Minister Richard Benyon MP was forced to announce an embarrassing U-turn and that the proposed scheme had been dropped in the light of widespread public concern.

In June a letter appeared in The Independent endorsed by a number of conservation organisations:

> ***Safeguard our birds of prey***
> *As organisations that care deeply about our rich and beautiful countryside and wildlife we were horrified recently to learn of the proposals to use taxpayers' money to imprison buzzards and destroy their nests for the purposes of protecting pheasants.*
> *And of course we welcome Defra minister Richard Benyon's decision to drop the proposed research project. But we now urge him to go one step further in order to draw a line under this issue. We all want to see healthy populations of birds of prey, from the buzzards that are widespread in our countryside to hen harriers which are down to just one pair in*

England. For this to happen, full legal protection must be maintained and action taken to stop illegal killing of these birds. Given the strength of public feeling and lack of evidence for a problem, we are calling on Mr Benyon to confirm that no licences will be issued to kill birds of prey in order protect game birds or other livestock. Then we can all concentrate on protecting our natural environment so that our countryside is a place where people and wildlife can live side by side.

Martin Harper
Director of Conservation, RSPB
Simon Pryor
Natural Environment Director, National Trust
Douglas Parr
Policy Director, Greenpeace UK
Paul de Zylva
Head of Nature, Friends of the Earth
Deborah Pain
Conservation Director, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust
Barbara Handley
Chairman, Hawk and Owl Trust
And seven others

Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the end of the matter as in May 2013 following FOI requests by the RSPB it became apparent that Natural England had issued licences allowing up to four nests and their contents to be destroyed between 23 April and 8 May this year. Considerable concerns have been raised about the efficacy of the science used to make the decisions. It will be interesting to see how things develop.

Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group (England and Wales)

Whilst raptor persecution is one of the UK government wildlife crime priorities, progress from this group has remained disappointing. However, in 2012 the RPPDG finally managed to follow an initiative started several years ago in Scotland and produce a map of raptor poisoning incident for 2011 and a five year period 2007 to 2011. Unfortunately, the maps do not include incidents where birds of prey were potential victims such as poison baits. There will be an annual review to consider if poison baits other forms of raptor persecution such as shooting, trapping, and nest destruction or disturbance should be included.

RSPB have been providing maps of confirmed poisoning incidents (using government data) and other for forms of raptor persecution for over two decades. The lack of any government system for recording other types of raptor persecution could be an impediment to development of these maps as some RPPDG members may be unwilling to accept data collated by the RSPB.

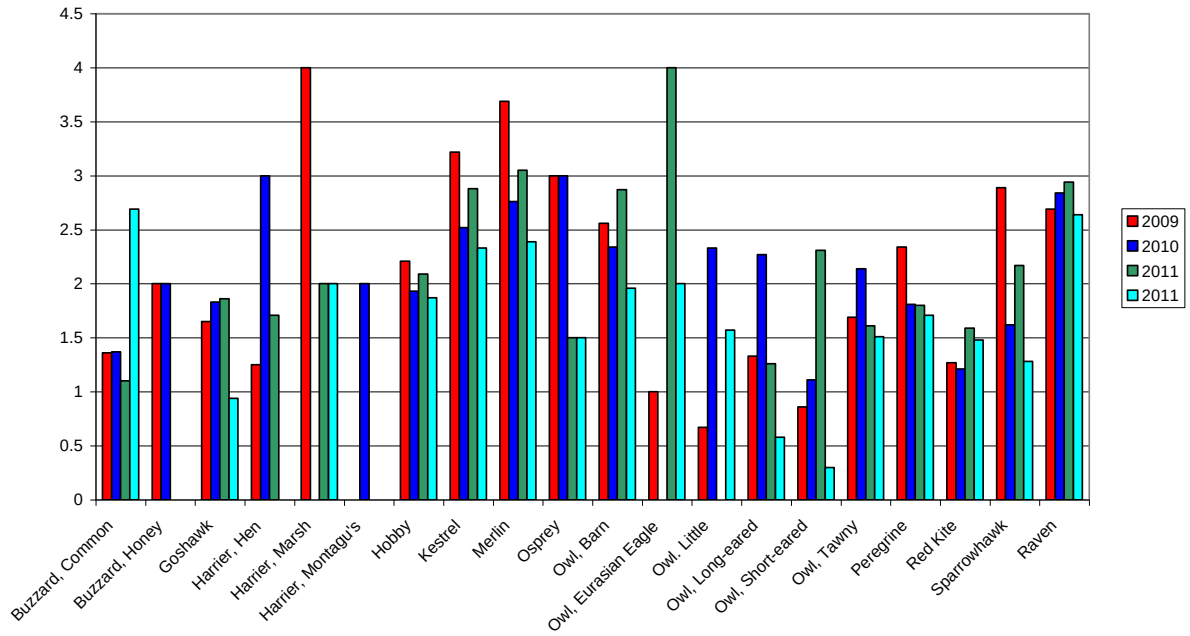
It is important to remember the RSPB remains the only agency with long term datasets of raptor persecution incidents and that these are important in highlighting that problems are still occurring and widespread. As usual we would ask all RSGWs to report all incidents to the Investigations Section. Any sensitive information can be reported in the strictest of confidence.

Appendix 1: Combined NERF data

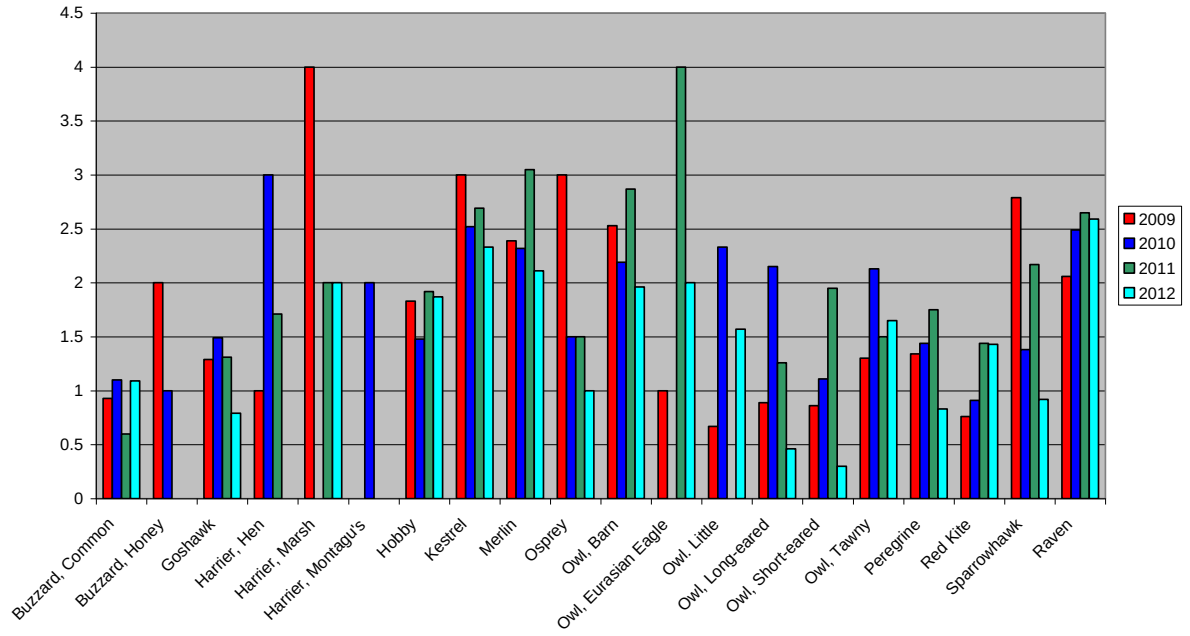
Species	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Home ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing/non-breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair monitored	Young fledged per pair monitored
Honey Buzzard	7	4	NC	NC	4	2	2	2	4	2	1
Red Kite	56	35	0	8	28	27	27	22	40	1.48	1.43
Marsh Harrier	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Hen Harrier	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goshawk	81	56	2	18	38	32	20	17	30	0.94	0.79
Sparrowhawk	122	113	0	8	54	39	45	33	50	1.28	0.92
Buzzard	399	358	5	8	143	58	48	112	156	2.69	1.09
Osprey	3	3	0	1	3	2	2	2	3	1.5	1
Kestrel	178	132	1	3	57	57	49	46	133	2.33	2.33
Merlin	232	109	4	18	87	77	71	58	184	2.39	2.11
Hobby	84	65	4	0	53	53	51	50	99	1.87	1.87
Peregrine	137	84	5	18	78	38	41	30	65	1.71	0.83
Barn Owl	399	152	9	12	125	125	100	92	245	1.96	1.96
Eagle Owl	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Little Owl	34	13	14	3	14	14	11	11	22	1.57	1.57
Tawny Owl	530	287	0	48	194	212	181	170	321	1.51	1.65
Long-eared Owl	53	37	1	9	24	19	12	7	11	0.58	0.46
Short-eared Owl	65	47	25	8	21	21	11	9	7	0.3	0.3
Raven	91	65	1	4	51	50	50	46	132	2.64	2.59
Totals	2480	1562	71	168	976	828	723	709	1506		

Appendix 2: Combined productivity graphs

a) young fledged per pair laying 2009-2012



(b) young fledged per territorial pair monitored 2009-2012



Appendix 3: Ring recoveries

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site	Direction	Comment
MRG	Red Kite			East Midlands	27.05.12	Dovestones				wing tag seen
YDUBSG	Red Kite			Cumbria	06.11.12	Blubberhouses				dead, poisoned
PDRMG	Sp'hawk	DD47894	08.07.12	Wharncliffe, S Yorks	01.10.12	Thurgoland, Yorks	85 days	2km	NNW	dead, road casualty
PDRMG	Sp'hawk	EY19901	30.06.12	Haigh Greave, S Yorks	04.10.12	Thurlstone, Yorks	96 days	11km	SSW	dead, hit glass
PDRMG	Sp'hawk	EL61639	03.07.05	Grenoside Site, S. Yorks	30.12.12	Burncross, Yorks	7yrs 6m.	2km	ENE	found dead
PDRMG	Buzzard	GR61882	18.06.12	Arnfield, nr Tintwistle	27.10.12	Tintwistle	131 days	2km	S	freshly dead
PDRMG	Buzzard	GR38840	14.06.12	Long Clough, Derbs	11.09.12	Warton, Lancs	89 days	75km	WNW	dead, hit by train
BRSG	Osprey	Darvic MU	22.07.13	Monymusk, Aberdeen	Jul-12	Stocks Resr, Lancs	1 year	c.480km	SW	wing tag seen 3rd-13th Jul
SPRSG	Merlin	EX36253	22.06.11	North Derbyshire	Jul-12	Staffs moors	1 year	c.29km	SSW	imm male nr ad br. pair
NYMSG	Merlin	EG05247	07.07.12	North York Moors	19.09.12	Walney B.O.	43 days	154km	WSW	controlled, f. r. as pulli
MRG	Peregrine	GR21375	23.05.11	Rochdale Town Hall	08.01.12	Raskelf, York	230 days	72km	NE	dead, no details
NYMSG	Barn Owl	GC70557	16.06.11	New Marske, Cleveland	02.01.12	Hutton Magna Yorks	200 days	50km	W	dead, road casualty
MRG	Barn Owl	GC73797	16.07.09	Worthington, Wigan	14.03.12	Altham, Lancs	940 days	30km	NE	dead
MRG	Barn Owl	GR26868	26.06.11	Glazebury, Wigan	19.07.12	Irlam, Salford	388 days	3km	SE	dead, road casualty
MRG	Barn Owl	GR62931	09.06.11	Abram, Wigan	22.10.12	Lowton, Wigan	501 days	3km	S	dead, road casualty
NYMSG	TawnyOwl	GC70540	10.05.10	Grosmont, N. Yorks	13.03.12	Whitby, N. Yorks	673 days	8km	NE	dead, road casualty
PDRMG	LE Owl	GC989433	05.05.10	Winscar Resr S.Yorks	07.01.12	Ingbirchworth Resr.Yorks	612 days	6km	ENE	dead, not recent

Appendix 4: List of acronyms

a.s.l.	above sea level
BRSG	Bowland Raptor Study Group
CRSG	Calderdale Raptor Study Group
DUBSG	Durham Upland Bird Study Group
MRG	Manchester Raptor Group
NC	Not Counted [in the NERF Species Tables]
NRG	Northumbrian Ringing Group
NYMRSG	Abbreviated acronym used in tables for NYMUB(M)SG
NYMUB(M)SG	North York Moors Upland Bird(Merlin) Study Group
PDRMG	Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
RSG	Raptor Study Group
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SPA	Special Protected Area, under EC Wild Birds Directive [79/409/EEC commonly referred to as The Birds Directive]
SPRSG	South Peak Raptor Study Group
SREYRSG	South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group
YDUBSG	Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group