

Northern England Raptor Forum

Annual Review 2013



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Photograph credits

Honey Buzzard: John Harwood
Red Kite: Ivan Ellison
Poisoned Red Kite:
Marsh Harrier: Ian Fisher
Hen Harrier: Mick Price
Northern Goshawk: Ivan Ellison
Buzzard: Ken Smith
Osprey: Ken Smith
Common Kestrel chicks: Julian Park
Merlin chicks just hatched: Mike Price
Hobby nest: Mike Price
Peregrine: Mike Killelea
Barn Owl chicks: Derek Charlton
Eagle Owl eggs: Mick Demain
Little Owls: Richard Waddington
Tawny Owl chicks: Mike Price
Long-eared Owl: Bob Kenworthy
Short-eared Owl: Ivan Ellison
Raven: Ken 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).
Northumbria Police 0345 604 3043
North Yorkshire Police 0845 606 0247
South Yorkshire Police 0114 220 2020
West Yorkshire Police 0845 606 0606
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:
RSPB Hen Harrier hotline 0845 4600121

Foreword

Andre Farrar
PR Planning and Strategy Manager, RSPB.



This spring I returned to the Forest of Bowland for an all too brief visit. I stood in a place I had first visited in 1982, the year I was the RSPB's man in Bowland, just starting out on my career in conservation. And I watched a male Hen Harrier crest the brow of the hill; and then the food pass with the female rising up from a nest.

I shared that moment with the guys mounting a guard that, even in this place that has been their English stronghold for decades, is still necessary. This pair fledged young successfully and was one of only four pairs in England this year.

And four pairs seems like progress – this report covers 2013, the year of no successful nests in England. And the pair I was watching this spring was the first pair in Bowland since 2011. But of course four pairs is not progress, it's not even a bare minimum. It is a welcome and encouraging sign that the fortunes of this bird that is loved and loathed in unequal measure can improve – but real progress has yet to appear.

My summer of '82 was the year I got to know Hen Harriers in spring, eight nests on my patch and fledged young in double figures. It was the year, too, that I confronted that deep visceral loathing that Hen Harriers prompt in many people charged with producing as many red grouse as the land can give ... it shocked me then, it saddens me still and it continues to perpetuate the unacceptable absence of Hen Harriers from the hills of Northern England.

The extirpation of Hen Harriers as a breeding species in England prompted action. It galvanized Birders Against Wildlife Crime's Hen Harrier Day; Mark Avery and Chris Packham eloquently articulated that enough was enough. Suddenly Hen Harriers were a hotter topic than they've ever been – I welcome that. Standing in the deluge in the Peak District on 10 August on Hen Harrier day with over 600 people, resolute in our determination to see the return of Hen Harriers – to see real progress and not have to celebrate just four pairs. Approaches on tactics differ – this is inevitable and no bad thing, but the goal of seeing Hen Harriers restored is shared.

The fate of Hen Harriers in the English uplands is but one element in a story of how the hills are responding to a shooting industry intensifying to produce larger bags of red grouse. The growing realisation (and acceptance) that the impacts in terms of the landscape, the habitats that make it what it is and some of the species that depend on it are unsustainable.

This excellent report bringing together the results of committed individuals contributing a massive amount of time and expertise. It tells the story of the decline of Hen Harriers in hard numbers – but it also charts other stories of successes and recovery. Corners can be turned.

The stories of the conservation of any bird of prey feature the dedication of individuals and groups who are prepared to commit themselves to research, monitoring and protection – NERF's Annual Report for 2013 is full of the next instalments of these stories, and it is a tribute to the members of NERF that makes a vital difference.

Chairman's Report



Welcome to the fifth NERF annual review, where we document the status of raptors, owls and the Raven throughout the English uplands from the Scottish border to the moors of north Staffordshire. That we are able to cover such a large area is a testament to the many hours that a relatively small number of extremely dedicated and experienced fieldworkers put into fieldwork every year. This document is the best and most up to date summary of the status of our upland avian predators available, much of the data are of course collected under licence from Natural England or BTO and supplied to the RBBP to be used in their annual reports published in *British Birds*. We at NERF have always believed that the data collected by raptor workers within our local member groups has huge added value by its use to form an over-arching regional view, offering a clearer picture of both overall and local trends and possible concerns. We feel that this is the best way to inform the conservation and protection of those species we study.

Some species of course are doing well and some much less so. In the former category is Osprey, a recent colonist, Hobby, a species many find it difficult “to get to grips with” and as a result poorly documented outside the Peak District and finally Red Kite, a much heralded and successful reintroduction. However all these species, notably Red Kite are constrained in both range and numbers by persecution, especially in this case the use of poison, so we need to avoid complacency. We have grave concerns for a number of species particularly of course Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Goshawk and Short-eared Owl; all four have suffered severely at the hands of the game industry despite their protected status. Indeed in the year under review no Hen Harriers bred successfully in England and only two pairs made the attempt, although it was claimed both failures were natural one exhibited one of the hall marks often associated

with persecution, a disappearing male dooming the attempt to failure. This is very rare in non-persecuted populations yet up to 30 times commoner in areas managed for Red Grouse shooting. Peregrines and Goshawks are almost entirely absent from huge areas of upland, again mainly those associated with grouse shooting and it seems that Short-eared Owls are following them. This must change, failure cannot be an option, the birds deserve no less.

NERF has contributed a view to the Law Commission review on wildlife crime and Natural England's review of General Licence conditions it remains to be seen whether our view prevails. The current government declined to change the law governing poison possession in order to make prosecution easier and has currently ruled out the licensing of grouse moors, although this may change after the recent show of support for Hen Harrier Day: thank you Mark Avery and BAWC. What is very clear is the current status quo throughout the uplands is totally unacceptable and it seems grouse shooting is unable or unwilling to put its own house in order. Although regrettably NERF is not part of DEFRA's upland stakeholder group we support the bringing forward of an "Emergency Hen Harrier recovery plan" once such has been agreed by all parties. Shooting organisations seem very keen on bouncing DEFRA into publishing before total agreement, probably with their lower preferred harrier densities, we should be very wary of this, if these organisations are as keen on harriers as they currently claim all they need to do is obey the law and stop killing them: problem solved. We are members of PAW, attending those meetings concerned with solving raptor persecution and already work closely with RSPB, BTO, RBBP and NE on various issues. We remain willing to work with others offering genuine dialogue aimed at improving the conservation status of raptors, owls and Raven.

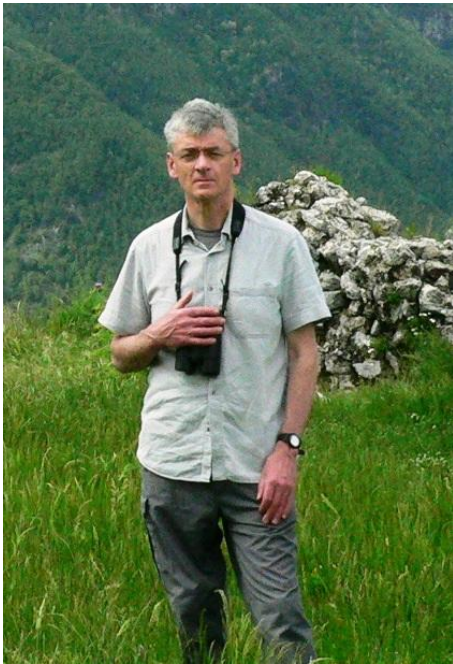
Finally if I were to offer only one brief message it would be, we cannot do this without your participation, field skills and data, to all of you who are already part of NERF in some way I offer a huge and genuine thank you for all your efforts, they are much appreciated. Enjoy the read!

Paul Irving.
Chairman, Northern England Raptor Forum
September 2014

NERF committee. February 2014



Secretary's Report



The Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF) represents the collective field-work and conservation interests of ten wholly voluntary 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 key raptor species in their areas. In many cases these detailed research studies date back 25 years or more and as a consequence NERF holds the most comprehensive, evidence-based, data set for the breeding success of raptors, owls and Raven in the uplands of northern England. This information is supplied to the national database, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, and to other organisations to further the cause for species & habitat conservation and protection.

Each raptor study group is represented within NERF by two members. Formal meetings are held twice per year (February and September) with business and decisions between meetings being progressed via email or sub-committees. Representatives from the RSPB, Natural England and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel regularly attend meetings in an advisory capacity. We are pleased to announce the launch of our website www.raptorforum.co.uk where more information can be found.

Our Northern England Raptor Conferences, held each November, are a regular calendar feature offering the opportunity for fieldworkers and professional conservationists to share knowledge and thinking. The 2013 conference at Askham Bryan Agricultural College, York was kindly hosted jointly by the North York Moors Merlin Study Group and the South Ryedale & East Yorks Raptor Group. A summary of the papers given during this highly successful and enjoyable day is provided separately within this review. NERF is especially grateful for the support and encouragement of its conference sponsors – in this case the RSPB, the Hawk & Owl Trust, the North York Moors National Park, the Forestry Commission and Paramo clothing.

The BTO organised a National Peregrine Survey in 2014 and individual NERF member groups have played a large part in locally co-ordinating the survey to provide full survey coverage of traditional eyries and allocated random squares in their respective areas.

NERF activities extend beyond its primary objective of collating field data and we continue to press for improved species conservation and protection in a variety of ways. Representation on outside bodies and written submissions to a variety of organisations form a large part of our work. A NERF member sits on DEFRA's Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) where we seek to ensure police resources and policies meet the threats of wildlife crime. Members also represented NERF on DEFRA's Buzzard Stakeholder Group which subsequently disbanded in the absence of finance to undertake the necessary research into the impact of Buzzards around gamebird poul release pens. Without research and good science there can be no justifiable case for the lethal and non-lethal control of Buzzards yet we continue to see applications for control coming from some estates.

Above all, after the very year of this Annual Review which saw no Hen Harriers fledged in England for the first time in many decades, NERF's main focus has been directed towards this icon and threatened species. NERF formally withdrew from the Environment Council's Hen Harrier Dialogue process over dissatisfaction with the rate of positive progress and in the face of continued persecution and a rapidly declining population. We now look to Defra's Uplands Stakeholder Forum to publish its Joint Hen Harrier Recovery Emergency Action Plan and trust that this will secure the rightful place of the Hen Harrier in our uplands. Meanwhile NERF members supported the Hen Harrier Day on the 10th August 2014 at Derwent Reservoir, Derbyshire to draw attention to the plight of this species on driven grouse moor estates.

NERF has met separately with the RSPB to discuss matters of common concern and at the time of writing we are looking forward to our active participation in the new 5 year Hen Harrier LIFE+ project being led by the RSPB to further the conservation of this much threatened species.

Finally, we are again especially grateful to Judith Smith for her work as editor of this, our Annual Review, which we see as an important showcase of NERF's collective efforts.

David Raw
Secretary, Northern England Raptor Forum

August 2014

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 lying generally west of the Easting NZ10 up to the county boundaries with Northumberland, Cumbria and North Yorkshire]. Where appropriate, comments are also made on the status of species throughout the Durham recording area as determined by the county ornithological society, the Durham Bird Club.

Manchester Raptor Group

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.

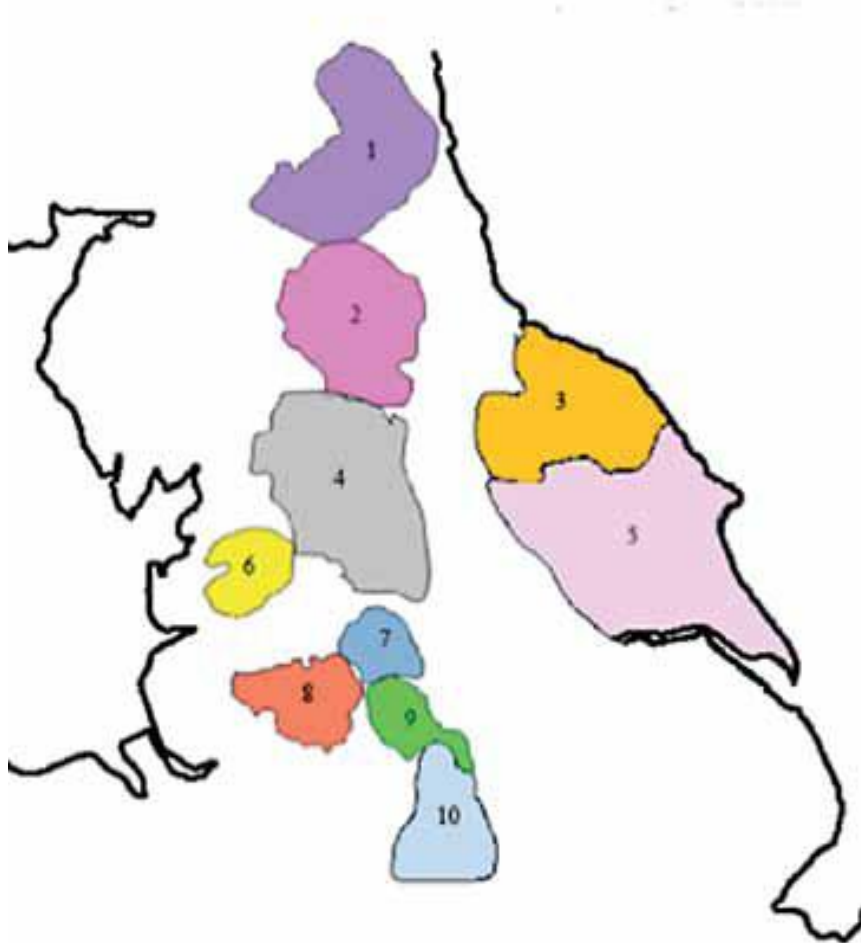
The work previously undertaken by the Mosslands Barn Owl Conservation Group has been absorbed into the MRG, whose other main field of interest is Peregrines.

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 was formed in 2006 to collate the results of fieldwork on raptors being undertaken across the northern uplands by member groups. We speak with one collective voice for the protection and conservation of birds of prey. Members survey all 23 species of raptors, owls and Raven (an honorary raptor) occurring in or on passage through our region.

Whilst the terrain may be sometimes challenging and often remote the following species accounts show clearly that our volunteer fieldworkers manage to study the majority of key species in considerable depth. Many of these studies have been ongoing for decades and serve to provide valuable information on long term population trends. Our focus is on Schedule 1 species where members operate under appropriate licence but we also recognise the need where possible to provide information on the other, more common species.

The breeding season really presents quite a small window of opportunity each season so resource and particularly time constraints mean that priority must be given to some species over others.

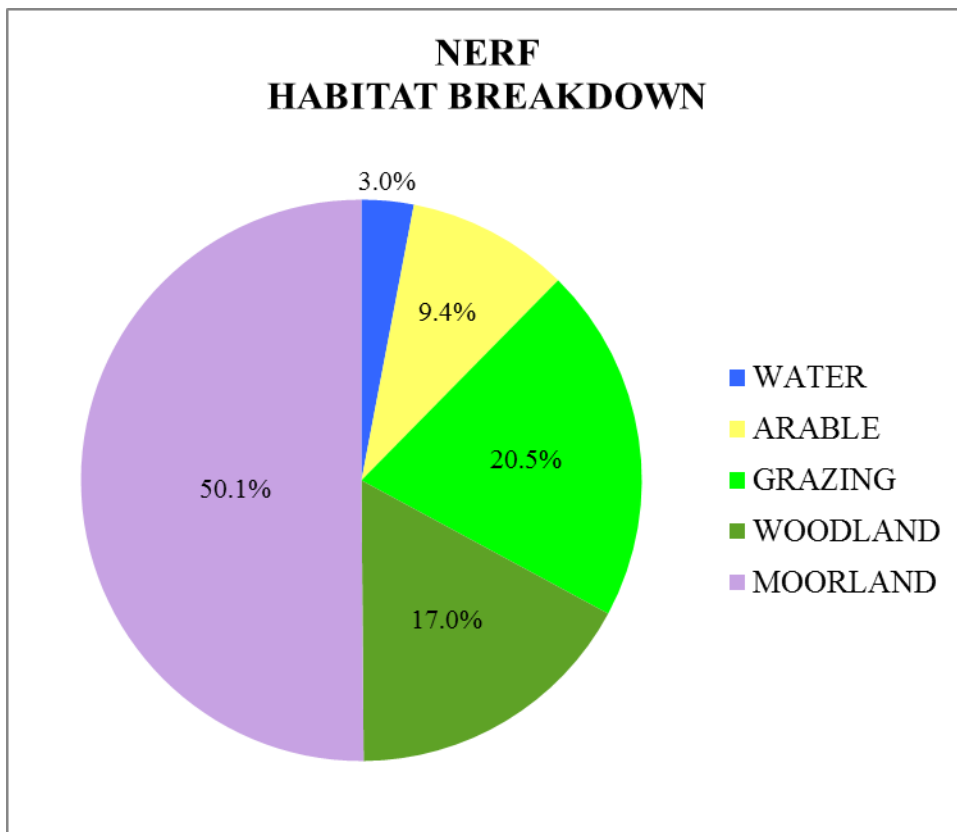
We attempt to provide as much detailed information as possible for Schedule 1 species and some others. The extent and area of coverage for each group's survey work should be read in conjunction with the figures presented in species account tables. A "0" (**Zero**) is shown where the column feature was known with confidence to be zero for the area surveyed having regard to the extent of coverage indicated. Examples include species that definitely did not occur or perhaps where no pairs laid eggs or fledged young. "NC" (**Not Counted**) is shown in any column where the feature occurred but the number was not known – probably because it was not monitored in detail. The NC notation should not be interpreted to conclude that the species does not occur in the study area.

Similar criteria apply to the persecution data. The numbers in the persecution pie-chart refer only to evidence-based cases recorded by members in respect of both 'species' and 'type of persecution' categories. These figures are by no means absolute, they simply reflect the incidents that group members have experienced. Equally the absence of persecution incidents shouldn't be interpreted that no persecution occurs.

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.

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. 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 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

Species monitored by NERF

GROUP																			
BRSG	Green	Blue	Green	White	Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green
CRSG	Green	Red	Green	Red	Blue	Red	Green	Green	Blue	Red	Red	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green
DUBSG	Green	Blue	Green	Red	Blue	Green	Yellow	Green	Blue	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Blue	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
MRG	Green	Red	Red	Blue	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Green	Blue	Red	Green	Blue	Green	Green
NRG	Green	Red	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Green
NORTH YORK MOORRS G	Yellow	Green	Green	Blue	Blue	Red	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Blue
PDRMG	Green	Red	Blue	Green	Blue	Green	Yellow	Green	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green
SPRSG	Yellow	Blue	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Yellow	Green	Blue	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Green
YDUBG	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Blue	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green
	<i>Buzzard Common</i>	<i>Buzzard, Honey</i>	<i>Goshawk</i>	<i>Harrier, Hen</i>	<i>Harrier, Marsh</i>	<i>Hobby</i>	<i>Kestrel</i>	<i>Merlin</i>	<i>Osprey</i>	<i>Owl, Barn</i>	<i>Owl, Eagle</i>	<i>Owl, Little</i>	<i>Owl, Long-eared</i>	<i>Owl, Short-eared</i>	<i>Owl, Tawny</i>	<i>Peregrine</i>	<i>Red Kite</i>	<i>Sparrowhawk</i>	<i>Raven</i>

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

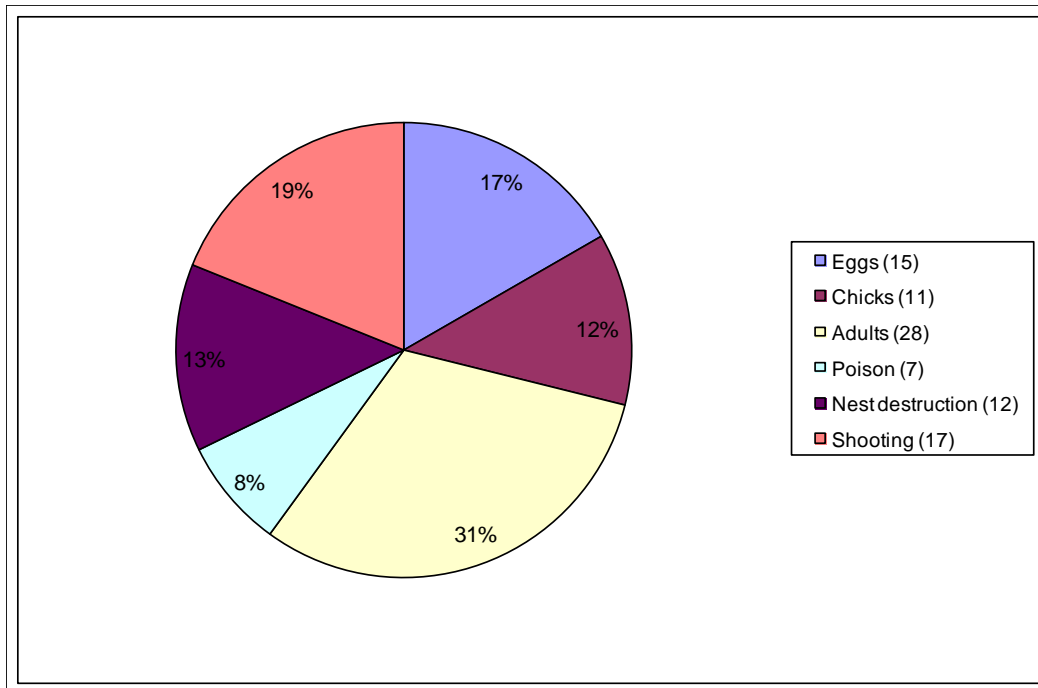
NERF regional persecution data

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 this year is 90, a welcome return to 2011 levels when 82 were recorded. However, all suspected incidents have been omitted from the chart below. Once again, destruction of adults is the largest sector at 31%.

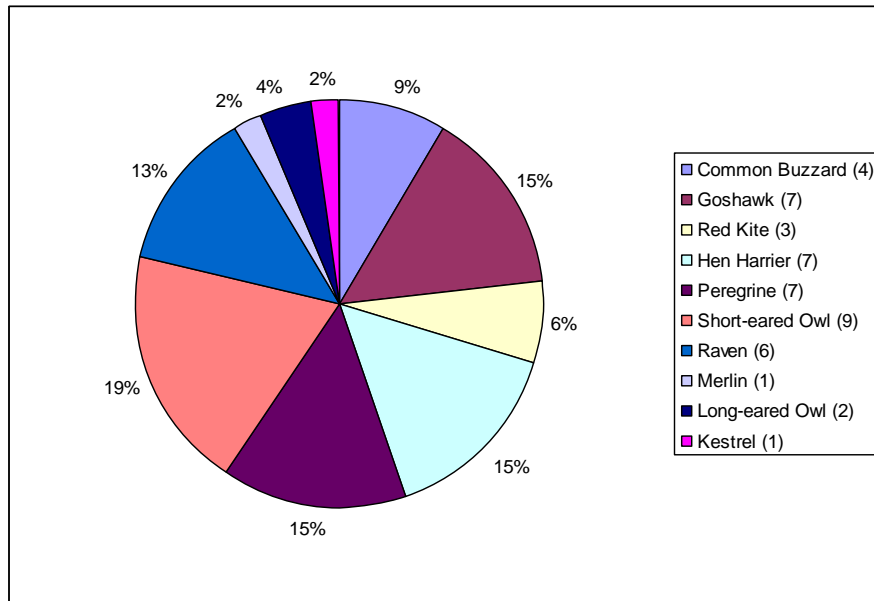
Persecution by type 2013 (*figures in parentheses refer to number of incidents*)



Black Hole species

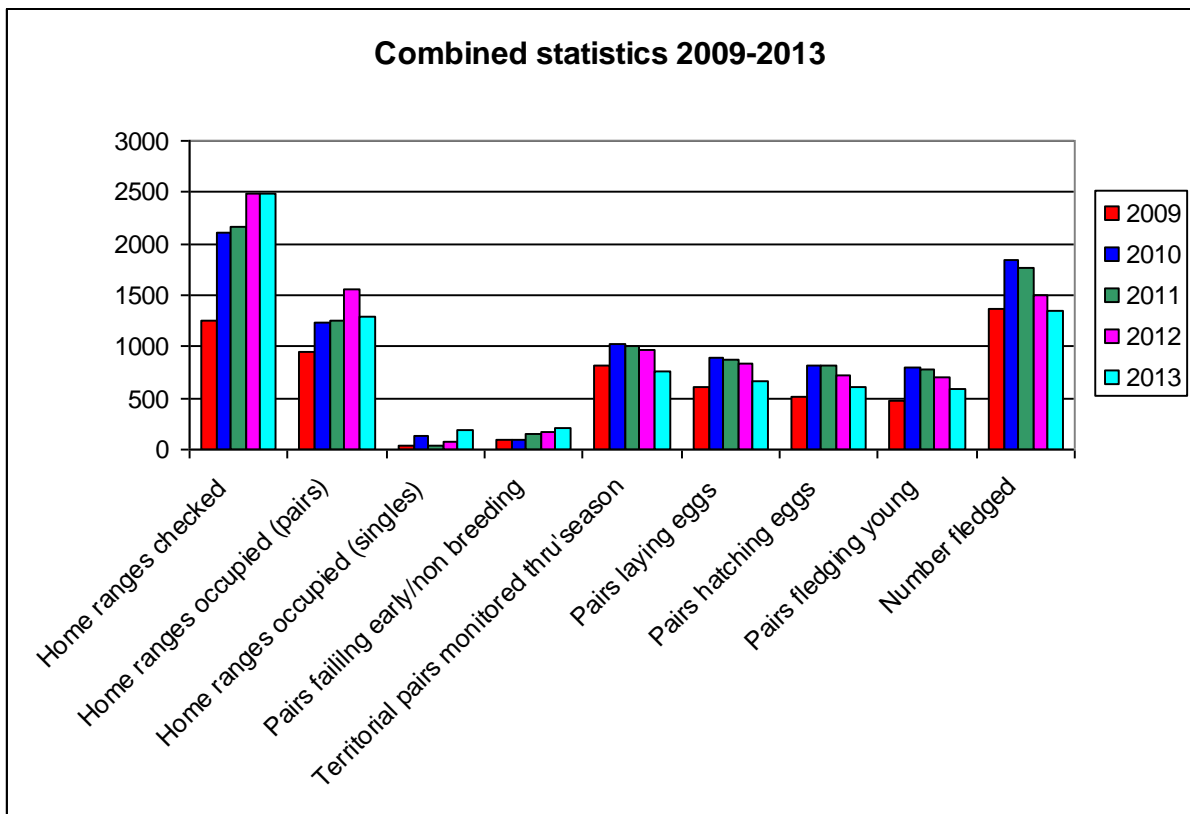
During 2013 NERF members analysed the various habitats within their respective study areas with a view to identifying 'Black Hole Species', i.e. those habitats where there is ample suitable habitat and food supply but where the relevant species are absent or occur at levels well below those experienced in similar habitat. The pie chart indicates the species and the number of NERF member Groups experiencing reduced populations.

Black Hole species (figures in parentheses refer to number of groups listing species)



Summary

Within the NERF region 19 of the 23 raptor species were monitored and / or recorded by Group members during 2013. 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 - 2013 are presented in the table below.



Collectively NERF members checked 2495 home ranges in 2013 – 15 (1.65%) more than in 2012, 15% more than in 2011, 18.6% more than in 2010 and 98% more than in 2009.

However, 3 additional groups have joined over the years.

Of these, 1290 were occupied by pairs of birds and 751 pairs were monitored throughout the season, well down on 2012 (23%). This was due to the exceptionally cold spring which resulted in a disastrous breeding season for most raptors and owls because of the effect on their mammalian prey. However, a minimum of 595 pairs are known to have fledged in excess of 1342 young birds.

Comparisons between the 2009 and 2013 fledging rates for pairs laying eggs and pairs monitored are provided in Appendix 2.

Although NERF members completed an extraordinary amount of monitoring during 2013 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 2009-2013 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.

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 2013

Montagu's Harrier – no sightings in the NERF region in 2013

Rough-legged Buzzard – no breeding season sightings in the NERF region in 2013

Golden Eagle – no sightings in the NERF region in 2013; the only bird in England is the solitary Haweswater bird, still alive in September 2014.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*



UK population estimate

14-42 pairs were reported to RBBP for their 2012 report, with poor success due to the wet summer (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560).

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	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
NORTH YORK MOORRSG Group A	7	1	1	NC	1	(1)	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NORTH YORK MOORRSG Group B	4	2	7	NC	2	2	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Very rarely seen and no breeding site known despite good habitat within the study area.

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 no records of this migratory species crossing the Group's study area during 2013.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

Unusually there were no reports across the county of birds on passage. There were no reports of birds lingering during the summer months.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

No records of this species this year.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

No occurrences of this species reported this season.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Two independent Groups worked on this species in 2013 in different areas of the forests. Group A recorded just 3 different birds during the breeding season, 2 males & 1 female. One of the males returned for his 6th successive year. The other two (a pair) were also “returners”, the male for his 5th year, the female for her 4th. These two were mates in 2011 when their nest attempt failed. The female did breed successfully in 2010 but with a different male. Food-carrying adults were observed and photographed on 4-5 occasions from early to mid-August at which point observers lost track of the birds’ flight lines. In view of this and as no juveniles were seen subsequent to these sightings breeding can only be regarded as probable. Group B did prove nesting to the egg stage but the outcome of the attempts was not established in either instance.

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 Groups study area. There were no records of this species within the study area in 2013.

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.

A female was recorded in North Derbyshire on 20th August in possible breeding habitat, but there were no indications of breeding.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Not reported in study area in 2013

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

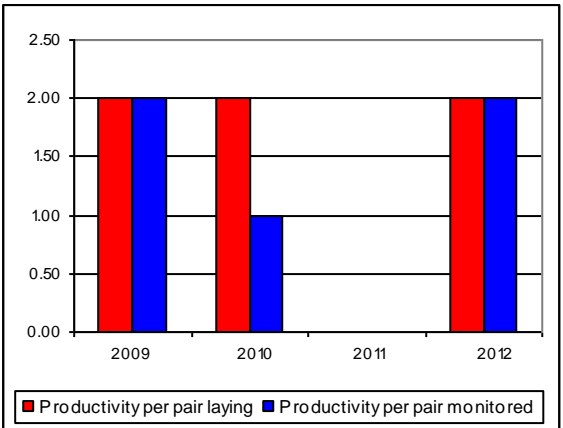
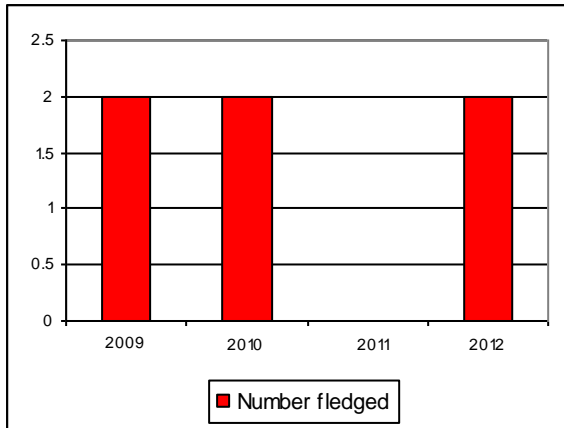
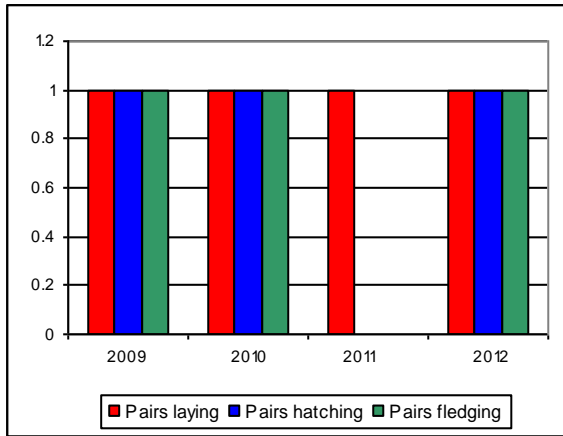
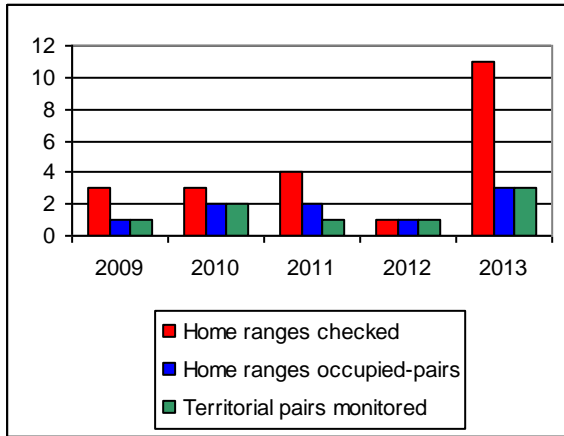
Level of monitoring: Not known to occur here as a breeding species.

Records of birds in the Yorkshire Dales invariably refer to occasional passage migrants. No observations were reported this year.

NERF regional summary

Only the North York Moors offers a realistic chance of encountering this elusive species with any degree of regularity harbouring as it does the sole known regular small breeding population in northern England. It is however, highly likely that pairs of this species, adept at maintaining a low profile during the breeding cycle, are nesting undetected elsewhere in the region.

Comparative data 2009-2013



Red Kite *Milvus milvus*



UK population estimate

A figure of 2500+ pairs is based on 2012 figures derived from the minutes of the UK and Ireland Red Kite Co-ordination Group. (The estimated figures for Wales and The Chilterns alone are 2000+). The figure includes Northern Ireland but excludes Southern Ireland. Information supplied by Doug Simpson MBE; this is twice the five-year average (1121 pairs) given by RBBP. (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560).

Conservation status

UK: **Amber list**

European: 2; Concern, most notably in Europe; declining.

Global: Near Threatened; experiencing a moderately rapid population decline, owing mostly to poisoning from pesticides and persecution, and changes in land-use amongst other threats.

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

National and regional threat assessment

By far the biggest threat to red kites continues to come from illegal poisoning. Whilst they may not be the intended target they are scavengers and will consume poisoned baits placed out illegally to kill other species. There have been at least 25 Yorkshire-related Red Kite illegal poisonings recorded since 2000, 20 of which have occurred in North Yorkshire. This area has the unenviable record of being one of the worst in the UK for offences involving birds of prey.

They are also susceptible to poisoning from second-generation rodenticides introduced to control rats which had become resistant to first-generation substances such as Warfarin. 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. The growth in the number of wind turbines, sometimes featuring as extensive wind-farm arrays, poses an increasing risk of collision. There are still no national guidelines regarding coordinated nature conservation and planning guidance for installations of micro-wind turbines.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru'	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	35	27	?	7	20	17	9/10	9	18+	1.1	0.9
NRG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SREYRSG	12	11	?	1	11	11	11	11	22	2	2
YDUBSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	11	2.2	2.2
Total	58	43	0	8	36	33	26	25	51+	1.55	1.42

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: A pair frequented a suitable site for several weeks late in the season building a loose structure high in a Pine. This may have been a pair which had failed elsewhere within the area. Both birds were wing tagged, one was a bird from Scotland and the second was a bird from the Lake District.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Once again the number of sightings increased across the study area. However; despite a significant effort by Study Group members no evidence of breeding was found. There were 14 sightings between the 24th March and 17th August; widely scattered across the whole study area. On 31st March 2 birds were seen together in the Luddenden Valley. A potential future breeding site? The habitat is definitely suitable.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: The Durham Upland Bird Study Group is grateful to the Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) for allowing NERF to reproduce their summary data. The Northern Kites Project released 94 juvenile birds in the Gateshead area between 2004 and 2006. By 2010 there were 21 territorial pairs locally, of which 13 bred successfully that year with 24 young fledged.

Despite an impressive roost count of 55 at one location in January, 2013 proved to be a very disappointing breeding season from a number of aspects. There was an unusually high nest failure rate despite apparent favourable weather during the hatching and fledging period. It is possible that the very cold conditions of March and April could have impacted on the adults' fitness at the start of the season. Nine, probably 10 pairs were successful. Of the 7 nest failures, one was predated when it contained 2 young, two others had had the lining ripped out, possibly by Carrion Crow, and the cause of the others was not established.

Ten young birds were wing tagged in 2013 (pink on left & yellow with black lettering on right).

There is real concern that the population is failing to spread out from the core introduction area into either the lowlands or uplands. At best, the population can be described as stable over the last 3 years but it has not expanded as would have been expected from the experience of release programmes elsewhere. Some chicks which have been wing tagged are never seen again after fledging despite intensive winter monitoring. There are plans in 2014, the tenth anniversary year for the project, to increase survey effort still further and hopefully fit tail mounted tracking transmitters to all juveniles.

Manchester Raptor Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Only 12 records reported to www.manchesterbirding.com in 2013, compared with 25 in 2012.

J	F	M	A	M	J	JY	A	S	O	N	D
		2	2		4	2			2		

Six were in the east, including 2 at Stalybridge 4th June, and 5 in the west, with one passing over the city centre 5th April where it was intercepted and chased off by the resident Peregrine.

There is no suggestion of breeding in the county.

Northumbrian Ringing Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: There were no breeding attempts for Red Kite in Northumberland in 2013.

North York Moors Upland Bird Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Reports were received early autumn of a breeding attempt having occurred in the northern part of the North York Moors but attempts to verify this were unsuccessful. However, over the course of the year a fair number of sightings throughout the study area referred to more than one bird. For example, 2 birds were reported as displaying towards the year end in one particular valley to the north with up to 4 individuals observed later at the same site and 3 birds were recorded in another dale in July. At this point time one can expect to come across a bird anywhere in the North York Moors and at any time of the year and it does not seem to be stretching credulity excessively to expect a breeding attempt to be confirmed in the national park in the not too distant future.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: 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 in the near future this species will move to breed within the excellent habitat available in the Group's study area.

South Peak Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: 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. Six individuals were seen in various locations within the SPRSG recording area during the 2013 season, but there was no sign of breeding.

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring:

Scarborough Birders recording area only: At least 16 individual sightings, but some duplicate records.

East Yorkshire Red Kites: Good coverage of a large representative study area.

We continue to remain confident about the long term success of the East Yorkshire Red Kite population, being pleased to report that 11 breeding pairs were known to have been successful this year, an increase of 3 from 2012. As in previous years, monitoring showed a tendency for several established pairs to 'up sticks' and move to new nest sites. A further pair deserted their nest site after apparently being disturbed. Although they remained in the area, we were unable to locate their breeding site. As we do not have access to three known nest sites, we have had to resort to observing from the public highway. As in 2012, the regular presence of birds at two of them and the sighting of fledged young indicated that both were successful this season. We are also grateful to the people who informed us of 4 new nest sites. East Yorkshire is a massive area and we are confident there will have been other breeding pairs that we weren't aware of. A record maximum of 65 birds were recorded at the communal winter roost site.

AREA	PAIRS FOUND	PAIRS BRED	PAIRS SUCC.	YOUNG
West Yorkshire	54 (57)	49 (55)	42 (46)	76 (85)
North Yorkshire	35 (35)	28 (32)	22 (26)	46 (47)
East Yorkshire	12 (8)	11 (8)	11 (8)	22 (17)
Totals	101 (100)	88 (95)	75 (80)	144 (149)
Average young raised per successful pair = 1.92 (1.86). 2012 figures in brackets.				

2013 Yorkshire overall breeding figures are shown in the table above.

It is highly likely that there were other territorial/breeding pairs which were not located.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: In Nidderdale a pair near Pateley seen with just fledged young – the nest site remains frustratingly unknown. Up to fourteen birds were in Nidderdale post breeding. Just outside the south east of the study area two nests failed at the egg stage which coincided with a period of strong winds and heavy rain. Cold eggs were in the nests and both are on land where disturbance by humans is unlikely.

NERF regional summary

Reliable records are not available from all parts of the NERF region. Red Kites are also frequently recorded as passage birds in many study areas.

WARNING:

Some poisons are exceptionally toxic and can be absorbed directly through the skin. Raptor Workers finding a dead Red Kite, or any other species suspected to have been poisoned, should exercise extreme caution before handling a carcass. Butyl gloves offer some protection and may be used. However standard, thin, household gloves are not effective against many of the poisons found in dead Red Kites and should not be used. If the carcass is recovered it should be dropped into a bin liner. This bin liner should be placed inside a second with the butyl gloves dropped into the space between the 2 bags. The bags should then be securely tied. In every event it is advisable to wash or sterilise hands immediately after contact with a dead animal and in all cases before eating or smoking.

Yorkshire Red Kites have their own guidelines for dealing with casualties:

www.yorkshireredkites.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=13

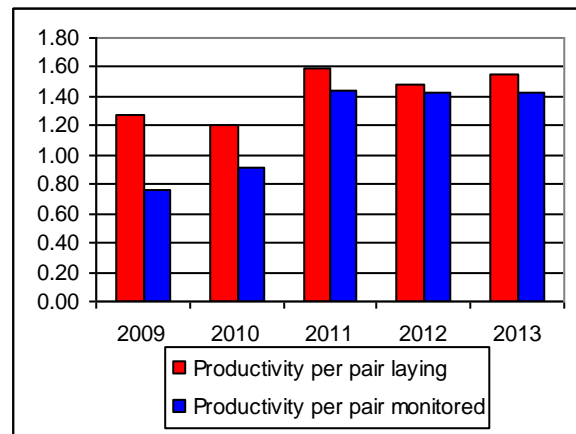
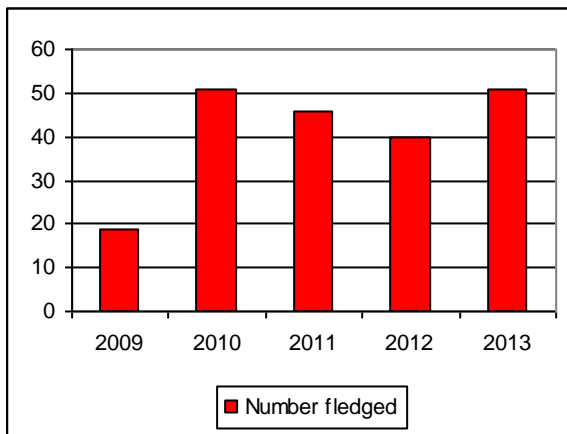
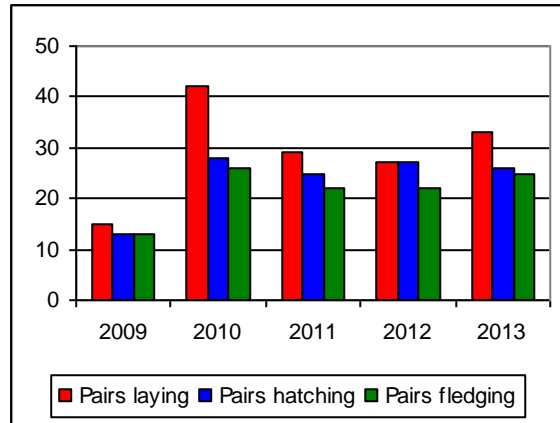
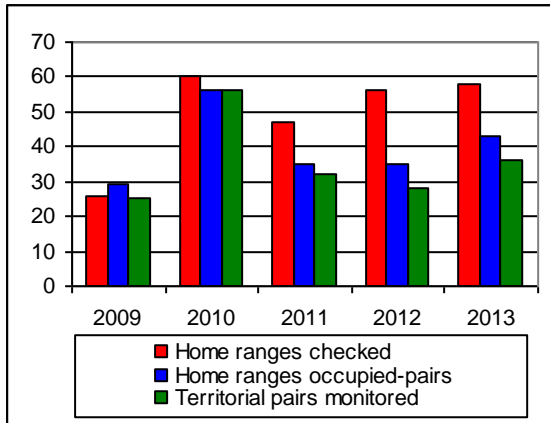
It is essential that all suspected poisoning incidents are reported to the local Police and that an incident number is obtained. The cause of death will be determined by either the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [PBMS], telephone 01524 595830 (direct line) or 01524 595800 (switchboard) E.mail: leew@ceh.ac.uk Alternatively contact the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme [WIIS] telephone 0800 321600.

Local police: dial 101 and ask for the Wildlife Crime Officer and ask for an Incident Number.

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 August 2014.

Comparative data 2009-2013



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). 272-336 breeding pairs were reported to RBBP (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560).

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)	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
NRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4.0	4.0

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

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

Not known to breed in Calderdale although sightings increasing particular on the moors during the summer months.

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 2CY 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.

There were only 2 records in spring: one cream-crown at Marsland 22nd April and one report from the Astley Moss SSSI 20th May. The age and sex were not specified by the person reporting the sighting.

The remaining records for 2013 did not suggest that any birds spent the summer on the mosslands, as the next sighting was of an adult female 6th August at Astley Moss and what was presumably the same bird was also seen nearby 9th and 12th August, at Croxden peat pools and Ringing Pits respectively. On this latter date it had prey and was harassed by a Peregrine family. At the same time, another female / juvenile was seen flying north but there was no interaction between the two. On 4th September, a female / immature bird migrated north-east over Winter Hill. A juvenile was sighted at Croxden peat pools 6th September, and an adult female was on Barton Moss 10th September and Croxden peat pools 20th September. The last sighting was again at Smithills Moor with an immature flying south 6th October.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

The pair returned to the 2012 breeding site in April, nesting in the same place in the reed bed, where they laid 5 eggs. All 5 eggs hatched, however only 4 young fledged.

In common with previous years the Group observed many passage birds so hopefully we might start to get more pairs breeding in the study area in the future.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

2013 followed the standard pattern from recent years and passage birds were recorded in most months. The records included sightings at Scaling Dam from mid-June to September on 10 occasions and 5 further records on Fylingdales Moor during May, June and September.

The majority of the sightings involved individuals and the 'pairs' that featured briefly on two occasions were not regarded as potential breeding birds.

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.

As in previous years birds were noted on spring and autumn passage across the study area, mainly in April and May and from late July through to September. A passage 'cream crown' was noted in the Upper Derwent valley in early June.

There remains little likelihood of any breeding in our study area, yet it is interesting that the upland areas are used on migration.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Not known to occur here as a breeding species

Level of monitoring: Part upland & part lowland areas

A minimum of 28 sightings were recorded from members operating in the Scarborough section of the study area. Whilst breeding was suspected during the 2013 season this was not confirmed. Nonetheless the Group believes that breeding within the area will take place in the not too distant future.

NERF regional summary

Once again only the Northumbrian Ringing Group reported a successful breeding attempt in 2013. However; most other NERF Groups observed passage migrants during both spring and autumn.

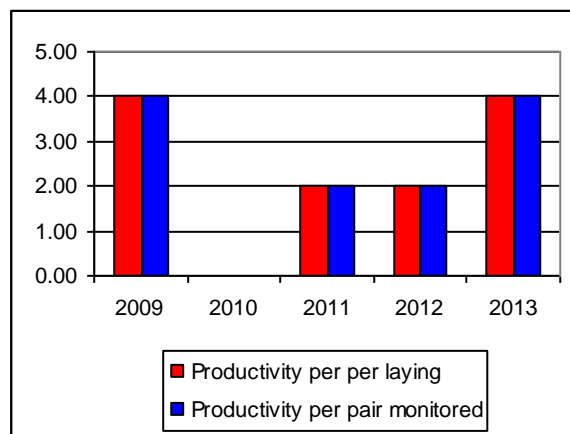
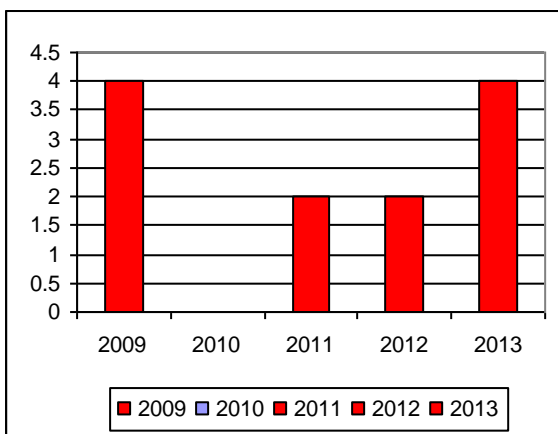
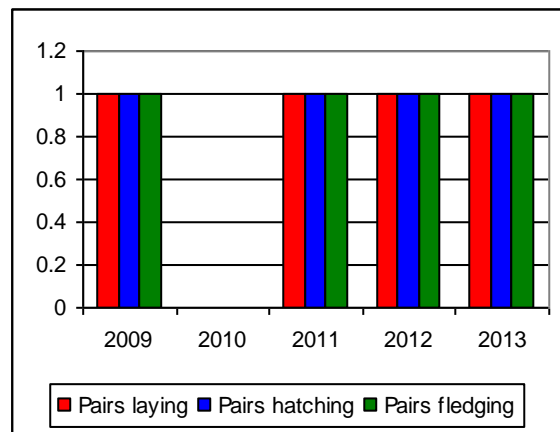
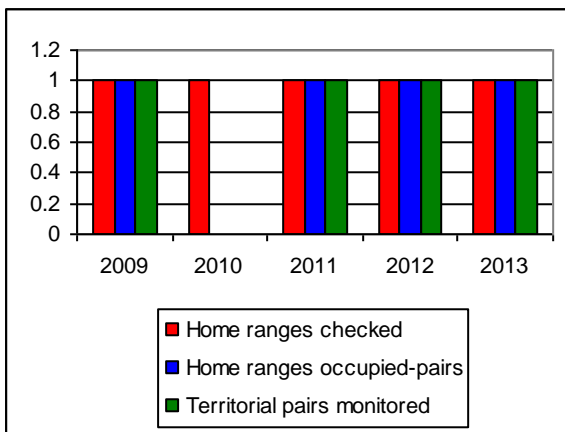
Wing-tagging project

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 2009-2013



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). 204-329 monitored pairs were reported to RBBP for their 2012 report (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560).

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

A large and compelling body of evidence points to illegal persecution in and around driven grouse moor estates being the principal factor which determines the breeding range and population of this iconic species in the English uplands. Studies suggest the favoured moorland habitat is capable of naturally carrying in excess of 300 breeding pairs and yet, with the underlying habitat quality remaining generally favourable, the species has inexorably declined. The Hen Harrier is vulnerable to persecution both at winter roosts and during the breeding season. The regional data presented here for 2013 highlights just how dire the plight of this species has become.

NERF now looks forward to Defra's Upland Stakeholder Group publishing its Hen Harrier Joint Recovery Emergency Action Plan which we trust will secure the birds' full protection and rightful place in our uplands. The issues associated with the grouse shooting industry are deep rooted but action is needed now from all sides to stop illegal persecution. The UK government also has a clear responsibility to towards conservation in the EU designated Special Protection Areas of northern England. The Hen Harrier is listed as a citation species for both the North Pennine and Bowland SPA's and positive measures are long overdue.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	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
BRSR	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSR	8	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	10	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRMG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SREYRSG	NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YDUBSG	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	54	3	0	1	2	2	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.

There were remarkably few sightings in the Bowland fells during the breeding season. A pair was seen together at one site but didn't show the next day or subsequently. Several other sightings of individuals (mainly females) were reported from areas away from previously known home ranges. Disappointingly, despite extensive field work, no breeding attempt was located for the second successive year.

In recent years the United Utilities Bowland Estate has been the only area across the whole of northern England uplands to have regularly held breeding Hen Harriers. It is to be hoped that this loss will prove to be only temporary although the underlying causes for the void now so painfully evident offer little cause for optimism.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas

Level of monitoring: Good annual coverage but not known to occur as a breeding species.

The species has no history of breeding in the Calderdale study area.

Seventeen sightings were recorded in 2013; 16 of which were in the late autumn and winter months. The traditional winter roost was occupied by 1 or 2 birds occasionally in February, March and November. Historically this site has been occupied mainly during harsh weather when birds move in only to leave again immediately when the weather improves. The roost lies on a grouse shooting estate in an area of c 5000 hectares of suitable breeding habitat; unfortunately breeding has never taken place there.

There was an isolated report of a male passing through the M62 corridor on 27th June.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage, all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.

Up to 3 ringtails roosted at one upland site in the latter months of the year.

Breeding was attempted in the county for the first time since 2005. A pair with a nest and eggs was found in early June in an area of upland heather moor. Protection measures were put in place but unfortunately within less than a week the adult male failed to appear and the female, without being provisioned, ultimately deserted the nest and eggs. The 2005 nest failed in very similar circumstances. In contrast, experience of breeding pairs in Scotland suggests it is almost unheard of for the adult male to naturally desert a sitting female. Elsewhere in early June there was a very unusual series of 'one-day-only' reports of male or female birds at three separate locations. Each area was subsequently visited and extensively surveyed without the birds being seen again.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage but not known to occur as a breeding species. There were just four records reported on www.manchesterbirding.com, a fall to only one quarter of those in 2012. This presumably reflects the decline of the species in England. A ringtail flew N over Tottington 6th April and a male was hunting at Cutacre former opencast site 28th April. In autumn, a ringtail flew SE over Smithills Moor 6th October and a ringtail was at Withins Resr, Bury 2nd November.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas only.

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

In the early spring a few widely dispersed passage birds were seen but most had left Northumberland by April.

In May one pair settled in an area but with the cold snowy spring they appear to have delayed starting a nest. Eventually, by early June two eggs were laid, one of which was somewhat misshapen. A 24 hour protection watch was put in place with help from several local partner groups and coordinated by the RSPB.

Sadly, the eggs were incubated well past full term and never hatched. Later analysis showed the eggs to be infertile.

In the Border Forest at Kielder an adult male was present from May to mid June but was never seen to display and no female was ever seen.

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 usual, large tracts of suitable habitat in the North York Moors were visited during routine survey work with no positive outcomes. There were casual and infrequent sightings of birds outside of the breeding season, mainly in the late autumn and winter periods.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.

A number of spring sightings of single birds were each given a high priority for follow up by experienced observers. These included a male and a ringtail within 5km of each other.

Unfortunately none settled and no breeding behaviour was noted in 2013.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually.

A number of sightings of single birds in the recording areas were each carefully followed up by observers given the precarious breeding status of Hen Harrier in England. An adult male

was recorded during April in North Derbyshire and an adult female was noted at the same site on a few days during the same month, but there was no sign of breeding activity. An immature bird, thought to be a first summer male, was seen hunting at another site in North Derbyshire in late April, but was not seen on subsequent visits.

Ringtail harriers were recorded during the autumn from the SPRSG recording area.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage.

In the Scarborough Birders recording area there were 9 reports of individual birds, in the autumn and winter periods. There was no suggestion of any breeding attempt.

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. There were several records of wintering birds in Nidderdale.

A male 'skydanced' for a few days at a site in the Yorkshire Dales National Park with a ringtail also being seen but there was no subsequent breeding attempt.

All other areas where Hen Harriers have bred since 2000 were checked and none were seen.

NERF regional summary

The facts are simple and the evidence incontrovertible. Extensive coverage of the uplands of northern England revealed just two breeding attempts by Hen Harriers, both of which failed. As a result, 2013 will be marked as a new low in the fortunes of this species as for the first time in many decades no young were raised anywhere in England.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*



UK population estimate

The 363-514 pairs reported to RBBP in 2012 is the highest ever reported but still believed to be an under-estimate (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560). 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. A growing threat is posed by forestry operations and the felling of occupied territories in the breeding season. On a local level recreational activity may also pose a threat.

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
BRSRG	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSG	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSG	7	3	3	0	3	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NRG Nbl'd	42	34	1	4	31	26	17	14	26	1.0	0.8
NRG Cum	6	4	0	3	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
PDRSG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	18	11	NC	2	9	9	9	9	18	2.0	2.0
YDUBSG	2	1	1	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Total	84	55	5	10	45	36	27	24	46	1.3	1.0

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas

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

Goshawks try to breed at one site each year but fail to lay eggs probably being discouraged early in the breeding cycle. Another site in Gisburn Forest has been deserted for some years now probably due to excessive disturbance from recreation and a lack of suitable trees in quiet areas.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

For several years Goshawks have turned up in the same area of the study area at the start of the breeding season. This territory, formed by the junction of 2 very steep, rocky and heavily wooded valleys adjacent to a grouse moor, 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.

In 2013 a pair returned in line with previous records and remained on site throughout the spring; however there was no evidence that breeding took place. On 14th April a female was seen to dive and a male then soared together with a second male.

Historically birds have returned in spring and then quickly 'disappeared'. Previously birds have been seen in the same area with asymmetrical wing damage which is indicative that the birds were shot. The fact that a pair of birds were present throughout spring is welcomed and hopefully a springboard for future breeding success.

Birds were also reported on 2 occasions on the eastern Pennine fringe in spring and once and on another occasion in autumn.

Three further records were received from the western Pennines in autumn.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Monitoring again focused primarily on aerial display in springtime over coniferous plantations. The cold and inclement weather that persisted during March and April appeared to limit display and subsequently made it very difficult to assess any breeding season outcomes. Overall numbers appeared to be low with perhaps no more than 3 pairs at traditional sites going on to possibly breed. There was no absolute confirmation of breeding. A female at one upland site carried a leg jesse and elsewhere in the lowlands there were falconers' escape birds at two locations.

In addition to the 3 upland sites a further 2 lowland sites in the county produced records suggesting a county population of no more than 5 pairs.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

No breeding records confirmed by Manchester Raptor Group.

Northumbria 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.

After one of the worst spring and early summers on record, with very cold northerly winds and a late snow fall, the Northumberland Goshawks' breeding success suffered badly. Site occupation was good with 34 occupied territories but only 26 pairs laid eggs resulting in 26 young fledging. This is only slightly more young fledging than in 2012 when there was a very wet summer.

Cumbria followed the same pattern and was very poor with only one successful nest fledging 2 young.

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 2013 to be published. However, new nest sites located this season provided more evidence that the species is still spreading further afield.

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

Formerly a breeding species in our study area, persecution remains the only reasonable explanation for the near localised extinction as a breeding species, 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.

Formerly a regular breeding species in the study area, persecution remains the only plausible explanation for the localised near extinction that has occurred. There were occasional sightings of displaying birds early in the season in the traditional upland areas, but as usual this resulted in no definite breeding attempts or occupied sites. In the Upper Derwentdale area all sites were checked, but none were successfully occupied in 2013.

Elsewhere in the SPRSG recording area eleven sites were occupied and a total of at least 18 young fledged from nine successful nests.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland

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

One female was seen once in spring in same area where birds have been noted occasionally in recent years. There is a suggestion from a local bird vet that these stem from falconers' escapes as birds are regularly flown in Nidderdale and occasionally lost.

Elsewhere displaying birds were seen at one site, and occasional sightings at another.

NERF regional summary

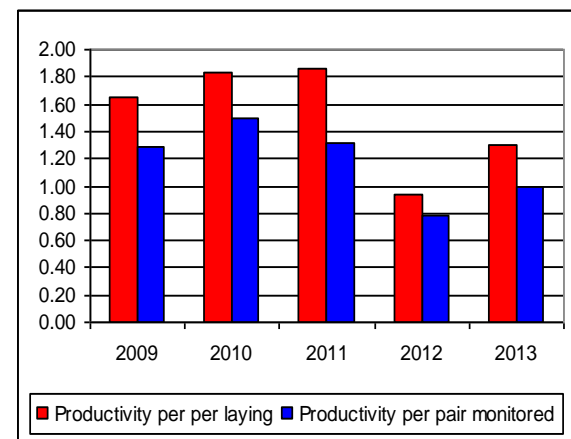
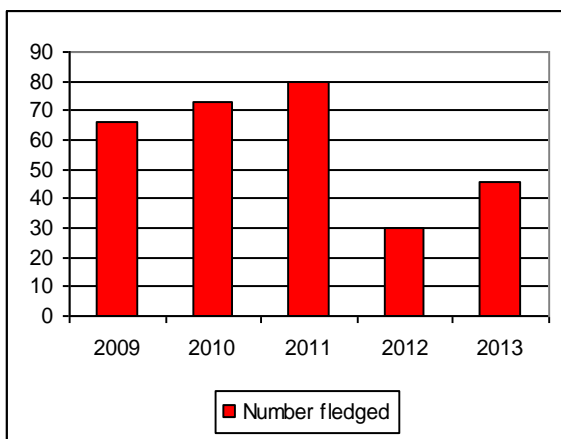
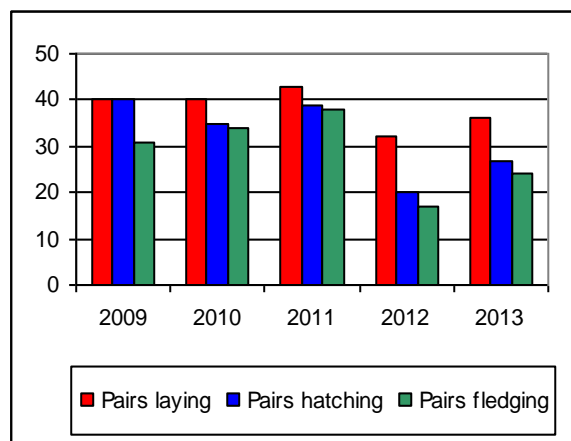
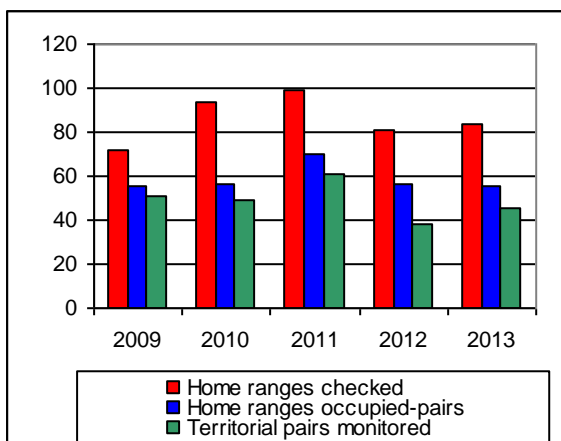
Once again the two main Goshawk study areas for which we have complete data; one in the South Peak area and 1 in Northumberland (which includes part of eastern Cumbria) contain

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 reported approximately the same number of occupied territories as in 2012. Productivity was a little better with 46 young fledging compared with 30 in 2012. This productivity is well below the 80+ young fledging that NERF members reported in 2011. The low numbers of birds fledging in the NRG area was again 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 2009-2013



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 2013 in England showed a 27% decline 2012-13, and a 7% decrease in the period 1995-2012.

National and regional threat assessment

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

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

Conservation status

UK	Green
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

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
BRSRSG	NC	NC	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
CRSG	2	2	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	NC	NC	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	86	36	NC	NC	14	14	13	12	18+	1.29	1.29
NRG	20	16	0	NC	11	11	8	8	20	1.82	1.82
NYMRSRSG	2	2	NC	NC	1	2	2	2	4	2.00	4.00
PDRSG	22	17	NC	2	14	12	11	11	28+	2.33	2.00
SPRSG	NC	NC	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
SREYRS G	0	NC	48	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
YDUBSG	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	4	4	4
Total	133	74	49	2	41	40	35	34	74	1.85	1.80

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
Birds are often seen but no breeding pairs are monitored or looked for.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

The steep-sided and heavily wooded nature of Calderdale makes this species difficult to monitor.

At the beginning of the 2013 breeding season 2 territories were checked by Group members. Both were found to be occupied by pairs, however no further monitoring took place and the outcomes are unknown.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part Upland, Part Lowland

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

The species is not subject to any particular monitoring in the uplands. Over 200 records submitted by Durham Bird Club members in final quarter reflect its relative abundance in the eastern lowlands with the range also extending along the valley systems in the west.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs through to fledging. Over 400 records from www.manchesterbirding.com, Leigh OS newsletters and other sources were analysed to produce the data above.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

These results are for the study in the Border Forest at Kielder. a much improved breeding season was recorded, after the near complete failure in 2012 because of the constant rain. 2013 saw a return to more normal conditions resulting in 11 nests fledging 20 young. Only had 7 fledged in 2012 from the same number of nests.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent Of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

No monitoring of this species takes place normally but numbers of adults observed from year to year suggest there is no cause for worry as far as the North York Moors population is concerned. The chicks from one of the two nests above were ringed and one – a male - was recovered 10 days post-fledging trapped in a garden shed. It was released unharmed, the other nest was located post-fledging with at least 2 youngsters close by. Both nests were in the north-east section of the study area.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

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

Sparrowhawk monitoring was severely hampered by restrictions on FC rangers climbing activities in the main long term study area, unlikely to be resolved in 2014.

At a site in Derbyshire a visit led to the discovery of a dead Sparrowhawk caught in a Crow Trap; it appeared to have followed a thrush into the trap and then couldn't get out, a number of other traps were in the area were left open as they weren't being used, but this one had somehow been closed – as a result of discussions with the landowner, doors are now removed from all traps when not in use.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

SPRSG no longer systematically monitors the species as it is so widespread, although continued lack of successful breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwentdale grouse moors points towards persecution as the likely cause. Reports from members suggest that broods were small in 2013, with just single or two chicks reared.

South Ryeland and East Yorkshire Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

Scarborough Birders recording area only. 48 sightings of individual birds throughout the year at several localities.

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.
No monitoring work undertaken with only a single casual record.

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. In 2013 the number of fledglings reported is up from 50 in 2012 to 74 in 2013 but unlike previous years where the rise probably reflects increased effort by some groups rather than an increase in productivity, 2013 shows more home ranges checked but a reduction in the number of home ranges occupied.

Compared with the previous year, 2013 showed that a similar number of pairs monitored fledged young but productivity was almost 50% higher than 2012, more in line with productivity shown in the years 2009-2011 reflecting the improved weather situation compared to the wet weather suffered in 2012.

Due to the birds still being relatively common, Sparrowhawks have in recent years been rather overlooked as regards detailed monitoring by many of the NERF member groups. However the lack of occupied home ranges in 2013 could be worthy of further investigation; it could be a consideration that the increase in some other larger raptor species particularly Buzzards may be having an effect on Sparrowhawk populations - an aspect that should perhaps warrant further investigation by NERF member groups.

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 2013 for England shows a 5% decrease 2012-13 and a 175% increase 1995-2012.

Conservation status

UK	Green
Europe	Not of concern
Globally	Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

The BTO Bird Atlas 2007 -11 describes the spread of Buzzards in recent decades as “one of the most extraordinary changes in our avifauna”. The maps confirm that its range has more than doubled, and it is now widespread all year-round across Britain. However, the reasons for this expansion are not fully understood.

Although the breeding abundance change map confirms the strength of the eastwards expansion, which is largely a recolonisation of former range, the Atlas also notes some increases in western areas. However, these increases are generally not found within NERF study group areas.

In three study areas within County Durham and Derbyshire the respective groups noted the lack of success adjacent to grouse moors compared to solid increases away from these areas. Within the Bowland and Manchester areas shooting persecution was evident.

Aside from the illegal aspect of such unacceptable persecution, the basis for it is difficult to comprehend. A research paper (Francksen et al, 2014) presented to the BTO Annual Conference in April 2014, was based on a study of Buzzard diet at Langholm between 2011 and 2013. This covered a complete vole cycle, this being their preferred prey. Each year 13-16 nests were monitored using motion triggered cameras, analysis of prey remains and pellet content. Contrary to expected results, it was found that when the relative indices of voles in their diet were low, increased predation of Red Grouse and their chicks did *not* occur. Instead, Buzzards switched to eating more lagomorphs, moles, shrews and corvids. These prey groups are typically associated with moorland fringe and farmland habitats.

References:

Balmer,D.E., Gillings,S., Caffrey,B.J., Swann,R.L.,Downie,I.S. & Fuller, R.J. 2013 Bird Atlas 2007-11: the breeding and wintering birds of Britain and Ireland. BTO Books, Thetford.

Poster presentation based on research paper - Francksen,R., Whittingham, M., Baines, D., 2014: Common Buzzard diet in relation to changes in vole abundance

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing	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
BRSR	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
CRSR	4	4	0	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	132	132	NC	NC	32	32	30	30	32+	1	1
NRG	105	100	0	NC	77	NC	NC	46	62	NC	0.81
PDRSR	47	41	NC	5	16	24	18	16	10	0.67	1
YDUBSR	15	15	0	3	12	12	12	12	23	1.9	1.9
Total	304	293	0	8	138	69	61	105	128 +	1.86	0.93

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

Good numbers are found in the study area but only one pair is regularly monitored and this is usually successful. There is evidence to suggest that birds are regularly shot at by the amount of damage to wings noted.

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 2013 however 172 reports were received across Calderdale; a slight increase on 2012. The majority of these records came from the uplands in the north west of the study area but interestingly the number of sightings continued to increase in the south and south east lowlands increased.

A maximum number of 6 birds were seen in the sky together over Elland Park Wood on 1st April. Display flights and instances of food carrying were noted at sites where breeding is believed to have taken place. Breeding was also suspected at a number of other sites.

Whilst the species was not surveyed in any depth in 2013 and it is impossible to quantify the breeding success, anecdotally the indications are that breeding did occur and overall the numbers are increasing. There is ample suitable habitat in the study area, the threat from

persecution is relatively small therefore 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: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs

In 2013 no breeding survey work was undertaken and data available from casual reporting was considerably less than in previous years preventing much meaningful analysis of breeding, although it was noted in several areas particularly in the Dales. However, although birds were recorded across most of the study area throughout the year, the trend of established productive territories in the uplands being vacated, which is strongly suggestive of persecution, was continued. Alongside this the further range extension and population consolidation in the lowland east of the county also continues. In the first quarter of the year over 400 county-wide reports included gatherings of 7-10 birds in seven locations but only two of these were within the uplands.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

Over 800 reports from www.manchesterbirding.com, Leigh O.S. Newletters and local Buzzard specialists were analysed to produce the data in the table. A definitive number of young was only known in a few cases where chicks were ringed, so the figures should be regarded as minima. At least 8 pairs bred on the mosslands. Two pairs were known to have failed probably due to the cold spring. One was found shot during the year on an opencast site being converted to a country park.

Northumberland Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas only

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

Good data was received from two areas – Kielder and MoD/South Cheviots.

In the Kielder Border Forest 75 sites were occupied and of 52 nests found 26 failed and 26 fledged 32 young.

In the MoD/South Cheviots area 25 nests were found, fledging 30 young.

The third area covered by the group, the North Cheviots had 18 occupied sites.

North York Moors Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

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

This species is not monitored by the study group. However, it continues to consolidate across the North Yorks. Moors and birds can now be sighted just about anywhere at any time of the year. Apparent pairs suggesting breeding behaviour were recorded in Glaisdale, Langdale Forest, near Whitby, Eskdale, Sneaton Forest and along the southern borders of the study area. Undoubtedly, numerous other nesting pairs escaped detection.

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

A number of sites failed at the egg stage in areas adjacent to Grouse moors [adult birds disappeared]. These ‘black hole’ areas have suitable habitat that is persistently unoccupied by Buzzards, away from the Grouse moors the species continues to do well.

South Peak 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 group no longer systematically monitors the species as it is so widespread, although continued lack of breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwentdale moors points towards persecution as the likely cause. Reports suggested that broods were small in 2013 with just single or two chicks reared per successful pair.

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place
Within the overall study area data was only available from the Scarborough recording area where over 200 sightings of individuals and groups of up to 8 birds were noted at many localities throughout the district year round. No breeding surveys were undertaken.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study
In the south east of the study area there were three failures, with one nest blown out and two pairs that deserted.

In Nidderdale a minimum of eight occupied territories were reported but it was not clear if any young at all were reared and one territorial pair elsewhere were not present after early season.

In the Yorkshire Dales National Park this species is now widespread but no detailed monitoring work is undertaken.

The Settle and Malham area holds a minimum of six confirmed territories although not all of these are necessarily occupied each year, with an additional 10 'probable' pairs (B. Shorrocks *pers. com.*)

NERF regional summary

Absences of this species from parts of the northern uplands with eminently suitable habitat continues to be a cause for concern. However the healthy expansion of Buzzards into adjoining lowland areas will continue to form a reservoir from which birds could re-colonise provided they are given the opportunity which their legally protected status should afford. NERF will continue to oppose any 'control' licence applications without and until proper appropriate scientific research has been undertaken which establishes the justification for such action.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*



UK population estimate

A five-year mean of 208 breeding pairs was estimated by RBBP in their 2012 report (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2012. *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560). APEP 3 estimates 200-250 pairs, 2006-10 (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013) The Bird Atlas 2007-11 found an increase of 68% since the last atlas (1988-91) with expansion into northern England and Wales and a successful relocation programme at Rutland Water.

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	4	2	1.3

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Birds are seen every year on passage, often staying to feed on Stocks Reservoir. They are often mobbed by Peregrines as they use the valleys to cross the Bowland fells.

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. In 2013 there were just four reports of passage birds being noted; three in spring heading towards their breeding grounds in the north and one in autumn on the southerly migration. Whilst Calderdale is equidistant between the breeding areas of Rutland to the south and Cumbria and Northumberland in the north and there are a great many large water bodies, supplying drinking water to both Yorkshire and Lancashire, available they are invariably situated high on the Pennines. These reservoirs are windswept, devoid of fish and suitable nesting trees. Consequently it is highly unlikely that passage birds will be tempted to take up residence in the study area.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Not known to occur as a breeding species in the county

Ospreys were noted on passage only and no pairs lingered.

Across the whole county, the first spring returning bird was seen on 24th March. Spring passage numbers were quite modest but movement continued into early June. The first autumn bird passed south on 8th August and a few reservoirs then had singles lingering until the last bird of the year was seen on 22nd September.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

11 records of passage migrants reported on www.manchesterbirding.com referred to 10 individuals and of these, 7 were in April, following the first on 30th March. All except one of

these were in the east of the county. The 3 remaining records were on 19th July, 10th August and 21st September and all were in the west of the county. The 11 records for this year compare with 22 in 2012.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Three territories were again occupied by pairs in Kielder Forest. As in 2012 one pair did not lay any eggs however, they were observed nest scraping and copulating. The remaining two pairs both laid clutches of three eggs and fledged broods of three and one. This was a record number of fledged young for Kielder.

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.

In most years spring and autumn passage birds are recorded with some frequency at the two attractive water features to the north of the North York Moors, Lockwood Beck and Scaling Dam Reservoirs. However, no specific records have come to hand for 2013. There were though a number of sightings in both seasons across the adjacent Tees Plain. It is probable both reservoirs were visited this year but birds simply passed through unobserved as undoubtedly some will have elsewhere in the North York Moors.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

The group 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.

Three different passage birds were seen passing through the area in early spring in the SPRSG area.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Single birds on spring passage, coastal or near fish-ponds were observed in the Scarborough Birders recording area. There was also one September record.

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.

One bird summered in Nidderdale and was frequently seen at Gouthwaite Reservoir.

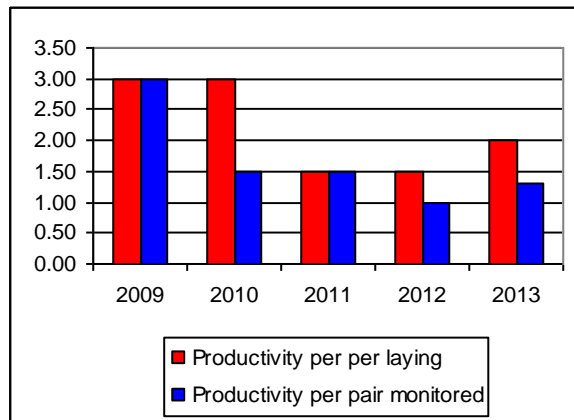
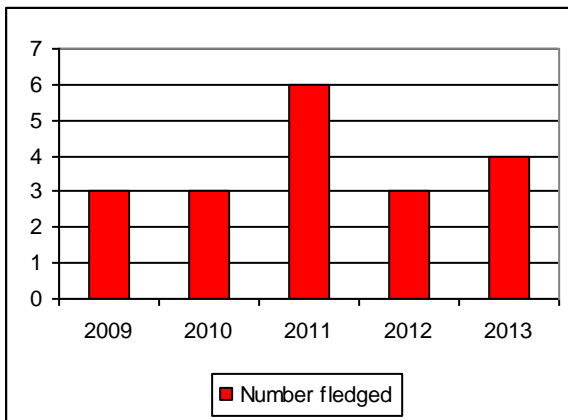
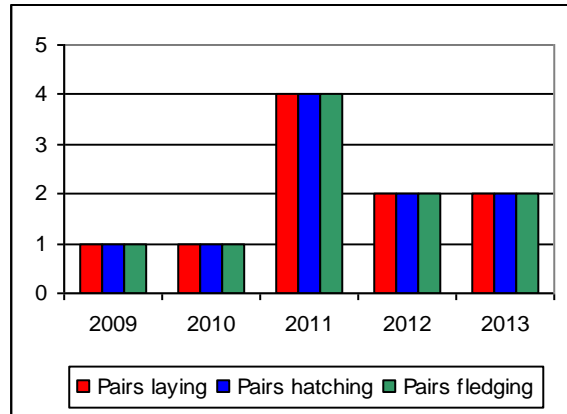
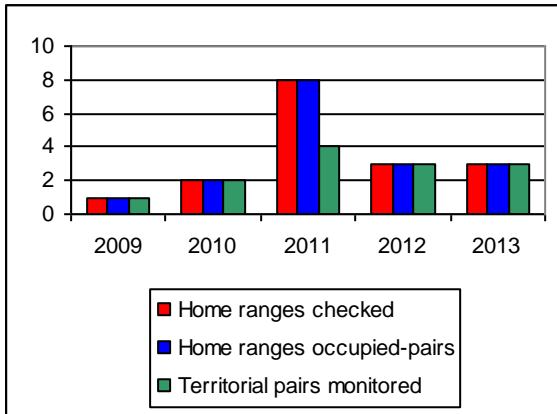
NERF regional summary

The breeding birds in Northumberland were the only ones monitored by NERF in 2013 (although at least three pairs bred in Cumbria).

For the second consecutive year in Northumberland two pairs successfully bred but a third pair, despite copulation, did not lay any eggs – perhaps still being too immature.

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 2009-2013



Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*



UK population estimate

The Kestrel is one of the most widespread and abundant raptors in Britain & Ireland. The species is present in almost 90% of 10-km squares in both winter and the breeding season, being absent from only small areas of Northern Ireland and southwest and central Wales, from certain upland areas of western Scotland and mostly from Shetland. Based on material from the BTO Bird Atlas 2007-2011, in Britain the Kestrel has lost its position as the most widespread raptor to the Buzzard. Densities are highest in central and eastern England and southwest Ireland. The most recent UK population estimate of the species reported in British Birds (February 2013) was 46,000 individuals, the second most numerous raptor after the Buzzard, whose population was estimated to be between 57,000 and 79,000. The BBS report 2013 gave figures which showed that numbers in England declined by 21% during 1995 – 2012 and by 35% 2012-13. Despite these setbacks the Kestrel is widespread and perhaps the raptor species most readily identified by the general public.

Conservation status

UK **Amber**
 European 3: Concern, most not in Europe; declining
 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
BRSR	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSR	12	10	NR	0	2	2	2	2	5	2.50	2.50
MRG	76	76	NC	76	NC	25	25	25	66	2.64	2.64
NORTH YORK MOORRSG	23	7	NC	6	1	6	4	3	12	2.00	2.00
PDRMG	11	3	NC	1	0	3	3	1+	4+	NC	4
SREYRG	NC	NC	NC	1	NC	1	1	1	4	4	4
YDUBSG	6	6	0	6	1	5	5	5	21	4.20	3.50
Total	130	102	0	90	4	42	40	37+	112+	2.66	1.24

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but little monitoring takes place.

Many pairs exist in the study area but only one or two are regularly monitored. Two regular sites were not used in 2013. There seemed to be a definite decrease in pairs this season.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Ten pairs are known to have been on territory during 2013 however, the Group only monitored 2 pairs throughout the season and paid passing attention to a further 2 pairs. Two clutches of 3 and 4 young were recorded and juveniles were seen at 2 other locations during autumn indicating that at least 2 other pairs were successful. Overall the Calderdale population of Kestrels is likely to be significantly higher than the actual recorded data implies.

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 active monitoring of this species in the uplands. Across County Durham as a whole the Kestrel remains the most recorded raptor by Durham Bird Club members though records for Sparrowhawk and Common Buzzard fall not too far behind. As long as winter weather is not too extreme birds can be found throughout the year hunting even on the highest of the western fell sides.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

76 territories were estimated from records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com Peter and Norma Johnson's long-running nestbox study, BBS, Leigh OS Newsletters and other records.

Kestrels do not seem to have suffered unduly from the long cold spring, as a minimum of 66 young fledged. 22 young were ringed in the Johnsons' study, from 5 pairs – only one added egg was found. This was the same number as in 2011 when 30 young fledged.

One pair remains in central Manchester and fledged 3 young 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.

Although the number of nest attempts this season was double the 2012 total, the failure rate was high at 50%. One clutch simply disappeared, a Stock Dove on eggs being present in the box when next visited; small chicks from another nest were presumed predated, whilst the clutch from a third was apparently deserted. There are real concerns over this particular nest box however; it has failed every year for the last four years, and the suspicion is that adult birds are being 'removed' routinely. The last time the box fledged young was the season before a local pheasant keeper, whose home is not too distantly sited from the box, was employed.

The South Cleveland RG data for the season are included below for continuity purposes only, but nonetheless make for worrying reading. Birds are seen routinely enough in the study area to suggest that the population is fairly healthy, yet the data resulting from nest monitoring suggests a conclusion somewhat at odds with this view.

The only other data received was from Geoff Myers who monitors three boxes on the Trees Plain, of which only one was occupied, from which four young fledged (not included in the table figures below).

Kestrel Annual Productivity Data – North York Moors

Large Nestbox Scheme

Year Band	No Sites	No Occ	%age Occ	No Succ	Yng Rgd	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
2012/13	45	10	22.2	6	26	4.33	2.60

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 Kestrels were not monitored in 2013, although a number of historic sites were noted as unoccupied.

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. Reports suggest that Kestrels had small broods, possibly due to the poor vole population.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: No details available.

Level of monitoring: No details available.

Scarborough Birders recording area only: Mostly single birds at many localities throughout the year, but no actual survey work undertaken.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but only casual monitoring takes place.

The Kestrel is a relatively common species that is not monitored in detail 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 few 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 national and regional threat assessment

The population is in decline nationally. This is because 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.

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.

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.

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 2012, *British Birds* 107: September 2014 504-560 gave a figure of 1160 breeding pairs based

on a study by Ewing *et al.* (2011). However, only 275-346 pairs were reported to RBBP in 2012.

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 un-seasonal heavy rainfall – some spells of which can last for hours sometimes days. If these occur when chicks are still in down and too big to be brooded effectively, death is likely to ensue from hypothermia.

Overall, the future does not look too rosy for the species in northern England. If global warming continues 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
BRSRSG	20	8	3	0	8	8	8	8	31	3.90	3.90
CRSG	5	4	1	0	4	4	4	4	10	2.50	2.50
DUBSG	69	40	2	8	32	32	30	29	99+	3.10	3.10
MRG	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
NRG	68	17	0	2	15	13	12	11	32	2.46	2.13
NYMRSG	41	9	1	2	9	7	7	7	31	4.43	3.44
PDRSG	22	13	NC	0	13	13	13	13	40+	3.08	3.08
SPRSG	11	3	1	1	3	2	2	2	6	3.00	2.00
YDUBSG	15	9	0	2	7	5	5	5	9	1.8	1.3
Total	253	103	8	15	91	84	81	79	258	3.07	2.84

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 persecution of Merlins exists mainly on the private shooting estates. In the last three years some traditional sites have been vacated, principally on moors where new keepers have been installed. Six nests on the United Utilities estate fledged 23 young - the best return for 28 years. Some sites on the Abbeystead estate were not checked this season.

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.

2013 was a typical year for the Calderdale Merlin population i.e. mixed fortunes. Two clutches were predated at late egg stage. At one nest a single egg was taken and although the incident was not witnessed it is presumed that the female was distracted by a crow long enough for the egg to be taken. Shortly after this incident the nest received a significant amount of police protection whilst a team of officers spent two weeks on the moor searching for the body of a murder victim. Calderdale RSG was contacted by the Officer in Charge of the Durham Constabulary search team [it was their murder enquiry] who, having heard from the local Police that there was a protected species in the area, were concerned that their activities would disturb the breeding attempt. Members of the Group met with the Police and identified the nest location. Fortunately it was outside of the main search area and there was no disturbance to the birds. Calderdale RSG would like to record their grateful thanks to Durham Police for their consideration for the welfare of the Merlin whilst undertaking a difficult murder enquiry in a hostile environment. PIT tags were fitted to four birds.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Monitoring effort remained high and Merlins generally experienced a successful year overall although one part of the study area in the south of the county suffered a poor uptake of sites and low breeding success, possibly as a result of April snow cover. The overall fledging success shows considerable improvement from the wet summer of 2012. One nest in a heather block failed at egg stage when it was run through with a tenant farmer's quad bike.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

Although not known as a breeding species it is possible the odd pair may breed on the remoter moors. An historic site was checked, plus another where birds had been seen lingering in a previous year.

There were 14 reports from 10 sites in the early winter period. Autumn migration in August and September involved 9 sightings and in the late winter period the majority of records came as usual from the mosslands.

A total of 46 records were analysed from www.manchesterbirding.com, Leigh OS newsletters, mossland recorders and others.

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.

With good coverage again, it was disappointing that only 17 sites were occupied. It was noted that in the North Cheviots only 2 sites were found occupied continuing the downward trend of recent years.

Of the 17 pairs only 13 were known to have laid eggs, (an effect perhaps of the very cold late spring), with 11 pairs successfully fledging 32 young a slight increase over the 2012 season.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The situation with the North York Moor population continues to worry. A very poor season indeed – in fact the worst for site occupation over the last 10 years - as the table below reveals. Productivity, however, from the pairs that did nest this season was overall good as is normally the case. Only one successful site lay appreciably below 300 m, another fractionally under. It is particularly concerning that several “banker” territories on the higher moors were not occupied this season.

Summary of known site occupation for the last 10 seasons

	<i>No. of sites checked</i>	<i>Number occupied</i>	<i>% occupied</i>	<i>% prs successful</i>	<i>% total sites successful</i>
2004	22	17	73.9	82.3	63.6
2005	18	11	61.1	90.9	55.6
2006	25	17	68.0	94.1	64.0
2007	24	13	56.5	76.9	41.7
2008	23	15	65.2	86.7	56.5
2009	33	16	48.5	93.8	45.5
2010	29	17	58.6	94.1	55.2
2011	30	16	60.0	87.5	46.7
2012	36	14	38.8	78.6	30.6
2013	41	9	22.0	77.8	17.1

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

The number of occupied sites continues to cause concern, in particular those where despite good early signs, activity ceases without any explanation and birds are no longer seen. Some traditional sites seem to be suffering due to intense habitat management.

Improved weather in late spring – early summer resulted in good brood productivity.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

In the Upper Derwent Valley four traditional sites were checked, only one of which was occupied and this was successful with two young fledged. In other parts of SPRSG’s recording area six sites were checked, of which only one was successful, with four young fledged. At three of these sites no birds were present and at the other two sites one breeding

attempt failed where a pair was present in the early part of the season, but the male disappeared, and was thought to have been taken by a Peregrine; at the other site a male was present during March, but there was no further action. On the north Staffordshire moorlands no pairs were located for the first time in many years.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas.

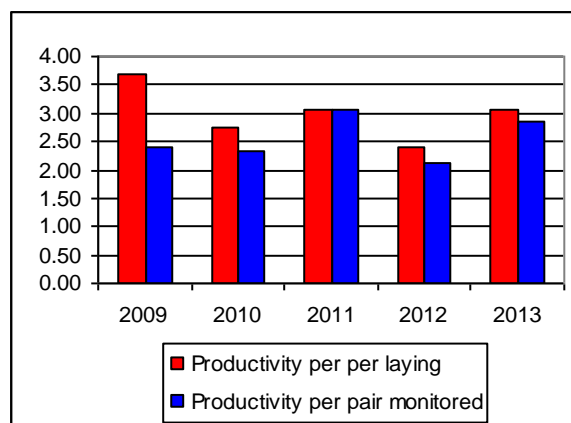
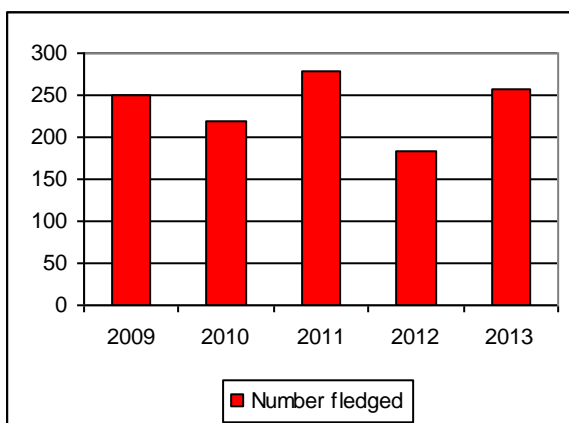
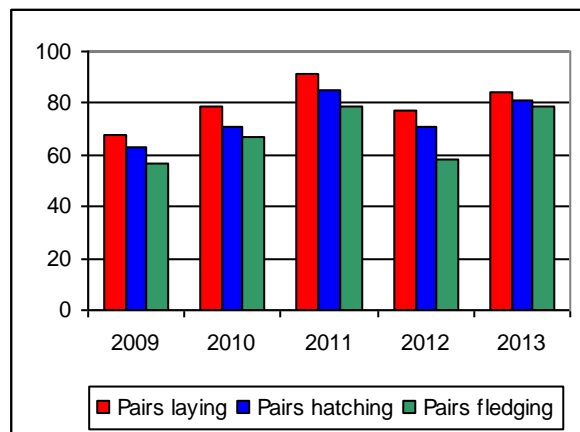
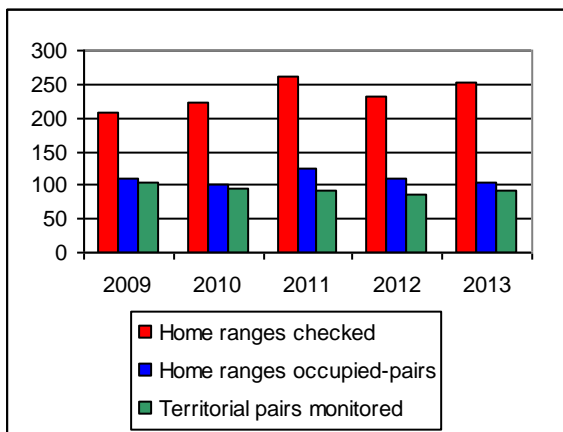
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

In one area a nest holding 4 half - grown young was predated by a fox. In another area 8 territories were checked but only 2 held pairs in early season.

NERF regional summary

It would be very helpful if the reasons could be established as to why Durham Merlins seems to be stable and doing reasonably well when others are struggling - particularly the North York Moors population seemingly in severe decline. It may boil down quite simply to a matter of topography; the Durham moors are a lot higher than those of the North York Moors, but no doubt there are other contributing factors involved. Regardless, it does seem time the conservation bodies started looking seriously at a situation that frankly does not seem to result from any kind of short-term fluctuation in the population dynamics of the species.

Comparative data 2009-2013



Hobby *Falco subbuteo*



UK population estimate

In 2009 the UK population was estimated to be 2,800 pairs. (Musgrove *et al* 2013, APEP: *British Birds* 106, February 2013). The BTO's BBS Report for 2013 shows a 16% decrease for England 2012-2013, and a 6% increase 1995-2012. Clements (2001) estimated the UK population to be in the region of 2,200 breeding pairs, so considering their northwards spread since then, the current figure is probably considerably higher.

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

Formerly rare, and confined to southern heathland areas, Hobbies are now becoming widespread in farmland in lowland England, and in a few upland areas, Hobbies are secretive and breed later than most other species, and both these factors can lead to under recording. The easiest way to locate breeding pairs is to check for fledging success from mid August, when the young are most vociferous and can be heard from a considerable distance, and this has proved a useful method of finding new pairs.

Fieldworkers studying this species should be reminded that a Schedule 1 Licence is required if nests are to be visited or if any other observation required for monitoring might cause disturbance of the nesting pair.

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
BRSR	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSG	3	NC	2	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	2	2	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	14	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSG	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	11	8	NC	0	5	5	5	5	9+	1.8	1.8
SPRSG	31	30	1	2	30	26	26	26	57	2.19	1.9
SREYRG	0	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	63	56	16	0	36	31	31	31	66+	2.13+	1.85+

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.

At least two pairs are breeding in the area, but owing to the extensive and difficult to access habitat it has not been possible to find the sites. One pair has been tracked from their feeding area to a location approximately one mile away where the nest site is thought to be.

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 13 sightings reported from nine separate locations between 12 May and 25 July, 2013. Whilst the number of sightings is down by 18.7% on 2012, this is not thought to be statistically significant in a study area where breeding is not known to occur.

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.

Breeding was thought probable at two lowland sites, monitored by members of the Durham Bird Club. The precise final outcomes were not known. Elsewhere, birds were seen regularly during the summer at three or four lowland sites. The reports are indicative of a slow increase in a still small breeding population, but the general trend has been favourable since the first breeding record in 2009. The county's current breeding population is possibly no more than two to four pairs.

The Hobby can be seen occasionally at westerly locations; a single bird appeared at an upland reservoir on the relatively early date of 6 May.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

76 records from www.manchesterbirding.com, Leigh OS newsletters and others were analysed, producing 14 territories (defined as two or more records within a 2km radius). Care had to be taken with two pairs breeding near the county boundary but in Cheshire, which were known to hunt within the county, so the elimination of several records may have resulted in showing fewer territories than was actually the case.

A site used in 2011 was checked, but was unoccupied, possibly due to regular pigeon shooting in the vicinity.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Once again, breeding was not proved in the area although sightings of adult birds on the coast and inland continue, and probably one or two pairs breed most years, but go undetected.

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.

This is not a study species of the Group. Few birds were recorded across the study area over the season with regular sightings at only one site to the west of the moors hinting at possible territory occupation/nesting. However, proof of this did not materialise. The planned erection of artificial nesting platforms for this year did not take place.

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.

The number of sightings in upland areas continues to rise, but confirming breeding in these areas has proven difficult.

Due to other commitments, less time was spent on this species in 2013.

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 Anthony Messenger's 100 sq km core study area, seven pairs, (plus a single bird), were present in 2013; six pairs were successful, fledging 14 young, (2.33 young per successful pair), the outcome at the seventh site unknown, but possibly a failure. In the south of the area overall, (including the above), 21 pairs, (plus the single bird), were present. 19 pairs were successful fledging 46 young, (2.42 per successful pair); one pair definitely failed, and the other possibly failed, (as stated above). 23 pulli were ringed in this area.

Due to personal circumstances, Anthony was unable to check thoroughly a further 23 known sites, so that the total number for the south of the area will be substantially higher than the figures given above. The estimated population for Derbyshire as a whole is c.115 pairs, (*Messenger, Derbyshire Bird Report 2012, The Status of the Hobby in Derbyshire-a continuing success story*).

In NE Derbyshire and the Peak District, despite observers' time restraints, Roy Frost, Mick Lacey and Mick Taylor proved at least seven pairs breeding, fledging a minimum of 11

young. At two further sites, adult birds were observed carrying food towards presumed successful nest sites, but, despite much searching no nests nor young were found.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Information from Scarborough Birders recording area only.

Mostly single birds at several localities throughout the breeding season, but no actual survey work undertaken. One pair possibly bred, but not proven.

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.

Two birds were noted at Gouthwaite during the summer, (one of them a first summer bird), but no evidence of breeding.

At another site, there were sightings from early May, with a family party noted later in the season, indicating local breeding.

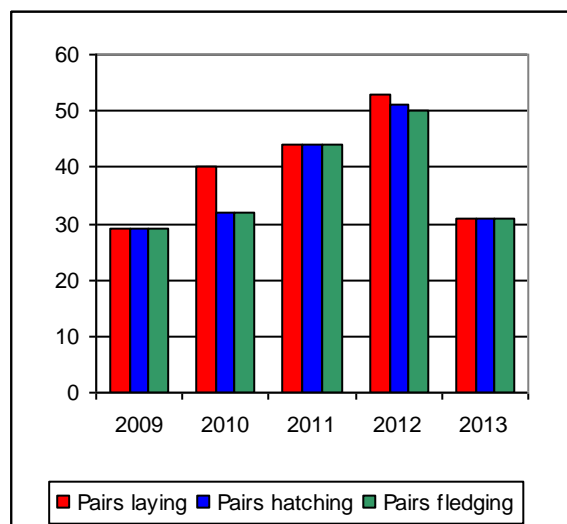
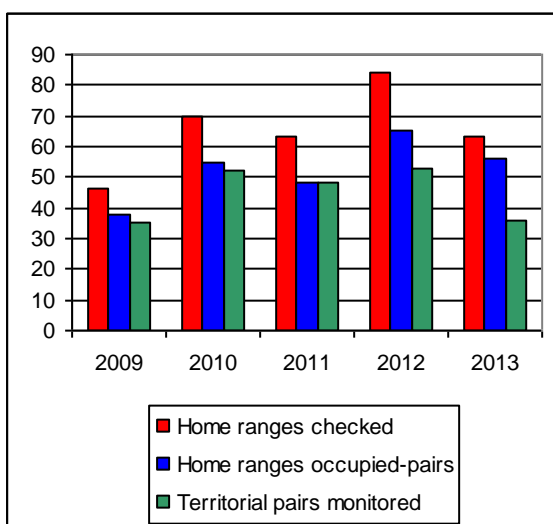
NERF regional summary

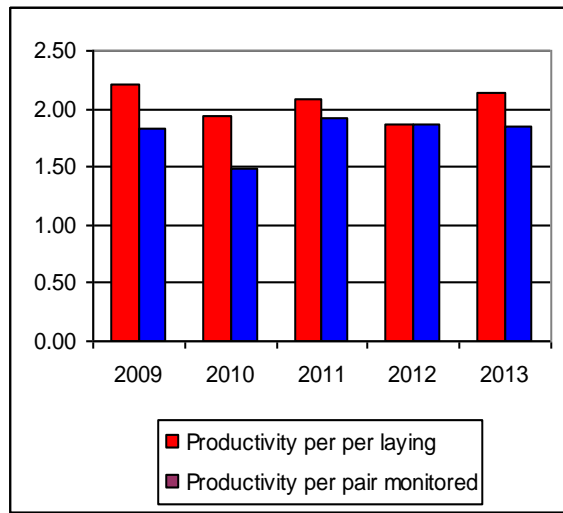
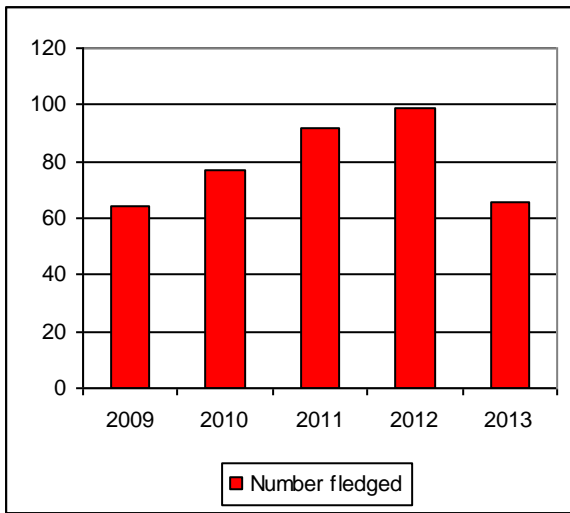
A considerable amount of work is undertaken by NERF Group members, particularly in the South Peak. Hobbies were observed across the region and known to have bred successfully in 2 study areas, and suspected in several more.

Colour ringing

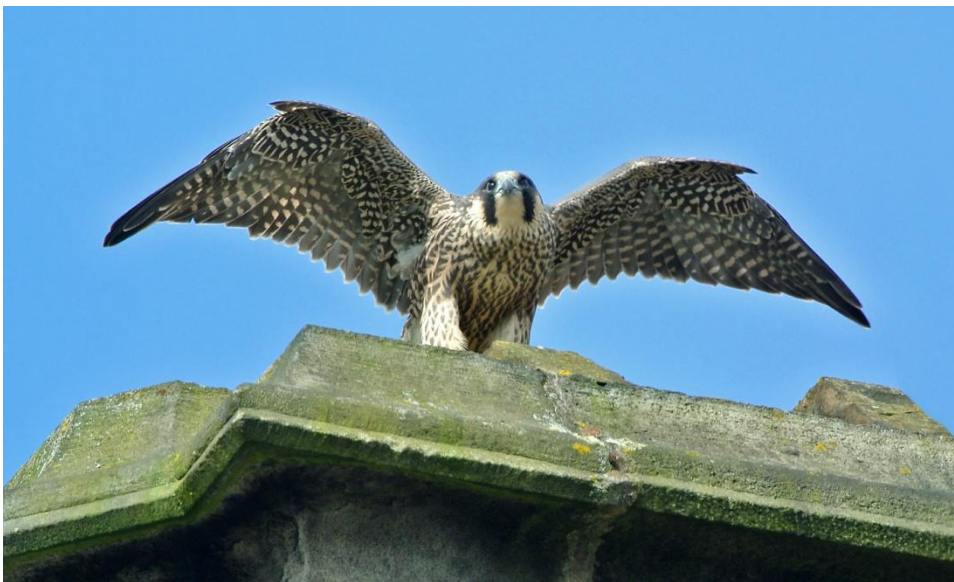
A colour ringing scheme was in operation for this species from 2004 until 2010 and to assist with this project Raptor Workers are requested to report all sightings of colour ringed birds via the website at www.ring.ac or alternately the information can be passed by email to Jim Lennon at lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk.

Comparative data 2009-2013





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). The BTO are conducting a national survey in 2014 which should give a more up-to-date figure.

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'	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSG	19	14	2	9	5	5	4	3	9	1.8	1.8
CRSG	7	5	0	4	3	1	1	1	2	2.00	0.66
DUBSG	7	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	11	9	0	1	9	8	6	5	12	1.5	1.33
NRG	37	20	1	1	18	17	16	15	32	1.88	1.78
NYMRSG	2	1	0	NC	1	1	1	1	2	2.0	2.0
PDRSG	10	6	NC	2	4	4	4	4	7	1.75	1.75
SPRSG	4	3	NC	1	3	3	2	2	6	2	2
SREYRG	30	25	NC	9	25	16	16	15	36	2.25	1.44
YDUBSG	26	8	0	2	6	6	5	5	11	1.83	1.83
Total	153	92	4	30	74	61	55	51	117	1.92	1.6

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage

Group members checked all known sites and found fourteen occupied. Nine of these failed to lay eggs although fresh scrapes were found at six. At all nine sites at least one bird went missing, usually the female. At another site eggs were found deserted in a scrape where one bird remained (male) and a further site failed when newly hatched chicks were stolen. Three pairs were successful, two of which were away from grouse moors. All the other sites are on, or adjacent to grouse moors. Peregrine persecution has been taken to a new level on all the private estates in Bowland in the last four years, with only the United Utilities estate offers a glimmer of hope at the moment.

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 Calderdale Peregrine population has been in decline for several years and 2013 followed the familiar pattern; perhaps exacerbated by severe weather at the start of the breeding season. However; the broader picture tells a different story. With the exception of one traditional site that is widely known, adjacent to a road with easy access from the M62 and monitored often for several hours every day by both RSG members and the general public all of the other upland sites have been abandoned or remain unoccupied. With this single exception the only other sites that are now regularly occupied are both in the bottom of the main Calder Valley. Moorland sites A – a pair was seen early in the season, and then they ‘disappeared’.

Moorland site B – a pair was seen on numerous occasions, including copulation before they too ‘disappeared’.

Moorland site C – no birds present.

Moorland site D – appears to have been abandoned. For the last three years no birds have been seen at this location.

Moorland site E – the site near the M62 was occupied. For at least the last 25 years the pair occupying this site has used a south facing ledge however 2013 they used a north facing ledge c100m away. Whether this indicates a change in the resident population is unknown at this stage. Four eggs were laid however on two young fledged; both were fitted with PIT tags.

Valley site A – was occupied and monitored throughout the season; however the pair failed to breed for the 4th successive year.

Valley site B – was also occupied and monitored throughout the year. This site has been occupied for three years but the birds have never produced young.

In summary five pairs were located on territory at the beginning of the breeding season. Four of those pairs failed. Three pairs were monitored extensively throughout the breeding season, including two of the failed pairs. Only one pair laid eggs and only 50% of those eggs hatched. The remaining two eggs were sent to the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme for analysis but the outcome is as yet unknown.

2013 was a disastrous year for the local Peregrine population.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Seven traditional eyries, as well as many other possibly suitable upland sites were carefully monitored. A pair seen at one site in March did not settle and a lone female was present for a few days at another site. Once again there were no nesting attempts in the Durham uplands,

including those traditional sites which fall within the North Pennine SPA for which the Peregrine is a named citation species.

In comparison, five sites in the Durham east coast lowlands, not listed in the above table, were all successful and raised two young each. A pair was present at a 6th lowland site in March.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

One quarry nest was probably robbed – two chicks at least were seen there. However Raven predation cannot be ruled out here, as has happened before.

Birds failed at three urban sites but human disturbance was not suspected. In two cases unhatched eggs were removed for analysis. A pair in a new quarry site fledged three young but as this site is heavily used by climbers, dogwalkers etc. we do not expect it to prosper in future years. Interestingly, a ring from a Common Tern ringed at a site 3km away was recovered by a climber at this site.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Once again most sites received excellent coverage, with only one regular site not visited. It was a much more successful year and despite the number of occupied sites increasing by just one, at total of 32 fledged young was a significant increase on the 19 fledged in 2012. This is no doubt because of the better summer weather. In the border Forest a clutch was stolen from one site that was also robbed in 2012.

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.

Only one site was known to be successful and although it was not monitored through the breeding season, two young were known to have fledged. It is not known for certain whether the other regular North York Moors site was occupied or the whether the nest failed for some reason at a very early stage.

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 the only successful sites once again in grit stone crag areas with good public access.

One 2013 site in West Yorks was a ground nesting pair with three eggs laid but only one young fledged.



South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Poor; only covers the Scarborough area

The data relates only to the Scarborough Birders recording area, with a total of 98 records submitted during the year, many of which may be duplicated for the same bird(s).

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 recording area 30 sites were checked in 2013. Of these, five sites were unoccupied, including three sites in Upper Derwentdale, although at the Alport Castles site an adult bird was seen in early March and pair later in the month, but the birds were not subsequently seen. At the 25 sites where pairs were present, 15 sites were successful, raising at least 36 young; two sites were in limestone dales in Staffordshire, where two young fledged from one nest (the second site failed). Of the remaining ten sites most failed because of the poor weather conditions, sometimes after a failed first attempt. However at a site in the White Peak where birds had been seen in previous years, a vocal adult pair was observed, but no proof of breeding was obtained; it was suspected that the pair failed due to nearby plant working in the narrow rake. At the traditional site on the Roaches in Staffordshire the birds were robbed when small young were in the nest, despite wardening by Peak District National Park Park volunteers. Two of the successful sites raised four young each, and a further six sites raised three young each. Included in the totals was a new disused quarry site in north Derbyshire, where the pair raised three young. In lowland NE Derbyshire, two sites were again occupied, one raising three young, whilst the other site raised one chick. In addition to the figures given above, city centre pairs in Derby and Sheffield were successful and birds were regularly seen at the Crooked Spire in Chesterfield, with a pair there at the end of the year. The four young at the Derby Cathedral site were ringed and colour ringed, as were the three young at St. George's Church, Sheffield. A successful breeding attempt was made at the DWT East Mill site in Belper, where four young were raised.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

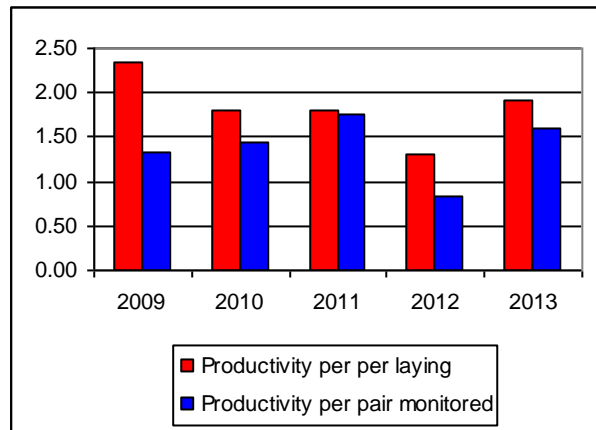
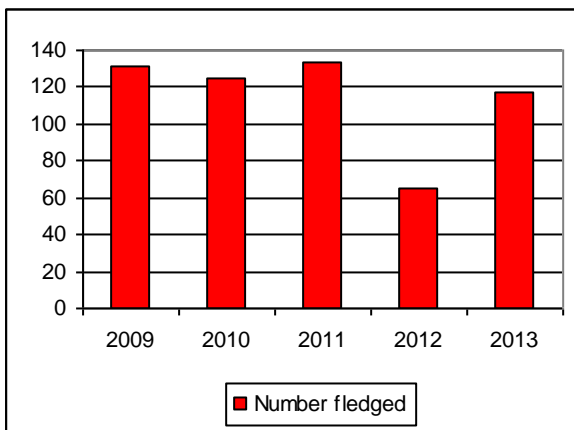
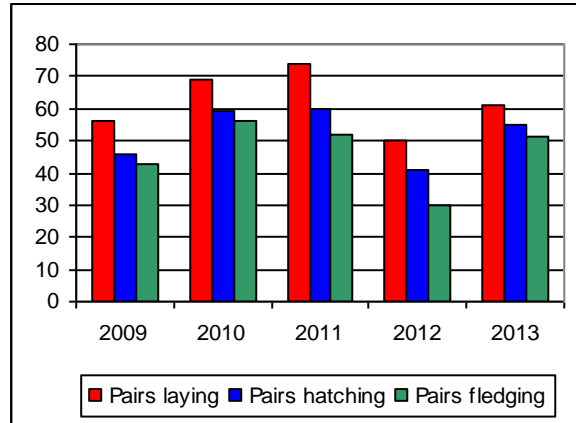
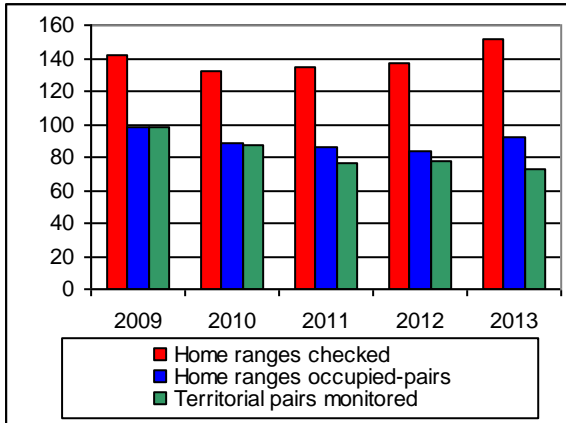
The number of occupied sites remains low but there was one more successful nest than in 2012. The mean number of fledged young at the successful sites away from grouse moors has remained relatively constant over the last eight years but as ever, none of the traditional sites on grouse moors were occupied.

NERF regional summary

The stark conclusion from the long-term data collected by raptor fieldworkers in the uplands of northern England is that Peregrines, like many other species of raptor, are simply not tolerated in most areas managed for Red Grouse shooting. The data shows that this is not a localised problem caused by a 'couple of bad apples', but a generic issue associated with intensive grouse moor management. Whilst the evidence is clear for all to see, it is continually denied by the shooting lobby and ignored by Defra. Despite millions of pounds of public money going into agri-environment funding for the management of heather moorlands, it seems that there is no place for iconic birds of prey such as Peregrines.

There are growing calls from some for licensing of shoots or even a complete ban on driven grouse shooting. Given the flagrant contravention of the European and national legislation that protects species such as the Peregrine and Hen Harrier by many grouse moor managers, it would seem that these are options that need serious consideration.

Comparative data 2009-2013



Barn Owl *Tyto alba*



UK population estimate

The Barn Owl Trust estimated the national population prior to the 2013 breeding season to be around 4000 pairs, having lost ground from gains made in the years 2000-09 due to cold springs suppressing vole activity. However the disastrous weather in spring 2013 probably resulted in less than 1000 pairs breeding – the lowest number since 1958.

The Bird Atlas 2007-11 had suggested an expansion of 67% since the 1988-91 Atlas, due to nestbox schemes, mild winters and agro-environment schemes. It may well be that this gain has been completely wiped out, but it is almost impossible to arrive at a population figure which remains stable for any length of time.

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

2013 was one of the worst years for breeding Barn Owls in living memory. Added to the ever-present threats of reductions in agri-environmental schemes, habitat destruction, barn conversions, this year saw an exceptionally cold spring (coldest since 1962) which inhibited vegetation growth; in turn this caused the vole population to crash resulting in wide-scale starvation for many Barn Owls, and for those that survived, many females could not attain sufficient weight to bring them into breeding condition.

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
BRSRG	35	24	1	9	24	15	12	12	40	2.66	1.66
MRG	46	9	3	3	8	6	5	5	18	3.0	2.25
NRG	207	41	2	0	37	36	36	32	93	2.58	2.51
NYMRSRG	40	10	2	5	5	5	5	3	8	1.66	1.66
PDRSG	1	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
SPRSG	4	4	NC	NC	4	2	2	2	6	3.0	1.5
SREYRG	3	3	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
YDUBSG	4	4	0	1	3	3	3	3	10	3.3	3.3
Total	340	95	8	18	81	67	63	57	175	2.61	2.16

Group reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Barn Owls in Bowland go from strength to strength due in part to the relatively mild winters of late and the abundance of warm, dry and mainly undisturbed stone barns. Local farmers are both aware and tolerant of the owls and have nearly all been accommodating in letting us monitor the sites. Two owls however succumbed to the unusually cold winter of 2012/13 being found dead in their respective barns. These barns were ultimately not used in 2013, however, one could be down to the fact that Jackdaws used the box in which they usually

nest. Another pair failed after the roof was taken off the barn after they had laid four eggs.

New sites continue to be located each year.

The Bowland results were certainly exceptional and taken alongside the MRG data, suggest that conditions in the uplands were somehow more conducive to vole survival – perhaps due to the prevalence of insulating, tussocky grass and solidly built stone barns?

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Barn Owls have been absent from Calderdale for several years. However; there is suitable habitat and abundant prey throughout the study area and in an effort to reverse the situation the Group has once again increased the number of available nest boxes. All of the boxes were checked during 2013 and regrettably were found to be unoccupied.

One additional traditional natural site was also checked but was also found to be unoccupied. The fact that this species remains largely absent from the study area, with only one sighting on 26 September, continues to cause concern.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

There are currently no monitoring programmes operating for sample areas in the county. The species is therefore under-recorded although reports during the year came from more than 20 locations including a few in the western half of the county. The inference remains that the population has still to recover from the consecutive harsh winters of late 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Manchester Raptor Group

Only 6 pairs bred in the MRG area, (17 in 2012) and of these, one pair just laid one egg at a new site and did not proceed further; another pair fledged 3 young in a disused bridge (per member of public) – this bridge had been checked earlier in the season with no definitive conclusion. Two successful pairs (5 and 4 young) bred at altitude on the moors – perhaps vole numbers were higher there for some reason? Another successful pair lost one young to a train shortly after fledging. The final successful pair (3 young) bred in a box put up without landowner's consent by two persons unconnected with this group.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Data was received from six areas in Northumberland, but with only 41 pairs being located it was another poor year. With the low vole population and the very cold wet and late spring, the owls struggled to raise broods. At least two pairs had very late nests with chicks still in the nest in October.

Many nest sites in the uplands are still vacant after the bad winters of 2010-11 and even seeing birds on or near higher ground is still a rare event.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Scheme A: South Cleveland RG nestbox operation. A most disappointing season with breeding success minimal. The pair that failed at the late chick stage appeared to have great difficulty provisioning the young. On one visit two moles only were found in the box and both chicks ultimately died well feathered but undernourished.

Scheme B: Run by G. Myers on the western perimeter 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: 10 available, 2 occupied by pairs, both laid eggs and fared better than North York Moors pairs producing 10 fledged young.

Pawl Willet's box study in the forests to the SE of the North York Moors sadly was not monitored this season due to his ill health and domestic commitments.

It seems probable that many North York Moors birds did not come into breeding condition. Presumably, a post 2012 crash in the vole population was the most likely factor behind this.

There were several recoveries of South Cleveland RG birds over the course of the year:

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

A couple of reports of single birds seen during the season, no regular sightings and no breeding activity reported.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

In the major SPRSG recording area four broods were monitored; one brood of three was ringed, a second brood of three fledged unringed and the breeding success of the two remaining pairs was unknown; in addition one adult male was also ringed and two adults were found dead due to starvation. It was thought that the poor breeding season was due to the poor vole population.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Scarborough Birders recording area only. Several pairs undoubtedly bred, but no monitoring by SREYG members. There were forty seven sightings throughout the year.

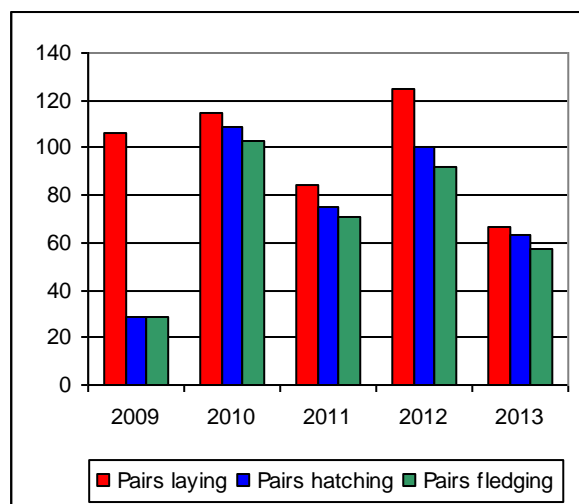
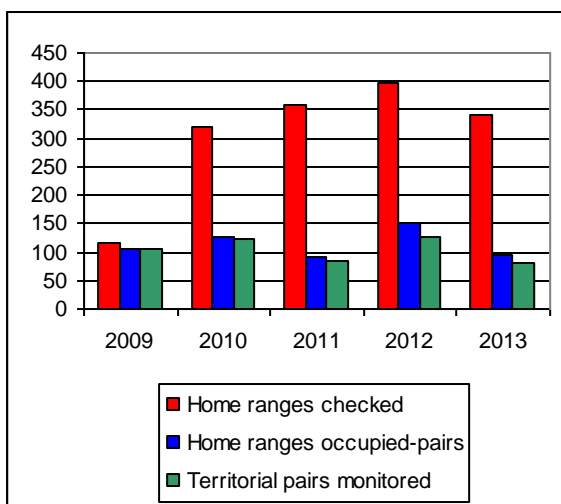
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

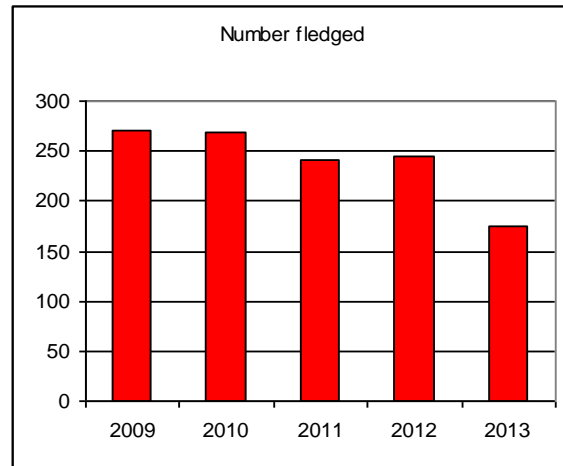
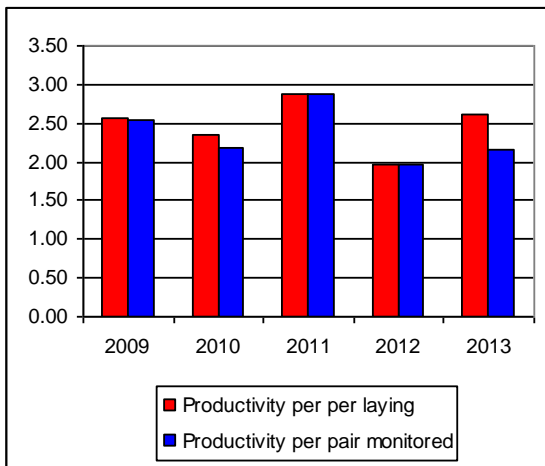
In one part of the study area one pair was present but did not breed. There were also a minimum of eight possible and one confirmed breeding pair in the Yorkshire Dales National Park as widely scattered locations suggesting the population may be higher than the figures suggest.

NERF regional summary

With the exception of Bowland, all members actively monitoring this species suffered marked declines for the reasons already stated. However, provisional results from 2014 suggest that more adults must have survived than was suspected, and were just not able to breed in 2013.

Comparative data 2009-2013





Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*



UK population estimate

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

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.

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 into its possible effect on the Hen Harrier population. If the result is 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.

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 (2013) due to the lack of breeding Hen Harriers in the Bowland Fells.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing	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
BRSR	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only..

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage of all known sites.

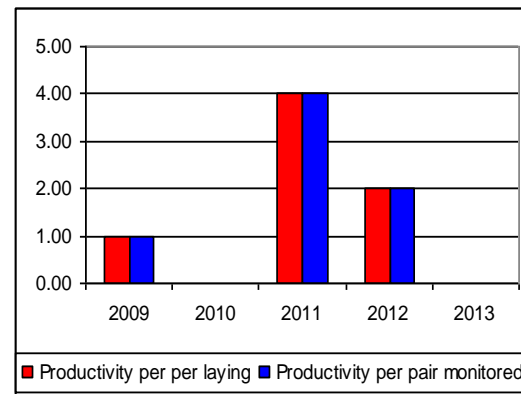
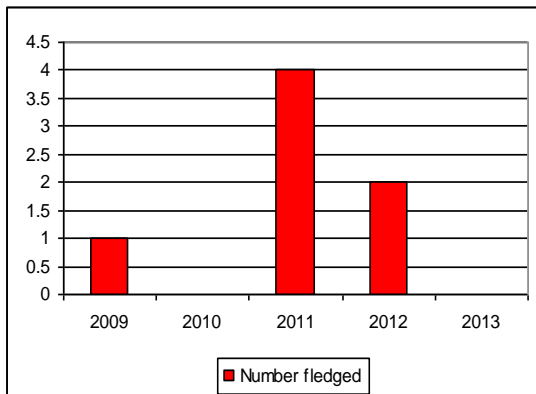
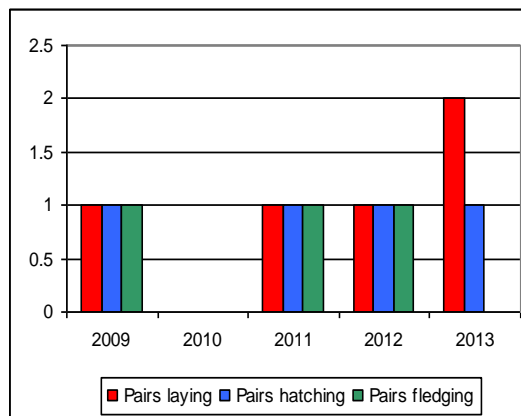
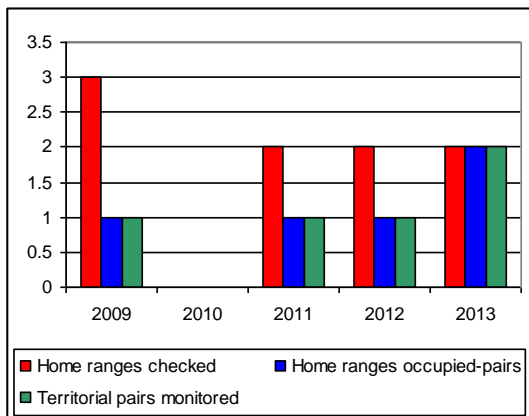
Two nests were located early in the season, both pairs laying c/4. One of these pairs failed on eggs after unnecessary human disturbance. A repeat laying c/4 half a mile away at an alternative site within the home range failed, again due to human disturbance from the same source. At another location, 3 chicks hatched, but all died in the nest, cause unknown.

All other groups reported nil sightings, or known escapees, 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 eight 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.

Comparative data 2009-2013



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). The 2013 BBS Report shows a 25% decline 2012-13 and a 50% decrease 1995-2012.

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

National CBC/BBS data suggests the species remains in rapid decline with new lows in the breeding population and a contraction in range; a marked decline of approx 50% in breeding pairs is estimated for the period 2001-2011^(BTO). There is as yet little direct evidence to explain the losses in the UK but continental studies suggest poor survival rates for juveniles to be a primary driver linked to changes in farming practices and habitat, and harsh winters. The Hawk & Owl Trust have launched a 'Little Owl Count' project to better understand the current situation. Your site records can be added to the database and more information can found at <http://littleowlcourt.org/make-our-little-owls-count/>

NERF data

Those RSGs omitted from the table did not monitor any sample populations this season.

	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	22	6	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	4	2.0	2.0
MRG	30	7	NC	NC	7	7	7	7	12+	1.7	1.7
NRG	20	5	NC	NC	4	3	2	2	6	2.0	2.0
Total	77+	18	NC	NC	13	12	11	11	22	1.9	1.9

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

Only one regular site is checked each year and this was not used in 2013. Other pairs exist within the in-bye and there were regular sightings during the year.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole area.

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

These charismatic owls continue to be found widespread throughout the CRSG study area, predominately on farmland or in-bye land. A total of 99 records received throughout the year. This represents an increase of c.15% over reports for 2012.

Only two of the occupied sites were monitored throughout the year so the number of successful pairs is significantly under reported..

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Little Owls remain quite scarce on the fringes of the western uplands. No regular monitoring takes place.

[In the lowland eastern half of the county the Durham Bird Club continues to receive very regular reports though these are perhaps skewed by observer coverage and in farmland areas in the lower Tees Valley there may be some indication of range contraction.]

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

An indication of the species' status can be gleaned from the 110 records submitted to manchesterbirding.com. Leigh OS newsletters and records from other sources were analysed to provide an estimate of 30 territories for this sedentary species. Actual breeding data was only available for 7 sites and three of these were found in Barn Owl boxes where the chicks were able to be ringed.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

This species is poorly recorded in the NRG area. However a rise in interest has prompted a small nest box study to be started alongside the more casual monitoring of pairs.

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.

This is not a target species for study by the Group. It appears to have a very sporadic/sparse distribution over the study area which does not hold ideal habitat for the species over the majority of the terrain on offer. It is by inclination a farmland species and generally where birds do appear it is usually in the dales or on moorland edge locations which are not normally surveyed routinely by members of the Merlin group. It is considered by some that the species occurs more frequently along the southern edge of the North York Moors.

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.

Little Owl were not monitored by PDRM in 2013

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

No specific study of this species was undertaken in 2013

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Within just the Scarborough Birders recording area there were 20 individual sightings and several pairs probably bred but there was no detailed monitoring by SREYRSG members as a whole.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

The species is not monitored.

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. For those sample areas studied the relatively low yield of occupied home ranges is noticeable compared to the number of traditional territories checked by members. Fledging rates remain only modest.

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). The Bird Atlas 2007-11 suggests a shallow decline of 17% 1967-2010 but the reasons for this are unknown.

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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	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	13	9	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	89	89	NC	NC	16	15	13	13	17	1.13	1.06
NRG Cumbria	120	4	0	0	4	4	4	4	6	1.50	1.50
NRG North'land	250	60	0	8	52	52	48	45	85	1.63	1.63
NYMRSG	A 30	8	NC	6	2	2	1	0	0	0.00	0.00
	B 4	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	4	2.00	2.00
PDRSG	34	NC	NC	NC	7	7	5	5	10	1.43	1.43
YDUBSG	12	12	0	1	11	11	11	11	18	1.64	1.64
TOTAL	552	184	0	15	94	93	84	80	140	1.51	1.49

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.

Not monitored but common within the study area. This species breeds in close proximity to both Long-eared Owl and Eagle Owl with all three being heard calling at the same time early in the year. Some pairs breed in boxes put up for Barn Owls within barns.

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 13 sites. No further monitoring took place and whilst a calling juvenile was recorded from Ogden NNR 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 of upland areas.

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

There are no sample populations monitored but the species certainly remains quite common in suitable habitat in upland areas. Tawny Owls are widespread across the county as a whole with fledglings seen by late April in two locations.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Once again, Peter and Norma Johnson's long-running nestbox study of 45 sites was important. Just 9 pairs were found to be breeding – producing 11 young, with 2 pairs each having 1 addled egg and no young - a very poor year, in comparison to 2011 (46 young) and 2012 (42 young). 140 records from manchesterbirding.com, Leigh OS newsletters, and other sources were also analysed.

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.

In Cumbria with Grizedale to the south and Kershope to the north, the two studies are well separated. Both however, experienced a terrible year, Grizedale returns were particularly grim with just one box occupied of 80 available: it did at least fledge 2 youngsters.

Data were received from five different studies over a wide area of Northumberland. It was a very disappointing year all round with the vole population being low everywhere. From only 60 occupied boxes 85 young fledged - a slight increase on 2012, but that was with an additional 16 boxes available in 2013.

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.

Scheme B is another nestbox scheme for the species to the west of the moors operated 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: 7 boxes available, 1 occupied, the pair fledging 2 young.

An appalling breeding season for the species. For the first time in the almost 40 years the South Cleveland Ringing Group scheme has been running, not a single chick was ringed. Only two pairs nested with one female abandoning her clutch of 2 eggs. The other pair at least produced a chick that sadly died well before fledging and which stimulated some unusual observed behaviour on the part of the presumed female bird. She was seen on two occasions to appear outside the nest box with the dead chick in her beak. She shook the youngster vigorously several times before retreating back into the box with it, re-appearing a short while later to repeat the process. She eventually must have accepted the fact the chick was dead as the corpse was abandoned soon after. The cause of this overall miserable state-of-affairs was considered to be due to a more severe than normal crash in the vole population.

The table below is included primarily for continuity, as the data for 2012/13 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
2012-13	59	10	16.9	6	14	2.3	1.4

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

Visits to 30 nest boxes in and around the upland areas resulted in just 3 clutches being recorded (only 1 pair were ultimately successful fledging 2 young), lack of small mammals coupled with the late winter weather in 2013 is thought to have had an impact on the breeding success of Tawny Owls in our area. Another upland site was found post fledging (3 young).

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

The species is not monitored on a regular basis by the SPRSG, but it is thought to have had a poor breeding season in 2013, probably due to the poor vole population.

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.

There was one failure reported with two young predated.

NERF regional summary

It is clear from the data returns provided by those Groups which operate monitoring schemes that voles across the region experienced marked synchronicity of numbers at dire population levels. Perhaps the most striking example of this was demonstrated at a natural nest site in the Peak District that held 3 healthy chicks, 7 Magpie wings and a pair of Sparrowhawk wings, (an immature male from 2012) – indicative perhaps of the challenging state of affairs the adults had to contend with in order to provision their young.

Being early nesters would not have helped Tawny Owls whereas later nesting Kestrels and Barn Owls would have benefited from those voles in the system having produced some progeny as a prey source by the time they had young to feed.

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). It is certainly under-recorded, because of the wide range of habitat used. Where an intensive study is carried out, numbers found are always considerably higher than thought. The Bird Atlas 2007-11 found a decline of 19% since the 1968-72 atlas.

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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	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	0	1	3	3	3	3	6	2	2
MRG	11	10	NC	NC	3	3	3	2	4	1.33	1.33
NRG	21	8	0	0	7	5	4	4	8	1.6	1.14
NYMRSG	4	2	0	NC	1	1	1	1	3	3	3
PDRSG	6	NC	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
SPRSG	5	1	NC	NC	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
YDUBSG	4	4	0	1	3	3	3	3	6	2	2
Total	58	29	2	2	18	16	15	14	29	1.81	1.61

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland and Lowland areas.

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

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.

Of the 7 territories checked only 4 were found to be occupied by pairs. In terms of productivity 2013 was a disappointing year with the three successful pairs produced clutches of 1, 1 and 4 young respectively.

Whilst birds were noted at other locations throughout the year there was no evidence of breeding.

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 monitoring studies in the uplands where the species is an uncommon breeder.

Across the county as whole, birds were reported from 16 sites in the first quarter with a maximum count of 12 at one roost. Records suggested a relatively poor breeding season and autumn arrivals along the coast also fell below normal levels.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Other than one study, poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

All breeding records came from the east of the county this year, with Bob Kenworthy's study finding 2 pairs fledging 4 young, whilst another pair with small young (number unknown) was suspected to have been predated, although this nest was in an area where chicks have been stolen in previous years. There were sightings at 7 locations in the north and west of the county but no proved breeding, though one territory was suspected. A roost of 3 birds was found at one of these in autumn. Another historic territory was checked but found to be vacant.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

The only study in the county is in the border forest at Kielder. 2013 was much better year with 7 occupied sites fledging at least 8 young. Two of the nests were in nesting baskets each having 3 young each, the others in crow nests. None of the known nests this year had Goshawk predation a nice change. Away from the study area an adult was seen hunting in June but no young were recorded.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

This species receives incidental monitoring effort only during Goshawk operations when any nests found are checked for owl occupation. Were these birds to be present at even a reasonable breeding density this level of coverage should really be producing positive results. The plain fact that it isn't is a clear indication that the species is only thinly distributed across suitable coniferous North York Moors habitat. The two known regular nest sites were, again found to be unoccupied this season. Several pellets at one of these were collected, analysed and found to contain the remains of 6 Harvest Mice – a rodent species not suspected of occurring there! Breeding was confirmed at a third site where 3 fledglings were observed in July and possibly occurred at another forest site where adults were heard early season

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

Many historic sites checked but there were no signs of occupation early in the season, however late in the season fledged young were noted at some sites.

South Ryeland and East Yorkshire Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

Scarborough Birders recording area only. Only two sightings in year. No sign of breeding.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & 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 SPRSG had little luck locating active nests and there was evidence of successful breeding at only one site, where two young fledged in late July.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Timble area: In addition (to the above figures) one pair were present in the north west of the study area. There are at least eight regular breeding sites in the Settle area of the Yorkshire Dales national Park with five additional probable sites (Brian Shorrocks *pers. com.*).

NERF regional summary

Although Long-eared Owls are notoriously difficult to monitor there are several studies undertaken within the NERF region. In 2013 it was felt that the late cold spell coupled with an apparent shortage of small mammals (in some areas), may have delayed the breeding season in those study areas and that this may have resulted in some missed breeding attempts.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*



UK population estimate

The current estimate (2007-11) is 620-2180 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106 February 2013). The Bird Atlas 2007-11 reported a 39% reduction since the last atlas 1988-91 and a 48% decline since the first atlas 1968-72. It was added to the RBBP list in 2010.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

Breeding success is invariably linked to vole abundance but the species' failure to fully exploit suitable habitat and the current strong indications of a decline in breeding numbers are not fully understood. Prey abundance is the dominant factor but winter survival and perhaps even persecution may play a part.

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

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	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
BRSR	11	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
CRSG	14	5	0	NC	2+	2	2	NC	NC	NC	NC
DUBSG	15	4	0	NC	4	1	1	1	NC	NC	NC
MRG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	5	5	NC	NC	5	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
SREYRSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YDUBSG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	75	47	NC	NC	17	4+	4+	NC	NC	NC	NC

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage, most sites receive annual coverage

Another notably poor year with a serious decline noted over the last four years. Only one pair was located with a nest containing a clutch of 6. This pair lost all their young within two weeks of hatching. Illegal persecution is the most probable cause.

Large areas of suitable habitat remained unoccupied.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; most sites are monitored annually

2013 was another poor year for this species in Calderdale. Records were received from 5 separate locations from late spring to late summer. Food was seen carried on two occasions, on 12 June and 6 August, at different locations. Whilst the nests were not located this activity was clearly indicative of breeding success.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Good coverage; several large representative study areas surveyed each year.

There was one confirmed breeding success from an upland area and 3 further possible breeding attempts though in all cases the exact outcome wasn't determined. In general the number of breeding pairs continues to appear to remain very low.

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. In contrast to 2012, there were generally fewer records this year. Up to 2 birds were present on the mosslands from January to late April and other reports in January came from Ashworth Moor, Bickershaw former colliery site and Red Moss. April brought single birds to Audenshaw Resrs and Sunbank Lane Ringway and a bird heading N over Highfield Moss in mid-May was thought to be a migrant. The only hint of possible breeding was the record of a bird hunting on Saddleworth Moor, 14th July.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

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

After last year's excellent showing of possibly 18 occupied territories, 2013 could not have been more different with no occupied territories found.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Poor coverage, monitoring of pairs when located

No evidence of nesting was obtained from anywhere in the North York Moors this season and this was attributed to the paucity of voles available in the environment. Wandering individuals were recorded over the early part of the year on favoured moors to the north and the regularly wardened Hawk & Owl Trust-managed Fylingdales Moor to the east also produced several sightings of singles over the January to early May period.

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.

There were very few sightings in the study area during 2013 and no known breeding attempts. A lack of small mammals was thought to be the primary cause though there was no specific data to support this theory.

Concern remains that persecution is in part responsible for the limited success of any would-be breeding attempts by Short-eared Owls in the study area. The group feel that serious consideration should be given to securing Schedule 1 status for this species

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one monitoring study.

On the north Staffordshire moorlands three pairs were present, whilst in the Upper Derwent Valley just two pairs were located. The outcomes from both areas could not be determined with certainty.

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. In the Scarborough Birders recording area only there were 32 reports involving probably about 20 over wintering and autumn birds.

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.

There were no records from Nidderdale and no breeding season records in the Yorkshire Dales National Park although here there were several reports in the post-breeding period.

NERF regional summary

Most groups attempt to monitor Short-eared Owls alongside other upland target species, through what is often quite extensive and comprehensive survey work. Whilst the special difficulties of surveying Short-eared Owls are well known and can't be underestimated the picture provided by all groups in 2013 is of a species at a particularly low ebb across the northern uplands. The table shows a dramatic reduction in the number of home ranges occupied compared with 2012 and a corresponding drop in the number of cases of confirmed breeding.

The RBBP's inclusion of the Short-eared Owl seems wholly appropriate and has already provided a stimulus for some groups within NERF to refocus their efforts to more effectively monitor this challenging and iconic species.

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 2013 BBS annual report showed a 10% decline 2012-13 for England, but a 8% increase 1995-2012.

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

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
BRSRSG	6	4	0	2	4	4	2	2	5	1.25	1.25
CRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	7	3.50	3.50
DUBSG	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	27	9	NR	3	9	6	6	5	14	2.33	1.55
NRG	42	28	0	4	24	24	22	22	50+	2.08	2.08
NYMRSG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	11	8	NC	3	8	5	5	5	20	4.00	4.00
SPRSG	26	26	NC	3	NC	23	23	NC	NC	NC	NC
YDUBSG	25	10	0	2	8	8	8	8	20	2.5	2.5
Total	145	87		17	55	72	68	44	116	1.61	2.11

Group reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

During 2013 six regular sites were checked, five on crags and a sixth on a radio tower in a quarry. Persecution exists and one site, which has been used by the same female for several years, is known to have failed on eggs or small young.

Furthermore it is possible that other pairs may breed in shelter belts in remote areas near farms and at least one pair is believed to be breeding in the large Gisburn Forest.

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 Calderdale breeding Raven population appears to be stable at 2 pairs. In 2013 these 2 pairs fledged clutches of 2 and 5 young respectively, a slight increase on the previous year but this increase is not believed to be statistically significant.

Taking into account the regular sightings of birds on the western border of the study area, where a maximum of 9 birds were seen together on 26th, it is quite possible that other pairs bred at undiscovered locations.

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.

Raven is a rare and only an occasional breeder in the study area.

Large tracts of suitable habitat in the uplands being surveyed each year for several species including Raven. Counts of up to 10 birds were made in the first quarter in upland areas and pairs were seen in at least three sites though none settled to breed. Similarly, birds were present at 8-9 locations during the early summer without evidence of breeding.

The pattern of a strong presence in upland areas in spring but no subsequent breeding is now all too familiar and can only be explained by persecution.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

The Group monitors known pairs annually; however there is no sustained attempt to search for the many other pairs that must be breeding in the study area.

In addition to the above figures, there was a family party of a pair and 2 juveniles on Little Woolden Moss on 5th July; however, the nest site remains unknown. A pair at Bradford Gasworks (Ancoats) failed at the chick stage on 1st March, but possibly re-nested. A pair on Carrington Moss was disturbed at the incubation stage by Buzzards (but may have tried subsequently at a private site). Pairs also began to nest-build at Buckton Vale Quarry and Dovestones but abandoned the attempts, the latter due probably due to unintentional disturbance.

Pairs were successful at Bolton Town Hall (2 young, one of which had twine around its foot), Horwich (4 young ringed), Rochdale Gas Works (1 young), Wigan Town Hall (4 young), Piethorne (3 young).

Possible or probable breeding was considered to have taken place at Birtle and Davenport Green/Sunbank area. This was deduced from records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com (211 in total). Other sources of records were BBS, Leigh OS newsletters, RSPB Dovestones and group members.

Northumbrian Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

2013 was another very good year for Raven, with many birds being seen in the NRG recording area; hopefully the population will continue to grow.

Unfortunately some brood counts were missed because of the prevailing bad weather at or around the time of fledging. Consequently the 50 young known to have fledged is the bare minimum for the study area.

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.

Sadly, there were no confirmed or otherwise verifiable records of Ravens in the study area this year.

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. The gritstone crag areas with good public access once again proved to be the most successful sites.

Four upland sites produced 16 young. Additionally local bird watchers reported that a pair in a quarry in South Yorkshire also fledged young. Unfortunately they did not record the number of fledglings.

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.

This species continues to expand across the SPRSG study area, including in the north-eastern lowland areas where two sites were monitored, with successful breeding at one site and a resident pair at a second site, where breeding was not proved. In the south of the recording area (south of Carsington Reservoir) ten tree nests were located, nine of which were successful, with broods of three to five young. Nest trees were Scots Pine (4), Corsican Pine (2), Norway Spruce (1), Cedar (1), Ash (1) and Sycamore (1).

In the Upper Derwentdale area a pair was successful at Alport Castles, feeding large young in the nest in March. Most of the White Peak quarry sites had successful breeding pairs with broods of three to five young and two pairs were successful on crags in the Dovedale area, one of these pairs on the Staffordshire side of the Dove, fledging five young.

Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

The number of occupied sites appears in the recording area seems to have stabilised however; the mean number of fledged young per successful site was 2.50, the lowest figure recorded since the formation of the group in 1992.

An additional pair nested and got to the small chick stage at least, but the final outcome is not known, one pair failed and one site was occupied early in the season but the birds were thought to have switched to a new site. A further nest, located in late May, appeared to have been occupied earlier in the season; once again the outcome is unknown.

NERF regional summary

There are mixed fortunes for Raven across the NERF recording area. Ten few fledglings were recorded in 2013 when compared to 2012. 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

Addenda – 2012

West Yorkshire

Bradford Ornithological Group recording area **All information from David Barker**

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Six young were ringed at 2 nests and 2 chicks were known to be at another nest.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A female frequented a moorland site in May and a male, possibly immature, was at another site in June but breeding was not suspected.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

A pair were displaying in April.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Three young were ringed at one nest and 2 chicks were at another site. A sighting of an immature at Otley suggested breeding nearby.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

15 pairs were known to have bred and 3 of these failed. A minimum of 21 young were counted or ringed.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

22 young were ringed from 7 pairs and a minimum of 31 young were known to have been produced by 10 pairs. The outcome was unknown at a further nest with 4 eggs.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Four young were ringed on a moorland. Breeding was confirmed at another site and suspected at 2 other moors.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

There was confirmed breeding at one site with 1 young.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

11 chicks were ringed at 5 sites. Six further pairs bred but only 4 of these hatched young; one of these lost all 3 chicks before fledging. A further five pairs probably or possibly bred.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*

One was noted in the Howgill area in the autumn.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Six chicks were produced by 3 pairs. A further site had 4 pairs displaying but the only nest found has 3 eggs predated.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Breeding was attempted at 16 sites, of which 11 produced 17 live young, and of these, 6+ died or were predated. Eggs were predated, deserted or failed at 5 sites.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

11 nests fledged 13 young of which 4 were ringed. Eggs were predated at one nest, infertile at another, and dead young were found at 2 nests. At a further site, food was seen being taken to an undiscovered nest.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

One confirmed nest produced 2+ young, and food was seen being taken to 2 other sites.

2013

Cumbria

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Four pairs were in the Lake District and 2 young were raised at Bassenthwaite Lake. Another pair held a territory at Foulshaw Moss but was probably too young to breed.

Lancashire

All information from Rob Archer or Chorley Natural History Society (Neil Southworth, Recorder)

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

On 6th April a bird with orange wing tags was seen in the Belmont area, indicating a bird born in Yorkshire in 2005.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A male seen near Belmont 8th-15th April was briefly observed sky-dancing.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Breeding was noted at 2 sites in the Chorley NHS area.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Six territories were determined in the Belmont area, with 4 in the Rivington/Anglezarke area and one in the Cuerden Valley.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Young fledged in a quarry just outside Greater Manchester. At least 7 pairs bred in the Chorley NHS area with 2 nests fledging 4 and 2 young at Belmont and family parties of 4 and 6 at Great Hill and Rivington .

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

A pair at a regular site near Haslingden were predated.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

At two quarry sites on the edge of Greater Manchester, one young hatched but soon died and there were two unhatched eggs, and at the other 4 eggs did not hatch. Successful breeding was confirmed at 7 other sites with at least 7 young raised.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Of four pairs in a valley to the north of Greater Manchester, 2 pairs only fledged one young. One pair bred in an abandoned articulated lorry. A pair fledged young in the Burnley area. In the Chorley NHS area, the long cold spring affected breeding at Belmont with 5 pairs in 2012 reduced to 2 in 2013, one of which fledged 3 young. Five dead birds were found in that area in March and April. A pair bred at Roddlesworth but there was no breeding at Ulnes Walton for the first time in many years.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Two pairs bred at Cuerden Valley Park and a juvenile was seen at Ecclestone.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

Whilst one or two birds were present in the West Pennine Moors throughout the breeding season, no territories could be identified for the first time since 1983.

West Yorkshire

Bradford Ornithological Group recording area

All information from David Barker

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

5 pairs bred producing a minimum of 12 young. Another box was occupied in March, outcome unknown.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Eleven pairs produced 20 young, with breeding probable at 2 further sites producing 2+ young. Three nests failed.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

A pair frequented a moor from 20th April to 11th May, with display noted, after which a ringtail was seen in three other areas until 6th June.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

One to three juveniles were seen at a site which recorded the only confirmed breeding.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Breeding was recorded at 18 locations with a minimum of 42 young recorded. One ringed at Sandwich Moor 22nd June was found dead at Arkendale 29th August – a distance of 18 km in 66 days.

In the Washburn valley there was a 33% increase in the number of young over 2012.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Nine pairs were found producing a minimum of 15 young.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Four nests were found and three of these had a total of 8 chicks. Two of these died before ringing.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Of four nests found, one was predated, probably by a fox, which took 4 young. Three and four young were ringed at two other nests. At the remaining nest, there was at least 1 young.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Two pairs were on territories but no breeding was proved. However there were sightings of several juveniles in the recording area in the autumn, suggesting breeding had taken place.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Twelve young were ringed at 5 nests.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Seven young were ringed at 2 nests.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Fifteen nests were found, and chicks were ringed at at least 6 of these. Eggs were predated by a squirrel at one nest.

Bird Crime 2013

Bob Elliot, Head of Investigations with the RSPB, reviews its latest 2013 Birdcrime report and outlines some of the wider political issues affecting UK raptors.

In October 2014, the RSPB launched its 23rd annual Birdcrime report looking at offences against wild birds in 2013. Birdcrime is a unique publication. It is the only centralised source of incident data for wild bird crime in the UK. The report focuses on recording crimes that affect birds of prey and the threats to rare breeding birds.

In 2013, there were:

- 74 reports of poisoning incidents of birds of prey, including 48 confirmed incidents of abuse involving the confirmed poisonings of at least 76 individual birds or animals.
- 164 reports of shooting and destruction of birds of prey and these include the confirmed shooting of at least 49 individual birds of prey.
- 14 nest robbery incidents including three confirmed and four probable incidents from schedule 1 species.
- 14 reports related to the illegal disturbance or photography of Schedule 1 birds.
- 29 reports of illegal taking, possession or sale of birds of prey.

In the Northern England region there were 113 incidents reported of wild bird crime occurring in 2013, which accounted for just under 23% of the UK incidents reported in Birdcrime 2013.

We constantly remind others that these published figures must represent only a fraction of the number of incidents in each category. Many remain undetected and unreported, particularly those that occur in remote areas. Persecution continues to have a conservation-level impact on several priority species, such as the golden eagle and hen harrier. The UK breakdown of reported bird of prey persecution incidents published in this report shows that 54% occurred within England, 27% in Scotland, 10% in Wales and 8% in Northern Ireland. 2% occurred in an unknown location in the UK.

In 2013, the RSPB received information on 32 individual prosecutions involving wild birds.

These cases involved a total of 139 charges, of which 118 were proven. Fines for the year totalled £21,285 and four people were given prison sentences (two of which were suspended sentences).

Some significant cases from the North of England:

Leniency due to ill health was possibly all that stood between a buzzard killer and prison on 8 July 2013 at Carlisle Magistrate's Court.

Gamekeeper Colin Burne of Winters Park, Penrith pleaded guilty to killing the two buzzards, killing five more before this date, and going equipped with a wooden stick to kill the birds. He received a 70-day jail sentence, concurrent on each charge, suspended for 12 months. In sentencing, the judge stated that had it not been for his ill health he would have considered jailing him.

On 11 February 2013, a local naturalist found three live buzzards in a cage trap at Whinfell Plantation, Penrith, Cumbria. The trap was on land used by the Cliburn shoot, which leases the rights from the Lowther Estate. Later that day, the RSPB Investigations department was informed about the trap. RSPB Investigations officers went to the site the next day. Three buzzards were still in the trap. One looked unwell, so they immediately released it. They installed a covert camera to determine whether the operator would release the buzzards as bycatch species, as required by law. The camera footage later showed that Burne had killed both buzzards by repeatedly striking them with a wooden club.

Cumbria Police WCO PC Helen Branthwaite was informed and RSPB assisted PC Branthwaite in searching around the trap location. A total of 10 dead buzzards were found close by, and five were freshly killed. None of the dead birds matched the two killed by Burne on camera. Burne was questioned about the trap. When he was shown the covert video footage, he fully accepted killing both birds and a number of other buzzards during the previous five years. He later revealed the location of the bodies of the two dead buzzards that he had killed. This case confirms the urgent need to tighten up the use of crow cage traps to ensure that protected species, such as buzzards, are not targeted as a matter of routine. It also shows the value of reports that come from the birding or Raptor Study Group communities.

Gamekeeper convicted of pole trapping offence:

On 10 December 2013, Ryan Christopher Waite, employed by the Swinton Estate, near Healey, North Yorkshire, pleaded guilty to setting a spring trap on two separate occasions in May and June 2013.

On 31st May 2013, officers from the League Against Cruel Sports discovered a set spring trap on top of an isolated tree stump on the edge of a clearing within a plantation on the Swinton Estate. Spring traps can legally be used to control certain small mammals but they must be set under cover to avoid non-target animals from being caught. A spring trap placed in this manner is commonly referred to as a “pole trap”. Pole traps have been banned since 1904 and are synonymous with the trapping of birds of prey, which use elevated positions as a vantage point when hunting. The League reported the incident to the RSPB Investigations team, who visited the location on 2 June. The team installed a covert surveillance camera, and made the trap safe. On 4 June 2013, the covert surveillance filmed Waite placing the spring trap back on top of the stump and re-setting the trap. Waite was again filmed passing the set trap on 6 June before removing the trap on 12 June. During the surveillance period, several incidences of birds landing on the stump were recorded, but fortunately no birds were caught. The evidence was taken to North Yorkshire Police. A warrant was executed at Waite’s address by the police and assisted by the RSPB. The spring trap used by Waite for the pole trap was found at Waite’s property. Waite was then arrested and admitted under police interview to setting the trap on two separate occasions, though he claimed he was actually trying to trap squirrels. However, not a single squirrel was recorded in his vermin records for 2013. Although he entered a guilty plea to illegally setting the trap on two occasions, Waite denied it was for birds of prey. On 13 February 2013, a Newton Hearing was held in order to try to establish intent. The court ruled that Waite had been reckless in setting the trap. Waite was fined £250 and ordered to pay £105 costs.

The Birdcrime Report for 2013 also outlines the issues of raptor persecution in the Peak District National Park:

The Upper Derwent Valley is situated in the “Dark Peak”, the northern part of the stunning Peak District National Park in Derbyshire. The area is renowned for its breathtaking scenery, with its deep wooded valleys and bleak, rugged grouse moors. It is the perfect place to enjoy some of the UK’s most beautiful landscapes and to experience the great outdoors, but sadly not birds of prey. Until relatively recently, the area was renowned for supporting viable populations of two iconic species, the goshawk and the peregrine falcon. However, both have seen catastrophic declines in an area where the predominant land use is grouse moor management. Persecution incidents are numerous. Criminal convictions for bird of prey-related crimes have demonstrated a link with game shooting. All this takes place within a National Park that attracts around 10 million visitors annually.

Political contexts:

For many years the RSPB has challenged the Governments in England, Wales and Scotland to change the behaviour of those responsible for committing crimes against wild birds by improving wildlife laws and reforming policing of wildlife crime. Birdcrime 2012 updated the progress (or lack of it) that had been made following the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) report on wildlife crime, and the Law Commission’s interim findings of its review of wildlife law. We await the publication of the Law Commission’s draft wildlife bill with interest.

There have though been some encouraging signs of change. A number of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) have held rural and wildlife crime seminars at which professionals and members of the public have had the opportunity to air their views. In September 2013, Derbyshire PCC Alan Charles hosted a Rural and Wildlife Crime Summit, involving representatives from a wide range of conservation and animal welfare organisations, local government officials, countryside organisations and the police. Following the event, Derbyshire Constabulary announced a number of measures they would be taking to improve their response to wildlife and rural crime, which included recruiting volunteers, updating training of WCOs, increasing awareness of wildlife crime within the police force and developing a communications strategy. The response from Derbyshire Constabulary is welcome and necessary in a county that suffers more than its fair share of raptor persecution crimes. We hope it will be replicated elsewhere.

Vicarious liability.

There is strong evidence of a link between raptor persecution and land managed for driven grouse shooting in the uplands of England and parts of Scotland. Currently, the law does not target those who encourage or require their employees to break the law by killing birds of prey. An offence of “vicarious liability” was introduced in Scotland in 2011, imposing criminal liability on persons whose employee, agent or contractor commits an offence. The RSPB believes it essential that those ultimately responsible for enterprises where raptor persecution has taken place should be made accountable.

The RSPB is urging political parties to introduce licensing of driven grouse shooting after the election, to improve the condition of our uplands and protect birds of prey. We continue our efforts to work with organisations from the shooting community which are opposed to the illegal persecution of birds of prey and to urge Defra to ensure the promised hen harrier

recovery plan is robust and will drive hen harrier recovery by tackling the root cause: illegal persecution.

The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) recommended that the Government should monitor the impact of vicarious liability in Scotland, and report back to the EAC in 12 months with a view to implementing it in England and Wales. But the Government said it would wait to see what the effect of prosecutions would be over several years. The Law Commission has recognised that criminal liability needs to be extended to cover employers but has opted for an offence of “knowingly permit” rather than create an offence of vicarious liability. However, such provisions already exist in some parts of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and have proved ineffective.

Increasing penalties available to courts for wildlife offences.

The current maximum fine for offences tried in Magistrates’ Courts under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, of £5,000 and/or up to six months in prison, is inadequate. Penalties in the Magistrates’ Court should be increased to a maximum £50,000 fine and/or up to 12 months in prison, and, in the Crown Court, unlimited fines and/or up to five years in prison.

Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group (England and Wales)

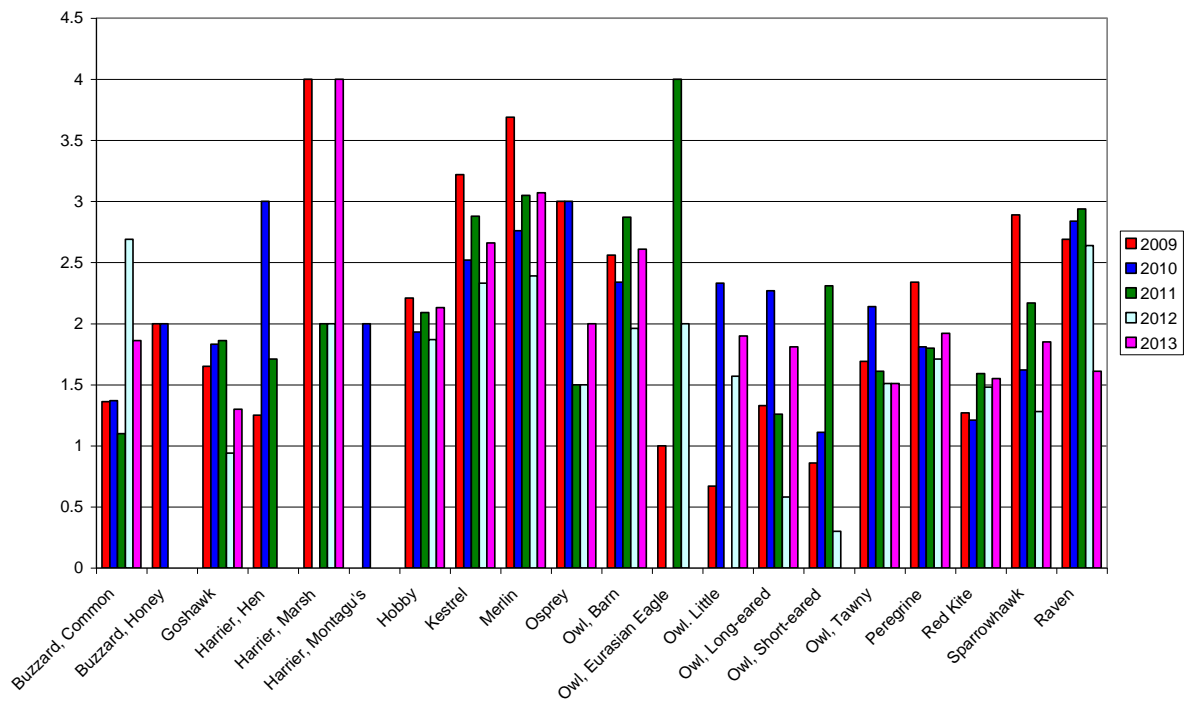
The UK wildlife crime priorities, which draw upon scientific evidence and prosecution data agreed by government and enforcement agencies, remain a necessary means of prioritising prevention, intelligence and enforcement activity. Delivery of the raptor persecution priority has been mixed, with good progress in Scotland but slower progress elsewhere. The delivery groups must be supported adequately by the police, with appropriate accountability arrangements. The England and Wales Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group has produced some maps to show where birds of prey have been poisoned. However, much more action is needed from this group. 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

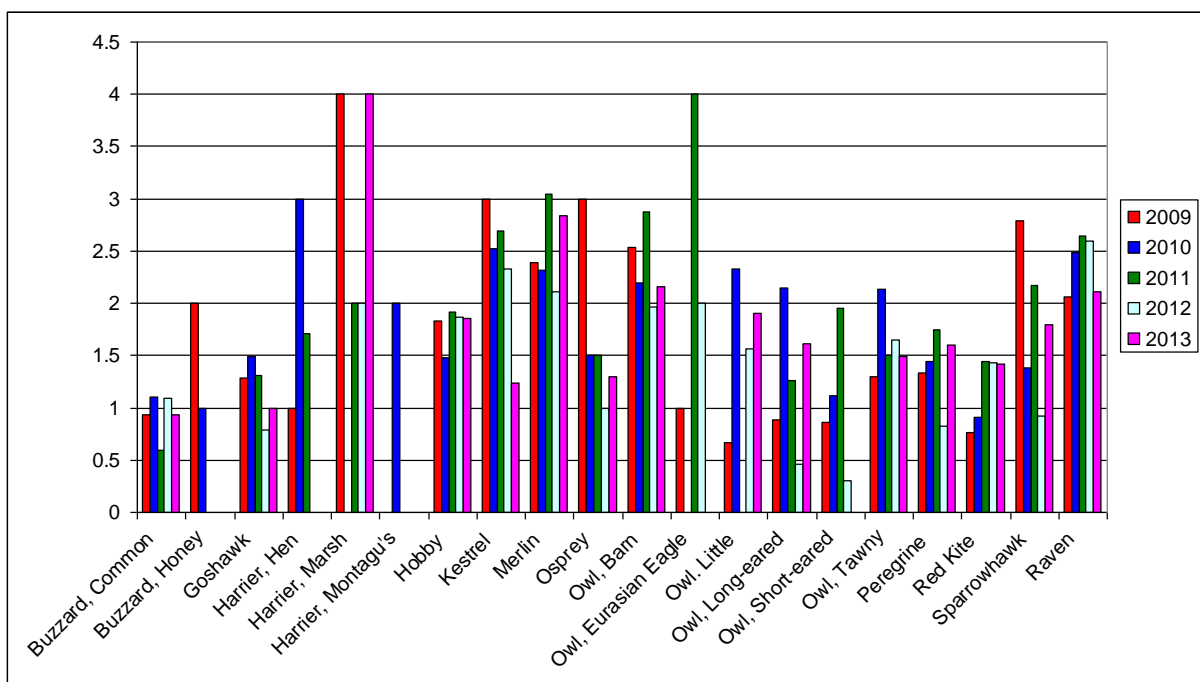
Species	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Home ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing/non-breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per pair monitored
Honey Buzzard	11	3	8	NC	1	3	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Red Kite	58	43	0	8	36	33	26	25	51+	1.55	1.42
Marsh Harrier	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	4	4
Hen Harrier	54	3	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Goshawk	84	55	5	10	45	36	27	24	46	1.3	1
Sparrowhawk	133	74	49	2	41	40	35	34	74	1.85	1.8
Buzzard	304	293	0	8	138	69	61	105	128+	1.86	0.93
Osprey	3	3	0	1	3	2	2	2	4	2	1.3
Kestrel	130	102	0	90	4	42	40	37	112+	2.66	1.24
Merlin	253	103	8	15	91	84	81	79	258	3.07	2.84
Hobby	63	56	16	0	36	31	31	31	66+	2.13+	1.85+
Peregrine	152	92	102	30	73	61	55	51	117	1.92	1.6
Barn Owl	340	95	8	18	81	67	63	57	175	2.61	2.16
Eagle Owl	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
Little Owl	77	18	NC	NC	13	12	11	11	22	1.9	1.9
Tawny Owl	552	184	0	15	94	93	84	80	140	1.51	1.49
Long-eared Owl	58	29	2	2	18	16	15	14	29	1.81	1.61
Short-eared Owl	75	47	NC	NC	17	4	4	NC	NC	NC	NC
Raven	145	87	NC	17	55	72	68	44	116	1.61	2.11
Totals	2495	1290	198	217	751	670	605	595	1342		

Appendix 2: Combined productivity graphs

a) young fledged per pair laying 2009-2013



b) young fledged per territorial pair monitored 2009-2013



Appendix 3: Ring recoveries

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site	Direction	Comment
NYMUBSG	Sparrowhawk	DB79701	09.07.13	Fylingdales Moor	19.07.13	Glaisdale	10 days	15km	W	released from garden shed
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	DB68239	07.07.13	Wharcliffe Woods	21.09.13	Agden, S Yorks	76 days	7km	SW	controlled
PDRMG	Buzzard	GC49780	16.06.09	Compstall, Stockport	12.08.13	Woodley, Stockport	1518 days	4km	WNW	rail casualty
PDRMG	Buzzard	GN04365	08.06.06	nr Darton, S Yorks	17.01.13	Crowle. N Lincs	2413 days	47km	E	found dead, not recent
NRG	Osprey	1156085	12.07.10	Kielder Water	04.05.13	Cumbria	1027 days	109km	SSW	colour ring read in field
NRG	Osprey	1156085	12.07.10	Kielder Water	18.06.13	Cumbria	1072 days	109km	SSW	colour ring read in field
PDRMG	Merlin	DD18698	01.06.04	nr Holmfirth	07.07.13	nr Hebden Bridge	3321 days	24km	NW	wire hit, broke wing
DUBSG	Merlin	DB41499	26.06.12	Durham (site A)	04.11.12	Icklesham	130 days	460km	S	controlled
DUBSG	Merlin	EW57139	26.06.02	Durham (site B)	04.12.12	Icklesham	10 yrs 160 d	460km	S	controlled
DUBSG	Merlin	DB49486	24.06.13	Durham	27.07.13	Morpeth	33 days	65km	N	freshly dead
CRSG/YDUBSG	Merlin	EL57171	29.06.13	Forest of Bowland	05.02.14	Grues, Vendee, France	221 days	853km	S	freshly dead
NYMUBSG	Merlin	EG05240	23.06.12	North York Moors	19.04.13	Whichford, Warks	300 days	263km	SSW	found dead
NRG	Merlin	ET99215	03.07.00	Harbottle	20.08.13	Lot-et-Garonne France	13yrs	1215km	SW	dead
NRG	Merlin	DB49486	24.06.13	Middleton, Durham	28.07.13	Morpeth	34 days	65km	NE	dead, hit window
PDRMG	Hobby	EL61939	05.08.12	Garforth, N Yorks	10.06.13	Milagro, Navarra, Spain	309 days	1258km	S	found dead
PDRMG	Peregrine	GR38849	10.06.12	nr Glossop	05.03.13	nr Kidderminster, Worcs	268 days	115km	S	freshly dead
NRG	Peregrine	GN66616	04.06.03	Redesdale, N'land	12.10.13	Dustanburgh Castle	10 yrs 133d	54km	ENE	decomposed on beach
NRG	Peregrine	GR10885	27.05.11	Bewick Moor	01.05.13	Castleweary, Borders	756 days	71km	N	controlled
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC97777	07.07.12	Ugthorpe, N Yorks	17.01.13	Ugthorpe, N Yorks	194 days	0km		dead, starved
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC97766	17.06.12	East Barnby, N Yorks	28.01.13	nr Ugthorpe	225 days	4km	SSW	dead, starved
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC97771	21.06.12	nr Egton Bridge	26.05.13	Egton, N Yorks	339 days	5km	SE	dead, not recent
NRG	Barn Owl	GR34571	07.06.12	Carrith Moor	28.01.13	Barrasford	285 days	17km	SE	dead
NRG	Barn Owl	GR34772	12.07.12	Kilham	28.01.13	Flodden, Milfield	200 days	5km	E	dead
NRG	Barn Owl	GR34701	24.07.12	Barlow	14.11.12	Morpeth	113 days	25km	N	injured, died in care
PDRMG	Tawny Owl	GC98452	12.05.10	Valehouse Resr Derbs	01.04.13	Crowden, Derbs	324 days	3km	NE	freshly dead
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR34713	09.05.12	Stonehaugh Forest	14.05.13	Nr Simonburn	370 days	7km	E	killed by car
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR34653	05.06.13	Tarset Burn	18.07.13	Tarset Burn	43 days	0km		killed by fox nr nest box
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR10670	20.05.12	Kershope Forest Cumbria	09.10.12	Stapleton Cumbria	186 days	12km	W	dead
NRG	Tawny Owl	GC26110	15.06.06	Spadeadam Forest	15.05.12	Stonehaugh Forest	6 yrs	18km	E	controlled in nest
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR34540	09.05.12	Stonehaugh Forest	13.09.12	Ashington	127 days	48km	NE	dead
NRG	Tawny Owl	GC43419	13.05.11	Wark Forest	28.04.12	Kershope Forest	350 days	7km	NW	controlled in nest
NRG	Tawny Owl	GC43428	13.05.11	Stonehaugh Forest	17.05.12	Chirdon Burn	369 days	7km	NW	controlled in nest

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

