

Northern England Raptor Forum

This edition of the Annual Review is dedicated to the memory of

Mick Carroll

1947-2015

*Founder of the South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study
Group*

Annual Review 2014



**Northern England
Raptor Forum**

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Photograph credits

Honey Buzzard: Garry Marchant
Red Kite: Ivan Ellison
Marsh Harrier: Ivan Ellison
Hen Harrier: Mike Price
Montagu's Harrier: Ivan Ellison
Northern Goshawk: Ivan Ellison
Sparrowhawk: Adrian Dancy
Buzzard: Ken Smith
Osprey: Ivan Ellison
Common Kestrel: Adrian Dancy
Merlin: Wilf Norman
Hobby: Susan H. Wilson
Peregrine: Ivan Ellison
Barn Owl: Mike Killelea
Eagle Owl: Ivan Ellison
Little Owl: Mike Killelea
Tawny Owl: Pat Killelea
Long-eared Owl: Bob Kenworthy
Short-eared Owl: Mick Demain
Raven: Ken Haydock

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

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
RSPB Assistant Investigations Officer (David Hunt) 07796611954
Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme 0800 321600
Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme 01524 5959830
Please report Hen Harrier sightings to:
RSPB Hen Harrier hotline 0845 4600121 or henharriers@rspb.org.uk

Foreword

Dawn Balmer

Head of Surveys BTO



I've had the great pleasure to work for BTO for over 20 years, much of that time in a role of survey organiser for a broad range of projects from Tawny Owls, Peregrines, BirdTrack, Constant Effort Sites, Retrapping Adults for Survival and Bird Atlas 2007–11. For me, the undoubted highlight of these projects has been working with volunteers. I am constantly amazed by their dedication, enthusiasm and expert knowledge.

For Bird Atlas 2007–11, over 40,000 volunteers contributed over 19 million bird records. Records came from many sources including individuals, bird clubs, raptor study groups and Rare Breeding Birds Panel. It's a fantastic example of what can be achieved through organised volunteer effort. The Bird Atlas highlighted mixed fortunes for raptors; the expanding populations of Red Kite and White-tailed Eagle as a result of re-introductions, the continued range expansion of Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Goshawk and Hobby, and the losses in range and abundance for Kestrel and Merlin. For Peregrine, the Bird Atlas indicated a 40% range expansion in Britain & Ireland since the 1988–91 atlas, yet the maps showed a much more complex pattern of change. Although there was range expansion across the lowlands, both the distribution change and the abundance change maps shows losses in the uplands of northwest Scotland.

Peregrine is one of the species monitored nationally through the Statutory Conservation Agency/RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (*SCARABBS*) agreement, though there is some local monitoring carried out annually. The sixth national Peregrine Survey was carried out in

2014, following the last full survey in 2002. The 2014 survey, organised by BTO, introduced some challenging elements and we greatly appreciate volunteers embracing new methods. Given the sensitive nature of the species, the access to land and local knowledge required, and the often difficult terrain, we were extremely grateful to voluntary groups like NERF who took a leading role in fieldwork and local organisation. The final survey results are eagerly awaited.

As well as recording the occupancy of Peregrine sites, more detailed nest recording was carried out under licence at some locations. Over the longer term, nest recording is greatly valued and allows us to report on a number of demographic parameters in our annual BirdTrends (www.bto.org/birdtrends), for example laying date has advanced by 11 days between 1968–2012 and that fledglings per breeding attempt has increased from 1.78 young to 2.26. The number of nest record cards received annually for Peregrine, and other upland nesting species is small, and we would welcome further submissions.

The Peregrine has long been a special bird for me. In 1992 I found a pair nesting on an old Raven's nest in a quarry in Shropshire. It was the third known nest (since Shropshire Ornithological Society records began), following the first record in 1987. I used to spend a lot of time cycling and walking around the hills and farmland near home looking for birds, so you can imagine my excitement at finding these birds. Although a pair has nested nearly every year, and nest watches were set up in the early years to protect them, it wasn't until 2007 they fledged their first chick – just the one! Thankfully, the Peregrines have been much more productive in recent years and it was particularly pleasing to hear they fledged young in 2014, the year of the national survey.

This year's NERF Annual Review summarises the status of key raptor species, knowledge only made possible through the voluntary efforts of its members. A sincere thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2014 Peregrine Survey, and for continued monitoring of key species through census, ringing and nest recording.

Chairman's Report



Welcome to the sixth NERF Annual review, where we document the 2014 status of raptors, owls and Raven throughout the NERF recording area. This year was for many of us particularly notable and busy both in the field and “politically.” In the field it was of course a

Peregrine survey year and our member groups and individual members played significant roles in both the surveying itself and in the co-ordination, making sure that as complete a data set as possible was supplied to the BTO. Peregrines on or adjacent to grouse moors are a major concern for us at NERF as their breeding performance and status is as poor as that of the Hen Harrier. In my own area of study one grouse moor site has never produced fledged young in over 20 years of occupation and another last fledged young in 1994. Both sites are now rarely occupied; this is sadly typical of much of our uplands and totally unacceptable.

Breeding Hen Harriers returned to the English uplands after last year's absence, with four nests. NERF members played a significant part in the round the clock protection duties for three of them, helping to ensure their successful outcome. In doing so they worked successfully with other organisations; this is surely the way forward in most aspects of our work.

Most other issues as ever concerned Hen Harriers. During the year we wrote to DEFRA concerning the Hen Harrier Emergency Action Plan, urging them to publish the agreed parts of that plan whilst urging them to achieve complete agreement. Whilst we would wish to see a plan implemented as soon as possible, it needs to be the right plan. In the vacuum of rumour that non-publication of a plan has created, Hawk and Owl Trust (HOT) have offered to conduct a trial of brood management on behalf of the DEFRA stakeholder group. We believe this to be wholly premature and as such extremely unwelcome and have written to HOT expressing that view. Brood management is not being suggested as an aid to harrier population recovery but to limit density to low levels in order to prevent any damage to grouse stocks. We are not wholly against such a plan but believe that the Hen Harrier population should be at least 50-70 pairs before such a trial is even considered. This would also show that levels of persecution had reduced considerably, surely a prerequisite for any such trial. There is also a question of the threshold density used and the currently quoted 10km between nests is unacceptably low compared to the 47.1sq km per pair quoted in the species framework document. We believe that diversionary feeding as demonstrated at Langholm offers estates the safeguards they are seeking in almost all circumstances and estates should be using this technique rather than holding out for brood management, which may in any case be shown to be unnecessary. No more trials - let's get on with saving the Hen Harrier now!

2014 saw the first Hen Harrier Day with the major gathering in the Peak District under the Derwent Dam on a day of pouring rain. Well over 500 enthusiasts were present to listen to Mark Avery and Chris Packham speak, raising the profile of the harriers' plight. This success is largely down to Mark along with Birders against Wildlife Crime; whilst NERF supports this initiative it does not share all their views. However the increased publicity via the internet is welcome and the diversity of approach is reaching a much wider audience and can only be to the benefit of the case for the Hen Harrier. More recently NERF members again lent their voice to support the Hen Harrier Day event on 9th August 2015.



Braving the wet weather at the first Hen Harrier Day, Derwent valley, 10th August



Mick Demain, Bill Murphy and Bill Hesketh, Bowland RSG

This report is of course the product of all the hours of fieldwork conducted by NERF members and some independent raptor workers. In that sense it is your report. If your observations are not included join your local group or submit data to them anyway. However that this report appears at all is almost entirely down to the hard work and ability to cajole the rest of us by Judith Smith, thank you Judith for the excellent job you do, it's something that we perhaps don't say often enough.

Paul Irving

*Chairman, Northern England Raptor Forum
September 2015*

Secretary's Report



The Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF) has been established for 10 years. It represents the collective field-work and conservation interests of ten wholly voluntary regional raptor study groups whose individual members are active in monitoring key species in the uplands. The common aim is to provide the most comprehensive, evidence-based data on the breeding success and year-round distribution of raptors in the northern uplands. The information collected through our monitoring efforts is supplied to Natural England and to the national database, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel for use in species and habitat conservation and protection. Geographic coverage extends from the Forest of Bowland across to the North York Moors and East Yorkshire and to the majority of the Pennine chain from Northumberland to Derbyshire.

Further details of our activities and composition can be found on the NERF website, www.raptorforum.co.uk. Formal meetings are held twice per year with each raptor study group represented by two members. There is a regular attendance, in an advisory capacity, from organisations such as Natural England, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the RSPB. Amy Challis, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme coordinator attended as a guest at one recent meeting to explain how that scheme is structured and we look forward to maintaining links on issues of common interest.

Steve Downing has represented NERF on the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW UK) for several years. External recognition for the work of NERF is always appreciated and so it was with particular pleasure to learn that NERF had won the 2014 PAW Partner of the Year Award. Steve accepted the award on behalf of NERF at their Annual Conference in Bristol and with still much to be done, he spoke of how voluntary organisations like ours will continue to play a vital role to support the efforts of the police and others in preventing wildlife crime. Further details may be found at www.nwcu.police.uk/about/the-structure-of-paw-uk/



Tom Huggon (left) from Browne Jacobson Solicitors, sponsors of the PAW Partner of the Year award, presents Steve Downing with his award.

The Northern England Raptor Conferences, held each November are an important event in the calendar which bring together field-workers and professionals to share knowledge and develop thinking on species conservation. The 2014 conference at Bakewell, Derbyshire was hosted jointly by the South Peak Raptor Study Group and the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group. A summary of the papers presented during this very successful event can be found on the NERF website and in this issue. We are especially grateful for the support of the various sponsors and to Alan Charles, Derbyshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Jon Stewart, General Manager Peak District NP, who both gave keynote speeches.

One important development during the year was an agreement for NERF to provide specialist contractor services into the RSPB's Hen Harrier LIFE+ Project for the next 5 years. The long-standing experience of our members in monitoring Hen Harriers will hopefully mean we can make a significant contribution to the objectives of the LIFE+ Project. Specifically we will assist in improving the understanding of the movements and status of Hen Harriers in northern England and the intensity and nature of any persecution and to enhance their protection at both breeding and wintering sites. A first report was provided to the RSPB covering winter 2014/15 roost occupancy.

David Raw

Secretary, Northern England Raptor Forum

August 2015

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.

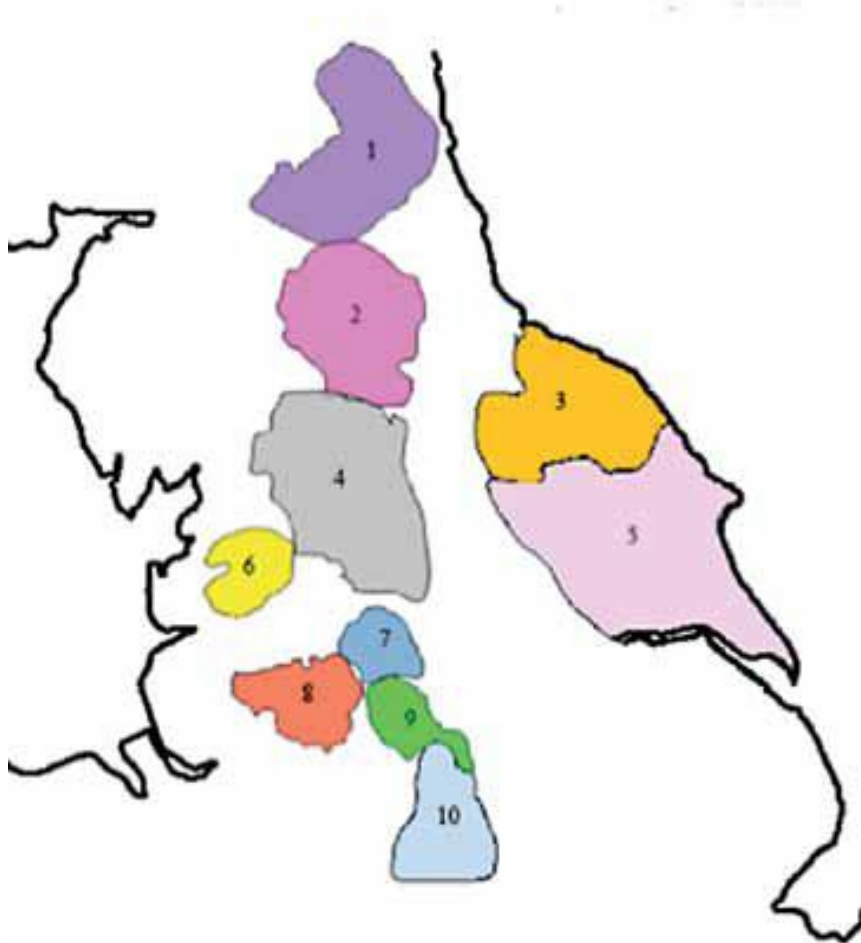
The work previously undertaken by the Mosslands Barn Owl Conservation Group has been absorbed into the MRG, whose other main field of interest is Peregrines.

Northumbria 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. Northumbria Ringing Group
2. Durham Upland Bird Study Group
3. North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group
4. Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor 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 & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage:

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.

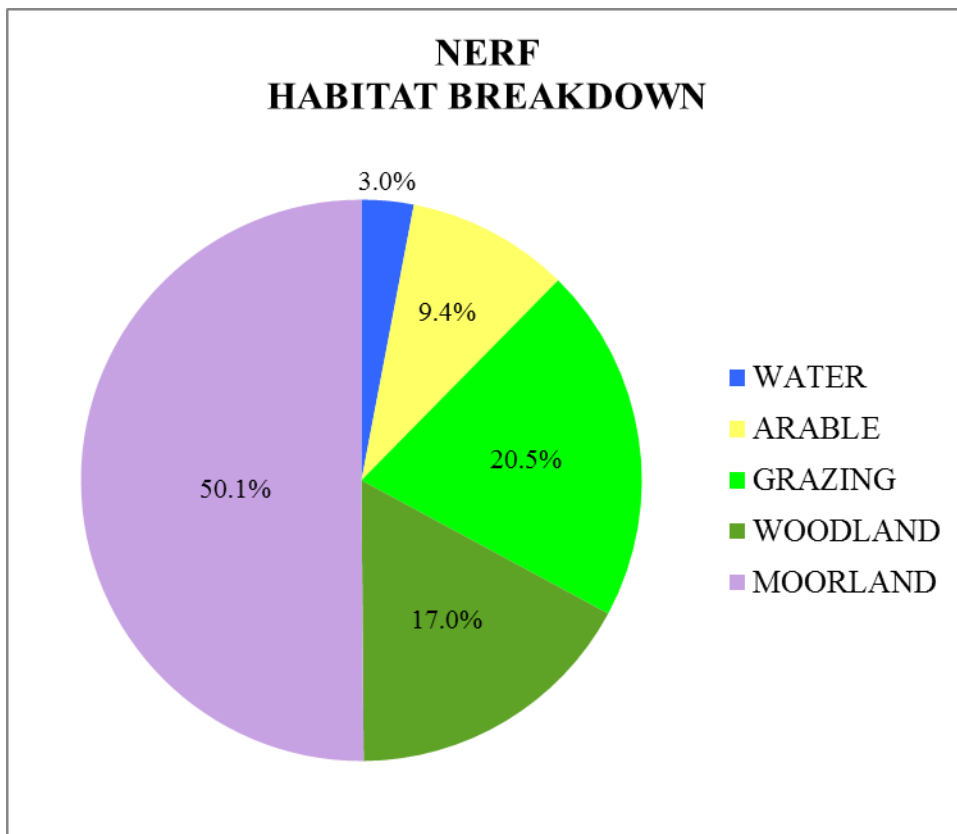
We attempt to provide as much detailed information as possible for Schedule 1 species and some others. The extent and area of coverage for each group's survey work should be read in conjunction with the figures presented in species account tables. A "0" (**Zero**) is shown where the column feature was 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																					
BRS																					
CRS																					
DUBS																					
MR																					
NR																					
NYMR																					
PDRM																					
SPRS																					
SREYRS																					
YD&NRS																					
	<i>Honey-buzzard</i>	<i>Red Kite</i>	<i>Marsh Harrier</i>	<i>Hen Harrier</i>	<i>Montagu's Harrier</i>	<i>Northern Goshawk</i>	<i>Sparrowhawk</i>	<i>Common Buzzard</i>	<i>Rough-legged Buzzard</i>	<i>Osprey</i>	<i>Kestrel</i>	<i>Merlin</i>	<i>Hobby</i>	<i>Peregrine</i>	<i>Barn Owl</i>	<i>Eagle Owl</i>	<i>Little Owl</i>	<i>Tawny Owl</i>	<i>Long-eared Owl</i>	<i>Short-eared Owl</i>	<i>Raven</i>

	Breeding* and monitored
	Breeding* but not monitored
	Absent
	Non-breeding; passage movements monitored

Note: *Breeding attempted at least once in last 10 years

NERF regional persecution data

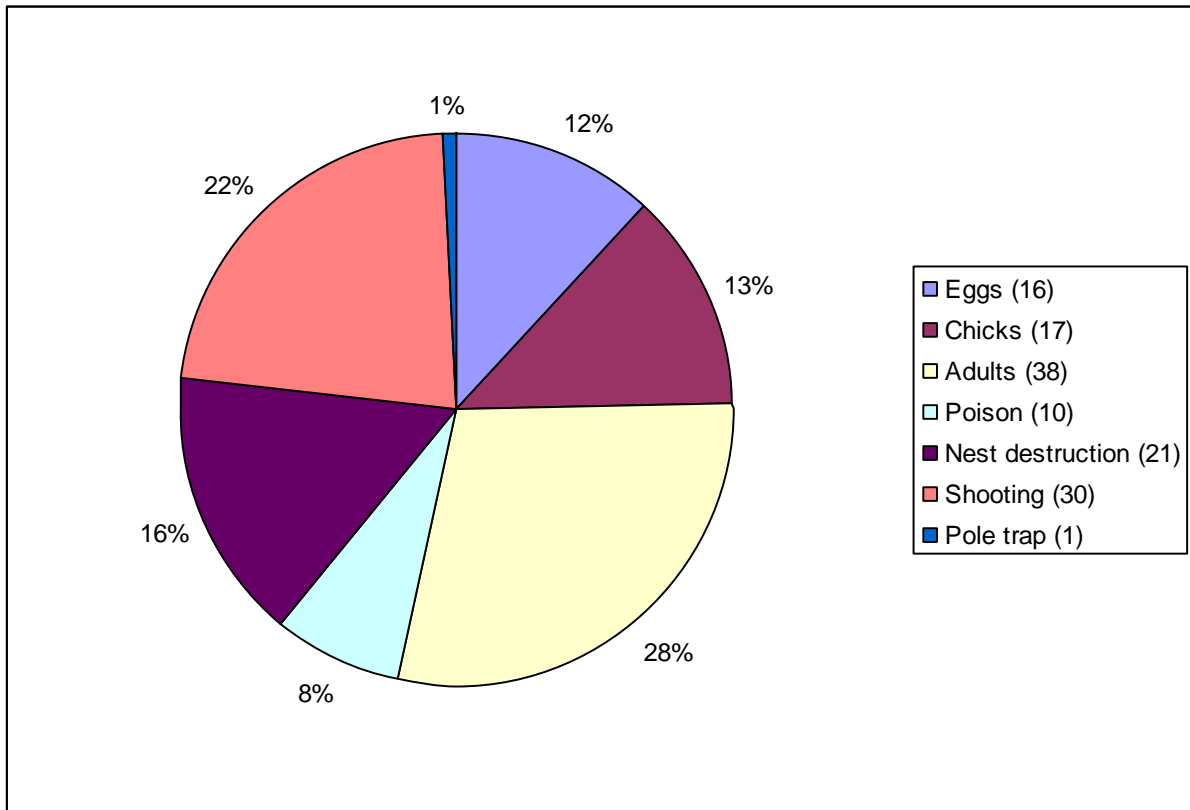
Of all the data gathered by Raptor Workers the number of persecution cases consistently invokes discussions in relation to the claims. Proven persecution is relatively easy to assert in cases where birds have been shot or poisoned or in cases where traps have been recovered adjacent to nests.

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 133, the second-highest total in the six years of the Review (190 in 2012, 119 in 2009, 90 in 2013, 82 in 2011 and 56 in 2010). This year it includes a new category, Pole trap. All suspected incidents have been omitted from the chart below. Once again, destruction of adults is the largest sector at 28%.

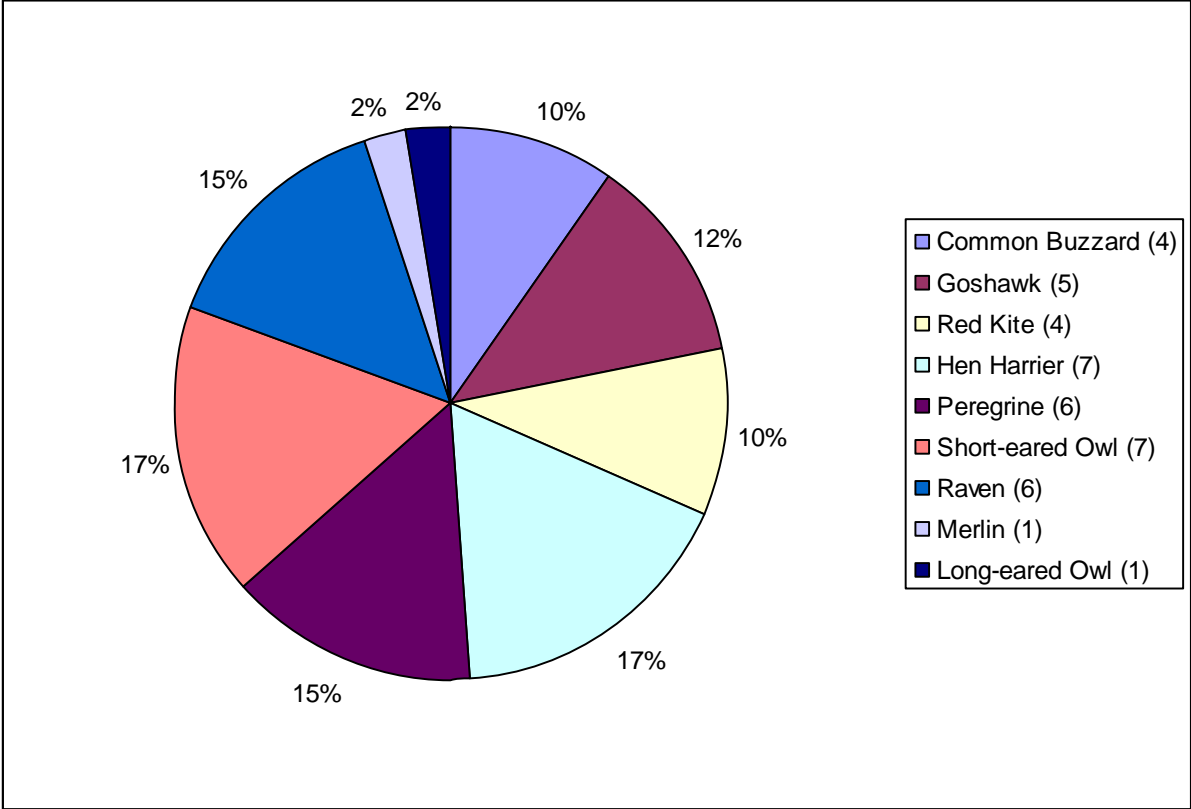
Persecution by type 2014 (figures in parentheses refer to number of incidents)



Black Hole species

During 2014 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.

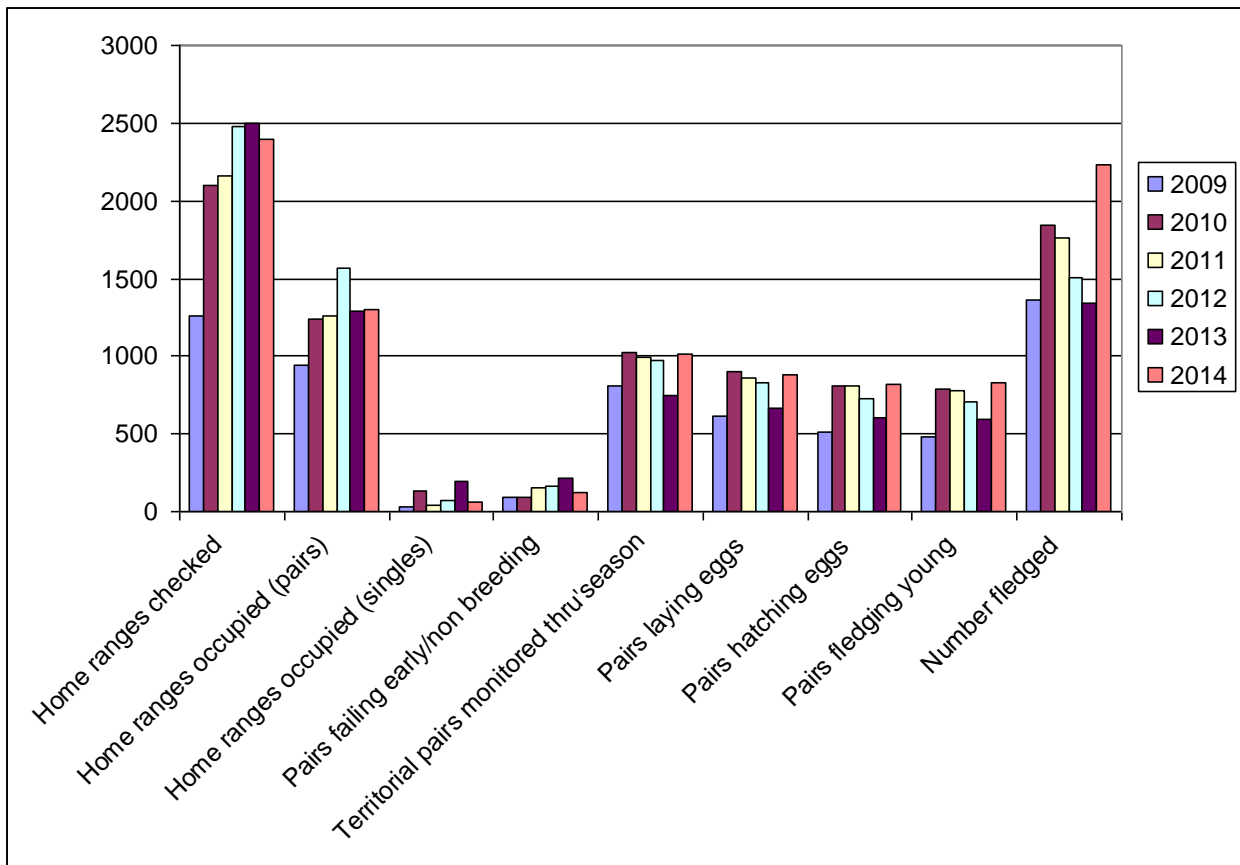
Black Hole species in 2014 (figures in parentheses refer to number of groups listing species)



Summary

Within the NERF region 20 of the 23 raptor species were monitored and / or recorded by Group members during 2014. There were no records, or no records in the breeding season, for White-tailed Eagle, 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 - 2014 are presented in the table below.

Combined statistics 2009-2014



Of the 2392 home ranges, 1297 were occupied by pairs of birds and 1012 pairs were monitored through the season – the latter figure 25.86% up on 2013 reflecting the much better breeding season for many species. 831 pairs fledged a minimum of 2233 young (595 pairs fledged in excess of 1342 young in 2013).

Comparisons between the 2009 and 2014 fledging rates for pairs laying eggs and pairs monitored are provided in Appendix 2.

Although NERF members completed an extraordinary amount of monitoring during 2014 there is more to do and anyone interested in joining one of the Groups should contact the relevant Group representative. Contact details are provided on the inside back cover.

Some very interesting conclusions can tentatively be drawn from the 2009-2014 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 20 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 2014

Rough-legged Buzzard – no breeding season sightings in the NERF region in 2014. However, there was a well-documented influx into northern counties from November 2014.



Rough-legged Buzzard, Saddleworth Moor, November 2014 (Simon Hitchen)

Golden Eagle – no sightings in the NERF region in 2014; the only bird in England is the solitary Haweswater bird, still alive in March 2015

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*



UK population estimate

18-34 pairs and at least 16 territories where only single birds were present; at least 28 young fledged (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422).

Conservation status

UK	Amber
Europe	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

National and regional threat assessment

Egg collectors represent the most serious threat to nesting Honey Buzzards in Britain. As the species presents no risk to game birds, those gamekeepers who can differentiate between Honey and Common Buzzards are quite happy to tolerate the former! Migration to and from Africa has its own inherent dangers of course but at least British birds, which migrate across the Straits of Gibraltar, avoid the slaughter of their European counterparts running the gauntlet of passage across the central Mediterranean via Malta where significant numbers are shot each year in flagrant contravention of EU laws.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial prs monitored thru' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
NYMRSG Group A	9	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	1.0	1.0
NYMRSG Group B	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC

Group Reports

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

There were just 2 reports in the whole county for the year. A light phase adult was seen in an upland area on 13 August and a juvenile appeared near the coast on 22 September.

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.

Returns for the season from Group A only. Just 4 birds recorded this season but formed 2 pairs that bred successfully, each raising one youngster. One pair nested in a Larch, the nest being located 2 July; the other in a Scots Pine wasn't found until 21 July. The chick from this nest was ringed and an addled egg collected and later despatched to CEH for analysis. The Larch bird migrated post-17 August – the last date it was seen – the Scots Pine bird later – post-7 September. The male at the latter site was last observed 24 August, the female 31 August. All 4 adults were known from previous seasons having been returning for between 5-7 years.

All other groups submitted nil reports.

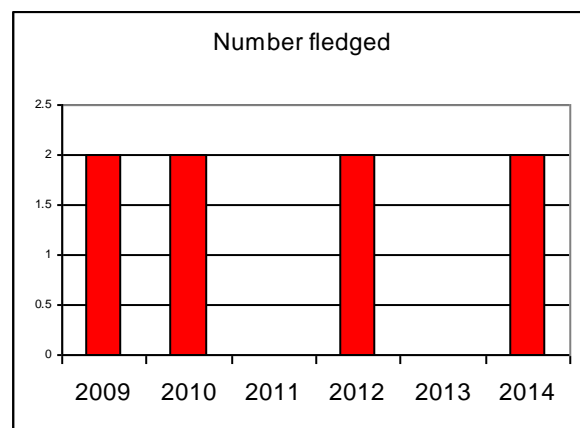
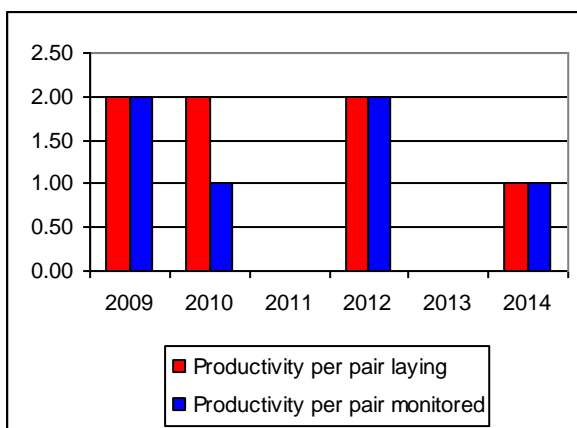
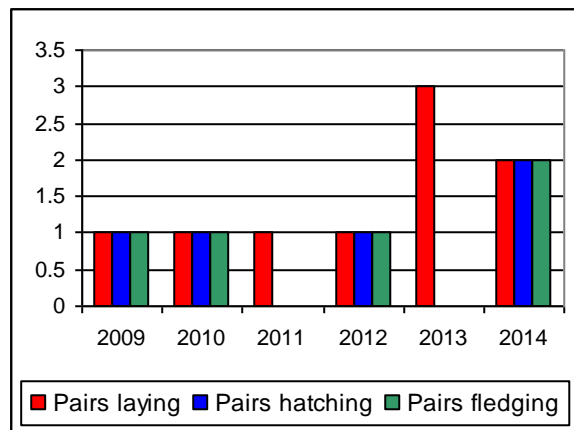
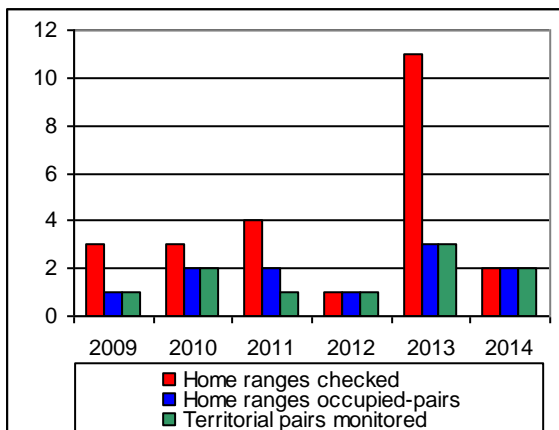
NERF regional summary

As is usually the case, only the North Yorks Moors area provided meaningful data for the year. However, this small, discrete population surely cannot be the only one in the NERF region. When one considers the obvious year-on year appeal of the North York Moors forests to the species, Kielder Forest in Northumberland for example must hold similar attractive habitat on an even greater scale and it seems logical that breeding pairs must occur there somewhere. The problem of course is that of locating them in such a vast area when admittedly, the species is notorious for the ability of nesting pairs to go about their business undetected, even doing so in close proximity to human activity when once into the breeding cycle. The additional difficulty is that of limited manpower availability in the field. The NYMs team will unreservedly vouch for the fact that fieldwork on this species - even working the traditional areas – is extremely time-consuming and often unrewarding. Thus it does seem nesting attempts elsewhere in the NERF region are most likely to come to light mainly as a result of fortuitous circumstances rather than directed fieldworker effort.

The chick ringed this season was the first for the NYMs.

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 2009-2014



Red Kite *Milvus milvus*



UK population estimate

3000 to 4000 pairs. Based on 2014 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.

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' season	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSR	40+	31	NC	6	25	25	25	20	35	1.4	1.4
SREYRSG	17	9	NC	1	11	8	7	7	15	1.9	1.4
YD&NRSG	2	2	NC	NC	NC	1	1	1	1+	1.00	1.00
TOTAL	59	42	0	8	36	34	33	28	51	1.50	1.42

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

A pair was at a potential site early in the season but disturbance due to engineering work on the UU estate may have prevented a breeding attempt.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

There is ample suitable habitat in Calderdale to support breeding Red Kites. Despite this fact they remain disappointingly absent. There were only 10 sightings during 2014, primarily in spring. Interestingly a bird with orange wing tags was recorded at Walshaw Dean on 11th April.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

We are once again very grateful to the Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) for allowing NERF to reproduce their data. Red Kites in Durham had their most successful breeding season since the species was first released in 2004 into the Derwent Valley, Gateshead Borough Council .

A major survey was organised by FoRK in 2014 which culminated in more than 50 volunteers registering over 1000 hours of fieldwork. The 2013-14 winter proved to be relatively mild and by February 37 birds roosted at one location. Warm and settled spring conditions then followed which resulted in a productive season. In addition to the numbers reported in the table the appearance of 2 pairs with 3 and 2 flying young, respectively, indicated success where no nests had been found.

19 young were wing-tagged, bearing pink (Durham) tags on the left wing and orange (2014) on the right wing.

FoRK cautions that the scheme is still less successful overall than, say, the earlier Yorkshire introduction scheme. Pairs continue to be mainly concentrated within the original core release area and have failed to establish themselves in the adjoining game-shooting areas of upland Durham and Northumberland and also elsewhere in lowland areas. The male from one pair was taken into temporary care with head injuries having apparently hit on obstacle; worryingly, x-rays showed the bird was already carrying lead pellets from an earlier event. Meanwhile the female continued to care for the pair's single chick which successfully fledged thanks to food being laid out near to the nest. The male was later released only to be ignored by his mate.

Sadly three Red Kites were found dead from illegal poisoning in the county during November 2014. Two corpses discovered together at High Spen, Gateshead BC included an experienced adult female from a nearby territory which had successfully raised young in the previous four seasons. Autopsies showed the presence of Aldicarb pesticide. The third bird, found near Edmundbyers, had died from Carbofuran poisoning. These deaths bring the overall total of birds lost due to known poisonings in the county in recent years to 10. Police investigations are continuing.

Manchester Raptor Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

Eleven sightings were picked up from www.manchesterbirding.com. Six in spring began on 17th Mar at Whalley Range, one flying NW, followed by one at Sale WP 14th Apr flying SW. One flew over Ashworth Moor Resr 23rd Apr and three May sightings involved singles at Stalybridge and Rindle 18th and 19th respectively, and one at Burnt Edge 26th.

Autumn records began with one E over Carrington Moss 2nd Aug, singles on Smithills Moor 13th and 21st Sep, an unconfirmed report from Lightshaw 18th Oct where the resident claimed other sightings in the same week, and the last E at Parr Fold Park Walkden 6th Nov.

Northumbria Ringing Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county and some areas in Cumbria

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

The information below relates to Cumbria only:

After the release of young 2010-2012, this is the first time kites have been known to nest, although it is thought this nest was used in 2013 but the outcome is unknown. 2014 had 2 occupied territories: one failed early and the other went on and fledged 3 young which were ringed and wing tagged.

North York Moors Upland Bird Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The species continues to consolidate its presence in the NYMs with sightings of single birds and small groups across the study area now accepted as nothing especially out of the ordinary. There were no reports received of possible breeding attempts or displaying pairs anywhere this year. Nonetheless, the future looks fairly rosy for these birds providing they can avoid the

guns of the game rearing fraternity and the poison bait scenario – the latter arguably the greater threat to this particular bird’s welfare.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

The group have increasingly recorded sightings of Red Kite in recent years, including several in 2014. Hopefully in the near future this species will move to breed within the excellent habitat offered in the group’s study area.

South Peak Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

As in previous years there were a number of sightings of single birds in the group’s recording area throughout the year but no breeding behaviour was recorded. Successful breeding must remain a distinct possibility in the future within Derbyshire and the Peak District, both areas having plenty of suitable habitat. A pair bred in Staffordshire, outside our recording area, in 2012.

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group.

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

Scarborough Birders recording area only: There were 12 sightings in 2014 recorded by the group, of which 5 were pairs of kites and 7 of individual birds. No record of breeding pairs.

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

Although we continue to remain confident about the long term success of the East Yorkshire Red Kite population, unfortunately there has been a decrease in known successful breeding pairs this year. There are several accountable reasons for this, including: pairs that didn’t return to previous nest site areas, a pair that deserted, possibly due to disturbance and lack of access to monitor known nests where we have had to resort to observing from the public highway. Kites continue to move off the Wolds and we now have several pairs on the plain of York. Sightings continue to come in from the east of the county with minor sightings from the North. East Yorkshire is a massive area and we are confident there will have been other breeding pairs that we aren’t aware of. A record maximum of 81 birds were recorded at the communal 2014/2015 winter roost site.

2014 Yorkshire overall breeding figures are shown in the table below. 2013 figures in brackets:

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PAIRS FOUND</u>	<u>PAIRS BRED</u>	<u>PAIRS SUCC.</u>	<u>YOUNG</u>
West Yorkshire	63 (54)	61 (49)	53 (42)	93 (76)
North Yorkshire	40 (35)	37 (28)	31 (22)	63 (46)
East Yorkshire	9 (12)	8 (11)	7 (11)	15 (22)
Totals	112 (101)	106 (88)	91 (75)	171 (144)
Average young raised per successful pair = 1.86 (1.92).				

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

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale 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

Yorkshire Dales:

Red Kites do not breed in the YDRSG area although wandering birds may occasionally be seen in any part of the Dales. The expansion of the population away from core breeding areas has halted when birds reach the edge of grouse moors on the southern fringe of the Dales. A number of birds have been found poisoned in this area suggesting that illegal persecution associated with grouse moor management may be limiting the spread of the population.

Nidderdale:

Two pairs probably attempted breeding though the nests were not located. One pair with recently fledged young was reported. Sixteen birds were counted outside the breeding season.

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

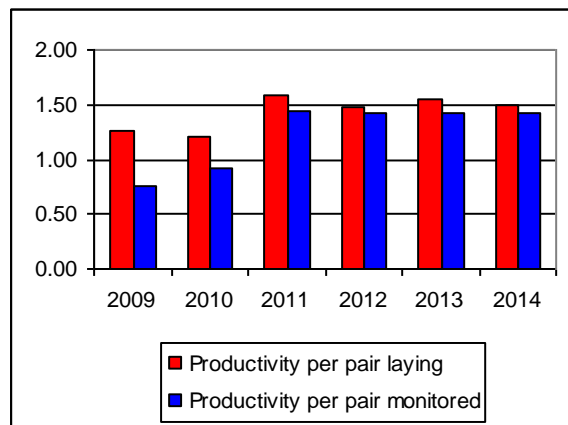
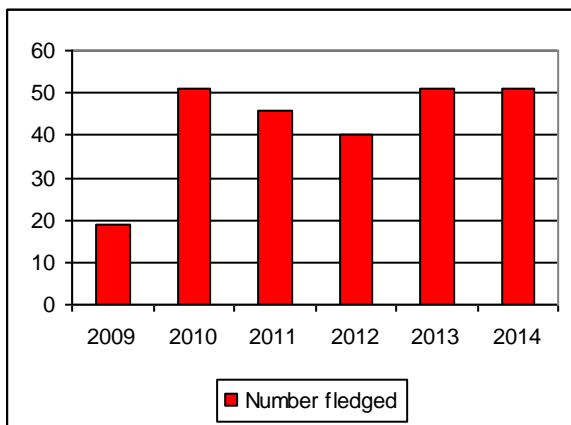
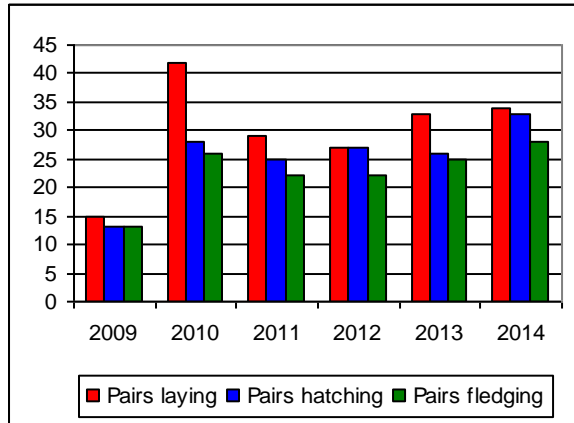
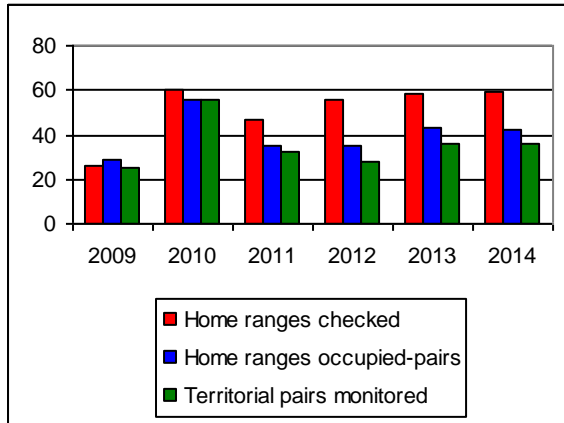
It is essential that all suspected poisoning incidents are reported to the local Police and that an incident number is obtained. The cause of death will be determined by either the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [PBMS], telephone 01524 595830 (direct line) or 01524 595800 (switchboard) E.mail: leew@ceh.ac.uk 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 2015.

Comparative data 2009-2014



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). 280-323 breeding pairs were reported to RBBP (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422.)

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	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
NRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

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

There were 16 sightings during between 5th July and 16th October 2014, all from the uplands. Fifteen of the sightings were of juveniles or first summer birds with only a single adult male being recorded at Warland on 14th September.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

These comments apply to the county as a whole. There were no records of overwintering birds on the North Tees marshes. The first bird of the year appeared at Teesmouth in mid-April and 1-2 were present there throughout the summer without any evidence of breeding. There were a handful of late spring reports of single passage birds seen at waters in the eastern lowlands and just 4 reports from these same areas during autumn return passage in September.

Overall, a relatively modest showing with no records from the uplands.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of Coverage: Whole County.

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

Once again a female appeared to summer, or even be resident, on Chat Moss, with sightings in every month from March to October on various constituent mosslands. However these were never frequent enough (or perhaps were not disclosed on www.manchesterbirding.com?) to allow general viewing and there was no suggestion of a pair. A juvenile was seen here 29th July, 1st August (seen at same time or shortly after female), and 8th October.

Other sightings reported on the website above came from Pennington Flash in January and February, at Bickershaw colliery rucks nearby in May, July and August, on Carrington Moss 4th April, at Walker Fold 6th August, and Aspull 11th September.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

Again only one pair bred, but with 5 young fledged it was the most successful year within the study area. Additionally many passage birds were seen in the county, predominantly on the coast.

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.

Although wandering birds continue to be recorded with increasing regularity from spring to autumn across the NYMs it is likely that any breeding attempt would be a rare event.

Unfortunately, the species' preferred reed bed habitat is virtually non-existent in the National Park. Any nesting if attempted would probably take place in an extensive rush bed – the closest corresponding habitat to reeds and which does occur widely across the study area. The well-watched Scaling Dam Reservoir area recorded the species with some regularity and perhaps offers the best chance of hosting a nesting pair at some future date.

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 number of birds passing through the study area during the summer months suggests that the upland areas are being used as passage / migration routes.

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.

Up to two birds were regularly seen in the Beeley Moor / Eastmoor area in the first half of August; they were thought to be birds of the year – but their origin remains unknown. Once again in 2014 the number of birds passing through the study area during the summer months suggests that these upland areas are being used as passage / migration routes.

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

Marsh Harriers are sighted from the Humber through to York areas and are known to breed here; however no-one from SREYRSG is currently carrying out any direct monitoring of this species.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

These data refer to the Yorkshire Dales part of the area.

In terms of Marsh Harrier there is no systematic monitoring in the YDNP. There are a few records of passage birds from various upland areas, primarily of single birds in late summer and early autumn.

NERF regional threat assessment

The NERF regional threat assessment mirrors that of the national threat assessment.

NERF regional summary

Once again only the Northumbria Ringing Group reported a successful breeding attempt in 2014. However; most other NERF Groups observed passage migrants during both spring and autumn.

Wing-tagging project

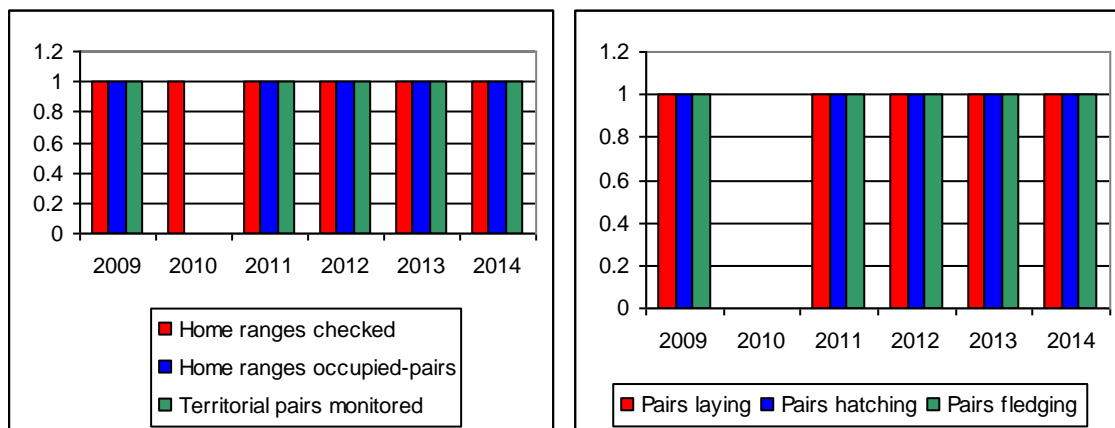
In 2011 Phil Littler commenced a wing tagging project in Norfolk and south Suffolk and 226 birds have been wing-tagged so far. He reports (September 2015) as follows:

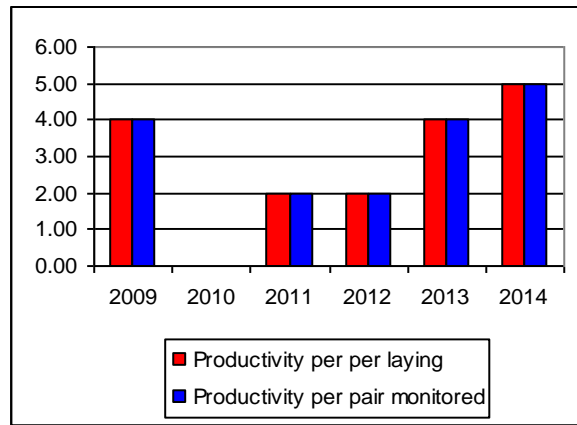
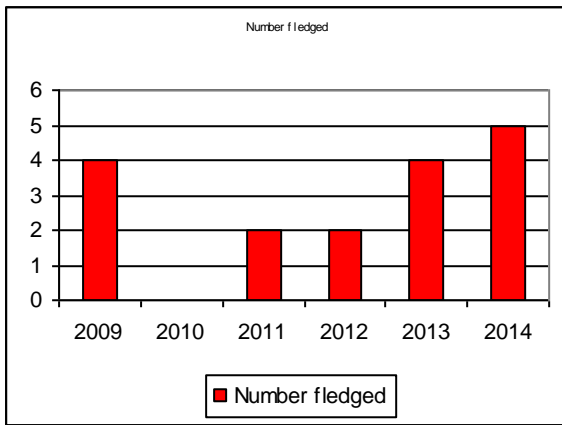
Movements of birds have been a real eye-opener with “firsts” reported from Germany and Belgium and a 6th for Eire. More expected are reports from Spain and Portugal as this is the assumed route that “our” UK birds would be expected to travel, either to over-winter in Iberia or NW and W Africa. Sightings have come in from the Straits of Gibraltar and Senegal but unfortunately the codes on the tags were not read correctly.

What is a worry is the lack of sightings of birds over 2 years old. For a more in-depth insight of the project take a look at www.nwnrg.co.uk.

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, or to the BTO. 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 2009-2014





Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*



UK population estimate

The latest estimate made from the 2010 national survey is 660 pairs with a declining trend (Hayhow *et al*, *Bird Study* 60, 446-458). The 2013 report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel reported 236-361 monitored pairs (Holling, M. *et al*. Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422).

The vast majority of the breeding population is found in Scotland with smaller numbers in Wales and much smaller in the Isle of Man and Northern England.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

Published research shows that illegal persecution is the dominant factor which determines the breeding range and population across the moorland of northern England. Studies suggest the moorland habitat is capable of naturally carrying in excess of 300 pairs and yet, despite the

underlying ecology remaining favourable the species status remains close to extinction in our region. Illegal persecution must stop.

Defra's Upland Stakeholder Group has still to conclude and issue its Hen Harrier Joint Recovery Emergency Action Plan which we trust will find mutually acceptable solutions and restore the Hen Harrier to its rightful status in our uplands. The Hen Harrier is listed as a citation species for both the North Pennine and Bowland SPAs yet is absent entirely from the former and well below natural levels in the latter. The UK Government has clear responsibilities towards remedying this situation in these EU designated SPAs.

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
BRSRG	18	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	9	4.5	4.5
CRSG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSG	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	14	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMUBSG	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRMG	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	5	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	4	2
SREYRSG	NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YD&NRSG	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	55	5	3	2	5	3	3	3	13	4.3	3.2

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas

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

The Forest of Bowland has been the traditional, last remaining stronghold for Hen Harriers in England in recent years but with no breeding attempts here at all in both 2012 & 2013 the species' fortunes were at an all-time low. There was some encouragement in 2014 with a return to two pairs which laid clutches of 7 and 5 respectively and fledged a total of nine young. The young birds were fitted with satellite tags but by September two of the birds, named Sky and Hope by local school children, suddenly ceased transmission on 10th and 13th respectively.



Hen Harrier being fitted with a satellite tag by Stephen Murphy, Natural England

A £1000 reward was offered by the RSPB for any information concerning their disappearance. A male was seen at a third site for a while but did not attract a female. Overall it is obvious that the Hen Harrier's recovery in Bowland remains fragile and tentative as the summary below shows.

SUMMARY OF BREEDING SUCCESS IN BOWLAND

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Pairs Nesting	8	11	6	0	0	2
Pairs Successful	5	8	4	0	0	2
Young Fledged	10	18	12	0	0	9

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas

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

An adult male was recorded in the traditional winter roost in the north west of the study area on 1st March. There were no other records until the breeding season had ended and birds began returning over late summer, autumn and the early winter. During this period birds were recorded by Group members on 63 days. The highest count on any one day was 3 individuals. This trio included two first winter females and a first winter male. They were present from early November to the end of the year. A satellite-tagged bird, identified from the data as 'Highlander', a female that had fledged in Bowland earlier in the year was present from 24th August to the end of the year.

Both the number of days on which sightings were recorded and the number of individuals recorded on any one day is the highest within the study area for several years. Additionally there were several records of birds on passage.

Durham 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 no reports of birds returning to the site of the 2013 unsuccessful breeding attempt nor any elsewhere across the upland areas during the spring and summer months despite extensive coverage.

Up to 3 birds were present at a roost during January and February and 1-2 from late September until year-end. Late autumn passage resulted in birds appearing at 4 lowland sites in the east of the county though none appeared to linger.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage but not known to occur as a breeding species. All records related to migrant ringtails in autumn and late winter on moorland areas. The visible migration watch point in the Winter Hill / Smithills Moor area provided a useful indication of movements and recorded ringtails on 22th, 25th and 27th Sep, with a 2nd year male there on 6th and 17th Nov. A female was at Watergrove Reservoir 15th Oct and a ringtail was on Holcombe Moor 16th Oct when mobbed by a Merlin and 2 Ravens. A ringtail was in the Dovestones area 1st Nov.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study. The dismal showing of recent years continued in 2014, with reports received from just three areas during the spring and summer but no confirmation of any breeding attempts. At one site an adult male displayed but never attracted a female and at another despite frequent visits there were just two isolated reports of single ringtails.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Good coverage; large representative study areas are monitored. Nearly all suitable upland habitat in the NYMs was checked again during the breeding season but sadly no observations of displaying birds were recorded. Significant additional effort was put in to monitoring traditional roost sites at both the beginning and end of the year but no birds were seen at these. Two individuals were recorded hunting with some regularity at one site during the winter and Scaling Dam Reservoir also provided several late winter records. The Sleddale area, generally favoured by raptors, produced regular sightings over the autumn and winter, mostly birds of single ringtails although 2 individuals were probably involved on 4th November and a bird on 6th August was considered to be a juvenile.

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 possible sightings of Hen Harriers in suitable habitat were reported throughout the breeding season yet despite prompt follow-up investigation very few were seen on subsequent days and so were considered to be wandering single birds. However a sighting of a pair performing a food pass in the south of the study area coincided with suspicious land management activities, namely heather burning at a time when burning wasn't expected.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most suitable areas are monitored annually. An adult male was seen in likely breeding habitat on 7th April and was later seen displaying on 14th April. A watch was quickly set up, coordinated by the National Trust in the hope that a female might soon be attracted. Sadly, the only female to turn up did not stay, but a second male arrived and displayed in the Upper Derwent Valley and a site further to the south-east. Both males continued displaying over a wide area until late May by which time the watch had been scaled down.

Nothing further was noticed until a male was seen hunting on 2nd July, and reacting to the presence of a hiker nearby a week or so later. Thoughts of a late breeding attempt were strengthened when an adult female was seen to mob a Buzzard on 14th July. On review it was thought that it was probably too late for a breeding attempt. However, a final search of the area was arranged for 5th August, but this was overtaken by the discovery a nest with five chicks by the shooting tenant on 1st August.

On receipt of this news, the NT quickly established a watch and the chicks (3 males, 2 females) were ringed on 4th August, when they were about 16-21 days old, and the two females were colour-ringed on 12th August. On 19th August, one of the females (Natalie), was fitted with a satellite tag, and by 23rd August, four of the five young had fledged. The fifth chick (a male) was a runt and was thought to have perished in the nest. The fortunes of the 4 young fledglings were then carefully tracked.

Sadly, by 4th September, the remains of another male were found 2 metres from the nest, and it was thought that it had been killed by a mammalian predator, although a Buzzard had been seen to visit the nest on a couple of occasions, and may have attacked the chick.

On 5th September, the satellite tag on Natalie indicated that she had not moved for two days and her corpse was picked up close to the last satellite fix, and it appeared to be in fairly good condition. It was subsequently sent to the Zoological Society of London for a post-mortem, which showed she had succumbed to a severe nematode worm infestation. It is possible that the two males which died earlier may have suffered a similar fate, but their corpses were too badly decayed for a post-mortem to be done.

By this time, the two remaining youngsters, (a male and a female), were flying strongly and venturing further from the natal area, and subsequently fledged successfully - the first young harriers to fledge in this area since 2006. The nest was second latest ever recorded in Britain.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage.

There were no reports to suggest any breeding was attempted

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

Level of monitoring: Poor coverage, casual monitoring only.

Occasional sightings of individual birds but no territorial behaviour was seen.

NERF regional summary

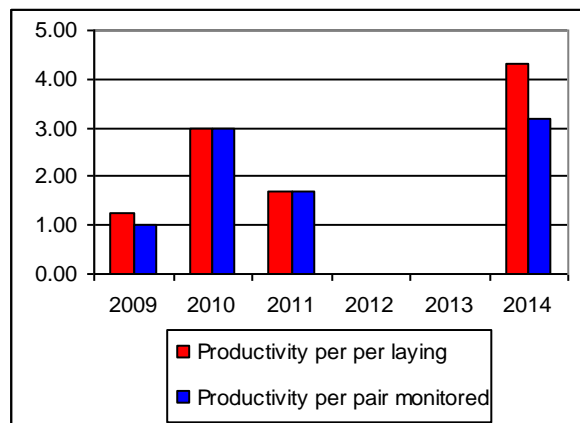
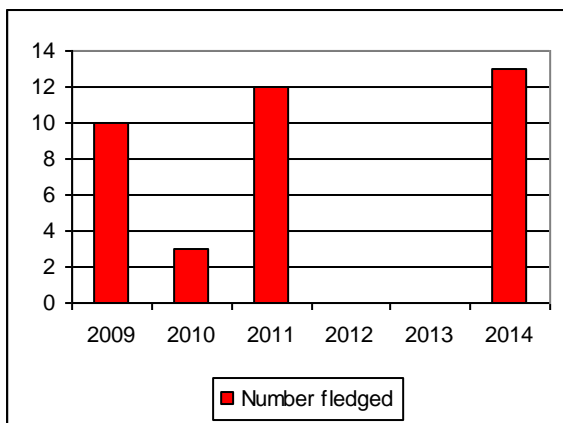
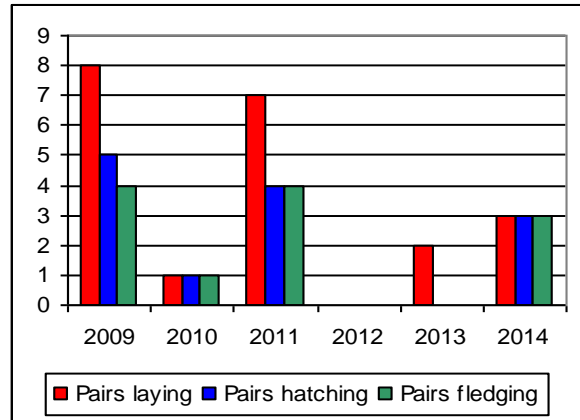
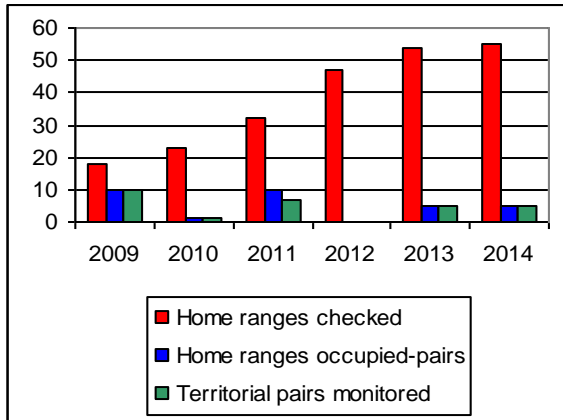
Outside of the NERF recording area there was one further successful nest. A pair in Cumbria fledged 2 young.

NERF members were once again able to provide extensive survey coverage of upland areas in the north of England during the spring and summer months with special attention given to those areas which might have supported breeding attempts in years past. Despite this effort the number of breeding attempts found remained unnaturally low. No young fledged at all in the north of England in 2013. The small step up now reported for 2014 of 4 successful nests (including Cumbria) is welcome but clearly the population remains extremely vulnerable and falls well short of the justified prediction of 300+ pairs for our region. Survival rates of the juvenile birds in their first few months are of great concern. By late September a total of 7 young were either known to have died near the nest or their satellite tags had stopped transmitting for unknown reason. The dearth of breeding attempts and poor fledgling survival reflect significant concerns.

We would wish to record our appreciation of the National Trust and other bodies in the Peak District who enthusiastically and efficiently co-ordinated watches on two occasions.

In addition to the surveying of extensive upland areas during the breeding season NERF members now contribute to the RSPB's Hen Harrier LIFE+ project by responding promptly with follow up visits to the casual records submitted by the public into the Hen Harrier Hotline. NERF member groups have also extended their approach to winter roost surveys with more frequent and far ranging visits.

Comparative data 2009-2014



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*



UK population estimate

In 2013, 7-8 pairs fledged 6 young; another poor year. ((Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422).

Conservation status

UK **Amber**
European Not of concern
Global Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

National threat assessment

In Western Europe approximately 75% of Montagu's Harriers nest in cereal crops and whilst this generally allows them to produce more chicks per breeding pair it also leaves them vulnerable to unintentional disturbance. Consequently once located the nests have to be either safeguarded during the harvest season, by enforcing an exclusion zone which has been agreed in advance with the landowner, or alternatively the chicks need to be relocated to a safer area. The eggs are especially vulnerable to egg thieves and the location of each nest must be kept a closely guarded secret. The nests may also require protection throughout the season.

NERF regional threat assessment

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

persecution may have already presented itself in the North York Moors in 2011 after early pairing followed by the male's absence thereafter.

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

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	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
SREYRSG	1	1	NC	NC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Group Reports

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Coastal corridor only

Level of monitoring: This nest was kept under close watch with Mick Carroll of SREYRG taking part in observations but not responsible for the monitoring activity. Two eggs were laid, but only one hatched and fledged.

No other group recorded this species (but see Non-NERF reports)

NERF regional summary

By successfully breeding in the Humber levels the Montagu's Harrier has a good chance of slowly building its numbers with the potential to then expand out of this area into the upland areas that have been briefly populated in recent years.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*



UK population estimate

The 361-464 pairs reported to RBBP in 2013 is slightly less than 2013 but still believed to be an under-estimate. (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422).

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
CRSG	1	1	NC	NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSG	7	2	2	0	2	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NRG Nfld	53	32	4	4	28	26	20	19	44+	1.69	1.57
NRG Cum	5	3	1	0	3	2	2	1	3	1.5	1.00
PDRSG	6	1	2	NC	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
SPRSG	20	16	NC	3	16	14	13	13	29	2.07	1.81
YD&NRSG	1	1	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
Total	93	56	9	7	50	43	36	34	78	1.81	1.56

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Most notably a pair was observed at one site during the spring. Birds are traditionally present at this location at the start of the annual breeding season; however they are never successful. As in previous years, display flights were noted on two occasions but despite prolonged periods of observation the Group found no evidence of breeding, and persecution cannot be ruled out.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The basis of monitoring was again through prolonged watches for aerial display in early spring over several traditional sites. Although, unlike 2013, the weather of spring 2014 was generally favourable it was notable how little display actually occurred. Several observers reported very low levels of activity. In one area, over 35 hours of monitoring in spring failed to provide any sign of sustained aerial display and there were only brief sightings, predominantly of single males only. No confirmation of breeding was evident from checks made later in the season and overall the results suggest a decrease to the already extremely low population.

There were no reports from elsewhere in the county.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

Northumberland: Once again the Northumbria RG worked well with the forestry commission to lessen the problems of forestry operations

A much better breeding season was recorded than in 2013 with at least 44 young fledging (only 26 in 2013); this was with 2 less occupied home ranges.

It was worrying to see 4 single birds holding territories.

Cumbria: A very poor year with only 3 occupied territories. At one nest the outcome is unknown, another nest was in a block which was felled before the nest was found and at the final nest 3 young fledged.

At another site a first-year male was in residence only

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 NYMs do not wish their data for 2014 to be published. Nests are not giving undue cause for concern in regard to persecution but there are suspicions one or two sites may be being interfered with.

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

A number of sightings of single birds in suitable territory were followed up throughout the year but no breeding was recorded until a very late attempt with 2 fledged young was noted in the study area.

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 Upper Derwentdale area all previous sites were checked and two were occupied in 2014: at one site a single chick successfully fledged, while at the other site birds were present, a clutch was laid and then deserted – no foul play was suspected – and when the nest was finally checked by camera, it was found to contain seven addled eggs.

Elsewhere in the SPRSG recording area fourteen sites were occupied and a total of at least 28 young fledged from twelve successful nests.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland

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

There was no systematic monitoring. At least one territorial pair was present at one site in the recording area with one or two displaying birds seen in spring. With no other casual records, it would appear that this species remains very rare within the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

NERF regional summary

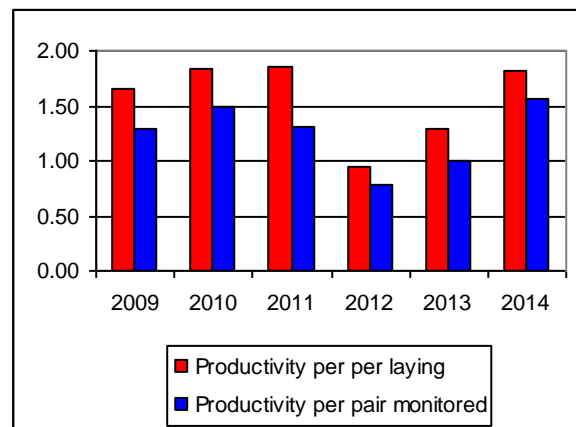
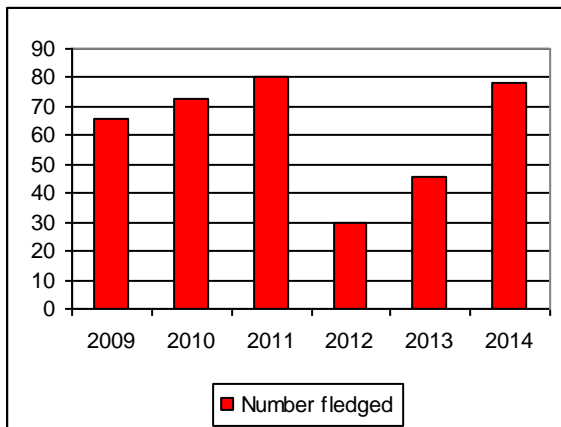
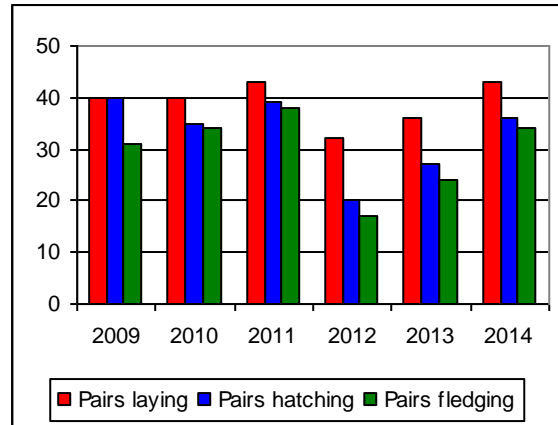
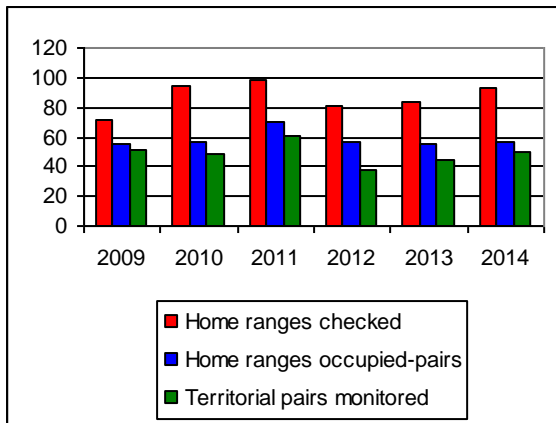
In the whole NERF area there are only three studies with reasonable Goshawk populations: Northumbria; South Peaks; and North York Moors. The data for the North York Moors study is not provided for this report.

The reasonable summer weather in 2014 meant that both Northumbria and the South Peak enjoyed improved productivity. The two areas together fledged 73+ young, (44 in 2013). In

Northumbria there were two fewer occupied home ranges but the South Peak area had an increase of five occupied home ranges (compared to 2013).

The number of occupied territories for the whole NERF area has remained constant over the last few years. Although more home ranges were checked than in previous years, only one more occupied territory was discovered. The population outside the three studies with viable populations remains in crisis. In the CRSG, PDRSG, YD&NRS and Bowland heavily game managed areas resulted in only 3 pairs where this species was known to lay eggs, fledging 5 young, despite intensive surveying.

Comparative data 2009-2014



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 2014 in England showed a 9% decline 2013-14, and a 18% decrease in the period 1995-2013.

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'	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	4	4	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	27	6	NC	NC	6	6	6	6	18	3	3
NRG	36	26	0	0	19	19	17	17	30+	1.58	1.58
NYMUBSG	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
PDRSG	17	15	NC	3	13	8	8	8	14+	1.75	1.08
SREYRSG	2	NC	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	3	1.5	1.5
Total	88	54	0	3	41	36	34	34	67+	1.86	1.63

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Four territories were checked at the beginning of the breeding season and found to be occupied by pairs. No further monitoring took place and whilst it is highly likely that one of more of these pairs successfully raised young this suspicion remains unproven.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The species is not subject to any particular monitoring in the uplands. Across the county the Durham Bird Club typically receives over 200 records over a 4 month recording period making the Sparrowhawk the third commonest raptor behind Kestrel and Common Buzzard.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Analysis of 330+ records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com, plus records from members, confirmed breeding at 6 sites with a minimum of 18 young fledging, and suggested territories were held at 21 other sites where the nest was not found. Three BBS squares also recorded sightings. Most records were outside the breeding period.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

With a growing interest in this small accipiter, it was good to receive data from three areas - The Border Forest, Otterburn MOD area, and a new area of Slaley Forest :

Border Forest - 16 nests fledged 24+ young

Slaley Forest - 3 nests fledged 6+ young

Otterburn MOD had at least 2 occupied sites

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent Of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

This is not a study species of the Group but nests, if found in the course of searches for nests of other species, are usually monitored through to outcome. To judge from the amount of grumbling one hears from members of the public regarding the depredations of this species on garden passerines, and the degree of otherwise casual day-to-day contact with hunting birds it is clear the NYMs population level gives little cause for concern.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Other commitments resulted in a lower effort expended on Sparrowhawk than in previous years with just 4 nests monitored outside of the on-going study in South Yorkshire (13 young ringed from 3 of these nests).

At the study site in South Yorkshire 10 nests were monitored, 5 successful nests and 5 failures (3 abandoned before laying), 12 young were ringed from 4 of the successful nests, the other nest being subject to the climbing restrictions imposed by The Forestry Commission.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

As in previous years, no specific studies of the species have been undertaken in the SPRSG area, but sightings are regular and the Sparrowhawk continues to thrive in urban areas.

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

Sparrowhawks are seen regularly throughout the area but with no formal monitoring by any member of SREYRG; however two nests were monitored on Skipwith Common, NE of Selby, with two of the pulli being ringed.

NERF regional summary

The Sparrowhawk remains widespread across the NERF region as a breeding species, but are not monitored as a matter of course by the majority of the member groups. The number of home ranges checked in 2014 was lower than 2013 but the number of pairs monitored throughout the season remained the same.

Due to the species being relatively common throughout the NERF region and the limited manpower the Sparrowhawk has in recent years been rather overlooked, with regards to detailed monitoring. The apparent number of unoccupied home ranges and nationally reported decrease in abundance highlights that this species could be worthy of further investigation by NERF members.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*



UK population estimate

In 2009 the population was estimated to be between 57000 and 79000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3 *British Birds* 106: February 2013, updated using BBS trend data). The BTO's BBS report 2014 for England shows a 3% decrease 2013-14 and a 172% increase 1995-2013.

Conservation status

UK	Green
Europe	Not of concern
Globally	Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

The picture both nationally and regionally is one of contrasting fortunes. Common Buzzard has been the most abundant raptor in the U.K. for more than 10 years and now covers almost the whole of the land mass. The spread into central and eastern areas is now almost complete, although the rate of increase in England has fallen slightly. This is to be expected as some areas approach their carrying limits.

Evidence suggests that the increase in numbers is associated with rapidly improving nesting success linked to improved survival rising from reduced general persecution and increased food supplies, particularly rabbits. The impact of reduced persecution nationally is most evident in the central and eastern lowland where large tracts of farmland are not kept. In contrast kept areas on the fringes of grouse moorland continue to record low density and productivity, which was again noted in Derbyshire and Durham.

However, persecution is far from absent in the lowlands evidenced by one case in Norfolk where in November 2014 a local gamekeeper was found guilty of two charges relating to the killing of 10 Buzzards and a Sparrowhawk and possession of pesticides and other items to prepare poisoned baits.

The first case of a conviction under Scottish Vicarious Liability legislation occurred in December 2014 and related to the poisoning of a Buzzard in Galloway. The gamekeeper had already been convicted in June 2012 in relation to the poisoning incident and the stockpiling of illegal pesticides. Under the new legislation the landowner was found to have not acted with due diligence in the running of the pheasant shoot on his estate. As a result he lost nearly £66,000 of the £120,000 Single Farm Payment he had received in 2012. This requires cross-compliance with a number of environmental and wildlife conditions. NERF will continue to support efforts to introduce similar vicarious liability legislation in England.

The issue of licensed shooting of Buzzards is still present and a Judicial Review case was heard in the High Court in June 2015. The outcome is still awaited but may have long term implications for how this proceeds in the future. The case, sponsored by the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, concerns the refusal of Natural England to issue a licence to a Northumberland gamekeeper to shoot Buzzards to protect a pheasant shoot. NE had secretly provided a licence to the keeper to destroy Buzzard eggs and nests in 2013 but refused him licences to shoot 16 Buzzards and 3 Sparrowhawks also in 2013 and another licence in 2014 to kill 10 Buzzards, and it is these refusals which are the basis of the Review case.

NERF continues to believe that without appropriate research and good science there is no justification for the licensed 'control' of Buzzards.

NERF data

	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pps 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	2	2	2
CRSG	8	8	NR	NR	0	1	1	NR	NR	NR	NR
MRG	71	9	NR	NR	9	9	9	9	11	1.2	1.2
NRG	162	162	NR	NR	64	45	45	45	64	1.42	1.00
NRG Cumbria	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	6	1.2	1.2
PDRSG	24	24	NR	1	16	16	15	15	25	1.56	1.56
TOTAL	271	209	0	1	95	32	31	75	108	1.4	1.14

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

Displaying pairs were recorded during the spring at 8 sites across the study area. However commitments to other species meant that very little monitoring took place during 2014.

Nonetheless at one site birds were regularly seen carrying prey into woods and whilst not proven, it is highly probable that this pair successfully reared young.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

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

The stronghold of Buzzards in Durham now lies firmly in the lowland east of the County and only limited monitoring takes place in the upland study area. Some 1000 records submitted to the County Bird Club and DUBSG from across the whole County were analysed and only 20% of these related to birds in the uplands. Whilst the returns are influenced by bias in the location of observers they also reflect the actual local status and productivity.

Low numbers on the edges of grouse moorland continue to point towards persecution. The only large gatherings of birds noted in these fringe areas were over Forestry Commission plantations.

A wing-tagged bird near Middle End in October which originated in Langholm, illustrated the extensive dispersal from natal areas that can occur with this species.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

Three nests were found fledging 2, 2 and 1 young respectively. In addition single young were noted at each of 6 sites on Chat Moss post-fledging, with probable breeding occurring at a 7th site. There was also probable breeding at a site near Rumworth.

53 further territories were estimated from an analysis of 718 records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com and members' reports.

Twelve BBS squares also had records but 3 of these were probably duplicated in the 53 territories estimated above.

Northumbria 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.

Three study areas are covered by the Group.

In the Border Forest/Kielder 75 home ranges were occupied and 61 nests were found of which 42 were successful, fledging 60 young.

In the South Cheviots/MOD Otterburn area 51 home ranges were occupied but the outcomes were not recorded.

In the North Cheviots 36 home ranges were occupied, 3 nests were monitored fledging 4 young.

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

Anecdotally the species continues to establish itself ever more firmly across the National Park area. Successful breeding was recorded by three pairs in one of the forests in the south east and in a new area to the north of the moors.

Peak District Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study
The Common Buzzard population has increased to such a degree that the PDRMG are reducing the monitoring effort on this species in lowland areas. It continues to thrive away from the grouse moors but failures are still common adjacent to the moors.

Persecution was evident when one was found dead in a plantation near Glossop. A post-mortem confirmed gunshot wounds. A Buzzard was found alive but caught in a fen trap near to Winscar Reservoir. Due to the extent of injuries it had to be euthanised. The bird had been ringed by PDRMG and was found just 259 days after ringing and approximately 5 km from the nest.

Elsewhere, a pair was found to have failed at the egg/small young stage, suggesting interference.

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
SPRSG no longer systematically monitors the species as it is so widespread, although there is a continued lack of successful breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwentdale grouse moors. One of the RSG members recorded 17 fledged broods of Buzzards while looking for Hobbies in August.

One report concerned a bird found injured and impaled on barbed wire fencing near Weston Underwood in South Derbyshire had been ringed by Sorby Breck in 2004.

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
Although not monitored Buzzards are regularly sighted throughout the study area and are known to breed.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale 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.
Although no systematic monitoring of this species takes place in the National Park casual records indicate that it is relatively widespread.

NERF regional summary

Across the north of England the population of Buzzards continues to grow but this growth in numbers and range expansion is generally taking place outside of the respective study groups' areas. Persecution continues to be a problem in some areas and the threat posed by applications for licences to shoot Buzzards is still an issue towards which all those concerned with the conservation of all raptors must remain vigilant.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*



UK population estimate

178-208 breeding pairs were estimated by RBBP in their 2013 report (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422).

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	0	3	3	3	3	8	2.67	2.67

Group Reports

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 as a passage migrant in the study area during spring and autumn. There were 6 sightings during 2014, 3 during the northerly spring migration and one in late summer when a bird was sighted flying through the Calder valley on 20th July. The two remaining sightings were in autumn as the birds returned to their wintering grounds in Africa.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

The first birds of the year were reported from separate upland reservoirs on 5th and 9th April. One to two lingered at one reservoir (Derwent) throughout the summer and reports of singles passing though came from 7 other locations during the summer months. A modest showing .

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

Just 6 records this year, beginning with birds over Harridge Pike 28th Mar and Astley Moss 1st Apr. There was then a break until 3rd Jun when one flew S over Carrington Moss. The next two sightings were by this author with one recorded on a WBBS visit at Lightshaw Flash, at 0830 6th Jun, heading towards Pennington Flash where it stayed until midday. Perhaps the same bird flew over my home on 8th Jun heading towards the Wigan Flashes where Geoff Hargreaves, alerted by mobile, picked it up at Bryn Marsh. The remaining spring record was on 30th Jun at Pennington Flash.

Two records of birds on return passage came from Billinge Plantations 2nd Sep and Swinton 7th Sep.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Three territories were once again occupied in the Kielder Forest with 3 nests, each pair laying 3 eggs. All the eggs hatched and 8 young fledged, a record year. With the population growing, intruding Ospreys were an increasingly frequent occurrence at the nests.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

There was the usual scattering of records across the NYMs involving both spring and autumn migrants. At Scaling Dam reservoir to the north of the area – one of the two natural sizeable waters there that annually attract passage Ospreys, 3 individuals stayed in the area for nearly three weeks prompting optimistic hopes, sadly unrealised, of a possible nesting attempt as there is an artificial nest site for the species *in situ* at the site.

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 number of birds passing through the study area during the summer months is increasing annually and suggests that the upland areas are being used as passage/migration routes.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Ospreys were seen quite frequently in the spring and the autumn months, the increase in populations around the UK resulting in many more sightings throughout the study 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.

A few migrants were recorded in the study area.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Osprey is a passage bird in the Dales in both spring and autumn with occasional birds remaining throughout the summer. There were occasional summer records from the SE part of the area, suggesting that a bird may have been lingering in the area.

NERF regional summary

A record year in Northumberland, the only NERF area where Ospreys breed, with 8 out of 9 chicks hatched managing to fledge. This success was echoed by optimistic reports from all other groups reporting on this species, leading to the hope that breeding may spread to other areas in the NERF area.

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.

However, 2014 was to see one of the best breeding seasons on record. The 2013 totals have been appended in red to the NERF data table opposite to show the remarkable increase in almost every heading, with the number of owlets fledging almost four times as many as in 2013. This was due to a mild winter coinciding with a peak year for small mammals. Fears that many adults had died in the winter of 2012-13 appeared to be exaggerated; the excellent results in 2014 suggested that many pairs survived but simply did not breed as females were not able to attain the necessary breeding condition.

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.

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

The usual ever-present threats of habitat destruction, barn conversions and reductions in agri-environmental schemes, together with deaths due to traffic collisions and other accidents due to the human environment, are somewhat balanced by an increasing interest in helping this species, due to its photogenic appeal. Barn Owl came 3rd in a national vote for Britain's most

popular bird in a vote in 2015, despite the fact that many people who voted had probably never seen one.

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	25	25		1	25	25	24	24	127	5.08	5.08
CRSR	1	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	73	28	0	0	28	28	25	25	99	3.53	3.53
NRG	235	76	1	4	72	72	72	72	209	4.29	4.29
NYMRSG	53	17	1	0	17	17	17	17	77	4.49	4.49
PDRSG	3	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	9	4.50	4.50
SPRSG	3	3	1	0	3	1	1	1	3	3.0	1.0
SREYRG	5	5	0	0	4	5	1	1	9	1.80	2.25
YDNRSG	7	7	0	0	7	7	7	7	29	4.14	4.14
Total	405	163	3	5	158	157	155	149	662	4.25	4.19
Total 2013	340	95	8	18	81	67	63	57	175	2.61	2.16

Group reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

Bowland had the highest number of young fledged per pair; hardly surprising given their exceptional returns in 2013 when every other group had dismal results.

Many more pairs undoubtedly exist in the Bowland study area but time prevents the group from locating these. Nesting on the floor of a stone barn was confirmed in two cases.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

The Group installed 19 Barn Owl nest boxes several years ago. Regrettably none of the boxes have been used to date.

Outside of the breeding season a single bird was seen several occasions on our western border between the 12th and 20th September. A further individual was recorded on the Calderdale Bird Conservation Group's Nature Reserve at Ringstone Edge on 15th September.

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 are no sample populations monitored by DUBSG but there were more reports this year from upland fringes and the upper river valley systems.

Across the county, 2014 brought a positive change of fortunes for the species whose modest population increase had been reversed in recent hard winters. The winter 2013/14 was

relatively mild and with a dry, settled spring and what proved to be an excellent vole year, conditions were set fair for breeding. Several pairs were known to raise double broods and one nest fledged an astonishing 8 chicks (per D. Charlton).

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage
73 sites were checked this year, either through personal visits or speaking to the owners, and of these 28 were found to have confirmed breeding. It was not always possible to see the chicks, and in two cases where eggs were being incubated it was not possible to follow these up. At some sites, access was either denied or impossible due to the structure, and breeding had to be deduced by (for example) adults taking in food. Some sites were only discovered after the breeding season but examination and information from owners confirmed breeding. One freshly dead juvenile ringed on the Bury-Rochdale border ringed 19.6.14 (GR83523) was found at Brandesburton, East Yorks on 25.12.14 (134km ENE). This is the furthest recovery we've had so far, but it must be borne in mind that this farm is close to the M62 and Brandesburton is about 20 miles from the end of the M62. There was a previous incident in 2006 where 2 (unringed) dead Barn Owls were found at a transport firm in the same area and circumstances suggested these had been carried by a lorry.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage
2014 was a great year for barn owls, with birds starting to recolonise the more upland areas of Northumberland, for example in the Border Forest at Kielder where the owls had been completely wiped out by the bad winters. Seven pairs nested, still a far cry from the c.25 pairs then, but an encouraging result.

With the increase in vole numbers, Barn Owls had one of their best years, with 72 pairs fledging a great 309 young, which included 12 double broods.

A small-scale study in the Grizedale Forest, Cumbria found 2 successful pairs which fledged 3 young between them.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

Level of monitoring: Good coverage; at least 2 monitoring studies

Scheme A: is a South Cleveland Ringing Group nest box scheme. Totally contrary to the experiences of the two other small rodent-dependant species in the study area, Tawny Owl and Kestrel, Barn Owls, judged by NYMs standards, enjoyed a very successful breeding season, with a record total of fledglings produced from this operation. Mild 2013/14 winter weather obviously aided high over-winter survival of birds and allowed them to achieve good breeding condition. Two pairs laid second clutches but both failed at the egg stage - reasons unknown. Hopes are high that the generally mild weather prevailing from late autumn to the year-end continues for the remaining winter months to help increase breeding stock further and new potential sites have been identified with nest boxes to be installed ready for the 2015 breeding season.

Scheme B: Run by G Myers on the western perimeter of the NYMs. This operation also extends out on to the Tees plain. Results from these latter boxes (not included in the above table), were: 20 Boxes checked, 9 occupied, all pairs hatched eggs and produced a total of 65 fledged young with several second broods contributing to this figure. Returns from the boxes within the NYM boundary were very poor, quite at odds with the picture elsewhere.

Scheme C: Covers the south-eastern area of the national park and is run by Pawl Willet. Returns from his boxes were also the best for some years.

One recovery from Scheme A: Nestling 1 of brood of 4 ringed 16.6.11 at New Marske, Redcar & Cleveland was found trapped in between hay bales in a barn at Grinkle Park Farm, near Loftus Redcar & Cleveland on 30.5.14. Clearly the bird was prospecting for a nest site. It was released alive and well.

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

Two pairs of Barn Owls were recorded breeding within the study area, a pair in a barn in West Yorkshire and a pair in an abandoned quarry in Derbyshire. These were the first Barn Owls recorded breeding by PDRMG in Glossop and the surrounding area since the 1980s.

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

In the major SPRSG recording area three sites were known to have been successful; one pair raised three young, whilst the breeding success of the two remaining pairs was unknown; in addition, an adult Barn Owl was observed at a suitable site in a working quarry in the White Peak.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

Barn Owls are regularly sighted along the A64 from York to Scarborough and in the Lowland areas to the south. They are known to breed here however no one from SREYRSG is currently carrying out any direct monitoring of this species. Figures in the table have kindly been provided by Rob Chapman of the York OC.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

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

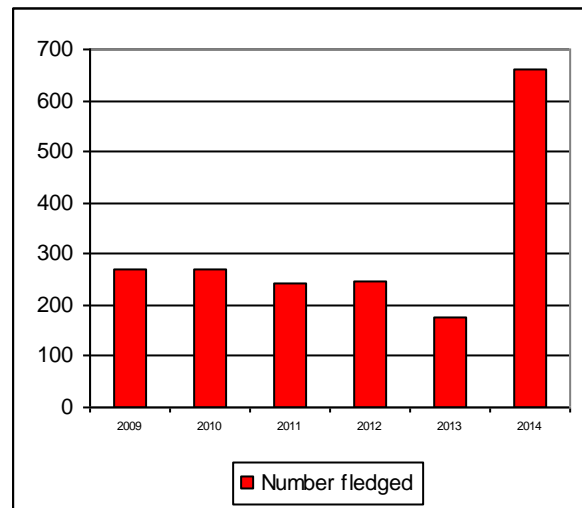
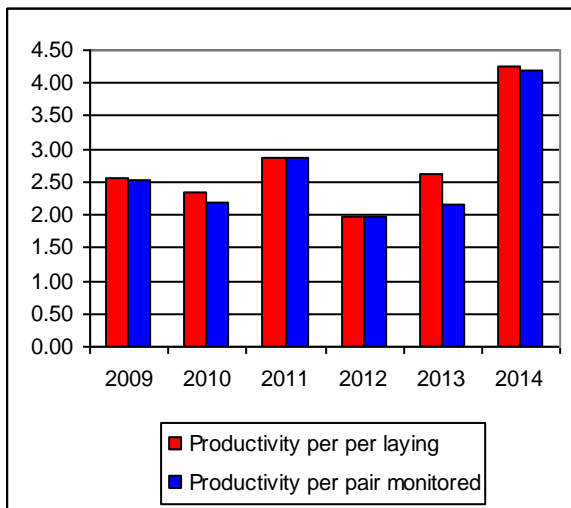
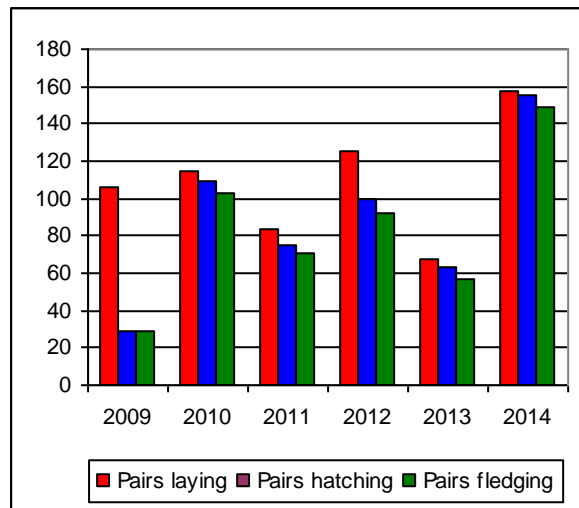
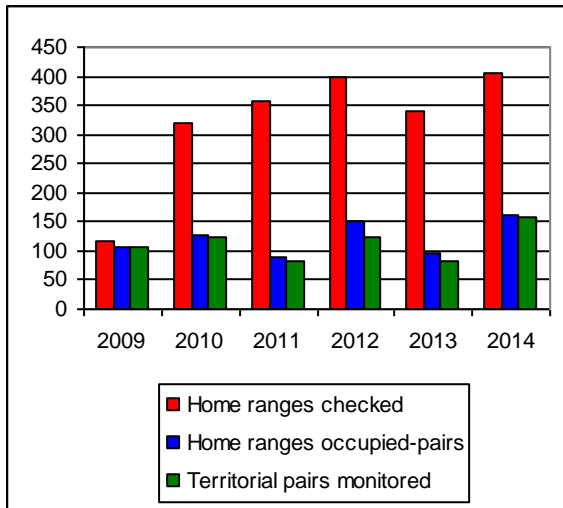
These results refer to the Yorkshire Dales Raptor Study Group.

Although a small number of nest boxes have been put up, with around 2000 field barns within the YDNP there are numerous potential suitable nest sites within the area. Casual observations of pairs indicate that a minimum of 29 young were fledged from seven confirmed pairs (including one pair that double-brooded and fledged two broods of five). A number of other single birds and pairs seen in potentially suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season would suggest that the population is relatively widespread within the study area with sightings along the western boundary of the study area, in Upper and Lower Wensleydale, Malhamdale and Airedale.

NERF regional summary

In common with the rest of the country, NERF members saw the best breeding season for many years, perhaps the best they had ever seen. There were many large broods and many pairs were double-brooded. This was due to a mild winter and a plentiful supply of small mammals.

Comparative data 2009-2014



Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*



UK population estimate

The UK population is unknown at the present time but is still likely to be small. At least 3000 are thought to be in captivity.

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. Importation of wild-caught birds has been banned since 2007.

National and regional threat assessment

It appears that the pilot study into the possible threat to Hen Harriers from Eagle Owls, mentioned in the 2013 Review, has now been abandoned. The chief threat to Eagle Owls breeding in Bowland is human disturbance, with anecdotal information regarding a particular egg collector. Lack of rabbit prey in 2014, due to myxomatosis, was another factor in failure this year.

It was estimated in 2008 that an average of 65 captive birds per annum escape annually – based on figures supplied by the Independent Bird Register and numbers registered under an CITES Article 10 certificate – many of these are not recaptured. (Melling, T. *et al.* The Eagle Owl in Britain. *British Birds* 101: September 2008 478-490)

This species is not a priority for RSPB protection as all breeding individuals are considered to be escapees. It is difficult for the three fieldworkers covering the Bowland area to protect nesting pairs as long as this species is not admitted to Category A of the British List where it would need to be listed as a Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Controversy still exists as to whether, historically, Eagle Owls existed in Britain after the Ice Age and whether records in the 19th century are accurate (Melling *op. cit.*)

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.

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	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only..

Level of monitoring: One area used in previous years checked intensively in 2014.

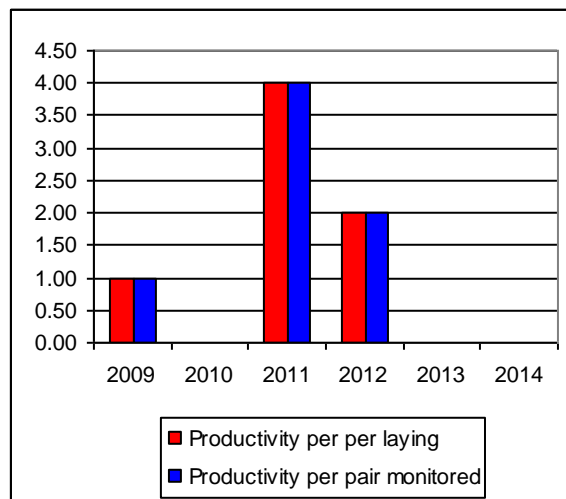
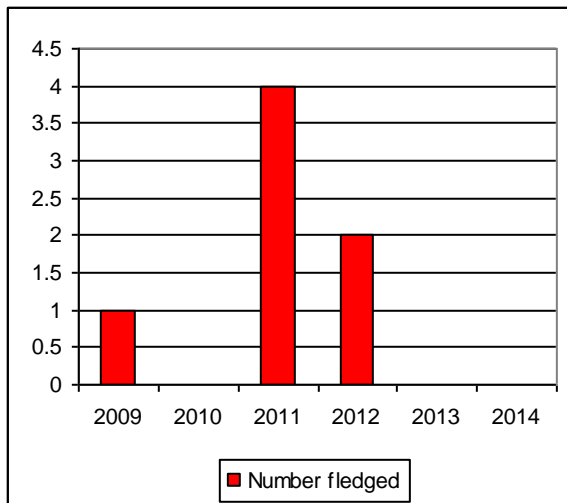
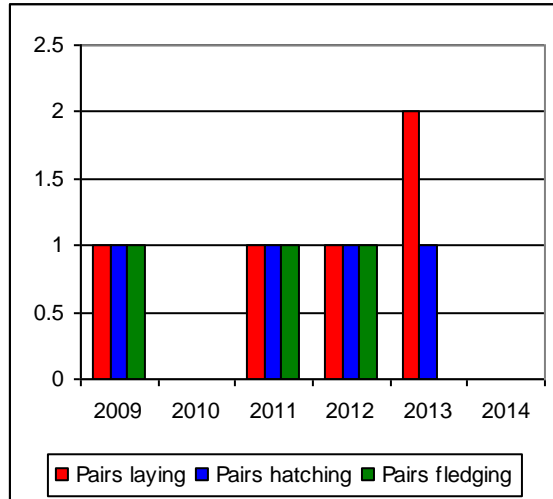
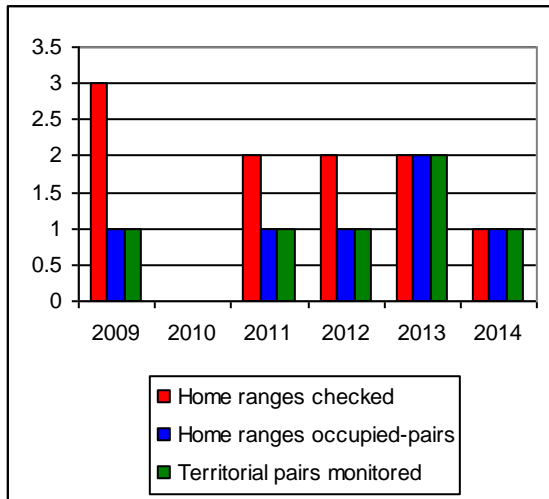
A male was calling from the end of 2013 and was occasionally answered by a female, and duetting was heard in February 2014 when scraping was taking place. Known scrapes were checked twice in early March but none contained eggs. It was the opinion of members that a combination of disturbance from at least two other groups and a shortage of food caused by myxomatosis had caused the pair to fail. The female was not seen after March 7th, and sightings of the male in April were few and far between.

All other groups reported nil sightings, or of 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, despite suitable habitat in forests such as Kielder. A pair has been breeding, or attempting to breed, 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. Persecution and disturbance are the main reasons for failure for this species.

Comparative data 2009-2014



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 2014 BBS Report shows a 13% decline 2013-14 and a 55% decrease 1995-2013.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

There has been a marked decline in recent years, as shown in the BBS figures, exacerbated by the two severe winters 2009-10 and 2010-11. 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 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://littleowlcount.org/make-our-little-owls-count/>

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Terr prs mon. 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
BRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	6	6	6
CRSG	25	9	16	NC	9	3	3	3	7	2.33	0.77
NRG	10	6	0	NC	3	3	3	3	6+	2.0	2.0
NYMUBSG	3	2	0	NC	1	1	1	1	3	3.0	3.0
SREYRSG	4	4	NC	NC	4	2	2	2	5	2.5	1.25
Total	43	22	16	NC	18	10	10	10	27+	2.7	1.5

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. Other pairs exist within the in-bye and with 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. During 2014 140 records came from 25 widely scattered sites across Calderdale. Despite this high number of sightings only 3 pairs were proven to have bred successfully. Group members believe that many other pairs will have bred successfully and that the data in respect of breeding success set out in the table do not reflect reality within the study area.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The species remains relatively scarce around the fringes of the western uplands but records of breeding were secured from Bowes, Baldersdale, Lunedale, Middleton-in-Teesdale, Hamsterley and Edmundbyers.

Little Owls have a predominantly lowland distribution across the county and annual reports into the Durham Bird Club typically provide information on more than 100 breeding pairs

(per D. Charlton). The recently published county avifauna, *Birds in Durham* (Bowey & Newsome) suggested a reasonably stable population for the county of about 330 pairs.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Using records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com this sedentary owl was recorded at 25 locations, plus 4 BBS squares, and many of these were the same as in previous years. However, this species does not appear to have fully recovered from the severe winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11. No broods were discovered when checking Barn Owl boxes.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Data was received from the following areas;

South East Northumberland: 6 boxes were checked, 2 were occupied and fledged 3 young

A box in Durham had 3 young fledging.

Three more pairs were found but their outcome is unknown.

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 study species of the NYMUBSG. Pairs are rather sparsely distributed across the upland areas of the moors which is not the preferred habitat of the species. It is much more likely to be encountered on the surrounding farmland, especially that to the south of the moors. Observed pairs were suspected of breeding near Aislaby in the north of the study area and near Appleton to the south. A brood of 3 fledged from a site near Goathland and 4 ringed chicks fledged from a nestbox outside and east of the study area just south of Whitby.

Two of four boxes monitored outside the NYMUBSG study area on the Tees Plain by G.

Myers were occupied. Both pairs laid eggs but one clutch was predated at the egg stage. The other produced a single fledgling. These figures are not included in the table.

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 Owls were not monitored by PDRMG in 2014.

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 2014.

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.

Little Owls are sighted throughout the area but there was no detailed monitoring by SREYRSG members.

Information was received on four pairs, two of which had success with young.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale 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.

There is no systematic monitoring in Yorkshire Dales National Park. Casual records indicate that this species is relatively widespread within the Dales, particularly in limestone areas, and that the population is only slowly increasing since the decline after the bad winters of 2009-10 and 2010-11.

NERF regional summary

The Little Owl's preference for lowland, open arable habitat with old trees, mature hedgerows or farm outbuildings 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. The Breeding Bird Survey 2014 suggested a 71% increase 2013-14 but a 20% decline 1995-2013 with the caveat that nocturnal species are covered poorly by the scheme.

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	16	2	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	4	2.00	2.00
MRG	79	38	NC	NC	38	38	38	38	76	2.00	2.00
NRG	354	160	1	9	151	151	143	136	330+	2.19	2.19
NYMRSG	A25	A5	A0	A0	A5	A5	A5	A5	A6	A1.20	A1.20
	B4	B3	B0	B0	B3	B3	B2	B2	B6	B2.00	B2.00
PDRSG	20	10	NC	NC	9	9	9	9	27+	3.00	3.00
TOTAL	498	218	1	9	208	208	199	185	449	2.16	2.16

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.

The Group received many reports of birds calling in spring. Unfortunately due to a lack of resources only 2 pairs were monitored throughout the breeding season. Both pairs are known to have raised 2 young. In efforts to increase nesting opportunities for Tawny Owls, 17 nest boxes have been installed in the Upper Calder Valley. Hopefully they will prove beneficial during the 2015 breeding season.

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 by DUBSG though the species certainly remains quite common in wooded upland fringes and conifer plantations. There were at least 7 pairs found nesting in The Stang forest although the precise breeding outcomes were unknown. The Tawny Owl continues to do well in the county as a whole and remains by far the most common owl species.

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 carried out an immense amount of work, checking boxes and finding 24 pairs which produced 53 young, with 9 addled eggs found. A further 14 pairs were also confirmed breeding, producing a minimum of 23 young. In addition to these 38 successes, a further 41 territories were estimated from records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com. Two BBS squares also recorded this species.

Northumbria 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 the areas of Cumbria covered by the NRG, there were excellent results. Nine areas were covered with 160 boxes being occupied (61 in 2013). A minimum of 330 young fledged compared with 89 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 NYMs study area. In view of the fact that Barn Owl nests in the area flourished with record productivity of young, it was a very disappointing season again for this species. It is difficult to believe that prey problems might have been a factor but perhaps vole/rodent numbers were appreciably lower earlier in the season than later.

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 on the following page), were as follows: 9 boxes available, 7 occupied, 6 pairs hatched eggs with 5 pairs fledging 5 young.

Productivity of nests from both schemes was clearly very poor indeed.

As usual the table following is included primarily for continuity, as the data for 2012/14 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. of sites	Number occupied	% occ	No. successful	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	1.54
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
2012-14	85	15	17.6	11	20	1.8	2.33

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 ongoing study of Tawny Owls took something of a back seat in 2014 due to the amount of work required to complete the BTO Peregrine study, observation work on the Hen Harriers in the Upper Derwent Valley, and ongoing work as part of the Peak Park Bird of Prey Initiative.

Twenty boxes were checked, 10 boxes were occupied and 27 young fledged from 9 boxes, the last box had 4 eggs but was not revisited.

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.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas.

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

There is no systematic monitoring of Tawny Owls in the area. Casual records would suggest that this species remains relatively widespread with records around many of the villages within the area.

NERF regional summary

Nestbox monitoring across the NERF region has shown a very marked improvement in the breeding success of the species following the abysmal returns of the 2013 season. This welcome upturn in its fortunes is undoubtedly attributable to significant increases in vole numbers in the majority of study areas. The one exception to this “across the board” improvement is the North York Moors situation.

Almost all the nest boxes sited there for this owl are in what one would regard as optimum deciduous woodland habitat so it is difficult to fathom why it seems to be having such a dire time in respect of breeding success.

It is all the more puzzling when one considers the flourishing fortunes of Barn Owls in the study area which had a splendid season. It is a situation of some concern and one can but hope that it will remedy itself and things improve significantly before too long.

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. Added to the RBBP monitoring list from 2010 owing to a lack of a national overview.
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 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	9	6	1	NC	6	6	6	6	15	2.5	2.5
MRG	9	7	NC	NC	7	7	7	7	17	2.43	2.43
NRG	18	9	0	2	7	7	6	6	11+	1.57+	1.57+
NYMRSG	3	NC	NC	NC	0	NC	NC	NC	NC	-	-
PDRSG	20	17	NC	1	15	15	14	13	20+	1.33+	1.33+
SPRSG	4	4	NC	NC	4	3	3	3	6	2	1.5
Total	63	43	1	3	39	38	36	35	69+	1.82+	1.77+

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland and Lowland areas.

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

Secretive and the least obvious of the Owl species found within the study area. This species is not monitored but pairs are known to breed in the Whitendale and Gisburn forests and are more often heard than seen. At least one pair may have lost its site in 2013 due to felling. One dead bird was found in the winter 2012/13 in Whitendale near a known site.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Calderdale MBC

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

2014 was a reasonable year in Calderdale for this species with a minimum of 6 pairs bred raising at least 15 young. Taking into account that a small valley in the south of the study contained 3, perhaps 4 pairs, Group members believe that other pairs were overlooked and that the breeding success was higher than that reflected in this report.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

There are no systematic monitoring programmes currently operated by DUBSG. Breeding was indicated at 3 upland forest sites.

Across the county as a whole, information received by the Durham Bird Club suggests the total breeding population may be 50-60 pairs.

A lowland winter roost in the early months of 2014 peaked at 18 birds. Breeding success was judged to be good with a least one pair going on to have second brood which fledged in August. Coastal incoming migrants were noted during the second half of October.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

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

Two groups of surveyors carried out valuable work in the east of the county. In one area, 5 pairs produced broods of 3, 3, 2 and 2 with one brood size not known (Bob Kenworthy). In the other area, 4 pairs produced broods of 6, 2, 2 and 4 eggs (outcome unknown) there was evidence to suggest a 5th pair but this could not be proven. Eight of the young here were ringed by members of the PDRMG.

At a third site in the east, 3 young fledged.

In the west 3 young fledged at one site, and there was probable breeding at two other sites.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

Data was received from two areas:

In the Border Forest at Kielder 6 pairs nested, of which 3 pairs fledged 6+ young. One nest was in the same nest basket used in 2013.

In the second area on the Northumberland /Tyne and Wear border 3 pairs fledged 5+ young.

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 is not monitored by the NYMMG. Its status in the NYMs is very much a mystery and a dedicated survey is really needed to obtain some measure of the distribution and density of pairs. However, this is unlikely to take place in view of manpower and time resource constraints. None of the recent three known locations provided evidence of breeding this season. Future such reports will almost certainly result from chance location of nests or the identification of calls from recently fledged young. At best the species can only at this point in time be regarded as very thinly spread throughout the study area with the forests to the south-east probably holding most pairs.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

Early visits to historic breeding areas in the northern part of the study area revealed a lot more nesting attempts than the group have historically recorded. Visits to approx. one third of the suitable habitat revealed at least 17 nesting pairs, 37 young were ringed from 13 nests and a minimum of 20 young fledged, (1 nest failed at egg stage and 1 lost to predation)

Proving how many Long-eared Owls fledged proved to be difficult due to the close proximity of some nests and the other monitoring work that was being undertaken at the time so this figure should be treated as very conservative. 2014 saw several high density areas for Long-eared Owl, 3 nests were found within 100 metres in Derbyshire, 2 of these nests were just 20 metres apart. In Greater Manchester we recorded 4 nests (with a possible 5th) in 3 very small plantations; these 3 plantations lie within in an area of about 0.5km².

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland part lowland areas

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

No monitoring takes place for this species, however they are known to have been sighted at Wheldrake Ings, (YWT) and are known to have bred on Strensall Common, (YWT) north of York, with two, possibly three, young.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Three pairs bred within 150 metres of each other in the White Peak area, fledging three, two and one young respectively; at a fourth site, about 800 metres away, the final outcome was not known.

NERF regional summary

Although Long-eared owls are notoriously difficult to monitor there are several studies undertaken within the NERF region, however, distribution is probably subject to under-recording owing to the species discreet nature and a lack of man-power.

NERF monitoring suggests that 2014 was a greatly improved year for Long-eared Owl, with an increase in breeding attempts, clutch sizes and productivity in many areas.

An apparent good year for small mammals was reflected in a good breeding year for all owl species in many areas.

Any open nests are vulnerable to predation by larger avian predators with at least one recorded instance of failure due to the predation.

Moorland fringe conifer plantations appear to be an important habitat for this species, a habitat that is being reduced significantly due to forestry work being undertaken in many of the study areas.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*



UK population estimate

The latest estimate, reflecting the difficulty of accurately surveying this species, falls in the range 620 -2180 pairs (Musgrove *et al*, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106: Feb 2013) and may well

be at the lower end at about 1000 pairs. The Bird Atlas 2007-11 suggested a decline of 39% since the 1988-91 Atlas. The species 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 fluctuates with vole abundance and probably weather conditions in late winter and early spring. Even in good vole years the species' distribution in apparently suitable upland habitat can be quite variable. The broad picture of decline in the uplands is not fully understood.

Conclusions must always be tempered by the recognised difficulties of surveying this particular species. Nationally the level of reports and confirmed breeding remain very low.

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
BRSRSG	11	6	NC	NC	5	5	5	5	10+	0	0
CRSRG	14	5	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	4+	2.0	2.0
DUBSRG	9	7	1	3	4	4	4	3	NC	0	0
NRG	10	0	NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMRSG	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	5	5	NC	NC	3	3	3	2	8	2.7	4.0
SPRSG	4	4	NC	NC	4	2	2	2	NC	0	0
YDUBSRG	4	4	NC	NC	3	3	3	3	3+	NC	NC
Totals	60	31	0	0	21	19	11	17	17+	0.81	0.89

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

It was not possible to count all fledged young but one nest probably fledged six and two of the pairs had second broods. Monitoring of this species couldn't be given as a priority this season due to the need to concentrate on Hen Harriers but Short-eared Owls seemed to fare a little better than in recent years.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only

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

Whilst 5 pairs are known to have been active in the study area only 2 pairs were monitored throughout the breeding season. Both pairs are known to have raised a minimum of 2 young however as Short-eared Owls are notoriously difficult to monitor and it is possible that other young walked out of the nests and fledged unobserved.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that there were other pairs in the study area and the Group plans to monitor this species more closely in future years.

During the winter larger numbers were recorded in the western uplands. In November a maximum of 8 birds were recorded on a single day and 5 birds were seen together in December.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

In what was considered to be good vole year, Short-eared Owls experienced slightly improved breeding success compared to recent years. Reports collated by J Strowger indicated breeding was confirmed at 5 upland sites and judging, by adult defensive behaviour, probable at a further 5 locations. Hunting birds suggested possible breeding in at least 3 other upland areas.

Annual Summary for County Durham

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Confirmed breeding	6	8	2	4	1	5
Possible breeding	4	2	3	3	3	5
Singles in spring/summer	15	14	7	14	4	3

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole County.

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

The species is only a very occasional breeder in the area. Only three definite records this year: one was on Little Woolden Moss 30th Jan, and in the late winter period there were 2 sightings from Bickershaw former open-cast site, on 3rd and 28th Nov.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

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

In contrast to the reasonable success reported in 2013, 2014 appeared to be an exceptionally poor year in the region with no reports of confirmed breeding from the areas routinely monitored for other upland species.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

With 2014 being seen locally as a good year for vole numbers the expected breeding success did not appear to materialise. In fact the birds were conspicuous by their virtual absence over large areas of the moors with incidental sightings being few and far between. The species is no longer as regular a breeding season sight as it was even five years ago. Whatever the reason(s) accounting for the present situation, there is certainly real cause for concern for the welfare of the species in the North York Moors.

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. Short-eared Owls were not as visible in daytime hours as in previous years though, intriguingly, it is possible that this was due to an abundance of prey rather than an absence of birds; their more crepuscular nature in such circumstances making monitoring very difficult. The RSPB Dove Stone Reserve reported 6 breeding pairs during their ongoing survey work on the reserve (these figures are not included in the table above). PDRMG ringed 8 young from 2 other nests. There were a number of areas where despite evidence of breeding behaviour successful subsequent fledging couldn't be confirmed. Equally there were also a number of areas where young Short-eared Owl were recorded post fledging despite no birds being observed during earlier visits.

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, two pairs were present, but the outcome was unknown, whilst in the Upper Derwent Valley two pairs were located and fledged young. A typical showing by recent years.

South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring only

There were no specific records of territorial pairs.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Only casual monitoring was undertaken. Three confirmed pairs were located: i) adult with recently fledged young ii) two territorial birds seen in spring with four together in late July and iii) adult seen food carrying on 24th July. There was one additional possible pair with one bird seen in suitable nesting habitat in mid-May. Other than these sightings there were no other reports of birds in the breeding season suggesting that this species is genuinely a scarce breeding species.

NERF regional summary

Most groups monitor Short-eared Owl in tandem with other survey work but this does result in a very considerable number of hours of fieldwork in suitable habitat each season. Pairs that might settle in areas of rough grassland, the so-called white moor that is also attractive to the species, are probably under-represented.

Overall the number of breeding pairs found through our members' survey work in 2014 was similar to 2013 although fortunes varied within the region. Despite reports of it being a good vole year, the species was particularly scarce in Northumberland, North York Moors and the Yorkshire Dales. Numbers in Bowland, Durham and the Peak District were up a little on 2013 though no area reported a strong showing and all thought the number of pairs remained at a very low level compared with a decade or more ago. That birds are now absent or scarce from several traditional areas of apparently still suitable habitat is of considerable concern and its status as breeding bird in the northern uplands remains 'vulnerable'.

NERF will continue to treat this as a priority species for survey work to better understand the controlling factors though the well documented difficulties of monitoring this charismatic owl will remain a challenge.

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 2014 gave figures which showed that numbers in England declined by 27% during 1995 – 2013 and by 5% 2013-14. 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 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.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Terr pris mon. 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	1	1	1	6	6	6
CRSR	6	6	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
MRG	72	21	NC	NC	21	21	21	18	48	2.28	2.28
NRG	61	19	1	3	13	12	8	8	32	2.67	2.46
NYMUBSR	24	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	7	3.50	3.50
PDRSR	3	3	1	1	1	1+	1+	1+	5	5	5
Total	168	52	3	4	38	37+	33+	30+	98	2.65	2.59

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. One regular site was used in 2014.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

The study group does not have the resources to monitor this species in any detail. Nonetheless 500 sightings were reported by members during 2014. Judging by the number of juveniles noted from late summer and throughout the autumn, it is believed that many pairs bred unnoticed.

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 are no sample populations monitored by DUBSG. In the county as a whole the Common Kestrel remains the commonest raptor. Reports suggest a very productive year with several broods of 6 successfully fledging.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

There was information about confirmed breeding for 17 pairs fledging a minimum of 43 young. Five of these pairs, fledging 21 young and 3 addled eggs, were monitored by Peter and Norma Johnson, so it is more than likely that the remaining 12 pairs managed more than 22 young! The city centre pair again bred, fledging 3 chicks.

Possible or probable breeding was recorded at 5 further sites.

An analysis of records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com April to July suggested 34 further territories, and in addition, 17 BBS squares recorded sightings. Five of these might duplicate some of these.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

In 2014 some data was received from 3 upland areas and 2 lowland areas. However, even with the high vole numbers, the population still seems to be struggling: of 61 known nest sites (both upland and lowland combined) only 19 were occupied; only 12 pairs laid eggs and 32 young fledged - the same number as 2013.

Addenda: 2013

Data was received from 3 areas: Border Forest Kielder, MOD/South Cheviots, and a lowland study. Fifteen occupied sites were found, all but one in nest boxes, the other on a crag. They went on to fledge 32 young, slightly less than 2012. This was put down to smaller brood sizes because of the poor vole numbers. The crag nest site was last occupied at least 15 years ago, before a pair of Peregrines took over residence; in 2013 the Peregrine pair did not nest, giving the Common Kestrels a chance; 5 young fledged from the site.

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.

Depressingly, the pattern since 2011 of worsening annual returns for this species from the South Cleveland Ringing Group nestbox scheme continued into 2014. The two pairs hatched 9 chicks but two virtually fully-feathered and ready-to-fledge young were found dead in one box. As with the Tawny Owl situation, it is difficult to credit: low prey availability was thought to be the problem, as the broods of Barn Owls nesting at the same time were flourishing. Unfortunately, the corpses were disposed of when despatched to, and analysis by CEH might well have revealed the cause of death. One cannot help but suspect that these returns reflect a similar situation for the Common Kestrel across the NYM population as a whole.

G. Myers monitored 3 boxes on the Tees Plain. Only one was occupied from which 6 young fledged (not included in the table figures above).

The South Cleveland RSG data for the season are included in the table opposite for continuity purposes only at this stage.

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
2012/14	69	12	22.2	8	33	4.13	2.75

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 2014, an apparent upturn in breeding success was noted but there was no time to monitor this species in 2014 due to other priorities.

NERF regional summary

Nationally the Common 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 Common 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.

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 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422) gives a figure of 268-322 pairs but states that this is a sample of pairs monitored by dedicated fieldworkers; Ewing *et al* (2011) estimated 1160 breeding pairs.

Conservation status

UK	Amber
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

National and regional threat assessment

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

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

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

Overall, the future does not look too rosy for the species in northern England. If global warming continues apace, the Merlin as a sub-Arctic species might well be forced eventually to retreat northwards leading to the extinction of populations on the southern limit in of its geographical range in Britain.

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Singles	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Terr prs mon. 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	20	8	1	1	8	8	7	7	28	3.5	3.5
CRSG	5	5	0	2	3	3	3	3	10	3.33	3.33
DUBSG	68	40	3	0	37	37	34	34	121	3.27	3.27
NRG	65	20	1	3	17	17	14	13	45	2.65	2.65
NYMUBSG	36	7	6	0	7	7	6	6	21	3.00	3.00
PDRSG	2	19	NC	4	14	14	14	14	57	4.07	4.07
SPRSG	11	2	4	0	2	2	2	2	9	4.50	4.50
Total	207	101	15	10	88	88	80	79	291	3.30	3.30

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, mainly on moors where new keepers have been installed. Six nests on the United Utilities estate fledged 23 young which is the best return for twenty eight 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.

Overall 2014 was a good year for Merlin in Calderdale. Study Group members submitted 70 records throughout the year, - a significant increase on previous years.

Five pairs were found early at the start of the breeding season but one pair deserted due to human disturbance and another failed for unknown reasons.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

2014 proved to be the most successful year for some time. The total population in the county is estimated to be 40 pairs. However, one area where 7-9 pairs could be relied upon in the 1990's is now down to a maximum of 3 pairs. We have a good number of abandoned sites.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

There was no suggestion of breeding this year. Twelve records from the early winter period came predominantly from the mosslands, but in the period August to year end just 10 out of 35 did so, with the rest from local moors.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

Twenty occupied territories were found; the same number as in 2013, but with the fine summer weather more young were fledged, 45 compared to 32 in 2013. The North Cheviots are still causing concern with only one occupied site from 10 checked. One nest on the MOD Otterburn ranges was in a small plantation that also held a Buzzard's nest only 50 metres away: both fledged young.

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.

Depressingly, the miserable state of affairs in regard to the NYMs breeding population continued in 2014 with the low number of nesting pairs the same as in 2013, but with one nest failing at the egg stage. However, overall 2 fewer occupied sites were recorded this season. For some years now it has been apparent that it is only the breeding pairs on the higher moors that are keeping the population going. Only one pair now is consistently nesting at a site appreciably below 300 metres.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

With most of the keepers cooperating fully with the Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative and the improved weather in 2014, 14 successful breeding attempts were monitored in the PDRMG area.

These 14 successful breeding attempts were known to have fledged a minimum of 57 young with 45 ringed from 11 nests.

At 3 monitored sites the breeding attempt was not proven until post fledging. These pairs produced 11+ young. In addition a recently fledged bird flew into a farm window close to a known historic breeding site.

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 the usual traditional sites were checked, only one of which was occupied and this was successful with 5 young fledging: (this is the first brood of 5 at this site since 1999). In other parts of SPRSG's recording area all known sites were checked, and lone birds were noted at 4 sites early in the season, but there were no further signs of breeding. On

the north Staffordshire moorlands only one pair was found, which was successful, rearing 4 young. All 9 young from the 2 successful nests were ringed.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

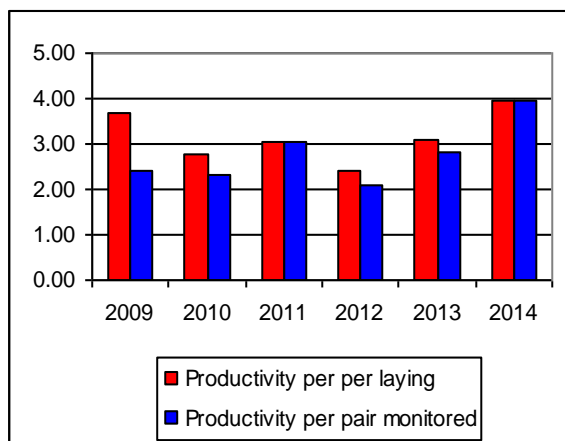
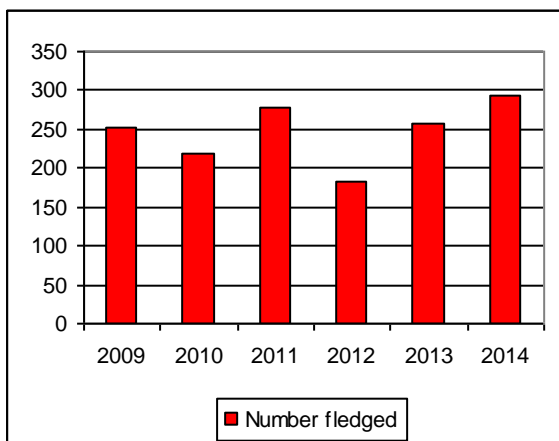
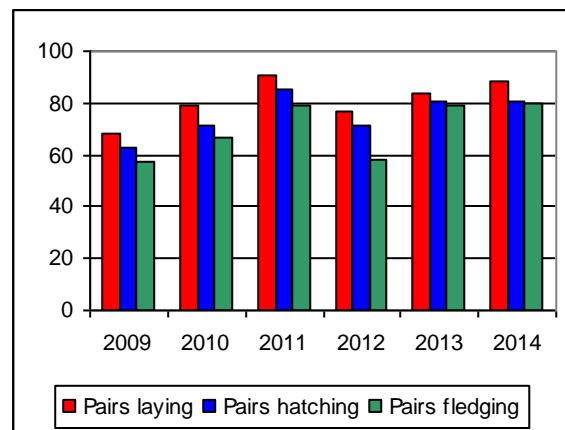
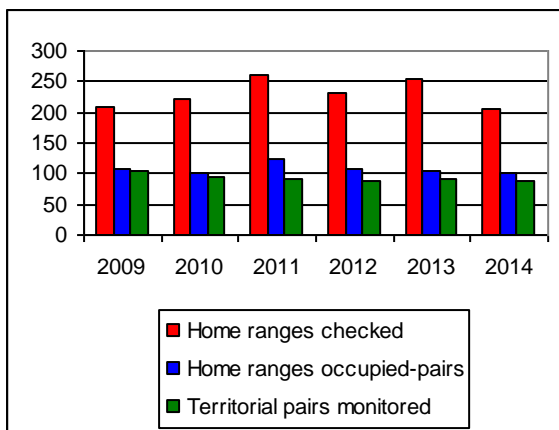
Level of monitoring: Poor coverage; casual monitoring of a few pairs.

Unfortunately there is no systematic monitoring of Merlin within the area. Although there are casual records from a number of areas holding potentially suitable nesting habitat, these are not detailed enough to determine any trends.

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 2009-2014



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 2014 shows a 18% decrease for England 2013-2014, and a 11% decrease 1995-2013. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel were notified of 206 confirmed breeding pairs but including probable or possible pairs brought the total to 1025, commenting that its relative common occurrence in southern England meant that pairs were overlooked, but also that fieldworkers were keeping locations secret (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2013. *British Birds* 108: July 2015 373-422). 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. Further research, based on a combined sixty years of fieldwork in three counties, (Kent, Hertfordshire and Derbyshire), and also including evidence from many other counties, suggests that the current UK Hobby population may be best expressed as a broad estimate of 3000-6000 territorial pairs (Clements, Everett & Messenger 2014: *The Hobby in Britain—A Revised Population Estimate*).

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	Terr prs mon. 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
BRG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1
NRG	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRSG	13	11	NC	NC	9	9	9	9	15	1.67	1.67
SPRSG	38	38	NC	3	34	28	28	28	57	2.04	1.68
Total	54	50	0	3	45	38	38	38	73	1.92	1.62

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 a single bird was seen on the moorland this season chasing Meadow Pipits.

Disappointing news, as at least two pairs were thought to be breeding in the area in 2013.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Adult birds were seen throughout August and well into September. Whilst it is suspected that Hobbies do breed in the study area, this suspicion remains unproven.

The overall situation in Calderdale is difficult to assess with any certainty. From 3 June to 17 September, Study Group members reported 21 sightings from 17 different sites. 16 of the 17 site sightings were of single birds. The remaining sighting was of two individuals calling to each other at a confidential site on 22 June. Clearly there is room for further observations and study of this elusive species.

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.

Disappointingly, there were no reports to confirm or suggest probable breeding in 2014, although the wealth of summer records would make it seem likely that breeding had gone undetected. The first bird was reported in the east of the county on 17 May and single birds were subsequently seen at 17 locations throughout the summer. The final report came in the second week in September. Most observations concerned birds in the east, but an adult was seen twice during June hunting over heather moorland in the west.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

The only confirmed breeding came from the regular site at Sinderland, where an adult and a juvenile were seen in September; up to 3 birds were seen in this period, so perhaps more than one juvenile fledged. Two other areas recorded multiple sightings. There was the usual problem on Chat Moss, where a pair breeds annually at a site only yards over the county border in Cheshire. This means that unless a nest is found, as happened in 2011, birds seen over the peat cuttings, (which are full of dragonflies in late summer), cannot be confidently said to have bred in Greater Manchester. The other area was the well-watched Elton Reservoir where there were 7 sightings between April and September. Sightings from the Woodford area related to a pair just over the border in Cheshire.

This is a difficult species to prove breeding, and it is certain that more pairs are breeding than we think!

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

One pair found at a site in the border forest area at Kielder in June. A food pass was seen, and one adult sat in a tree for 20 minutes before leaving. Despite follow-up visits, there were no further sightings. There was an active felling site and 2 Goshawk territories in the vicinity, so it is possible that the pair failed shortly after finding.

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.

Sightings over the course of the summer never gave rise to suspicions of possible nesting apart from one forest fringe site where a local keeper recorded a bird regularly entering and exiting the same forest compartment sector. It does seem likely that this bird was one of a nesting pair and represents something of an opportunity missed to record the first nest of this species in the North Yorks Moors for many years.

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.

Both of the lowland areas monitored for Hobby continue to show signs of increased populations.

In Cheshire, two pairs were recorded nesting just 2 km apart and a third pair nearby were seen defending an obvious nest against a Common Buzzard but despite extensive searching the actual nest was never found! Two fledged young were seen on a later visit. There were a number of sightings at two additional historic territories, but we failed to locate a nest, or see any fledged young, but being such an elusive species we could not say categorically whether breeding occurred or not. Six young fledged from three nests, 4 were ringed from two of these pairs.

In the other study area in South/West Yorkshire, 6 pairs were monitored, 11 young fledged, and 4 young were ringed from two of these pairs.

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 South Derbyshire core study area, eight pairs were present in 2014; six pairs were successful, one pair failed, and at the remaining site the outcome was unknown, although it is suspected that the pair moved out of the core study area soon after their initial arrival. Fourteen young were fledged from the 6 successful pairs, giving a mean of 2.33 young per successful pair, (which is identical to 2013), and 1.75 per breeding pair. Across the whole of the southern study area there was a minimum of 22 pairs present, (including the core area), from which there were 17 successful pairs, two failures, and three where the outcome was unknown; 36 young fledged, giving a mean of 2.12 young per successful pair, (*cf.* 2.42 in 2013), and 1.89 per breeding pair. A total of 17 young were ringed from the successful nests.

In NE Derbyshire and the Peak District, Roy Frost, Mick Lacey and Mick Taylor checked 16 sites, 12 had breeding pairs, of which 11 were successful and one failed. Pairs were present at the four remaining sites, but the outcomes were unknown. A total of at least 21 young fledged from the successful nests, giving a mean of 1.91 per successful pair.

Non-breeding first summer birds are regularly seen on the Peak District moorlands, hunting moths and dragonflies, mainly during July and August.

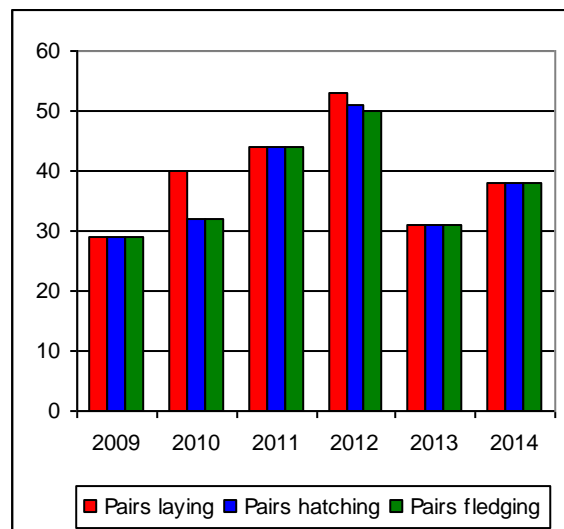
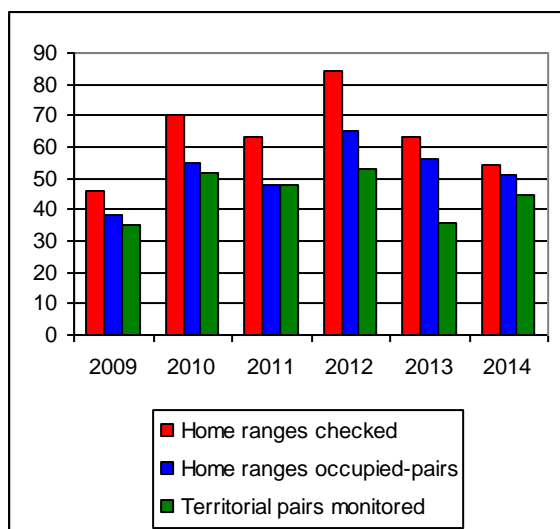
NERF regional summary

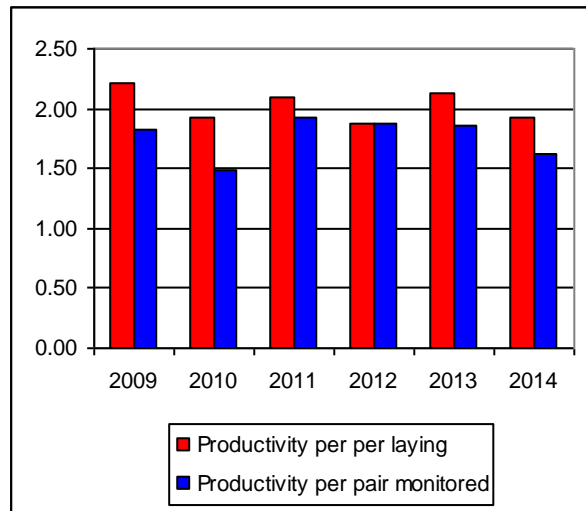
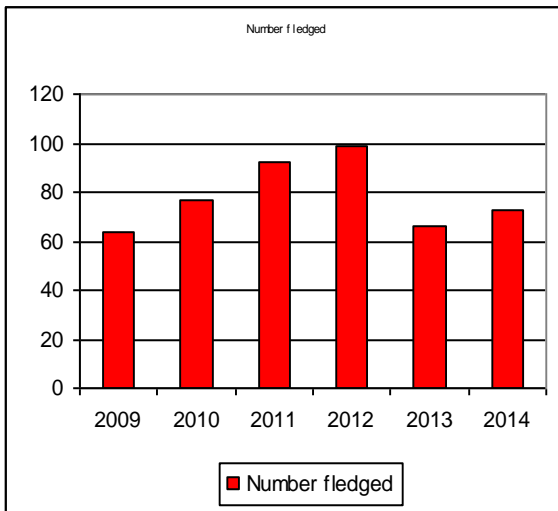
A considerable amount of work is undertaken by NERF Group members, particularly in the South Peak. Hobbies were observed across the region and known to have bred successfully in 3 groups' areas, and suspected in several more.

Colour ringing

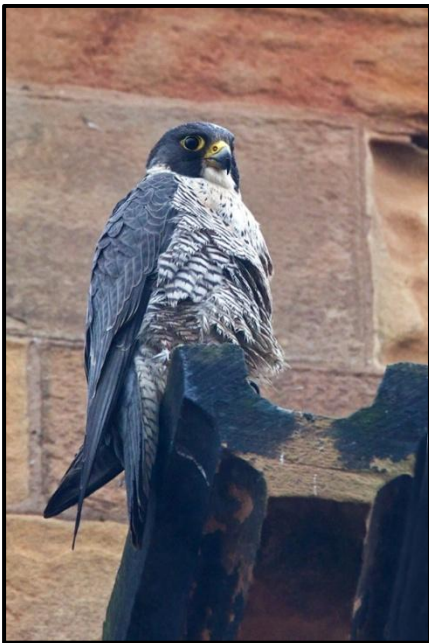
A colour ringing scheme was in operation for this species from 2004 until 2010 and to assist with this project raptor workers are requested to report all sightings of colour ringed birds via the website at www.ring.ac or alternately the information can be passed by email to Jim Lennon at lennons@shearwater50.fsnet.co.uk.

Comparative data 2009-2014





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 conducted a national survey in 2014 which should give a more up-to-date figure. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel Report for 2013 estimated 803-1072 pairs with the caveat that coverage was only moderate, with most counties submitting data for only a sample of the population.

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	Terr pris mon. 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
BRG	32	11	0	4	7	4	3	3	5	1.25	0.7
CRSG	6	5	0	4	1	1	1	1	2	2.00	2.00
DUBSG	17	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	12	12	NC	3	9	9	7	7	20	2.22	2.22
NRG	34	19	2	7	16	12	9	9	25	2.08	1.56
NYMMRSG	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2.0	2.0
PDRSG	15	11	1	9	11	2	1	1	2	1	0.22
SPRSG	34	28	NC	12	28	18	18	16	28	1.56	1.0
YD&NRSG	32	8	0	2	6	6	5	5	12	2	2
Total	184	98	4	44	79	53	45	43	96	1.81	1.22

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage

One pair failed because two females were trying to incubate the eggs. Persecution continues to be a massive problem for this species in the Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Once again, 2014 was a disappointing year in Calderdale. Five territories were occupied by pairs early in the breeding season with display noted at all of them. Unfortunately, only one pair bred successfully raising two young but even this success was marred by the fact that two eggs failed to hatch. Tragedy at this site continued when one of the fledglings was found injured by two men hiking in the area. This site is adjacent to a busy road and it is thought that it was struck by a passing vehicle. They managed to pick up the bird and take it to a wildlife rehabilitation centre for treatment, with X-rays revealing that one wing was broken in three places. The wing was re-set and pinned and initially the vet believed that the bird could be released back in to the wild. Regrettably that proved not to be the case, and the bird will have to remain in captivity.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The figures shown in the table relate to upland areas which were monitored extensively as part of the 2014 BTO National Peregrine Survey. All known traditional / historic territories in the Durham uplands were visited in line with the recommended survey technique as well as several 5x5 km squares randomly allocated as part of the national survey. Adult pairs were present at two sites in February and early March but failed to settle and a lone male was seen at a third site over the same period. Once again there were no known nesting attempts in the uplands including the portion of the North Pennine SPA for which the Peregrine Falcon is a citation species.

In contrast, complete and equivalent coverage of traditional sites and randomly allocated squares in the Durham Bird Club recording area in the eastern lowlands confirmed that pairs had nested at seven locations, six of which were successful in fledging 16 young. The lowland population has increased slowly but steadily over the last decade and 2014 was the best year to date.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

2014 was a national Peregrine survey year so extra effort was assigned to looking for pairs and recording their progress. Unfortunately, work took our ringer abroad for several weeks during the crucial period when chicks can be safely ringed and so only one brood, and one chick which fell from a nest of four young, could be ringed this year.

Two pairs nesting in quarry sites had their eggs (or possibly young chicks) stolen this year, and the future of successful breeding for this species surely depends on secure urban nest sites, all of which fledged chicks this year.



A block of flats in Wigan has a curious visitor (Nick Gee)

Non-breeding pairs were monitored at 3 sites, but disappeared - in two cases possibly due to disturbance; at one site climbing and at the other industrial operations.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

2014 was a fairly poor year in the NRG area. Although the same number of pairs laid eggs, the fledging success was down to 25 (compared to 32 the previous year). In one area four territorial pairs were present but none laid eggs, and in another area two nests were where robbed of eggs, and at another the young were stolen.

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.

Outside of the breeding season wandering/hunting individuals can be sited occasionally just about anywhere in the NYMs. Of the two known sites checked one was considered to be occupied early season but no breeding attempt took place. The other was thought to have been successful but no convincing proof or evidence has come to hand.

The lack of success at one site, reasonably distant from the nearest grouse moor, is of concern. There is no obvious reason as to why nesting hasn't taken place. To date there has never been any suspicion of nefarious activity there but the possibility of such occurring away from it cannot of course be dismissed! There are quite a number of potential nest sites for the species throughout the national park and one can surmise that the only feasible reason for continuing non-occupation of these is that birds are being prevented doing so on a regular basis. On a much more positive note, two young were fledged successfully at a site on the coastal cliffs.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

2014 was the year of the BTO Peregrine Survey, and despite good early signs with 11 sites occupied by pairs, only one pair were successful in the PDRMG area. The successful pair at RSPB Dove Stone (Greater Manchester) produced two young, the other pair never hatched their eggs but remained in the area throughout the breeding season.

South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Group.

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Poor; only covers the Scarborough area

Peregrines are known to be present throughout the area, with nesting now taking place on York Minster and along the sea cliffs around Scarborough but no active monitoring of sites is carried out by members of SREYRG.

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 34 sites were checked in 2014. Of these, six sites were unoccupied, including three sites in Upper Derwentdale, although at the traditional Alport Castles site the pair raised two young, the first success since 2007. At the 27 remaining sites where pairs were present, 15 sites were successful, raising at least 26 young. Of the further 12 sites, most failed because of the poor weather conditions, sometimes after a failed first attempt. A new site was discovered on the edge of the White Peak in a working quarry, where a changeover at the nest was observed, but shortly afterwards the pair deserted due to the proximity of quarry workings. A traditional site in the Manifold Valley, which has been successful since its discovery in 2003, seems not to have been occupied in 2014.

There was, however, less positive news from two sites in the recording area: at one site in the White Peak, where birds had been successful in many previous years, the pair was robbed immediately after young had hatched and at a second site in NE Derbyshire on the edge of the Peak District, where immature birds and adults had been monitored in the last few years, the birds were presumed robbed of small young. In both cases the Police Wildlife Officers and the RSPB Investigations Department were informed.

Two sites each fledged three young, although at one site four young hatched and were monitored to the feathered stage, but one young was assumed to have fallen from the nest and succumbed between visits; all remaining successful sites fledged one or two young. In lowland NE Derbyshire, as well as the unsuccessful site previously mentioned, two sites were again occupied, one raising three young, whilst the other site raised two chicks.

In addition to the figures given above, city centre pairs in Derby and Sheffield were successful (with three and four chicks respectively) and birds were regularly seen at the Crooked Spire in Chesterfield, with a pair there at the end of the year. The three young at the Derby Cathedral site were ringed and colour-ringed, as were the four young at St. George's Church, Sheffield. A second successful breeding attempt was made at the DWT East Mill site in Belper, where three young were raised.

Three traditional sites are monitored in the Staffordshire Moorlands: at the Roaches, one chick fledged; at a second site in the Dove Valley, two chicks fledged; the site in the Manifold Valley, occupied regularly since 2003, seemed not to be occupied in 2014 (three visits were made to this site to check).

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Yorkshire Dales: in the Yorkshire Dales National Park it was an average year with six occupied sites. One pair failed at chick stage and another failed when the eggs failed to hatch whilst just outside the study area one pair failed, probably at egg stage. It is disappointing that the increase in survey effort as part of the national survey failed to locate any additional pairs. Once again, none of the traditional nest sites on managed grouse moors were occupied. On a much more positive note, the Malham Peregrine Viewing scheme at Malham Cove, a partnership between the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and RSPB welcomed its 200,000 visitor since project began in 2003. These visitors, including more than 35,000 children, have seen and been inspired by the stunning views of these magnificent raptors that can be had at the Cove.

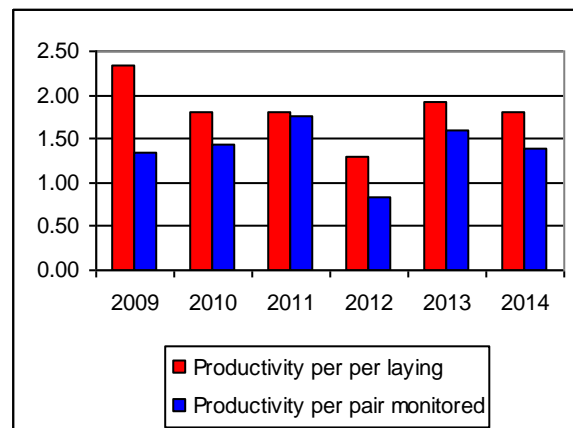
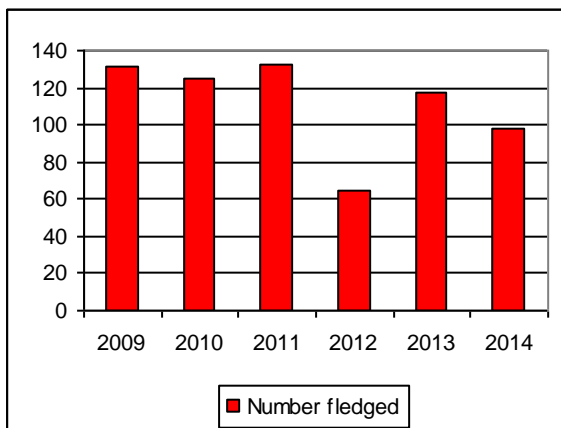
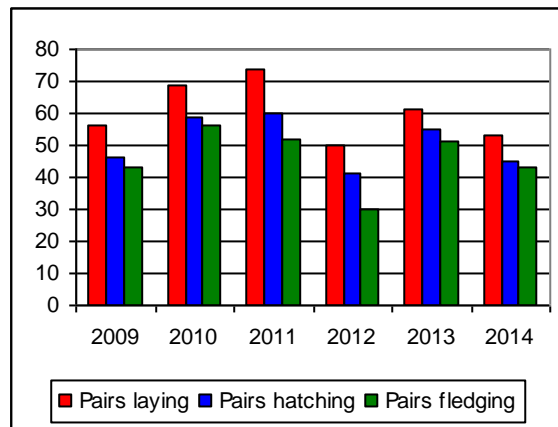
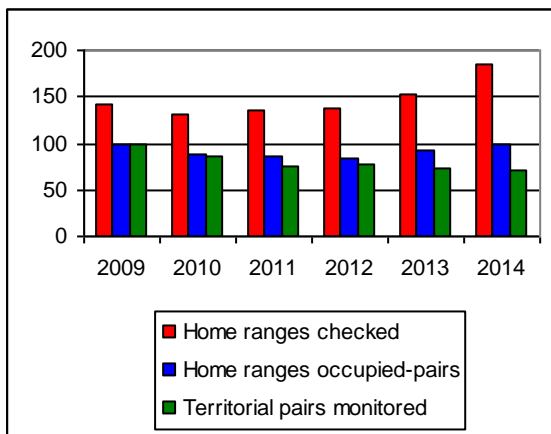
Nidderdale: pairs were present at the two usual sites but one pair failed, probably at egg stage. This may have been due to nesting nearer the working quarry face than normal. The usual grouse moor sites were all unoccupied.

NERF regional summary

Despite an increase in survey effort as part of the national survey, the situation in the uplands across northern England remains unchanged. Although the results have not yet been published it is hoped that the BTO report will show the stark contrast between the success of populations in lowland areas and the absence of occupied territories in areas managed for grouse shooting.

Despite full legal protection under national and European legislation peregrines remain absent from traditionally occupied nest sites on grouse moors throughout the region. Whilst the plight of the Hen Harrier remains justifiably high profile, the fact that Peregrines are simply not tolerated on the majority of managed grouse moors across northern England is often overlooked. The simple truth is that without illegal persecution of raptors such as Peregrines, managed grouse shooting would appear to be unsustainable. How long this continues to be socially acceptable remains to be seen.

Comparative data 2009-2014



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 2014 BBS annual report showed a 3% decline 2013-14 for England, but a 42% increase 1995-2013.

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
BRSR	6	4	0	2	4	4	2	2	5	1.25	1.25
CRSG	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	8	4.00	4.00
DUBSG	7	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
MRG	6	6	NC	1	5	4	4	3	11	2.75	2.20
NRG	38	27	1	3	24	21	18	18	49+	2.33	2.04
PDRSG	14	8	NC	5	8	3	2	2	8	2.67	1
SPRSG	28	28	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
YD&NRSR	23	10	0	3	7	7	7	7	16	2.29	2.29
Total	96	62	1	19	50	41	35	34	97	2.36	1.94

Group reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Six regular sites were checked, five on crags and a sixth on a radio tower in a quarry.

Persecution exists and one site at least failed on eggs or small young. This site has been used by the same female for several years. Some pairs may breed in shelter belts in remote areas near farms and at least one pair may 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. In 2014 there were two pairs once more and whilst the number of chicks fledging improved from 7 to 8 this increase is not believed to be statistically significant.

Overall there were 103 sightings reported across the year and from all sections of the study area. The highest concentration was located on the western boundary when 5 birds were seen together on 2nd July.

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.

The Raven is a rare and very occasional breeder in the study area although it has a year-round, widespread presence in the uplands.

The early months saw typical gatherings of up to 10 birds at various western locations. Pairs were present in at least five sites from early to late spring though none apparently went on to lay eggs. Nest building had been noted in February at one of these sites. Autumn and winter gatherings at the end of the year resulted in several reports of up to 8 birds across the western uplands. Despite a continuous presence and much suitable habitat, Ravens have managed to breed successfully only rarely in the Durham Pennines over the last two decades or more.

There was an interesting coastal report of 3 birds being seen in and around the far north east corner of the county from October to November.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Five pairs bred or attempted breeding. At Bolton Town Hall, 4 (possibly 5) chicks fledged, breeding about 40 feet above the Peregrines. Three young were ringed at a quarry in Horwich. Four young fledged on the dome of the Queen's Hall in Wigan town centre, the pair from the town hall chimney having moved here after their nest was blown away at that precarious site. Five young were found dead underneath a nest at Harcles, Holcombe 28th April, almost certainly due to human persecution. At Dovestones, the PDRMG reported one nest being lined but not used, and at another a female was found dead under the nest. The subsequent examination showed that she was egg-bound.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

With one less occupied home range, and less successful nests compared to 2013, it was surprising that the total of young fledging was only very slightly down at 49+ (50+ in 2013).

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 during 2014.

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.

Despite the extra effort afforded during the BTO Peregrine Falcon survey, Raven (which share much of the same nesting areas with our study area) appear to be seriously under represented as a breeding species. Two pairs were known to be successful in the study area and additional 2 pairs were recorded nesting outside the study area in Cheshire, however time constraints meant that fledging at these nests was not confirmed.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

In the SPRSG area the species continued to expand, including in the north-eastern lowland areas where three quarry sites were monitored, with successful breeding at all sites; three young fledged at each of two sites but numbers fledged were not known at the third site. In the south of the recording area (south of Carsington Reservoir) twelve tree nests were located, all of which were successful, with broods of three to four young. In the Upper Derwentdale area a pair was successful at Alport Castles, where four juveniles fledged. Most White Peak quarry sites had successful breeding pairs with broods of three to five young and at least one pair was successful on crags in the Dove Valley. It is believed that more pairs actually breed in tree nests than in nests on cliffs and crags, but the latter nests are much easier to find. An interesting record this year was of a pair which bred on a gravel face in a disused quarry, rather than on the usual steep cliff face nearby used in many previous years

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

These data refer to the Yorkshire Dales section:

Three sites failed:

- one pair was present early in the season but then disappeared; it is not known whether breeding was attempted

- one pair present early in the season, at a site where they had recently bred, disappeared.

Perhaps, coincidentally, a new rough shoot has been established in the area

- at a site that had been occupied since at least 2008 the nest was replenished but there was no further indications of a breeding attempt

After a slow increase since the mid-2000s, the number of successful nests has declined from a peak of nine in 2011 and 2012, to seven in 2013 and 2014.

NERF regional summary

The number of sites checked during 2014 is down 33.8% when compared with 2013. Of those sites checked 62 were found to be occupied, a decrease of 28.7% on 2013. Whilst the number of fledglings produced was reduced by 19 over the previous year productivity per pair hatching eggs increased from 1.67 to 2.36.

Whether these changes are statistically significant, without understanding what had occurred at the 49 sites not checked in 2014, is difficult to say. However, extrapolating the available data that is available would suggest that the population as a whole remained stable across the NERF study area.

Species reports from non-NERF members

Cumbria

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Eight pairs were estimated of which 6 bred:

Bassenthwaite – one chick died 22.6.14, one fledged too soon and died in care September 2014.

Foulshaw Moss – Three young fledged 25.7.14. The female was born here in 2010.

Roudsea Wood and Mosses NR, Ulverston: Two young, both male, fledged here.

Lancashire

All information from Rob Archer, Neil Southworth (Chorley Natural History Society), Tony Duckels (South Lancs Barn Owl Group) and Bob Danson.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Birds were seen in the breeding season in suitable habitat at 3 sites in the Chorley NHS (CNHS) recording area but no breeding was considered to have taken place. A juvenile was recorded nearby 14th and 21st September.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Seven pairs were known to have bred and a total of 11 young were seen. However, only 9 of these fledged, with theft of 2 young (probably the females) strongly suspected at one site, and theft also probably took place at a neighbouring site (both quarries). The only urban site (Morrison's chimney, Chorley) produced one chick in an abandoned Raven nest, and it was not clear if this fledged successfully.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

CNHS recorded one winter and 2 early autumn sightings.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

Six sightings in the CNHS area outside the breeding season included a female/immature on moorland 22nd August – 20th September.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

A pair bred in Cuerden Valley Park.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Four nests were found and one of these fledged 2 young in the CNHS area. Sightings from other areas in April suggested several other breeding pairs, and in September there were records of 12 over Belmont and 13 over Coppull.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

CNHS recorded single passage birds in March and August.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

No breeding territories were found in the central West Pennine Moors this year.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Although no nests were found, regular sightings from 3 areas May to September suggested breeding had taken place. A pair failed in east Lancashire.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

In common with the rest of the country, this species enjoyed an excellent breeding year. In Seven sites (6 in the CNHS area and one in Burnley) produced 33 young and 27 of these were ringed. Breeding almost certainly took place at 5 other sites.

In the Fylde, Bob Danson had an excellent year with 33 pairs producing 37 broods – 128 young fledged. The South Lancs Barn Owl Group (Tony Duckels) ringed 49 chicks in 2014, also many more than usual.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

In the CNHS area a pair fledged one, possibly 2 young. There were sightings of this sedentary species at 6 other sites suggesting the species is recovering, albeit slowly, from the two cold winters in 2010.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Juveniles were seen, or breeding proved, at 9 sites in the CNHS area, and there were records from 8 other areas.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

At least one pair bred in the West Pennine Moors.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

A pair again bred at a quarry site to the north of Chorley.

West Yorkshire**Bradford Ornithological Group recording area****All information from David Barker****Red Kite *Milvus milvus***

Eight young were raised at four sites, with 4 chicks at 2 nests being ringed. Two young died when the nest fell down during a storm at a fifth site. Material was seen being carried at a sixth site.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

A cream-crowned bird summered on Barden Moor from mid June to July. This bird was believed to be a 2nd summer. Other sightings involved passage birds.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

There were 10 winter sightings, all except 2 at the Barden Scale watch point. The only breeding season sighting was at this site on 12th May.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

An adult female was present 9th June to 21st July at a moorland site and was observed sky-dancing and gathering nest material. Sadly this bird did not attract a mate.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

There were 3 records from 3 different sites, but no suggestion of breeding.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Three sites produced 12 young, 5 of which were ringed at one location, Another nest failed.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

Breeding was recorded at 12 sites, producing a minimum of 20 young. At one of these sites, 2 eggs were predated. Ten young were ringed at 4 locations.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

In common with the rest of northern England, the area recorded sightings in November – at Timble Ings and Barden Moor.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Sightings of passage birds came from 7 locations in spring and one location in early autumn.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Breeding was confirmed at 9 sites with 2 broods of 6 and 4 ringed. There was probable breeding at 2 other sites.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Most sightings related to winter or passage records, although there was suspected breeding at one moorland site.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Sixteen sightings from 12 locations but no breeding was proved.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

Pairs bred at 2 sites fledging one young each, and possibly at one other. One chick was ringed.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

In common with the rest of the country, this species enjoyed an excellent breeding year. Seven sites produced 33 young and 27 of these were ringed. Breeding almost certainly took place at 5 other sites.

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Breeding was confirmed at 4 sites producing at least 6 young, and was probable at a further site. There were sightings from several other sites suggesting that further undetected breeding may have taken place.

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*

Twelve sites produced 26 young (17 ringed) and at one of these, 3 chicks were predated. Squirrels were noted as being a problem.

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

Breeding was confirmed at 5 sites and likely at another. A minimum of 6 young were recorded at 2 of these locations.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*

There were sightings from 10 locations, 7 of these in the breeding season, but breeding was only confirmed at one site where food was seen being taken to hidden young.

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Although there was no proved breeding, 2 family parties were recorded and a pair was seen taking nest material into a plantation.

NERF 2014 FIELDWORKERS' CONFERENCE

Held at the Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell, Derbyshire, 16th November

Hosted by the South Peak Raptor Study Group & the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

A SUMMARY OF SPEAKER PRESENTATIONS

Alan Fielding Updating the Hen Harrier Conservation Framework

Alan described the work of a team who have been updating the Hen Harrier Conservation Framework last published in 2011. The latest update is complete but not yet published. It has looked anew at the factors which influence UK populations, distribution and productivity to assess whether the Hen Harrier is in a "Favourable Condition" across its range. Methods have included statistical models, literature reviews and detailed assessment of habitat maps.

For the whole of Scotland, over the period 2003-12, the number of fledged young per breeding attempt has generally declined from about 1.7 to 1.2, largely due to falls in productivity of the Orkney population. Taking best estimates of 36% survival of 1st year birds and a 70% annual survival rate of adults then modelling indicates that there must be at least 1.6 young per breeding attempt to meet the Favourable Condition target of not needing immigrants for the population to be sustained. The western Scotland population currently has a favourable conservation status.

A variety of breeding density figures are available from 5 pairs per 100 km² (Potts) to other studies showing 2.9 (range 2.1-3.5) and more recently 4.1. When combined with an updated assessment of suitable habitat from mapping these figures lead to an estimated natural carrying capacity for the English northern uplands of between 125 and 298 breeding pairs; average 245.

Factors affecting survival, abundance and productivity include:-

Weather – eg spring rainfall has more than doubled in the southern uplands in recent years.

Forestry –Forestry Commission and private planting have greatly helped the species but it tends to have a cyclical impact.

Wind-farms –there is little evidence of these having a detrimental effect.

Sheep Stocking –In some areas in recent years, fewer sheep have coincided with increases in the numbers of breeding Hen Harriers

Persecution – Despite introducing more stringent acceptance criteria the review body has concluded persecution to be a significant factor. Most known cases relate to nest destruction but there are constraints away from breeding areas.

Alan Charles (Derbyshire Police & Wildlife Crime Commissioner) Wildlife Crime

In a keynote speech, Commissioner Charles said that tackling wildlife crime had featured in his election manifesto and he remained strongly committed to the cause. Derbyshire Police now has a central coordinator to link with its various local Rural Liaison Officers. Possible Hen Harrier breeding attempts in the county in the current year had shown how well coordination with other organisations can work. Volunteers from the public to help tackle a

wide variety of wildlife crimes are being sought and a poster campaign has been launched aimed at local engagement in recording such crimes.

The Commissioner is planning a parliamentary petition after the next election to introduce vicarious liability on landowners and other measures.

Jon Stewart The High Peak Moors Vision and Action Plan

As the General Manager for the Peak District, Jon reminded the audience that the National Trust is not just about stately homes but was formed to preserve special natural places. 2013 had seen the launch of the High Peak Moors Vision initiative which might be viewed as a model for future upland management elsewhere. Land use includes tenancies with farmers and shooting syndicates.

There are 5 key aspects of the Vision:-

- People being inspired
- People looking after the land
- Secure, healthy peat bogs
- Tree planting in valleys and cloughs
- A full and vibrant suite of wildlife

Trevor Grimshaw & Mike Price The Status of Raptors in the Peak District

The two speakers compared the fortunes of four key species in the White Peak and Dark Peak areas based on the long running monitoring by their respective raptor study groups.

Trevor explained that in the White Peak the Peregrine population had seen year on year growth since the birds first returned to upland quarries in the early 1990's. In 2003 birds began to use natural crags, then lowland urban sites by 2006 and more recently lowland quarries. In 2014, of a total of 30 sites ten pairs failed but the remainder fledged 38 young. Habitat for Merlin in the White Peak is limited and a long term decline has been noted; most recently 6 pairs in 2012 and 2013 worryingly dropped to just one pair in 2014. There is little evidence of persecution of Goshawk in the area with 11-15 territories occupied annually, typically leading to 7-10 successful pairs. The county population estimate for Common Buzzard now exceeds 350 pairs.

In marked contrast, Mike drew attention to history of raptor persecution in the areas of the Dark Peak. In 2011 a Birds of Prey Initiative was launched involving key stakeholder groups to change attitudes and provide estates with an opportunity to show they can act responsibly. Mike believed that conservationists must be more proactive and highlighted that raptor study groups offer a unique perspective with evidence based facts as to the true status of birds of prey. There are at least 21 sites where Peregrine have bred in the past in the Dark Peak, 10 of are considered as "primary" breeding sites, but illegal persecution has limited occupancy to about 9 sites of which typically only 2-3 pairs are successful each year, two of which are regularly breeding at RSPB Dovestone/Longdendale Valley. In the mid-1990's there were about 20 occupied Goshawk territories of which about 10 pairs were regularly successful at fledging young. More recently the number has fallen to 3-5 territories with 0-2 pairs successful. There were no young fledged in 2013. Merlins are relatively stable with 18 occupied territories in 2014 raising a remarkable 62 fledged young from 18 successful pairs.

Richard Sale Raptors and Wildlife in the Arctic

Delegates were genuinely treated to wonderful images and inspiring tales of survival in the high Arctic as Richard told of his conservation work in Canada, Iceland, Norway and Kamchatka studying, especially, the charismatic Gyr Falcon.

Andrew Dixon Peregrinations: satellite tagging of Peregrines in Arctic Russia

In collaboration with the Sokolov brothers, Andrew studied birds satellite-tagged in 5 areas of northern Russia, with 3 distinct subspecies being identified, *peregrinus*, *calidus* and *japanensis*.

Birds from the Yamal peninsula, where gas production is increasingly affecting the habitat, feed on waders as their principal food. Birds were captured on the nest using a noose, fitted with a transmitter and released. Nine birds wintered respectively in Portugal, Kish Island (Persian Gulf), Crete, south Sudan, southern Russia (2), Baghdad, Saudi Arabia (coastal strip more fertile than inland), and Janvu on the Red Sea. This last area is a well-known falconry area and birds are sometimes captured for the falconry trade – estimated at 2% of those tagged. At least one of these has subsequently escaped and found its way back north.

Birds from the more easterly Lena delta migrate to the Andaman islands and S Asia using the same stopovers on both migrations. This takes 35-40 days and is noticeably slower towards the end of the journey, reflecting the toll taken on the birds.

Birds from yet further east in Kolyma followed the east coast of Asia with one arriving in east Java and another in Vietnam where it was possibly killed.

Juveniles from 4 nests were tagged in the Kola peninsula. One of these wintered in southern Spain, one did not leave the area and one stopped migration. It was noted that the harness used to secure the transmitter can occasionally cause lesion through rubbing.

All the birds from the Taimyr peninsula went to N India and Bangladesh, flying directly over the Himalayas. Future work will concentrate on genome sequencing to determine the amount of gene flow between the subspecies.

Ron Downing Thirty years of Merlin in Angus

Ron's study area is the east glens of Angus where Merlins lay usually in the first half of May. Weather fluctuations affect the nesting success, particularly if poor conditions in April affect the adult female's capacity to accumulate body fat and bring them into breeding condition. Food included Meadow Pipit, Skylark, Chaffinch and Starling. In the period of his study, there has been a decline of 29% in eggs hatching and a 37% decline in eggs resulting in fledged young. This decline has been accelerated since 2011, and has caused Angus to mirror the decline in the rest of Scotland.

PTT rings have been used but these need to be used over multiple study areas to get meaningful results.

Heather burning may affect the availability of nest sites, with bracken growing in resulting burnt areas then requiring spray treatment.

Mark Thomas (RSPB) The Full Monty (Montagu's Harriers)

Mark described conservation methods used by the Dutch after it had been found that a large percentage of nests were being destroyed by harvesting. The situation was much the same in France (50% failure). The Dutch increased survival to 92% by fencing off the area of the nest before crop harvesting. Playing a tape of human voices at the fence deterred predators once the surrounding crop had been cut.

After poor years in 2012 and 2013, 2014 was a very successful year for Montagu's in England, with one pair nesting in a Humberside reed bed. The nest here was found by using a radio controlled drone and one young fledged. Security measures were put in force and 2 eggers intercepted.

Dutch satellite tagging showed where 10 males foraged, and they strongly favoured trial feeding plots. There appeared to be no risk in using tags (unlike some other raptor species) and these showed the wintering area to be in Senegal and other parts of equatorial Africa. Interestingly birds crossed the Straits of Gibraltar at night, probably to avoid mobbing by gulls.

Dutch scientists went to Africa to follow the birds' wintering period, using the satellite tagging. Males transmit once every 48 hours (smaller tag) and females once every 24 hours. The main risk on migration was crossing the Sahara and this is limiting population survival. Having reached Senegal, dry grassland was the preferred habitat and locusts the main food. Birds used trees much more than in Europe and roosts of up to 5000 birds were found. Wintering territories were typically just 2 km in radius but may change during the winter. Birds did not necessarily return to the same breeding site and are nomadic in nature.

In the UK, polyandry and polygamy were observed at the same site. One bird featured on the BBC's "One Show" was subsequently shot on the Sandringham estate. The way forward in the UK was to use more satellite tags, more volunteers to protect nests and fence off nests as the Dutch do.

Mark thanked Mark Constantine for financial support.

David Walker How much do we know about Golden Eagles?

In this thought-provoking talk, David challenged many of the accepted, even ingrained ideas, about interpreting studies of this species, on which much has been published. In fact, little is known about eagles outside the breeding season. Even breeding status can be misinterpreted (examples were given) – it is easy for survey workers to miss sites or wrongly interpret breeding evidence, resulting in more favourable outcomes recorded than was actually the case.

Habitat change, such as large amounts of tree planting affecting prey, and wind farms, and climate change, may be affecting survival. Outcomes at nest sites may be impacted by food supply, weather, or a combination of both. However, sites which have been vacant for several years may be unexpectedly successful, so all sites need comprehensive assessments with more visits than is currently the case, and surveyors need to be experienced and properly trained.

Obituary

Mick Carroll

26th August 1947 – 21st October 2015



Mick was born in Lancashire in 1947. He was adopted by John and Edith Carroll when he was six months old and spent his formative years in Colne where he went to the local primary school with his life-long friend, Clive Hartley.

Mick was introduced to the natural environment by his father when he was still a young boy. He was only 5 or 6 years old when they left their industrial home together and made their first trip to the nearby Bouldsworth Moor where he recalls seeing Ring Ouzel, Common Sand Piper and Short-eared Owls. Mick remembers, *'I didn't have bins in those days, everything was done by skeg o't eye'*. He would have to wait

another six years before he got his first pair of 8 x 32 binoculars, which cost the princely sum of £6.10 shillings. That was a huge amount of money back then; half of the average weekly wage for a manual worker and the equivalent of £136 today. Not a bad gift for a 12 year old. With or without binoculars that first trip to Bouldsworth Moor awakened an all embracing interest in ornithology.

At 15 years of age Mick started work on a local hill farm and joined the Royal Air Force when he was 19. After completing his basic training he became a member of the RAF Regiment, as a gunner. He was initially posted to the RAF Depot at Catterick, North Yorkshire before serving in Bahrain and Cyprus. His next posting took him to Germany where he was involved in helicopter-based mobile air operations with the British Army of The Rhine. Shortly after returning to the UK Mick was posted to British Honduras, now known as Belize before his last overseas posting took him to Northern Ireland. Whilst stationed there he suffered a back injury that would eventually force him out of military service at just 30 years of age.

Having left the military Mick moved to Pickering with his wife of 44 years, Helene, and returned to farming. He took an initial course at the agricultural college in Ponteland before moving to Durham to complete a course in farm management.

After qualifying from Durham his first farm job took him to Winteringham. Mick recalls *'That's where I first came into contact with a murderous gamekeeper who shot out a Kestrel nest'*. Mick found one of the young that had survived and took it home and cared for it. The bird was released back to the wild once it was fit to fly. Mick decided that if this behaviour towards birds of prey was the norm on the estate he would never be happy there and soon moved on. He spent the next few years farming in North Yorkshire before his old back injury forced him out of the industry. He took a job as Tree Officer with Scarborough Council monitoring Dutch Elm disease. Six months later he moved on again.

His next job, with English Country Cottages, allowed him to travel the length and breadth of the North of England and that gave him the opportunity to intensify his passion for bird watching. Coincidentally at the end of the contract with English Country Cottages his military pension increased substantially thereby allowing him to become a full-time birder. He then

took on a role at the Blacktoft Sands RSPB Reserve for 12 months and developed a special interest in birds of prey.



*Mick with Montagu's Harrier chick,
2010*

This expanded interest led him to monitoring raptors on the North York Moors, initially in the Dalby and Langdale Forests. He was subsequently invited to join the North York Moors Upland Bird [Merlin] Study Group with whom he was involved for many years. Mick had maintained his contact with the RAF Regiment and his love of the natural environment and his determination to protect that environment led to an invitation to join the RAF Fylingdales Conservation Group. Within this Group he was called upon to advise the contractors who were responsible for dismantling the 'golf balls'. Prior to the structural changes taking place Mick and the team installed a nest box scheme on the base. He continued to provide advice on the environmental management of the site after the work had been completed.

In addition to his conservation commitments at RAF Fylingdales Mick took on the roles of President of Scarborough Field Naturalists, Chairman of the Ryedale Naturalists, Regional Representative for the BTO, Executive Committee member of the Whitby Naturalists Club and member of the Yorkshire Naturalist' Union.

When he was not fulfilling his duties with the various conservation Groups Mick and Helene travelled extensively, birdwatching across the UK and wider afield including a trip to Israel to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary, and more recently a trip to the Middle East birdwatching in the Dhofar region of Oman.

Mick first encountered Hen Harriers, by chance, on the north-western plain of Germany. At the time he was serving with the RAF and had just bought a local bird guide from the NAAFI. He went to check out the local bird of prey population when he saw his first Hen Harrier. That was the start of his obsession with the species which never left him. Back in the UK, years later, he joined the Natural England Hen Harrier Recovery Project as a volunteer working alongside Stephen Murphy.



Mick with Cuckoo, Fylingdales, June 2015

Mick didn't only confine his harrier commitment to Hen Harriers and when Montagu's Harriers made a second attempted to breed in North Yorkshire he was at the forefront; managing the nest monitoring and protection scheme. Mick was on guard duty every day for two months. This extraordinary commitment put him in bed for the best part of a week but he considered the effort a small price to pay when two chicks fledged from the site.

Mick first attended NERF meetings as a member of the North York Moors Upland Bird [Merlin] Study Group. However; his greatest achievement within NERF was the formation of the South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group, which added both a huge geographical expanse to the overall study area and an influx of colleagues dedicated to monitoring and protecting birds of prey.

Since joining NERF he has used his expertise assisting colleagues to organise NERF conferences and has represented NERF on the Defra-led Buzzard Stakeholder Group. He was always available to represent NERF and his expertise was regularly sought by journalists and broadcasters. The photograph below shows him on the North York Moors speaking to David Sillito from BBC Radio 4.



In a moment of reflection and with typical candour Mick said. *“I am really proud to have been a part of NERF but we need to be more politically active if we are to protect our iconic birds of prey. Raptors are under continued and serious threats, particularly from the game shooting industry, which should have been confined to history long ago. NERF is the leading voluntary NGO speaking collectively for raptors and we must continue to work together to ensure that they have a safe future, free*

from persecution. We will only achieve that goal if we hold successive Governments to account. They have a ‘duty of care’ for our shared environment and they often fail in that duty. When Government Departments fail birds of prey NERF is there to work with like-minded NGOs to challenge decisions that will have a negative impact on raptors. Long may that continue.”

Mick was a friend and inspiration to all who knew him; he will be sadly missed. NERF would like to extend our condolences to Mick's wife, Helene, and his family.

Memories of Mick

Michael loved birds and the people who are involved in their conservation. He was a dear friend and a valued Natural England volunteer who played an invaluable part in the study and protection of Hen Harriers. Our thoughts are with Helene and his family - *Stephen Murphy, Natural England Hen Harrier Recovery Team*

RSPB staff seconded to the Langholm Moor Demonstration Project [LMDP] really enjoyed his two visits to Langholm Moor in 2015. Despite his illness, he made a tremendous contribution to the task of locating nests on the moor, whilst the Hen Harriers displayed overhead. It was an immensely enjoyable day for everyone. He made a very valuable contribution to the protection of birds of prey in general and Hen Harriers in particular. He leaves a void that will be difficult to fill - *Staffan Roos, RSPB*

“Larger than life” is a phrase often used when talking about someone, but rarely is it as apt as when describing Mick Carroll. Mick was large in life and large in the field of nature, his love of birds, of their variety and their diverse behaviour was his passion and brought him endless hours of enjoyment in the field and in his armchair.

Mick was a fighter and has been fighting for the rights of birds for many years, in particular the rights of Hen Harriers to nest and raise their young in the hills of northern England without persecution. This fight is not over but will be carried on sadly without Mick, a man who was truly larger than life. He leaves a great legacy of surveyors, researchers, campaigners and friends in his wake.

Mick came up against an even more pernicious opponent in cancer, a fight he lost but not without bringing his own style to the proceedings; he organised and attended his own wake, a wake with so many friends from the BTO, RSPB, HOT, NERF, Forestry Commission, Natural England, RAF, local Naturalist clubs and neighbours that the Hospice where it was held ran out of visitors badges!

Mick Carroll truly was larger than life.

Graham Oliver

SPREYRSG

The phone rings, the voice of the caller is gruff with a Yorkshire accent and he utters just two words “*Now then!*” It can only be one person in my world of friends and contacts: Mick Carroll.

I first encountered Mick at an AGM of the North York Moors Forest Bird Study Group, I was late getting to Pickering; I grabbed a pint and went upstairs to the meeting room. Just inside the door a voice said “*you’re late!*” That was it; no more, no less, the Hon Sec. had spoken. I suppose that was about 15 years ago.

Mick joined the BTO in 1991 and became Regional Rep for Yorkshire [North East] in 2001. Since then our conversations have become longer than two words, much longer!

As RRs in Yorkshire we have had plenty to talk about and of course for me Mick’s mantra has always been: “*We do things our way in Yorkshire, don’t we Mike?*” and a slight variation “*There’s only one way of doing things and that’s the Yorkshire way!*”

However, Mick is a force to be reckoned with, he takes no prisoners as the saying goes and his no nonsense approach to bird protection is refreshing, especially regarding raptors. He has been a tremendous driving force in making the BTO Yorkshire Conference a bi-annual event and although his health has prevented him from being fully involved recently, I very much appreciate his skills as a speaker finder. He must have a good contact book!

Finally, I have an enduring memory of his reaction to a menu selection at a Regional Reps’ weekend away, Main Course: Lasagne, Risotto or Vegetation option. Mick: “*Foreign Muck!*” That was my friend, Mick.

Mike Brown, BTO Regional Representative for Yorkshire Central.

Mick’s commitment to the protection of birds of prey across the North of England is legendary. He was instrumental in forming the SPREYRSG and overseeing the Group’s integration into the Northern England Raptor Form. As you would expect NERF is full of bird of prey experts and Mick was first amongst equals. He was also a man of contradiction. He used his undoubted skill and endless contact list to make projects happen. There was no ‘no’ in Mick’s vocabulary; no compromise. When there was work to do, it was done. Then when it was finished, there was no self-congratulation, just quietly, then not so quietly, moving on to the next protection job. I have been involved in many BoP protection schemes and if I ever got stuck I would simply ask myself ‘*what would Mick do?*’

Mick has decided that this last contribution to protecting birds of prey will be to haunt the persecutors; the raptor killers. The list is long Mick; no rest for you mate.

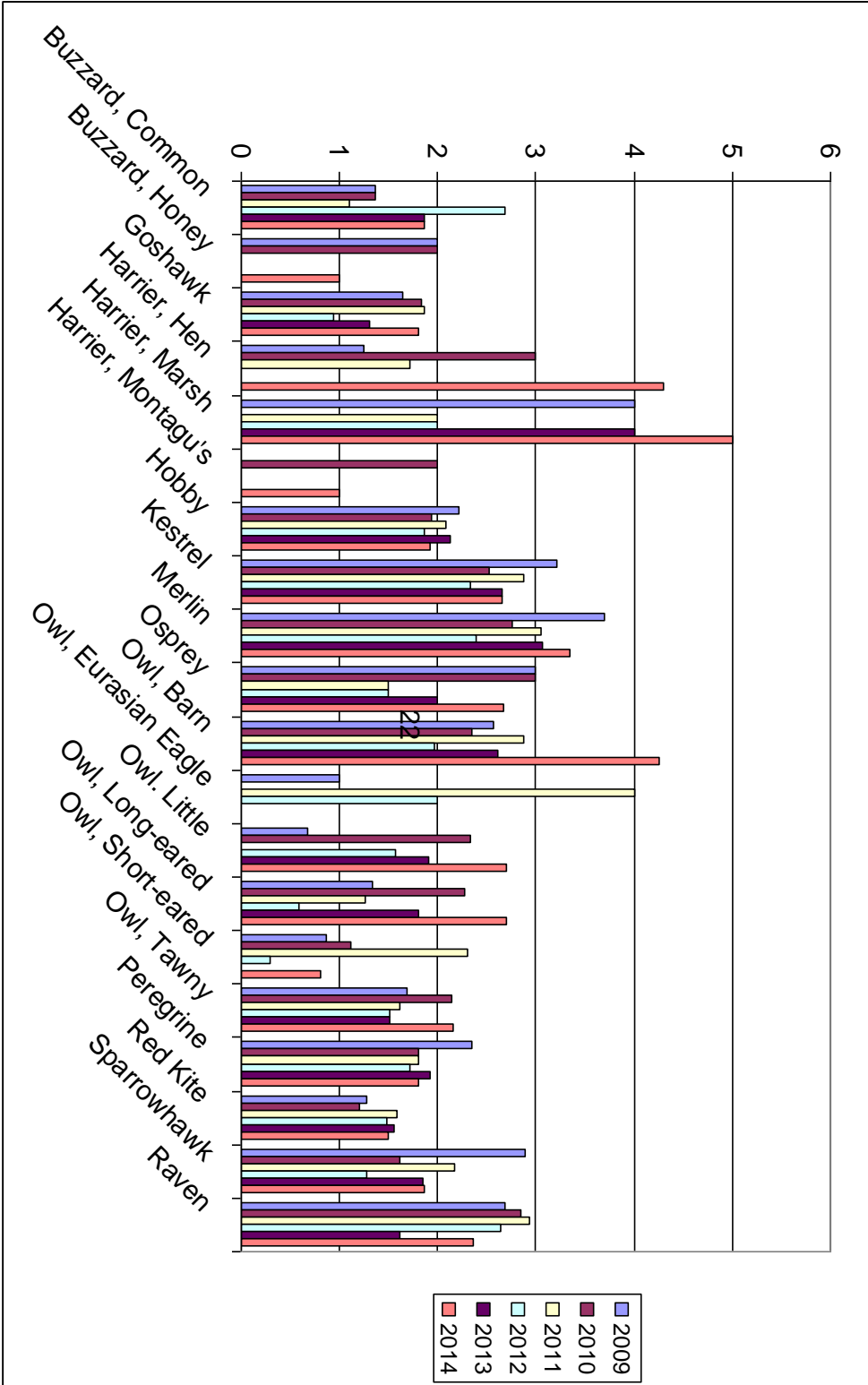
Steve Downing, Calderdale Raptor Study Group, NERF

Appendix 1: Combined NERF data

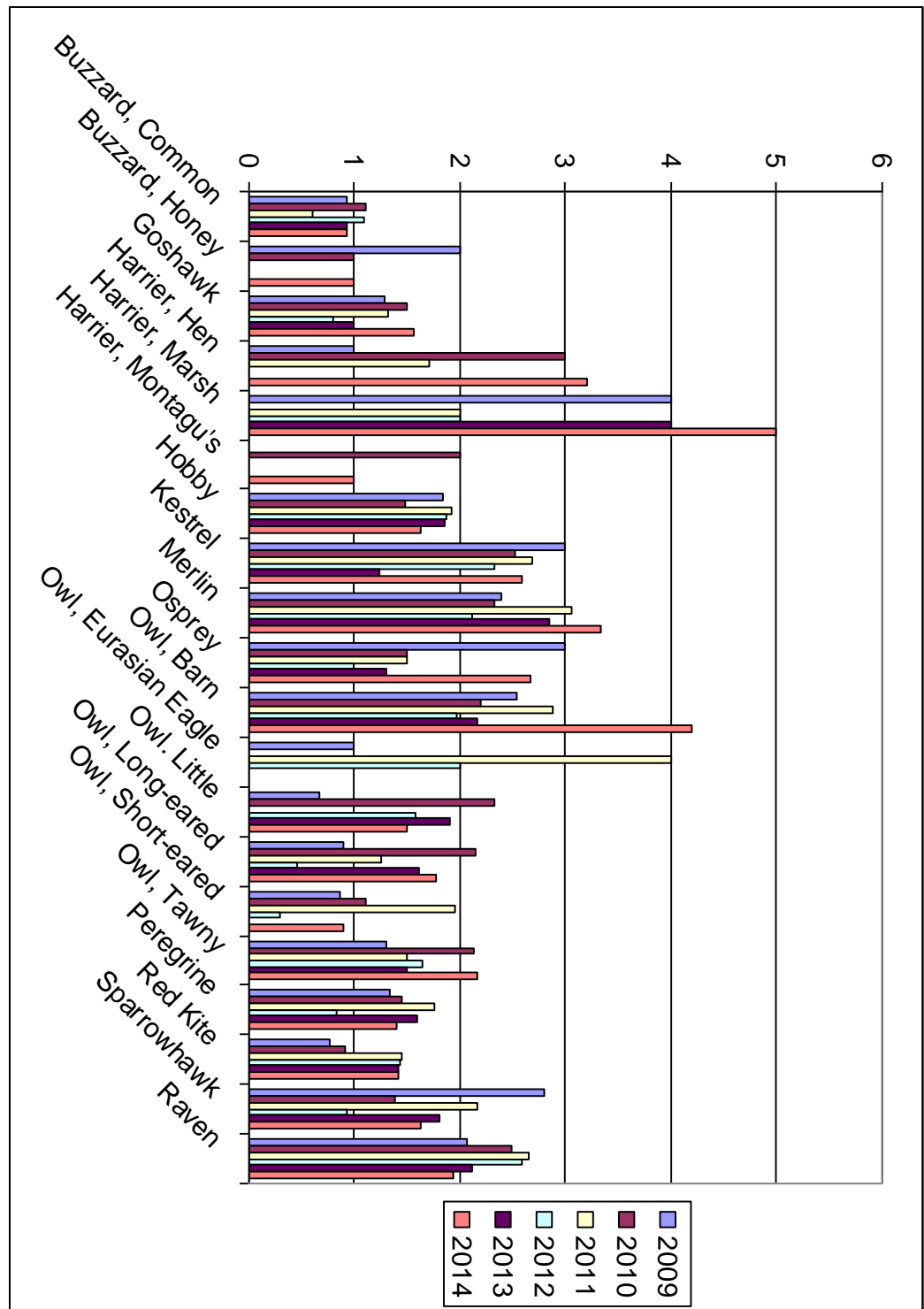
Species	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Home ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing/non-breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per pair monitored
Honey Buzzard	9	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	1.0	1.0
Red Kite	59	42	0	8	36	34	33	28	51	1.50	1.42
Marsh Harrier	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00
Hen Harrier	55	5	3	2	5	3	3	3	13	4.3	3.2
Goshawk	93	56	9	7	50	43	36	34	78	1.81	1.56
Sparrowhawk	88	54	0	3	41	36	34	34	67+	1.86	1.63
Buzzard	304	293	0	8	138	69	61	105	128	1.86	0.93
Osprey	3	3	0	0	3	3	3	3	8	2.67	2.67
Kestrel	168	52	3	4	38	37+	33+	30+	98	2.65	2.59
Merlin	207	101	15	10	88	88	80	79	291	3.30	3.30
Hobby	54	51	0	3	45	38	38	38	73	1.92	1.62
Peregrine	184	99	4	44	70	54	46	44	98	1.81	1.4
Barn Owl	405	163	3	5	158	157	155	149	662	4.25	4.19
Eagle Owl	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Little Owl	43	22	16	NC	18	10	10	10	27+	2.7	1.5
Tawny Owl	498	218	1	9	208	208	199	185	449	2.16	2.16
Long-eared Owl	63	43	1	3	39	38	36	35	69+	1.82+	1.77+
Short-eared Owl	60	31	0	0	21	19	11	17	17+	0.81	0.89
Raven	96	62	1	19	50	41	35	34	97	2.36	1.94
Totals	2392	1297	56	164	1012	881	816	831	2233		

Appendix 2: Combined productivity graphs

a) young fledged per pair laying 2009-2014



b) young fledged per territorial pair monitored 2009-2014



Appendix 3: Ring recoveries

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
PDRMG	Hen Harrier	EL61946	04/08/2014	Site confidential, S. Yorks	04/09/2014	Howden Moor W. Yorks	31 days			
PDRMG	Hen Harrier	EL61948	04/08/2014	Site confidential, S. Yorks	04/09/2014	Howden Moor W. Yorks	31 days			
SPRSG	Goshawk	HW90883	22/05/2003	Site confidential, Derbs	02/04/2014	Chatsworth, Derbs	3968 days	9		Injuries consistent with illegal trapping
NRG	Goshawk	MA20417	21/06/2011	Eskdalemuir, Borders	30/05/2014	Alnwick	1074 days	68		Long dead
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	DD47654	04/07/2005	Wakefield area	03/09/2014	Renishaw, Derbs	3348 days	41	SSE	Long dead
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	EL61842	04/07/2010	Grange Moor W. Yorks	17/04/2014	Barnsley	1383 days	15	NW	Broken wing, in care
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	EL61961	12/07/2014	Silkstone Beck W. Yorks	11/11/2014	Thurlstone, W. Yorks	122 days	7	SW	Found dead
SPRSG	Common Buzzard	GJ62876	30/05/2004	Belper, Derbs	11/11/2014	Windley, Derbs	3817 days	2		Dying, caught on barbed wire
SPRSG	Common Buzzard	GN43669	24/07/2007	Bilthorpe, Notts	22/06/2014	Caunton, Notts	2555 days	1		Road casualty
PDRMG	Common Buzzard	GR61851	14/06/2012	Bankwood, W. Yorks	21/04/2014	Elmley, W. Yorks	676 days	1		Shot
SPRSG	Common Buzzard	MA17098	27/06/2012	Waverton, Ches.	14/04/2014	Grindleford, Derbs	656 days	79		Identified by wing tags (alive)
PDRMG	Common Buzzard	GR82772	04/06/2013	Heydon Brook, Derbs	18/02/2014	Grains Moss, Dunford Bridge, W. Yorks	259 days	5		Destroyed, illegally trapped (fen trap)
NRG	Osprey	1156089 Blue 39	19/07/2011	Kielder Water	11/08/2014	Derwent Resr, Durham	1119 days	57	SE	Colour ring read in field
NRG	Osprey	1156085	12/07/2010	Kielder Water	Summer 2013	Foulshaw Moss Cumbria		112	SW	Breeding female
NRG	Osprey	1156088	19/07/2011	Kielder Water	06/07/2013	North Yorks Moors	717 days	135	SE	Colour ring read in field
NRG	Osprey	1174462	19/07/2012	Kielder Water	14/11/2013	Todde Marshes SENEGAL				Colour ring read in field
NRG	Osprey	White colour ring YA	Summer 2007	Glaslyn, Wales	07/04/2013 to summer 2013	Kielder Water		278	SW	Breeding male (also in 2012)
NRG	Osprey	Yellow colour ring 37	Summer 2009	Glaslyn, Wales	07/04/2013 to summer 2013	Kielder Water		278	SW	Breeding male

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
SPRSG	Kestrel	EN50913	08/06/2011	Nr Pilsley, Derbs	20/06/2014	Lowdham, Notts	1108 days	30		Found headless in Tawny Owl box
PDRMG	Kestrel	EX36423	06/07/2013	Old Glossop, Derbs	19/01/2014	Glossop, Derbs	197 days	2		Freshly dead
PDRMG	Kestrel	EX36030	13/06/2014	Glossop, Derbs	19/10/2014	Marsden, W.Yorks	128 days	21		Dead
SPRSG	Kestrel	EN90575	22/09/2014	Beeley Moor, Derbs	12/01/2015	Beeley Moor, Derbs	112 days			Road casualty
PDRMG	Merlin	EX36445	16/06/2014	Site confidential nr Glossop, Derbs	30/08/2014	Baggrow, Cumbria	75 days	173		Freshly dead
NRG/DUBSG	Merlin	DB49500	30/06/2013	Middleton, Teesdale	10/04/2014	Bosherston, Pembrokeshire	284 days	386	SSW	Freshly dead, emaciated
DUBSG	Merlin	EY56154	18/06/2014	Middleton, Teesdale	04/12/2014	Skelmersdale, Lancs	169 days	128	SSW	Dead, entered building
BRSG	Merlin	EW28776	04/06/2014	Bowland	04/06/2014	Jersey, C.I.	118 days	527	S	Found injured, died in care
NRG	Peregrine	GF51673	08/06/1995	Wark Forest	24/04/2013	Traprain, Lothian	18 years	110	NE	Transponder, annually since 2005
NRG	Peregrine	GN66616	04/06/2003	Redesdale Forest	12/10/2013	Dunstanburgh Castle	10+ years	54	ENE	Dead on beach
NRG	Peregrine	GC43385	28/05/2009	Site confidential, Northumberland	16/04/2014	Site confidential, Borders	1784 days	24	WSW	Transponder
MRG	Peregrine	GR62908	23/05/2012	Rochdale Town Hall	2014	St Peter's Health Centre Burnley		44	NNW	Colour ring red HK, held territory but did not breed
SPRSG	Peregrine	GC20773	25/05/2012	Derby Cathedral	10/04/2014	Selston, Notts	685 days	21	NNE	Found sick, into care, probably alive
SPRSG	Barn Owl	GF87149	18/10/2003	Unstone, Derbs	26/08/2014	Unstone, Derbs	3965 days	-	-	Long dead, at nest site
MRG	Barn Owl	GR83523	19/06/2014	Pilsworth, Bury	25/12/2014	Brandesburton, E. Yorks	189 days	134	ENE	Freshly dead
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC70560	16/11/2011	New Marske, Redcar and Cleveland	30/05/2014	Loftus, Redcar and Cleveland	1079 days	15	ESE	Trapped between hay bales, released alive and well
NRG	Barn Owl	GC26598	18/07/2007	Brandon, Northumberland	30/05/2014	Hurlstone Tower, Berwick	7 years	35	N	Road casualty
NRG	Barn Owl	GC73287	22/06/2010	Biddlestone	06/08/2013	Redesdale	1140 days	17	WSW	Dead

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
NRG	Barn Owl	FH92023	07/06/2014	Coltpark, Northumberland	07/10/2014	Elsdon, Northumberland	122 days	15	W	Dead, broken wing next to fence
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR10971	10/05/2011	Kershope Forest	01/03/2013	Carlisle	660 days	38	SW	Road casualty
NRG	Tawny Owl	GC04704	28/04/2006	Gibside, Newcastle	18/06/2014	Gibside, Newcastle	8 years	-	-	Controlled
NRG	Tawny Owl	GN65035	28/04/2007	Rufford Abbey CP, Ollerton, Notts	07/05/2014	Kielder Forest	2566 days	251	NNW	Controlled
SPRSG	Tawny Owl	GH78982	26/08/2013	Rivelin Filters, Sheffield	08/03/2014	Stannington, Sheffield	194 days	3		Tangled in garden twine, in care
PDRMG	Long-eared Owl	GN04387	30/05/2007	Winscar Resr, S. Yorks	03/07/2014	Scopwick, Lincs	2591 days	98		Road casualty

At a conference held at the BTO to celebrate 75 years of the Nest Record Scheme in March 2014, Northumbria RG was presented with a glass tankard in recognition of their contribution to the scheme (at least 12800 nest records since 1972).

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	Northumbria Ringing Group
NYMRSG or NYMMG	Abbreviated acronym used in tables for NYMUB(M)SG North York Moors Upland Bird(Merlin) Study Group
PDRMG	Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
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
YDNP	Yorkshire Dales National Park
YD&NRSG	Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group (formerly Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group)