

Northern England Raptor Forum

Annual Review 2015



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Inside back cover

Photograph credits

Osprey chicks (Front Cover)	Forestry Commission (North District) and Joanna Dailey
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Hen Harrier:	Ken Smith
Montagu's Harrier:	Ivan Ellison
Northern Goshawk:	Ivan Ellison
Sparrowhawk:	Ivan Ellison
Buzzard:	Ken Smith
Osprey:	Adrian Dancy
Common Kestrel:	Ken Smith
Merlin:	Wilf Norman
Hobby:	Jamie Dunning
Peregrine:	Adrian Dancy, Steve Downing
Barn Owl:	Joel Tragan
Eagle Owl:	Wilf Murphy
Little Owl:	Pauline Mellor Greenhalgh
Tawny Owl:	Wilf Norman
Long-eared Owl:	David Steel
Short-eared Owl:	David Raw
Raven:	Ken Smith

Useful telephone numbers

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

The national non-emergency telephone number is 101

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

Hen Harrier sightings: RSPB hotline 0845 4600121 or henharriers@rspb.org.uk

Foreword

Ian Carter



By chance I was asked to write this just a few days after leaving Natural England, having spent more than 25 years working as an ornithologist. I've been involved with a number of different raptor initiatives over the years and I hope readers will forgive a little self-indulgence as I reflect on some of the changes I've witnessed in that time.

I count myself especially fortunate to have been involved in long-term conservation projects involving two of our most enigmatic and impressive birds of prey. One is a wonderful combination of grace and elegance, with a mastery of the air unrivalled (in my unbiased opinion) by any other British bird of prey. The other also spends long periods on the wing but tends to hug the contours of the land, cruising just a few metres above the ground. Whilst one bird spends much of its time high overhead, scouring the landscape for carrion, the other is a dedicated hunter, constantly alert to ambush opportunities and the chance to snatch a pipit, a lark, a vole..... or even a grouse.

The Red Kite is a conservation success story. When I started working for English Nature (as it was then) it was absent from England as a breeding species. Now, thanks to the reintroductions, there are perhaps a few thousand pairs, though monitoring by raptor workers has highlighted contrasting fortunes between release sites in the lowlands and those on the upland fringe. The Hen Harrier has not fared so well and as the Red Kite has made its comeback, so this species has dwindled and faded from its former haunts. As highlighted here in this report, it now teeters on the very edge of extinction as a breeding bird in England.

If you think about the Red Kite you might be tempted to pat yourself on the back on behalf of humanity in general, and reflect on how enlightened we are these days. Long-term persecution removed this species (along with many other predators) from most of Britain. That it has now been restored shows not only commitment and determination from the many

people involved, but also the significantly changed attitudes of people living and working in much of our countryside. Persecution in the lowlands is now the exception rather than the rule and the Red Kite (among other species) has been able to flourish as a result. If you now turn to consider the Hen Harrier and its upland breeding areas, you may come to a rather different view. The Red Kite was lost from England as far back as the 1860s - a direct result of the sustained human persecution that was typical of the age. It seems unthinkable that now, well into the twenty-first century, we could lose the Hen Harrier from England for the same reason.

Between these two extremes are many other species with interesting stories to tell. Peregrines are flourishing across much of England but have almost gone from the upland SSSIs and SPAs that were once a major stronghold. The Goshawk has a markedly patchy distribution and remains rare or absent from huge areas of seemingly ideal terrain. The Buzzard has increased dramatically in recent decades and yet its welcome return has brought with it some challenging issues. For all these species, and for others, the need for the monitoring work brought together in this report, and based largely on voluntary effort, is as great as it has ever been.

Chairman's Report



This is the seventh NERF Annual Review, which contains a summary of the considerable amount of data gathered by our member raptor workers on breeding raptors, owls and the Raven. To each field worker gathering the data, to the various authors who compile the species accounts, but especially to our editor Judith Smith we owe as always a huge vote of thanks. It is no easy task to persuade people who would rather be out in the field to get it all to Judith within the appropriate time frame.

As seems to be the case in every year, Hen Harrier has been top of the agenda. NERF is of course involved with RSPB in the Life project for the species helping to follow up hotline sightings, trying to find harriers and joining in the protection of the few pairs we still have. Outside the breeding season, members are visiting and monitoring known upland winter roost sites and often not finding birds throughout the whole season, they have become so scarce. DEFRA has now published its six point recovery plan for the species, which of course contains the four things we and RSPB are already doing, plus the more controversial proposals, a southern introduction and limiting breeding density through “brood management” where chicks of “surplus pairs” are reared in captivity and released on or near where they came from. Let’s be clear here: without considerable improvement, hard and fast

progress targets and sanctions for failure NERF believes the plan is not fit for purpose. We have grave misgivings about brood management which we believe should not be considered until harriers reach a decent population level of 50-70 pairs. Even then, like the RSPB, we are very unlikely to agree to it. It seems to us that for the vast majority of grouse moors diversionary feeding is the better and more practical solution. Despite the DEFRA plan being heralded by most shooting organisations, the killing continues; last winter several birds were lost in the Yorkshire Dales and one in spring in Durham. Also in spring, we had the man with the harrier decoy and gun on National Trust land in the Peak District National Park, coupled with the pole traps on open moorland on the Mossdale Estate, again in the Yorkshire Dales. As I write we have just received the news that a young harrier of the year has already died in suspicious circumstances in Scotland. All this does not fill one with any hope that the DEFRA “plan” is anything but a lame duck. However, we will continue to work with our partners to bring about the massive changes needed to save the Hen Harrier from extinction in England and bring it to its proper status as a vital part of the ecology of our uplands. Many of us have of course been involved with various Hen Harrier Days, and along with our friends Birders Against Wildlife Crime, Raptor Protection UK, Mark Avery and Chris Packham, such events are making the public much more aware of the harriers' plight: to get the change we want we certainly need that public support.



Hen Harrier Day, Derbyshire, August 2015

Red Kites have suffered heavy losses this spring in North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Durham. Again in many cases these losses are associated with grouse moor management with birds unable to penetrate the uplands beyond the grouse moor fringe. NERF, through its membership of PAW, is much involved in the discussions about gas guns on grouse moors allegedly to deter “marauding flocks” of Ravens and/or gulls. Given the status of Raven as a scarce bird in the areas concerned, we believe gas guns to be entirely unnecessary for that purpose and gulls seem to ignore them. It is our belief that at the very least they should not be deployed on SSSIs or SPAs. We await the outcome of the discussions with interest. There are also ongoing discussions about the production of maps showing the distribution of persecution incidents. We of course favour a system that maps all such incidents in an open and transparent way. However, it is being proposed that the maps

will not show the distribution of poison baits and illegal traps - mainly pole traps - with no victim, or eye witness evidence which is not corroborated by admission, prosecution or forensic analysis of a carcass. How can such maps show the true extent of the persecution problem if these things are not included? We believe strongly that they must be included to show the extent of the problem our protected raptors face.

This year we have in the Yorkshire Dales a quite unwelcome development, in that the head keepers on five estates are acting as agents on the Merlin licence of a licensee in London. Given how long it takes to learn to be an efficient and competent raptor monitor, awarding licences without any proper training or vetting seems absurd. We strongly believe that a more co-operative approach between experienced raptor workers, estates and estate workers is much the better way forward for all concerned.

Also we have the Buzzard licence issue again. Although it was inevitable licence(s) would be awarded after the judicial review, the NERF view is quite clear we do not believe that all alternatives have been trialled and that such licences probably fail to fulfil all the scientific criteria involved. As such we are opposed to the granting of such licences to protect alien game birds from protected native predators only just recovering from two centuries of intense persecution.

These are just some of the issues that we have been involved with during the last year and in which we continue to be involved. However, our real strength is the data that we all collect and collate. These data are supplied to BTO/NE in our licence returns, to RBBP and make up the body of this review; they are our most important asset, that we speak based on good science and good data is our major strength. If you collect such data and are not yet a member of your local raptor group or wish to help in other ways I'm sure any approach you make will be welcomed.

I've just been looking at some of our Merlin data as presented by two members, it seems that we have in 2012-14 we visited 785 Merlin territories, of which 315 were occupied and 226 pairs reared 744 young.

Impressive figures, but it seems that only 40% of territories are occupied in any year compared to the population peak in the early nineties, and despite increased fledging success the population is not increasing, something we perhaps ought to investigate further. Thanks to Mike Price and Steve Downing for the figures.

I cannot close without mentioning the loss of our good friend Mick Carroll last year. Mick was tenacious in his wish to further the fortunes of the Hen Harrier and to see an end to raptor persecution. To that end it is a fitting tribute to Mick that one of this year's satellite tagged young harriers is called "Carroll" and another has been named "Mick". You are still much missed, Mick.

I hope as always you enjoy this review and it inspires you to contribute to the study of our magnificent but often beleaguered birds of prey.

Paul Irving

Chairman, Northern England Raptor Forum
September 2016

Secretary's Report



The Northern England Raptor Forum (NERF) was established in 2006. It represents the collective field-work and conservation interests of nine 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 for the areas our members cover. 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 to the majority of the Pennine chain from Northumberland to south Derbyshire. Every effort is made to avoid the duplication of reported data which might otherwise be found by referring to the excellent annual reports of county and local bird clubs.

During the past year our colleagues in the South Ryedale & East Yorkshire RSG decided their species monitoring and reporting work would be more effectively channelled through either the adjoining North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group or the BTO Regional Representative. SREY RSG have therefore disbanded in favour of this new approach. Further details of all NERF activities and its composition can be found on our 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. NERF is also represented on the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime (PAW UK) where our organisation was honoured to receive the 2014 PAW Partner of the Year Award.

NERF has now established a grant fund available to individual members, on application, to help promote particular species' studies with obvious conservation benefits. The first of these grants was awarded for work on the study of Hobby in Derbyshire.

The North of England Raptor Conferences, held each November are now an important event in the calendar bringing together field-workers and professionals to share knowledge and develop thinking on species conservation. The 2015 conference at Rishworth, Halifax was hosted on behalf of NERF by the Calderdale Raptor Study Group. A summary of the papers presented during this very successful event can be found elsewhere in this report and on our

website. We are especially grateful for the support of the various sponsors without whose assistance these events would not be possible.

NERF continues to provide specialist contractor services into the RSPB's Hen Harrier LIFE+ Project. The experience of our members in monitoring Hen Harriers means we can make a significant contribution to the objectives of this important project. Our monitoring efforts focus on improving the understanding of the movements and status of Hen Harriers in northern England, assessing the intensity and nature of any persecution and enhancing protection at both breeding and wintering sites. Reports are provided to the RSPB covering winter roost occupancy, spring and summer sightings and nest site protection. During the 2016 breeding season these efforts were complemented by extensive survey work by NERF members in support of the National Hen Harrier Breeding survey

David Raw

Secretary, Northern England Raptor Forum

August 2016

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 is 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.

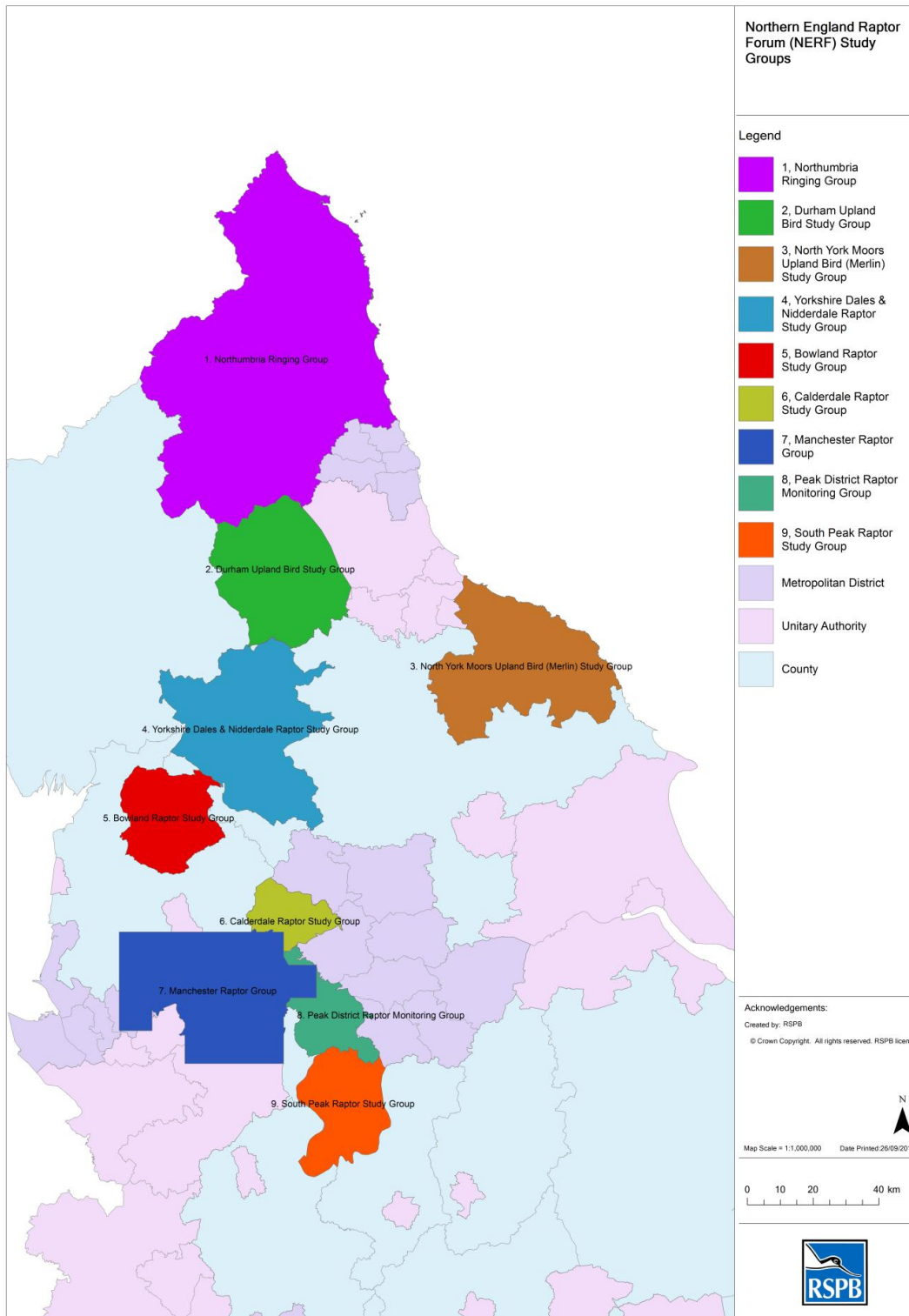
Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county plus the rest of 10km squares SD50,51,61,71,81,91; SE00; SJ59,78,88,98 into which part of the county falls (with effect from 1st September 2016).

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 group's main focus is on Peregrines and Barn Owls.

Data submitted includes records from www.manchesterbirding.com



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.

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).

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.

Note: The South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group has closed since the death of Mick Carroll last year.

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.

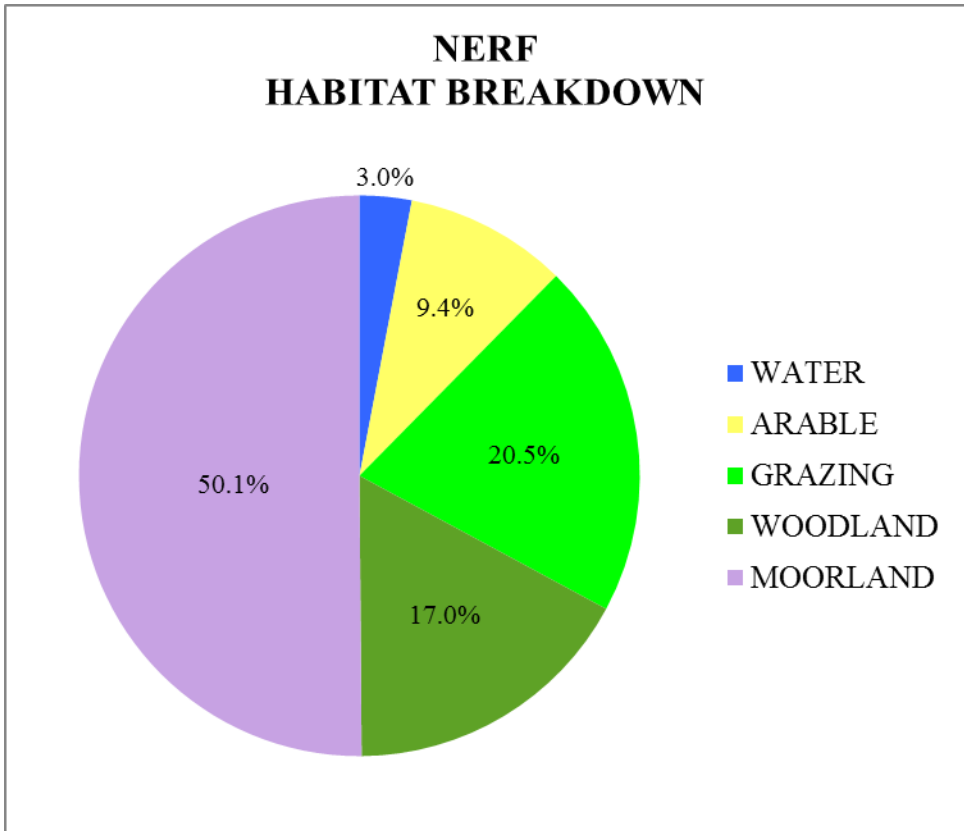
We attempt to provide as much detailed information as possible for Schedule 1 species and some others. The extent and area of coverage for each group's survey work should be read in conjunction with the figures presented in species account tables. A "0" (**Zero**) is shown where the column feature was 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.

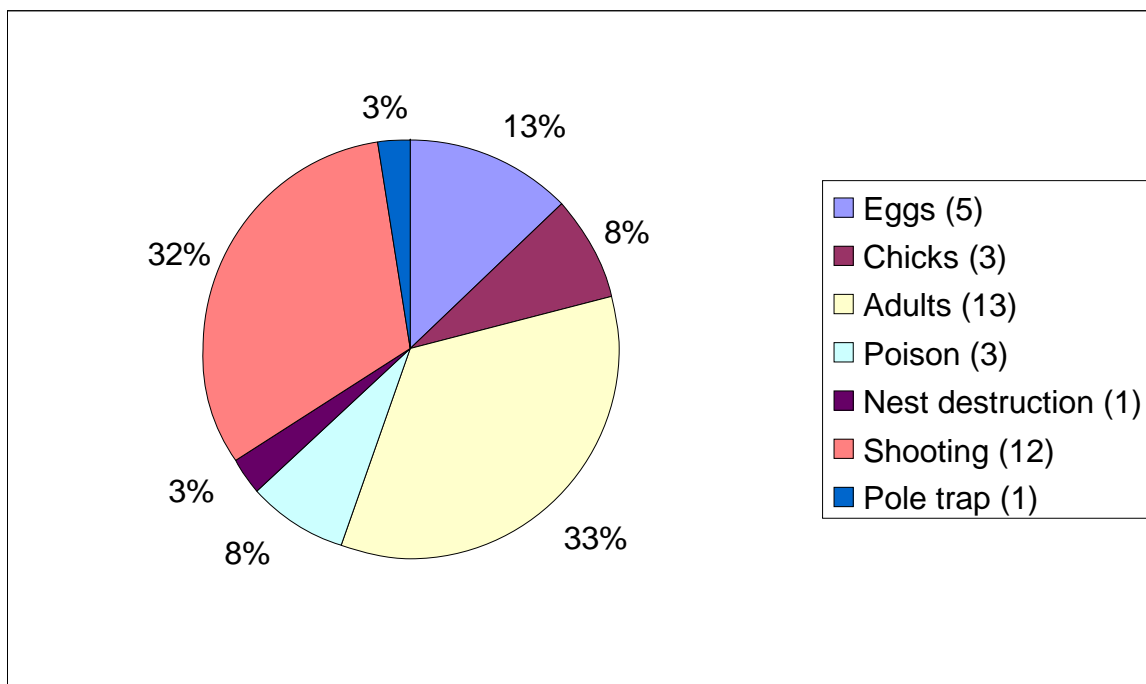
The chart below graphically indicates the level of monitoring undertaken by NERF. Analysis of the species breeding & monitored / breeding & not monitored / absent / passage data identifies the areas in which NERF will be able to focus future monitoring efforts more effectively. This will provide an opportunity 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-

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 38, which may appear to be a significant reduction on 133 in 2014 (190 in 2012, 119 in 2009, 90 in 2013, 82 in 2011 and 56 in 2010). This is because a decision was taken, in conjunction with the RSPB, only to record incidents where persecution was known to have taken place, rather than where it was strongly suspected but could not be proved. Once again, destruction of adults is the largest sector at 33%.

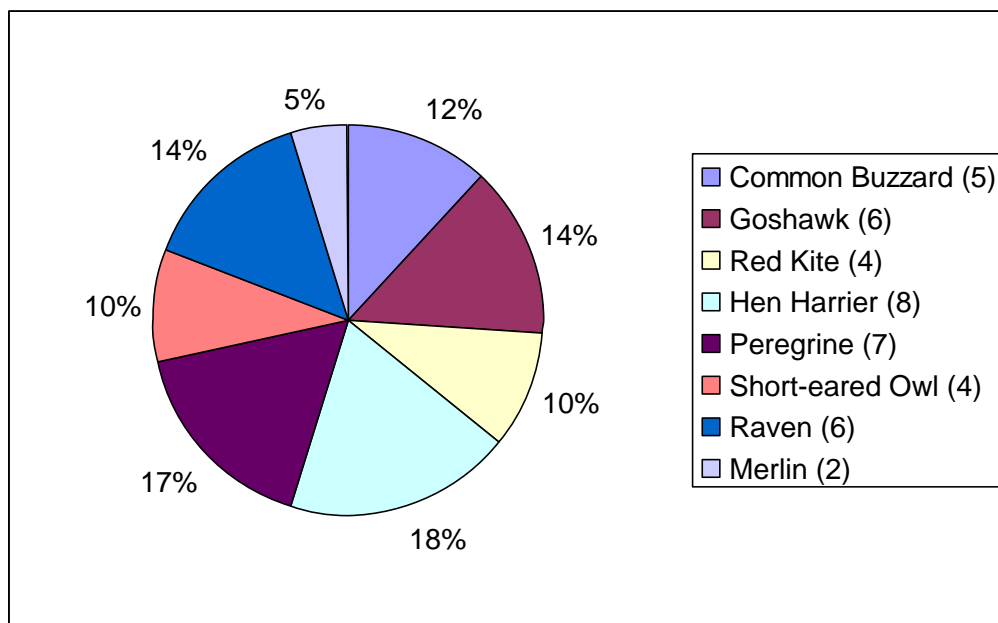
Persecution by type 2015 (*figures in parentheses refer to number of incidents*)



Black Hole species

During 2015 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 2015 (figures in parentheses refer to number of groups listing species)

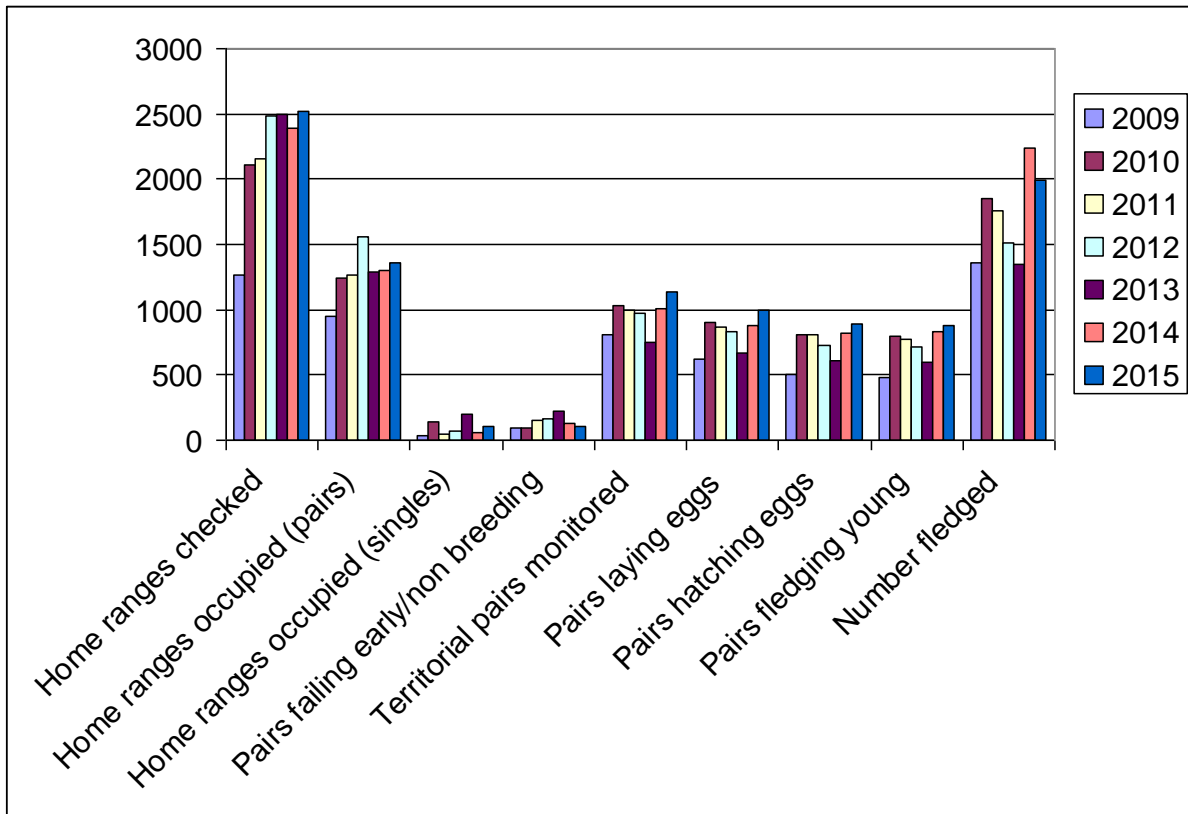


Summary

Within the NERF region 20 of the 23 raptor species were monitored and / or recorded by Group members during 2015. 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 was the solitary bird at Haweswater, Cumbria (assumed to have died in early 2016) not included in the NERF region. Full details of the work undertaken are 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 - 2015 are presented in the table following.

Combined statistics 2009-2015



Of the 2515 home ranges, 1357 were occupied by pairs of birds and 1551 pairs were monitored through the year. 876 pairs fledged a minimum of 1999 young (831 pairs fledged in excess of 2233 young in 2014, which was an exceptionally good year).

Comparisons between the 2009 and 2015 fledging rates for pairs laying eggs and pairs monitored are provided in Appendix 2.

Although NERF members completed even more monitoring during 2015 than in any other year, 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 2009-2015 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.

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 2015

Rough-legged Buzzard – no breeding season sightings in the NERF region in 2015. However, there was a well-documented influx into northern counties from November 2014 and several of these lingered into early 2015.

Golden Eagle – no sightings in the NERF region in 2015; the only bird in England was the solitary Haweswater bird, which was feared dead by April 2016.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*



UK population estimate

25-39 pairs and a minimum of 7 single birds occupied territories in 2014 with at least 27 birds fledging (Holling, M. *et al* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014. *British Birds* 2016 109: 491-545).

Roberts, S.J. & Law, C., in their paper on Honey-Buzzards in Britain (*British Birds* 2014 107: 668-691) estimated the national population to be in the region of between 100-150 pairs.

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

The most serious threat to the welfare of this species in the UK arises from the attentions of egg collectors, clutches of these birds being highly prized. However, the secretive, low profile behaviour of birds whilst nesting works in their favour. Location of nests from observation is invariably extremely time-consuming, and often an ultimately unsuccessful undertaking. Direct persecution from gun, trap or poison in Britain is of relatively rare incidence compared to that suffered by other large raptors. Fortunately, the species does not depend solely on moorland habitat for food acquisition during the breeding season and therefore does not come into contact with the gamekeeping fraternity there with any frequency. In any case, Honey Buzzards present no threat to grouse stocks as they feed principally on the larvae of bees and wasps excavated from their nests over the period when young grouse are at risk from raptors.

Extremely wet summers can have a catastrophic effect on breeding success if there is large scale wash-out of bee and wasp nests as occurred nationally in 2012. Luckily, UK birds

migrate to Africa in relative safety crossing the Mediterranean via Gibraltar. No doubt hunters will account for some birds en route but almost certainly nothing like the numbers shot illegally further east in Malta.

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
NYMUBSG	9	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	3	1.5	1.5

Group Reports

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.

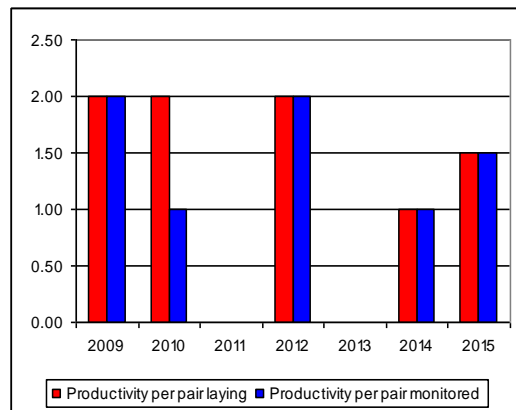
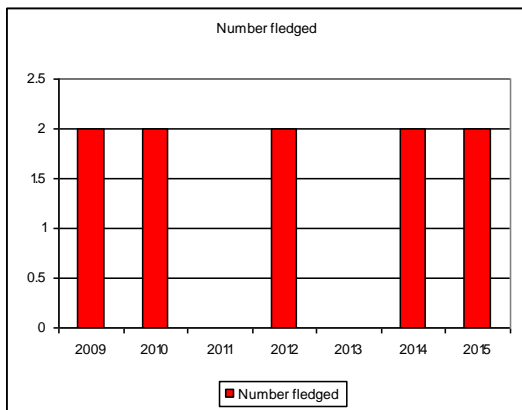
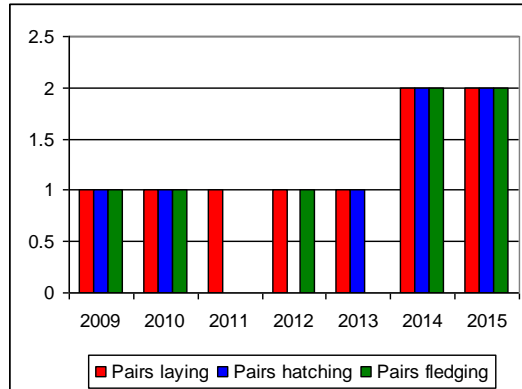
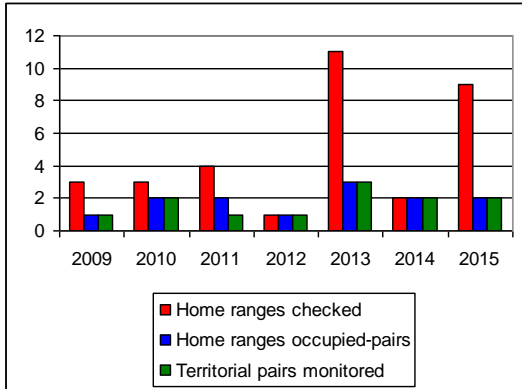
Data was received from just the one source. Six individuals were recorded this season, three males and three females forming two nesting pairs. The other two birds were recorded individually at different sites and both were new birds. One was returning for its 6th consecutive season, 2 for their 7th and 1 for its 8th, and it was these experienced birds that formed the nesting pairs.

All other groups submitted nil reports.

NERF regional summary

Once again only the NYM forests provided nesting data for this species. At a future date, should a breeding pair be located by fortuitous circumstance at another location in the region, perhaps the fieldworker(s) involved could be persuaded to devote the admittedly considerable time and commitment needed over subsequent season(s) to establish whether or not such a pair represents a viable and on-going small population. There must be other pairs nesting regularly elsewhere in the NERF region.

Comparative data 2009-2015



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. The BTO BBS report for 2015 showed an increase of 36% 2014 – 2015 and a 10299% increase 1995 – 2014.

Conservation status

UK: **Green**

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 26 Yorkshire-related Red Kite illegal poisonings recorded since 2000, 22 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. (NOTE: The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) has introduced a stewardship scheme whereby the dual problems of availability and competence of users will be addressed). CRRU has agreed to fund sample analysis of 100 Barn Owls to check the effectiveness of the stewardship scheme. However, they refused to include kites in the sampling process, this being a disappointment in view of their susceptibility to this form of poisoning (12 recorded Yorkshire deaths since 2007). 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)	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
DUBSG	42	30	0	8	22	22	17	13	26	1.2	1.2
NRG (Cumbria)	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2	5	2.50	2.50
Nidderdale RSG	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2.00	2.00
Totals	48	36	0	11	25	25	20	16	33	1.32	1.32

Group reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas

Level of monitoring: The Red Kite is known to have bred at least once in the area but although birds are seen every year they fail to become established at least in our study area.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: Calderdale is perfect Red Kite habitat but unfortunately there were no records of a breeding attempt once again. Nonetheless there were 20 records of migrants moving through the area between the 21st March and the 3rd September and the Group is holding its collective breath that a pair will breed in the area in the near future.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Thanks are due to the Friends of Red Kites for the provision of all breeding data.

Red Kites experienced a relatively poor breeding season in 2015. There were just 13 known successful nests which fledged 26 young (compared with 20 nests yielding 35 young in 2014). Most pairs managed just one or 2 young though the final total was boosted by the first ever brood of four being successfully raised. Nine nests failed at the stage of egg incubation or small young due to disturbance, predation or bad weather. Two young were blown to their deaths during a gale.

There was some evidence of birds spreading a little further south in the county away from their original release area.

By the end of the year 52 birds were counted at a roost site in the Derwent valley.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county

Level of monitoring: Ten records were picked up from www.manchesterbirding.com, all in the period 28th April to 27th September. A bird at Chelburn Resrs 28th April may have been the same as one at Diggle, Saddleworth 29th April. One flew NW at Bickershaw Rucks 11th May and one was at Dunham Woodhouses 5th June. A bird flying south at Holcombe Hill was mobbed by corvids, 11th June. Four sightings in July comprised singles at Hale 5th, Chat Moss 7th, Little Scotland 10th and Castleshaw Resrs 19th, possibly present since 15th. The final record was of one flying E over Winter Hill, 27th September. There were 11 records in 2014 and in 2013 but there is no suspicion of colonisation.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: The Cumbrian population is starting to grow, although slowly. 2015 saw a rise in the number of pairs found breeding, with 4 pairs, two of which failed early, no doubt because of inexperience. Five young fledged from the other two nests.

North York Moors Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Continues to feature frequently as wandering individuals, principally in the winter months. No rumours of potential breeding surfaced this season but it would come as no real surprise to Group members if such a report was verified over the next few seasons.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Red Kites are seen annually in the study area. It is surprising that we haven't yet recorded a breeding attempt, particularly in the lowland areas to the west of the study area, as these were the areas that Common Buzzard first returned to, and continue to breed very successfully.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: SPRSG no longer systematically monitors the species as it is so widespread, although continued lack of successful breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwentdale grouse moors points towards persecution as the likely cause.

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:

There are regular records at some of the well-watched locations in the south east of the national park, but this species remains very scarce across the rest of the Dales. There are no known breeding pairs within the national park. There have been a number of confirmed persecution incidents on the edge of grouse moors in the south east of the area in recent years which is believed to be preventing the spread of these birds into the area.

Nidderdale:

No real nest monitoring although two pairs were suspected breeding. One of these pairs was subsequently reported with two recently fledged young. A number of birds have been found poisoned over the years within the AONB, this year being no exception.

East Yorkshire Red Kites

The following information has been submitted by an independent observer.

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 85+ birds were recorded in December at the communal 2015/16 winter roost site indicating that there must be over 100 birds in the area.

Yorkshire: confirmed breeding figures for 2015 are shown in the table below. Full monitoring was not possible. For comparative purposes, the 2014 figures shown in brackets exclude the areas not monitored in 2015:

<u>AREA</u>	<u>PAIRS FOUND</u>	<u>PAIRS BRED</u>	<u>PAIRS SUCC.</u>	<u>YOUNG</u>
West Yorkshire	34 (30)	33 (29)	29 (25)	55 (42)
North Yorkshire	44 (35)	40 (28)	36 (31)	68 (63)
East Yorkshire	14 (9)	11 (8)	9 (7)	16 (15)
Totals	92 (74)	84 (65)	74 (63)	139 (120)
Average young raised per successful pair = 1.88 (1.90).				

NERF regional summary

The closure of the South Ryedale and East Yorkshire Study Group, following the death of Mick Carroll, has resulted in the loss of records from an area important for this species. 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. Note: The current Natural England practice is to wear two pairs. 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: http://www.yorkshireredkites.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13&Itemid=13

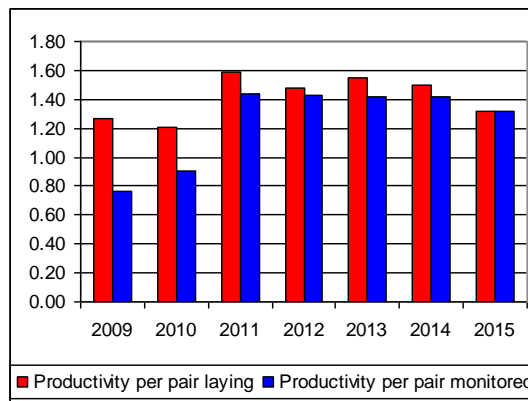
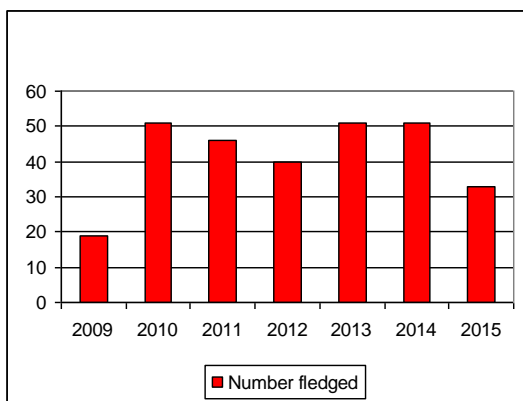
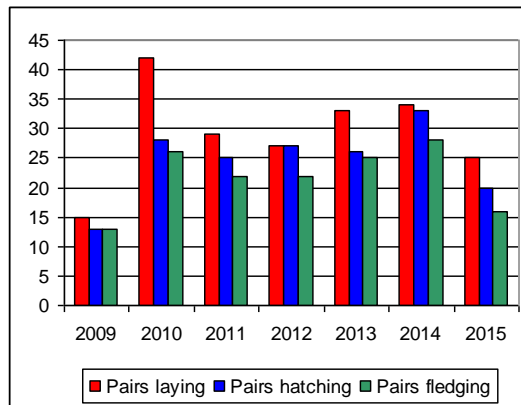
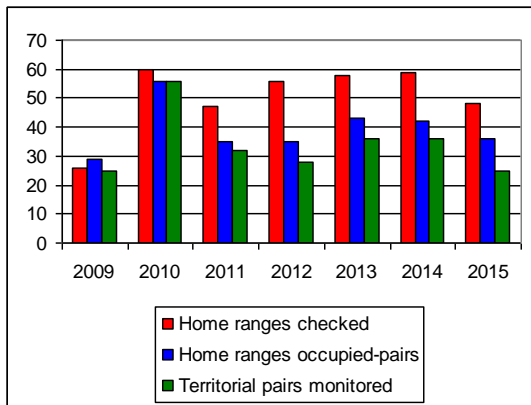
It is essential that all suspected poisoning incidents are reported to the local Police and that an incident number is obtained. The cause of death will be determined by either the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme [PBMS], telephone 01524 959830. Email leew@ceh.ac.uk or the Wildlife Incident Investigation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

The information should also be passed on to the RSPB Headquarters, telephone 01767 680551 and ask for the Investigations Team during office hours, or 0845 466 3636 at other times. Sick or injured birds can be reported to the RSPCA, telephone 0300 1234 999

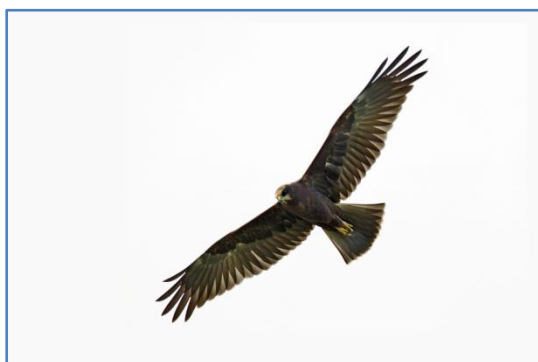
All telephone numbers correct at Sept 2016.

For Local Police 'Dial 101' and ask to speak urgently to a Wildlife Crime Officer - please also ask for an incident number.

Comparative data 2009-2015



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). 263-358 breeding pairs were reported to RBBP (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014. *British Birds* 109: September 2016 491-545.)

Conservation status

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

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	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00

National and regional threat assessment

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

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The Group observes single birds, usually females, on the fells most years. There is no evidence that they have attempted to breed in the study area.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

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

Marsh Harriers are not known to breed within Calderdale. However, there were a total of 17 sightings recorded in the study area between April and November 2015. Whilst representing an increase of one when compared to 2014 the change is not statistically significant. All of the sightings in Calderdale were of first summer or juvenile birds.

A pair was monitored throughout the breeding season 3km north of our study area by Ian Hargreaves, in conjunction with Calderdale RSG. Following several weeks of monitoring it became clear that the breeding attempt had failed. A licenced nest visit confirmed that whilst a rudimentary nesting platform had been constructed any attempt at breeding had been abandoned early in the season.

Both Ian and Calderdale RSG wish to thank the Head Keeper for his invaluable assistance throughout the monitoring process.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Two birds were seen at an upland site on several occasions over the late spring and summer months. However, the presence of these birds did not lead to a breeding attempt.

In addition to the observations in the uplands there were further reports from coastal localities. A juvenile male was present at Teesmouth from 26th February to 5th March, before the number of reported sightings increased in May when passage birds were seen at four sites. There were regular reports from Teesmouth from late July though to October. Along the northern coastal stretch 2 and 3 birds moved south together on 13th and 16th September respectively, and finally singles were seen there on 9th and 13th November.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

There were eleven records between February and October registered on www.manchesterbirding.com. Those in the breeding season were as follows: in April, a female flew over Winter Hill on 6th, a female flew east at Ringing Pits on the 18th and a further bird flew north over Salford Quays on the 25th.

A male flying north was recorded on 3rd May at Pickley Green and a further bird was seen at Little Woolden Moss, on the same day. A third report of another bird is thought to be a re-sighting of a bird already recorded. An immature male was observed at Lightshaw on 15th August. This bird was probably the same bird that was subsequently seen flying south-east over Bamfurlong on 20th.

There was no indication of any summering birds on the mosslands during 2015.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

The Group monitored a successful nest once more in 2015. In a repeat of the 2014 breeding attempt the pair fledged 5 young. Marsh Harriers breed at 3 years of age and it is hoped that the Northumberland birds will form a seed population from which the species can expand locally.

Marsh Harriers are seen in small numbers, throughout the county, predominantly as migrants. However, there were also occasional sightings of over-wintering birds on the coast close to the breeding site.

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 were only a few records for the North York Moors during 2015. All the sightings were of single birds, which were presumed to be migrants or non-breeding wanderers.

There were 7 records from Scaling Dam Reservoir, a further 2 from Fylingdales Moor, 1 report from Sleddale and a final observation from Egton High Moor.

This total contrasts markedly with the 146 observations of birds notified to the Teesmouth Bird Club Recorder, all, with the exception of 7, were from various parts of the Tees Estuary where more attractive habitat for the species exists.

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.

Whilst this species is not known to breed in the study area there were several sightings during 2015. The sightings, all of single birds, continue to increase annually particularly in late summer and autumn. The birds are presumed to be moving through the area on passage.

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.

In 2015 there were reports of a number of birds passing through the study area during the summer months, suggesting that the upland areas are being used as passage / migration routes. An all-dark bird was seen drifting high over Chesterfield on 22nd August.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Yorkshire Dales: There are an increasing number of late summer records of juvenile and immature birds in the recording area. Some of these linger in one or two of the better watched areas but others may well be roaming widely or just passing through. The majority of records came from Wharfedale, presumably due to greater observer coverage, but there were also records in Ribblesdale and Wensleydale.

Nidderdale: There were occasional sightings of birds from June to September 2015. However, it is not clear how many individuals were involved.

NERF regional summary

Once again only the Northumbria Ringing Group reported a successful breeding attempt in 2015. However, most other NERF Groups observed passage migrants during both spring and autumn.

Since NERF began publishing collective data in 2009 734 pulli have been ringed, an average of 105 per year. The population, which was historically based in the south-east, is now expanding north and west towards the NERF study area.

Wing-tagging project

In 2011 Phil Littler commenced a 10-year wing tagging project in Norfolk where the current population is estimated to be in excess of 100 females. By the end of the 2016 season, 280 birds in total had been fitted with green wing tags, 54 of these in 2015.

The area covered includes the North Norfolk coast, the Norfolk Broads, and RSPB Lakenham Fen in Suffolk.

The survey is already showing some interesting findings:

Young birds are dispersing randomly, some staying local and others travelling to 7 different European countries, as well as all over the UK.

Very few of the tagged birds are breeding, far lower than the 20% expected.

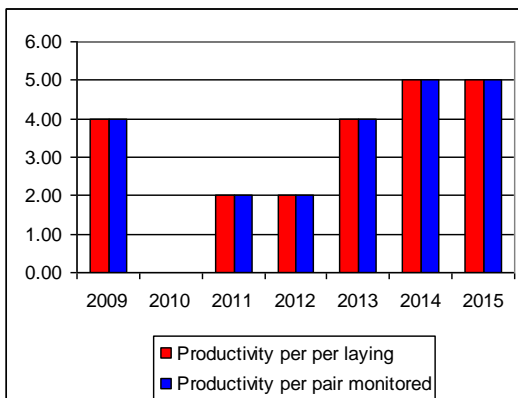
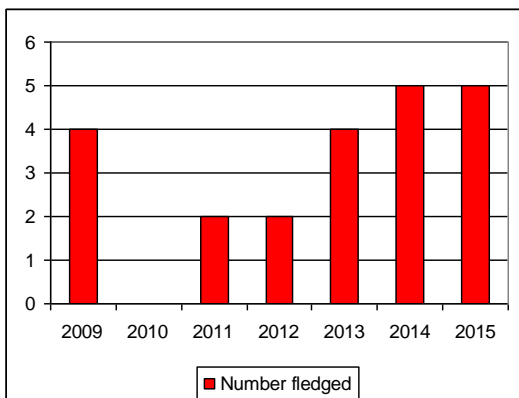
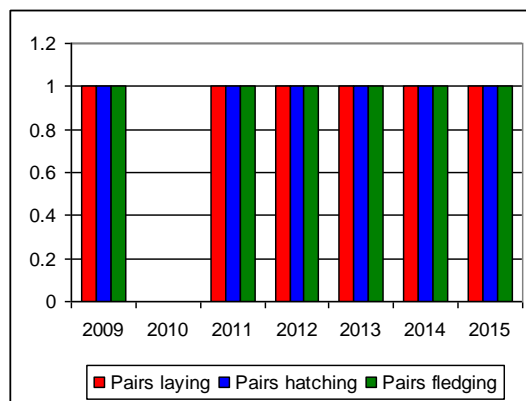
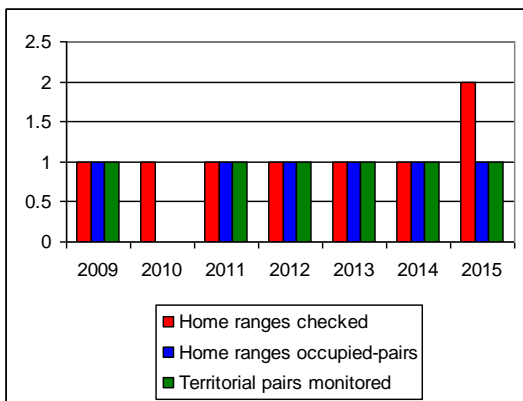
The few birds which are breeding tend to choose the same habitat that they themselves were bred in, e.g. oil seed rape, reedbeds. But they are not necessarily breeding near to their own natal area.



Phil is exploring the idea of satellite tags, as used with Hen Harriers, and is currently looking for sponsorship.

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

Comparative data 2009-2015



Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*



UK population estimate

The 2010 national survey provided an estimate of 660 pairs for the UK and Isle of Man as a whole (Hayhow *et al*, *Bird Study* 60, 446-458) with a declining trend. An important repeat national breeding survey has been completed in 2016 with the results yet to be published. The 2014 report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel showed that field-workers had monitored 268-393 pairs across the UK (Holling *et al*, *British Birds* 109: 491-545). The majority of birds breed in Scotland with much smaller and very vulnerable populations in Wales, 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

No other species attracts quite so much effort and concern for its wellbeing and protection as the Hen Harrier. The English population, centred in the northern uplands, remains especially vulnerable and close to extinction. The status reported here for 2015 offers little grounds for optimism.

Defra's Upland Stakeholder Group issued its Hen Harrier Joint Recovery Emergency Action Plan ahead of the 2016 breeding season but later separate instances of pole traps and decoys being set and apparently targeted at the Hen Harrier on driven grouse moor estates reinforces the view that illegal persecution remains the dominant factor in limiting the long overdue

expansion of the population in our area. Signals from satellite tagged birds have also been lost in unexplained circumstances since the Defra plan was issued. The updated Hen Harrier Conservation Framework will hopefully be published very soon (original by Fielding *et al*, 2011, JNCC Report 441) to further guide and inform the conservation patently still needed to protect this species.

NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	10	6	0	0	6	6	1	1	4	0.7	0.7
CRSR	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSR	8	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRG	9	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	8	4	4
NYMUBSR	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PDRMG	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SPRSR	5	0	2+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
YDRSR	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nidderdale RSG	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	51	9	8	1	8	8	3	3	12	1.5	1.5

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.

A complex set of sightings and breeding attempts were only properly interpreted thanks to many hours of meticulous fieldwork. During the spring and summer a total of 11 adult birds were recorded in the area; 7 males and 4 females. Of the males, two were in full adult plumage, one was a sub-adult and the remaining four were second calendar birds including one carrying a satellite tag (“Burt”). Of the females, three were fully adult and one was a second calendar bird carrying a satellite tag (“Highlander”). After pairing and nesting both of the adult grey males inexplicably disappeared leaving their two mates on eggs and, being unable to provision themselves, they soon deserted their clutches. The sub-adult male had paired with “Highlander” but he too disappeared leaving its tagged mate on eggs. One of the second calendar year males already paired with an adult female began to copulate with “Highlander” and continued to provide at both nests until “Highlander” eventually was forced to desert her eggs. One of the females which had lost her first full adult mate and deserted her nest then paired up with a second calendar male at her original nest site and put down a second clutch only for her new mate to go missing too and for her to desert her second clutch. By this time “Highlander” had relocated to a site 7 miles from her first territory, had paired with a second calendar male and had laid her second clutch of the season. This site failed in suspicious circumstances at late egg stage. This left just one pair hatching and fledging 4 young but it should be noted that only one bird survived to leave the natal area so the figure

of 4 fledging given in the table above doesn't really convey the eventual exceptionally poor outcome.

In summary, 4 females laid a total of 6 clutches but 4 nests were lost when the males disappeared and a fifth nest was lost at egg stage, possibly to mustelid predation though the evidence was by no means clear. A sixth nest initially fledged 4 young but only one survived to leave the natal area.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Hen Harriers were recorded in every month of the year in Calderdale with 93 reports, the majority of which were from the western border of the study area.

The winter roost formed at the end of 2014 continued into the early months of 2015 with regularly 2 and occasionally 3 birds present. As in previous years the roosting birds dispersed in spring to their breeding grounds, the last spring individual being a young male seen sky dancing on 10th May. Birds returned to the roost in autumn with a maximum of 4 present in November reducing to 3 in December. For the second year in succession the roost was frequented by "Highlander", a satellite tagged bird from Bowland.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: Excellent coverage; nearly all suitable habitat receives annual coverage

The year opened with 2-3 birds present around one upland roost area but these dispersed in early spring coincident with a few isolated reports of single birds in the eastern lowlands.

March and April provided reports of single birds at two upland localities but neither lingered whilst a pair present briefly at a third site appear to have been disturbed by heather burning and were not seen subsequently.

There were no further reports until the final quarter when single birds were recorded from 6 upland areas and 2-3 again occupied the known roost.

There has been just one breeding attempt in the county in the last decade; a nest in 2013 which failed when the adult male disappeared.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Lone ringtails were reported on single days from Astley Green and Little Woolden Moss in January, from Burnt Edge in February and from Smithills Moor in March and early April. A ringtail was seen at Smithills on 31st August with Little Woolden Moss and Castleshaw Reservoirs both recording ringtails on 9th October. Two different males and a female were seen on the morning of 26th October at Smithills Moor and finally a ringtail flew over Astley on 9 November. (Records courtesy of www.manchesterbirding.com and Leigh OS)

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

Level of monitoring: Good coverage; several long term study areas.

After a spate of unproductive years 2015 proved to be very exciting with the discovery of an adult male and two females nesting at one location. Two clutches of 4 and 5 were laid from which broods of 3 and 5 fledged. All young were colour ringed and two had satellite tags fitted one of which, a male, travelled to northern France to winter where unfortunately it was later found dead.

At another site an unmated male displayed for the majority of the summer but failed to attract a mate.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable monitoring of suitable habitat.

There was no evidence of any breeding attempts over the spring and summer.

There were occasional sightings in the winter months in the Sleddale, Guisborough Moor, Scaling Dam and Fylingdales Moor areas and at the latter site a male and female passed through together on 2 September.

Several former traditional roosts were checked regularly over the winter months but there were no signs of occupancy.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

A number of sightings of Hen Harrier in suitable habitat during the spring and summer were all given the highest priority for follow-up monitoring. Unfortunately only single birds were observed and none lingered for more than a few days. No nesting attempts were recorded.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Good coverage; several representative areas are studied.

Monitoring effort and sightings in 2015 were concentrated in areas where successful breeding has been recorded in the Peak District in recent years. Single birds were reported throughout April, May and June including a displaying male in April and a displaying female in May both in the vicinity of the nest site located by the National Trust shooting tenant in the previous year. Disappointingly no pair establishment or nesting attempt was recorded in 2015.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable / good coverage of a representative study area.

Yorkshire Dales. Despite large areas of suitable habitat there were no known breeding attempts in the Dales.

Nidderdale. A single bird lingered in one area from June until at least August. Three young birds fitted with satellite tags at nests in other regions were known to have frequented the area in autumn but their signals were lost in December.

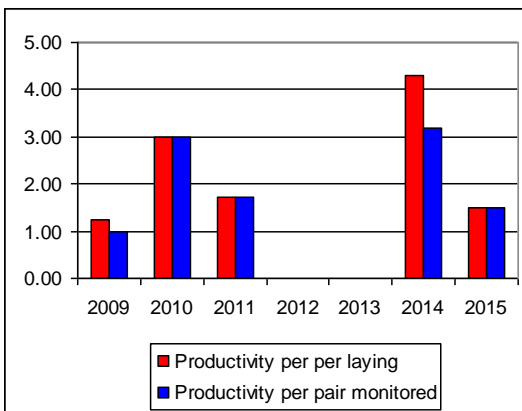
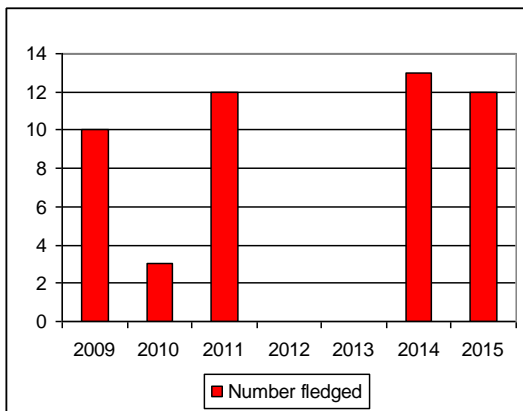
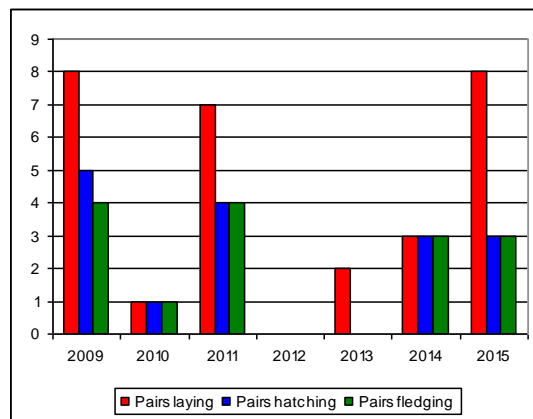
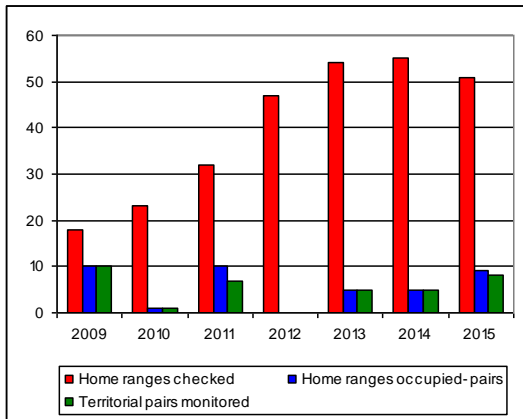
NERF regional summary

There were other breeding attempts in the uplands of northern England in 2015 which occurred outside the areas monitored directly by NERF member groups. Combining all reports for northern England, there were just 13 known nesting attempts. Six of these were successful in fledging 18 young. Of the seven which failed, one was thought to be due to natural causes, one was probably due to mustelid predation and 5 occurred after the male disappeared causing the female to desert. Male birds almost never naturally abandon a female sitting on eggs so to have 5 such examples within such a small number of breeding attempts stretches arguments for this being due to natural causes beyond any reasonable credibility. The evidence for these sad losses points strongly towards continued illegal

persecution as does the unexplained loss of signals from several satellite tagged young in their first winter.

NERF member groups continue to work with the RSPB Hen Harrier LIFE+ Project to monitor winter roosts, respond promptly with follow-up visits to reports from the public submitted into the RSPB's Hen Harrier Hotline and, of course, to support monitoring and protection efforts at any breeding site.

Comparative data 2009-2015



Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*



UK population estimate

In 2015 it is understood that there were only 5 nesting attempts nationally for Montagu's Harrier, all of these occurring outside the NERF study area although one of these was very close to the south of this area.

(<http://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/tracking/montagus-harrier/>)

The RBBP report for 2014 stated that ten sites had fledged 19 young. (Holling M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014. *British Birds* 2016 109: 491-545).

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 two successes in recent years (2010 and 2014). 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

The data for 2015 has been very thin on the ground with few positive identifications of Montagu's Harrier passing through the area by fieldworkers, giving the overall view that the species is not present with the NERF area.

NERF regional summary

With the contraction of the Northern England Raptor Forum, East Yorkshire sightings have been absent in 2015 for Montagu's Harrier, particularly on the east coast, making a notable species absence for this year. Whilst Montagu's Harrier remains a rare visitor and even rarer breeder in the study areas it is not inconceivable that they could colonise the area particularly in the Yorkshire Wolds, on the rolling arable fields or in the North York Moors as was proven recently in the moorland area, if they can become established in their current natal area in East Yorkshire.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*



UK population estimate

The 428-622 pairs reported to RBBP in 2014 represented a considerable increase over 2013 and is the first time over 600 pairs have been reported. (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014. *British Birds* 109: September 2016 491-545).

This is well 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)	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
BRSG	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSG	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUBSG	7	4	3	1	2	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NRG North'ld	57	37	3	7	30	28	22	19	41+	1.46	1.37
NRG Cumbria	4	3	0	0	3	1	1	1	2	2.00	0.67
PDRMG	6	3	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
SPRSG	20	13	NC	0	13	13	12	11	26	2.0	2.0
Totals	96	61	8	11	49	43	36	31	69+	1.6	1.4

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Goshawks attempt to breed at a traditional site every year on a private shooting estate but fail due to persecution; the birds are prevented from settling. Extensive habitat throughout the Bowland area remains unoccupied. Odd pairs possibly breed in some isolated areas where they remain undetected.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

During spring there were just three sightings of single birds across the whole of the study area. All three were thought to be males and one was observed engaged in an apparently unsuccessful display flight.

The only potential evidence of breeding was the presence of a juvenile female observed in the same location on four separate dates in early August. However, the nest, if indeed there was a nest in Calderdale, was not located, therefore whether the juvenile was the result of local breeding is open to conjecture.

There is ample habitat for Goshawk in Calderdale but once again, disappointingly, there were only 10 records throughout the whole of 2015.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Monitoring again focused on evidence of display early in the season. Adult females with accompanying males were seen at 4 locations but at least one site was affected by planned forestry felling work in February. In general, display was very limited suggesting population levels remain low and indeed vulnerable although an adult male and two juvenile males were seen at one location. Confirmation of breeding was hard to come by despite ground searches of key areas in July and August. The species is probably scarcer than it was even say 5 years with just a handful of pairs in the county each having an uncertain breeding outcome.

There was an unusual coastal report of a bird flying SW on 20th April at Whitburn Observatory.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

Northumberland:

The Northumbria RG again worked very well with the Forestry Commission to lessen the problems of forest operations.

The 2015 breeding season was very similar to 2014, with a healthy 30 territories found (28 in 2014) fledging 41 young (44 in 2014). Again, three home ranges were occupied by single birds.

In one area, monitoring resumed at two territories, after a gap of a few years.

Cumbria:

Another two nests were found in Cumbria but were outside this study area.

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 2015 to be published. One very definite nest failure at the egg stage this season is the third to occur at one particular site over the past five years. However, nest occupation was never proven in respect of the other two instances, despite the birds being well established and defending nest territory vigorously. All adult activity suddenly ceased without explanation, and this season a clutch of 4 eggs containing well developed embryos was found apparently abandoned. Conversely, a pair nesting on the other side of the forest has successfully fledged young for at least the last 4 seasons. Significantly perhaps, this pair nests adjacent to a moor managed by the Hawk & Owl Trust whilst the failed pair territory lies within 400 metres of the eastern border of one of the Grosmont Estates actively and enthusiastically kept grouse moors! No further comment required.

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.

Goshawks were confirmed present at 3 sites in the PDRMG study area, and there was one confirmed breeding attempt (South Yorkshire). This breeding attempt failed for unknown reasons at the egg stage. In addition there were a number of sightings of single birds reported to the group but no evidence of breeding was found in these areas.

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 2015: at one site four young (one female and three males) were ringed and successfully fledged, while at the other site birds were present, and four eggs were laid; the nest was intentionally disturbed in early May and the birds deserted.

Elsewhere in the SPRSG recording area 11 sites were occupied (one of which is in South Yorkshire) and a total of at least 22 young fledged from ten successful nests; one pair failed at the small young stage. One young fledged bird was killed by a fox. Three birds were seen early in the year in one area of central Derbyshire but no evidence of breeding was found.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

This species continues to be an enigma in the Dales with very few confirmed sightings. It is thought that there are two areas where Goshawks are present, but ascertaining the actual status is difficult. All records relate to birds seen early in the year and there have not been any sightings of juveniles in late summer/autumn for many years.

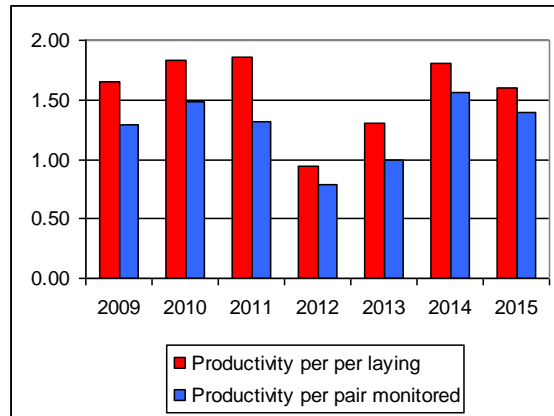
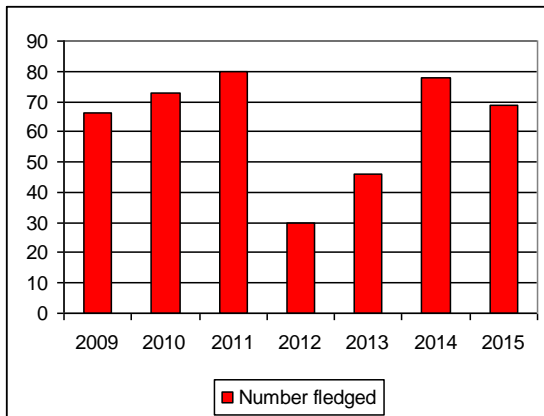
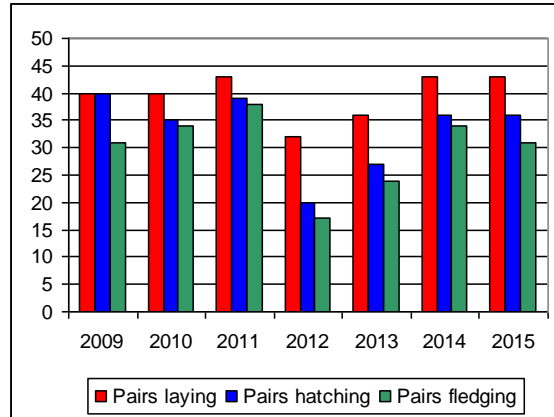
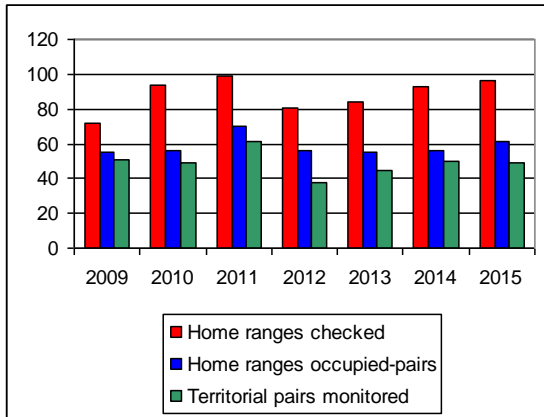
NERF regional summary

Once again in the whole of the NERF area, there are only three areas where the Goshawk populations are large enough and robust enough to get a population estimate, Northumbria, South Peaks, and the North York Moors (data withheld).

Both Northumbria and South Peaks fledged slightly less young than the previous year (67+, 73+ in 2014). But in Northumbria, there was a slight increase in occupied home ranges to 37 (32 in 2014), whereas in the South Peak RSG area, a decrease was noted to 13 (16 in 2014). As in all previous years of the NERF reports, it's the "same old story" of only a few pairs or more likely just displaying unmated males recorded.

Away from the three main areas, Goshawks were recorded by BRSR, CRSR, DUBSR and PDRSR, but only a possible 3 pairs were found and no fledged young were confirmed.

Comparative data 2009-2015



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 2015 in England showed a 25% increase 2014-15, and a 17% decrease in the period 1995-2014.

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)	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	4	4	0	NC	4	4	2	2	6	1.50	1.50
MRG	22	22	NC	NC	4	4	3	3	7	1.75	1.75
NRG	35	26	0	3	21	21	16	14	28	1.33	1.33
PDRMG	18	13	NC	NC	13	13	11	11	40	3.08	3.08
Totals	79	65	0	3	42	42	32	30	81	1.92	1.92

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

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

2015 was a very good year for sightings of Sparrowhawk with 256 records coming from 46 sites across the study area. Four nests were located, two of which both raised 3 young each; the outcome of the other 2 nests was unknown. It is highly likely that many other pairs nested undetected.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

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.

264 records from www.manchesterbirding.com plus records from members revealed only 4 instances of confirmed breeding. Two females laid in the same nest at a site in Wigan, but the nest failed.

There were 5 further sites where records suggested probable breeding had occurred.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

As in 2014 data was received from 3 areas:

Border Forest Kielder	15 nests fledged 21+ young
Slaley Forest	3 nests fledged 4 young
MOD Otterburn	3 nests fledged 3 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.

The Sparrowhawk is not a targeted study species of the NYMMSG. However, if and when nests are located in the course of other operations they are monitored to the outcome stage and young ringed if possible. No nests were encountered in 2015 but displaying males and pairs were observed in few areas. To judge from the regularity of sightings of birds across the NYMs the species would seem to be faring well here.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Due to other commitments, lower effort was expended on Sparrowhawk than in previous years, except in the on-going study area in South Yorkshire where monitoring continued as normal. At the main study site ten nests were monitored, two failed at egg / small young stage, eight nests were successful and at least 28 young fledged. No young were ringed due to climbing restrictions imposed by The Forestry Commission. Outside the study area, three nests were monitored in South Yorkshire, with twelve young ringed from these nests.

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.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

No formal monitoring occurs; casual records indicate that this species is relatively widespread but scarce within the study area.

NERF regional summary

The Sparrowhawk remains widespread across the NERF region as a breeding species, however, due to the species being relatively common and as a result of the limited manpower available this species has been rather overlooked with regards to detailed monitoring in recent years. 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 2015 for England shows a 14% increase 2014-15 and a 182% increase 1995-2014.

The latest BTO Population Trend graphs show a continuing upward slope for 2015.

Conservation status

UK : **Green**
Europe: Not of concern
Globally: Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

Whilst overall the population nationally and within the NERF area is healthy and growing this trend tends to hide continuing pockets where numbers are noticeably below the habitat carrying capacity. Non-keepered areas continue to have the best figures.

The concerns over the issuing of “control” [ie. Killing] licences for Buzzards raised in the 2014 Annual Review have proved prescient as in July 2016 Natural England granted a licence for the “control of up to 10 Buzzards to prevent serious damage to young pheasants.” The licence stipulates that the “control” must be used in combination with non-lethal measures and only on Buzzards in and immediately around the bird cages – not on passing birds, although how this will be monitored to ensure compliance is unclear. The licensee/estate has not been named in the information released.

The killing of a native wild bird in order to protect a non-native species being intensively reared for commercial shooting, without any rigorous research of the alternatives and the impacts, is a major concern of NERF shared with many organisations interested in the conservation of our avifauna, and there are genuine fears that this could be extended to other much more vulnerable species covered in this Review.

NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
CRSG	4	4	NC	NC	4	4	2	2	NC	NC	NC
MRG	76	23	NC	NC	23	23	22	22	33+	1.43	1.43
Nidderdale RSG	3	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
NRG	135	135	0	NC	108	NC	NC	37	56	NC	NC
NYMUBSG	11	11	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC
PDRMG	20	20	NC	2	15	15	15	15	22	1.47	1.47
Totals	250	194	0	2	151	43	40	77	113+	1.63	1.63

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Only one pair breeds within the monitored study area and this is considered to be due to deliberate disturbance preventing birds settling at suitable sites. However many pairs breed on nearby in-by-land and these birds hunt over the upland areas, of which many are seen to be showing wing damage suggestive of shot damage.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

The number of sightings continues to increase across the study area with almost 400 records being submitted during 2015. With limited resources the Group only partially monitored 4 pairs throughout the season and were regrettably unable to record the outcome at those nests. Taking into account the number of sightings reported it is highly likely that other pairs successfully raised young. On one occasion 10 first summer birds were observed soaring over Walshaw Dean in May.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

2015 confirmed the relatively recently established eastern bias to the distribution of Buzzards across County Durham with only c.20% of reports being generated from the upland areas, out of c.1100 submitted to the County Bird Club. The Group no longer systematically monitors the species because of its widespread nature. Within the study area several large inter-acting groups of 8-12 birds were noted in spring. Fledged birds were later noted at three of these

sites but post-breeding groups of 8 and 9 elsewhere on the very eastern and western edges respectively of the study area, though un-aged, suggested local success.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study. 23 instances of confirmed breeding were reported, producing a minimum of 33 young. This represents a considerable increase on 2014 when only 9 nests were found, producing 11 young. One nest was predated, probably by humans. In particular, David Steel and Gordon Yates found several nests.

There were 32 sites where breeding was probable, and 21 where sightings suggested a territory was held.

As well as records from Group members, analysis of 537 records posted on www.manchesterbirding.com was useful to determine probable and possible breeding.

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.

Data was received from three areas –

Border Forest, Kielder: 57 nests were found of which 36 were successful, fledging 54 young.

South Cheviots/MOD Otterburn: 50 occupied territories were found

North Cheviots: 28 occupied territories were found

In the South Cheviots/MOD Otterburn study area Buzzards were confirmed as the commonest raptor, now dominating former Goshawk nesting territories.

The NRG also study Buzzards within Grizedale Forest in Cumbria where 5 nests were found each fledging 1 young.

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.

The species continues to establish itself across the area. Eleven pairs were reported as either definitely or probably breeding although the true number almost certainly was considerably higher than this. Manpower restrictions within the Group prevent more systematic monitoring. However, it appears that the species is still steadily increasing year-on-year at least away from grouse moors, although so far there is no actual or anecdotal evidence to imply that active removal of birds is occurring on these estates.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Common Buzzard continues to thrive away from the grouse moors with all known sites within the PDRMG area occupied early in the season. However, failures continue to be common in areas adjacent to the grouse moors. Seven young were ringed from six nests in West Yorkshire and a seventh was occupied but the outcome was unknown. One nest was fully monitored in the Group's Derbyshire area where three young were ringed and all fledged. One nest monitored in Greater Manchester produced one young which was ringed and fledged. In South Yorkshire seven nesting attempts were recorded, of which two pairs failed early and five pairs were successful in rearing eleven young.

A Common Buzzard was found dead on the edge of the moorland near to Glossop. There was concern about the visible damage the bird had sustained and an x-ray revealed that it had been shot. It is likely that this had occurred relatively close to where it was found given the amount of shot seen in the bird. This is the second Common Buzzard found killed in this area. In 2014 a bird was found dead close to a new nest. X-rays proved that this bird had also been shot with a shotgun.

South Peak 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.

The Group no longer systematically monitors the species as it is so widespread, although continued lack of successful breeding adjacent to the Upper Derwentdale grouse moors points towards persecution as the likely cause.

Yorkshire Dales and Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Yorkshire Dales

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland.

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

The species continues to be seen across the Dales but the number of breeding pairs is not known.

Nidderdale

Extent of coverage: Part of upland area.

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

No pairs monitored although at least three pairs noted in the Gouthwaite Reservoir area.

What remains notable is the absence of pairs above Lofthouse where there used to be several pairs and the absence of possible breeding birds on the Swinton Estate.

NERF regional summary

Regionally, the species continues to recover after decades of persecution. However, the relatively limited success of breeding Buzzards in many upland areas of northern England is still evident and contrasts increasingly with the growth experienced in the lowland areas, which, notably, are usually un-kept.

There is a clear pattern of failures in and around grouse moors, and visible evidence of gunshot damage to birds was noted in Bowland and actual evidence of killing by the same method proven in the Peak District. There is no doubt that more casual disturbance takes place which prevents many birds from settling down to nest. So there is no room for any complacent view that everything is all right with this species.

Against this background there appears to be a creeping acceptance within some official bodies that controlled killing can be justified.

In the view of NERF the granting of “control” licences by Natural England should only be based on sound scientific published evidence of the nature and extent of any particular instance of Buzzards taking penned Pheasant poults and on the impacts of intervention, and then only after all non-lethal means of mitigation have been applied and exhausted.

The losses of poults to Buzzards must be miniscule in number compared to other causes such as road deaths, and suggests an industry, which rears and releases over 40 million Pheasants into the wild each year, that is being run on non-sustainable lines if it cannot withstand such limited predation.

That no details of how the approved killing will be monitored only heightens concerns that this approach is the ‘thin end of the wedge’ towards greater controls over supposedly legally protected raptors.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*



UK population estimate

203-237 breeding pairs were estimated by RBBP in their 2014 report (Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014. *British Birds* 109: September 2016 491-545), with a minimum of 378 young fledging – the first time in over a century that the number of known breeding pairs in the UK has exceeded 200.

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

Ospreys are generally liked by most people, or at least tolerated, and as the population has expanded there have had to move into more areas closer to people nesting in country parks, and near footpaths etc.

This has brought about new threats, disturbance by birdwatchers or photographers, fisherman, farmers and walkers.

There is still a concern about egg collectors, and the ever-present threat that a bird might be persecuted, but these are minor as the popularity of the Osprey with nest cameras, blogs, and even live viewing continues to grow. The threats to these birds can be well managed.

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)	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
NRG	4	4	0	1	3	3	3	3	6	2.00	2.00

Group Reports

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

There were just 4 sightings of migrants during 2015. Single birds were observed on their northern migration routes on the 7th April and 8th April. The remaining 2 sightings were recorded on the 30th June and the 23rd August as the birds returned to over-winter 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 report for the county came from Weardale on 1st April, followed by further records of birds moving north at 10 locations by month-end, and at 13 locations during May. Two birds once again lingered at Derwent Reservoir on the Northumberland / Durham border to bring hope that this location may eventually host a breeding attempt.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Spring saw 11 records of passage birds moving N, NW or E between 6th and 18th April – some of these may have involved the same bird.

Between 25th August and 1st October 6 birds were recorded on return passage.

A much better year than 2014 when only 6 sightings were recorded.

All except one of these records were posted on www.manchesterbirding.com

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Although not as good as 2014, this year was still very exciting, with 6 young fledged and another pair settling in to another platform, which we have provided.

Many passage birds are now being recorded throughout the county. It's hard to put a number on them, but 30+ is a bare minimum.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The only known records are of migrants recorded by Teesmouth Bird Club members at Scaling Dam Reservoir on 15th April and over the period 13th-16th September.

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.

There has been an increased frequency of sightings of birds on passage within the study area. In September 2015 an Osprey was reported as being found injured in the Glossop area, the bird unfortunately died before it could be recovered. A post mortem of the dead bird revealed that both legs had recently been broken, injuries consistent with being caught in a spring trap prior to its death. A reward of £1000 was offered for information leading to a conviction.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Ospreys are 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. On 22nd June and on 28th August birds were seen in the Rowsley area and both were seen to catch fish; however neither bird stayed and it was assumed that the river water level was too low for their liking.

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.

Yorkshire Dales: The number of passage migrants continues to increase in line with the national population trend. There are a number of records in most years that may relate to one or two birds lingering through the spring and summer, especially in the south east of the area.

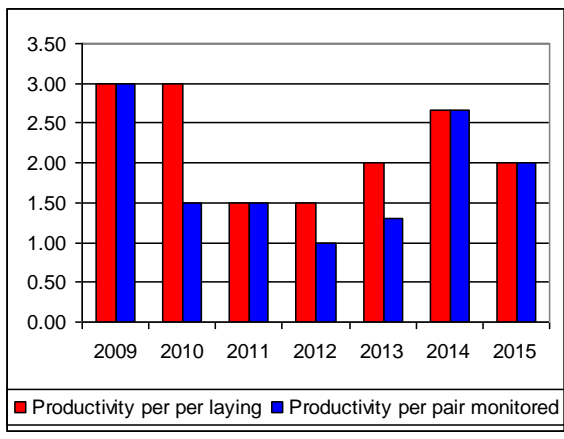
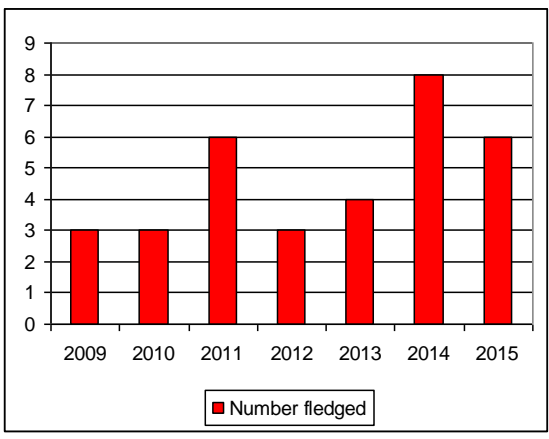
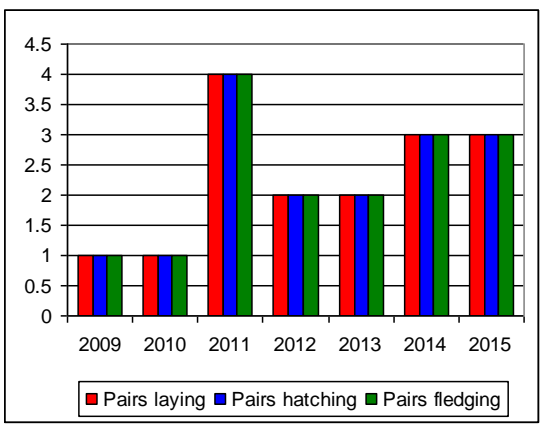
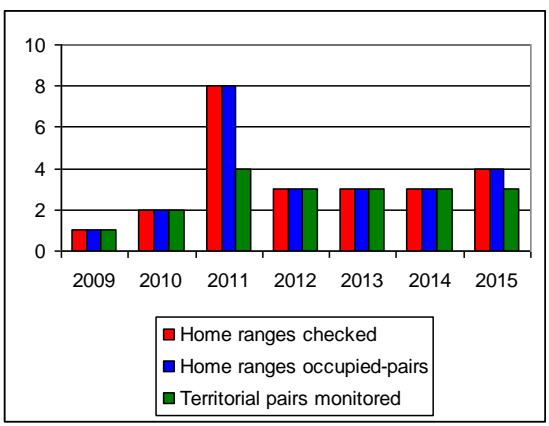
Nidderdale: An average passage year with several recorded in both spring and autumn.

NERF regional summary

Once again the only area where Ospreys bred is Northumberland. After the record year of 2014 where 8 young fledged, 2015 was nearer average with 6 young fledging from 3 nests, but on a more optimistic note another pair took over an artificial nest but never nested. As the population expands, hopefully new waters will be colonised. The only other report of a pair was received from Durham where two birds summered at a reservoir - hopefully a good sign.

All other NERF areas are recording more passage birds, and with the growing interest in putting up artificial nests, either in trees or on poles, it might not be too long before other pairs start to show an interest.

Comparative data 2009-2015



Barn Owl *Tyto alba*



UK population estimate

After the excellent breeding season of 2014, it was only to be expected that 2015 could not be as good, and indeed that was the case. The Barn Owl Trust commented, in their annual publication *The state of the UK Barn Owl population 2015*:

“Overall, 2015 was a poor year for Barn Owls in the UK but with marked geographical variation. Our initial impression, that Barn Owls in the west had a good year and those in the east had a poor year, turned out to be unrepresentative. In reality the results showed marked variation within regions and even within counties.”

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. [Musgrove *et al*: Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom (*British Birds* 106: February 2013:64-100)] gives a figure of 4000 (3000-5000) based on the now rather old survey date of 1995-1997. The work done by the many Barn Owl groups around the country to increase the number of boxes, especially at higher altitudes where they were not thought to breed in any numbers, may have resulted in a considerably higher population today.

Conservation status

UK **Green**

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.

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
BRSBG	34	34	0	1	33	33	31	30	85	2.57	2.57
CRSG	1	1	5	0	1	1	1	1	3	3.00	3.00
DUBSG	3	3	NC	NC	3	3	3	3	NC	NC	NC
MRG	69	37	2	5	28	28	26	24	55+	1.96	2
NRG	224	77	1	4	73	73	72	67	199	2.73	2.73
NYMUBSG	51	22	4	3	21	18	18	18	77	4.27	3.66
PDRMG	10	7	NC	NC	7	7	7	7	NC	NC	NC
SPRSG	8	7	1	0	7	7	7	7	13+	1.86	1.86
YDRSG	13	13	0	0	7	7	7	7	21	3.00	3.00
Totals	413	201	13	13	180	177	172	164	453	2.52	2.63

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. The Barn Owl Trust also suggests that improvements in box design should be incorporated into replacements or new boxes, to increase owlet survival.

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.

Barn Owls seem to do well in the old stone barns that are abundant in Bowland and given time and manpower the group could add significantly to the number of breeding pairs as we have only scratched the surface. Some pairs suffered this season late on due to the vole crash in June and young were found dead in an emaciated state in the barns.

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.

In common with previous years, single birds were reported from five discrete locations across the study area during 2015.

A breeding pair was located in late September nesting on top of large bales in a Dutch barn. One of the chicks was ringed and whilst the other two were visible they remained out of reach amongst the hay bales. Unfortunately two of the fledged young were later picked up dead; one was involved in a fatal road accident and the second was located in one of the other farm buildings and is believed to have died due to starvation. Whilst this pair was in all probability raising a second brood when they were located this success represents the first confirmed breeding within Calderdale since 2007.

The Group is very grateful to the farmer who left the barn undisturbed during the breeding season. To avoid potential problems, should the birds return and attempt to nest on top of the bales in future years, the Group has erected a nest box within the barn.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Upland sites appeared to enjoy a good year with pairs occupying several territories where they have never been previously recorded.

In an upland tributary valley of the River Tees three pairs bred successfully in field barns adjacent rough pasture at approx. 350 metres a.s.l. Hunting birds were still prominent towards the end of the year in the uplands with local residents in both Weardale and Teesdale reporting sightings where never previously seen and one moor supporting at least 7 birds. In contrast, reports for the county as a whole suggested normal numbers, with several pairs only able to fledge small broods of 1-2 young.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Whilst many other areas reported a very disappointing season after the bumper year of 2014, sites occupied were comparable with last year although the number of chicks fledged was well down at 52 compared with 99 in 2014. However, 5 boxes/sites were used for the first time in 2015 – perhaps due to 2014 young colonising - and 2 others showed signs of use, but breeding did not take place. There were the usual problems of monitoring young – refusal of access, frail ceilings or dangerous structures, cliff sites etc. Two sites were lost during the year – one due to development and another, nearby, due to roof repairs. Hopefully this latter site will be available in 2016.

Ten further boxes were made and erected during 2015 and at least 5 of these had owls already present or in the vicinity.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

Although not in any way as productive as 2014, this year was still pretty good with a healthy 199 chicks from 73 nests. The number of nests is the same as 2014, but the young raised per brood is well down with an average of 4.29 in 2014, but only 2.73 in 2015.

Barn owls are now a common sight when driving at night round the county.

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.

Scheme A: Is a South Cleveland Ringing Group nest box scheme. Contrary to the experiences nationally of many other monitors of this species, the NYM birds fared very well this season. Admittedly, broods were generally smaller than in 2014 but the shortfall was adequately compensated by the location of several new successful pairs. Forty-one of the 50 chicks were ringed. Providing winter weather does not cause excessive mortality the species looks set to go from strength to strength, unlike Tawny Owls which appear to be heading in quite the opposite direction!

Scheme B: Run by G. Myers on the western perimeter of the NYMs. Fifteen young represents a welcome improvement over the 2014 nil return for these boxes. 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, 10 occupied, all pairs hatched eggs and produced a total of 34 fledged young: almost 50% down on 2014 productivity.

Scheme C: Covers the south-eastern area of the National Park and

Scheme A: Is a South Cleveland Ringing Group nest box scheme. Contrary to the experiences nationally of many other monitors of this species, the NYM birds fared very well this season. Admittedly, broods were generally smaller than in 2014 but the shortfall was adequately compensated by the location of several new successful pairs. Forty-one of the 50 chicks were ringed. Providing winter weather does not cause excessive mortality the species looks set to go from strength to strength, unlike Tawny Owls which appear to be heading in quite the opposite direction!

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Scheme C: Covers the south-eastern area of the National Park and PDRMG area, Derbyshire Ornithological Society provided funding for materials to produce a number of Barn Owl nest boxes to be erected in the study area. Work on this began in November 2015 with 6 boxes erected to date.

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 SPRSG recording area, three broods of Barn Owls were ringed on the Chatsworth Estate: two broods of two, one brood of three and one adult male at the nest site; in addition two broods of three fledged near DWT reserves and two further pairs fledged young elsewhere. A single bird was found roosting in a derelict barn and regularly observed in the vicinity of Beeley Moor in the latter part of 2014 and during January 2015, but was not subsequently seen.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Yorkshire Dales

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

In addition to the figures in the table, there were a further three probable and four possible pairs. There were widespread reports from across the Dales throughout the year suggesting that the population is actually much higher than this, with many records from high ground. The range expansion over recent years has been remarkable, given how rare this species used to be.

Nidderdale

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas

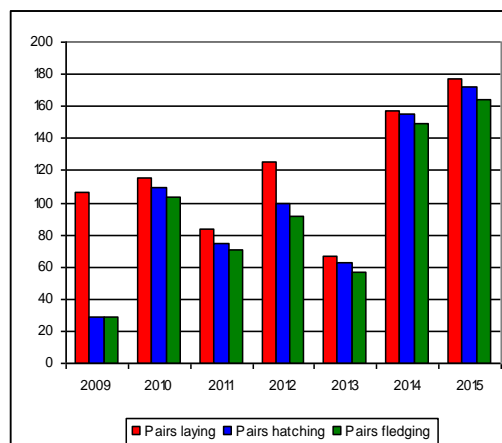
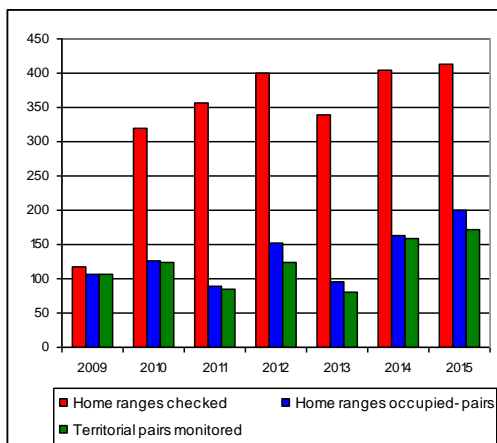
Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place

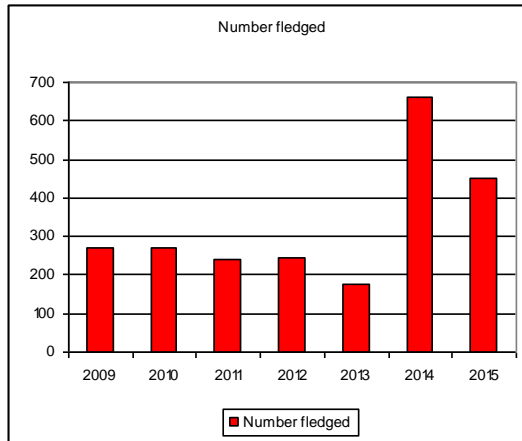
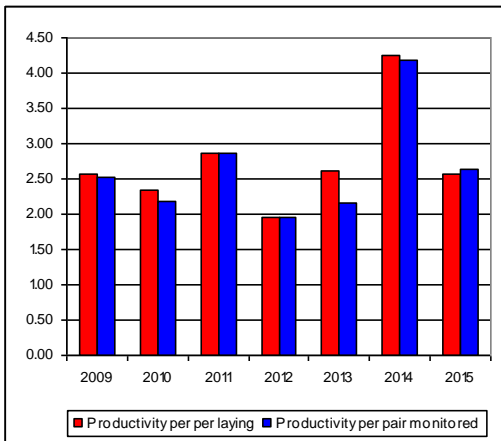
Several pairs are now known to be present within the AONB (less than ten) but currently none of these pairs are monitored.

NERF regional summary

The boost to the population as a result of the 2014 season appeared to be the reason for an increase in the NERF area in the number of occupied territories and in pairs laying eggs and fledging young in 2015. However despite these modest increases, the number of fledged young was only two-thirds of the 2014 total.

Comparative data 2009-2015





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.

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 re-found. (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)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only..

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

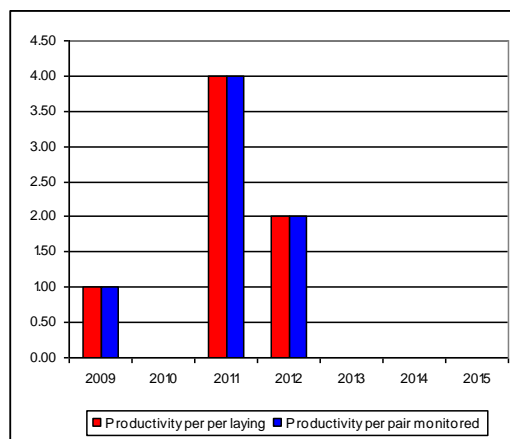
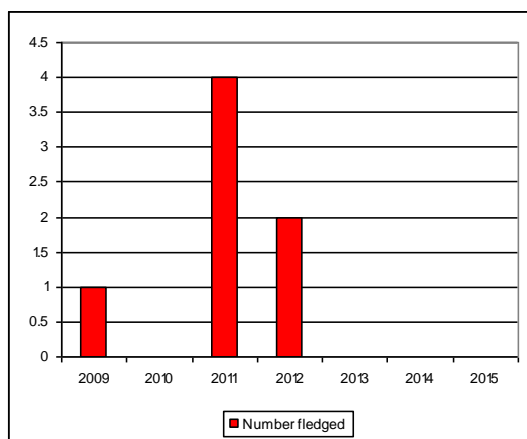
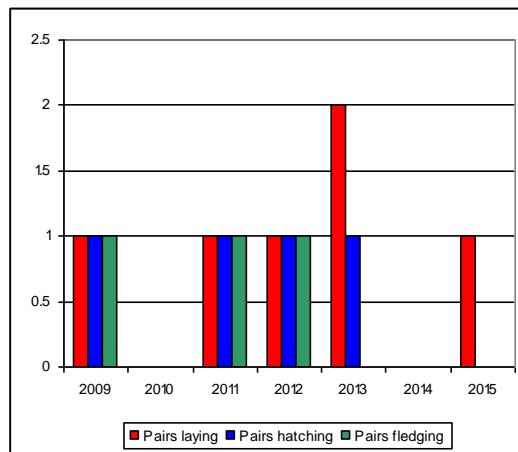
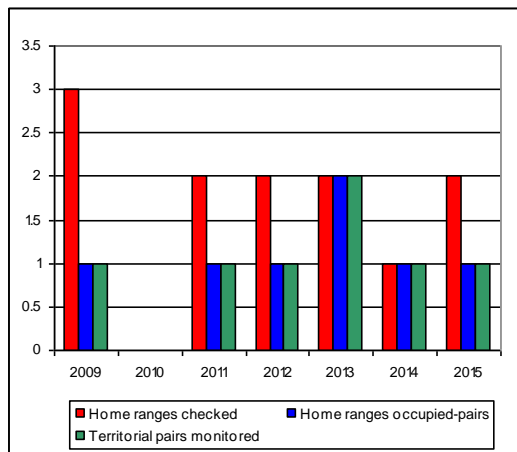
The Eagle Owl continues to breed at one location but suffers from casual disturbance by individuals intent on seeing the nest, this results in the female deserting the eggs. A second attempt is usually made but in 2015 it is not known if they laid again after a clutch of 4 was taken. There is no evidence that the Eagle Owl suffers from persecution on the United Utilities Estate and as yet no nests have been found on any of the private estates.

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 2009-2015



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 2015 BBS Report shows a 13% decline 2014-15 and a 59% decrease 1995-2014.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

The CBC/BBS trend for Little Owl in the UK shows very wide variation, but a downturn in recent decades suggests that a rapid decline now lies behind the observed fluctuations. The UK's Little Owl population has declined by 65% in 25 years 1988 - 2013 (BTO BirdTrends). There is as yet little direct evidence to explain the losses in the UK but continental studies suggest poor survival rates for juveniles to be a primary driver linked to changes in farming practices and habitat.

The UK Little Owl Project, set up in June 2015 by conservation biologist Dr Emily Joáchim, with the assistance of Andy Rouse Wildlife Photography, aims to further our understanding of the Little Owl's ecology in the UK. They want to support, develop and promote new and existing UK Little Owl research projects. This includes projects which monitor Little Owl nests, record biometrics, habitat use, diet, vocalisations and juvenile survival rates. They have set up a UK Little Owl sightings project for more information: www.littleowlproject.uk

NERF data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.0	5.0
CRSR	22	8	14	NC	1	1	1	1	4	4.0	4.0
MRG	19	2	NC	NC	2	2	2	2	2+	1.0	1.0
NRG	10	4	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1.0	1.0
NYMUBSG	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	3.0	3.0
SPRSG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2.0	2.0
Totals	55	17	15	0	7	7	7	7	17+	2.4	2.4

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.

The Little Owl breeds at a traditional site which is monitored casually on passing. Success can be proved when the chicks can be seen all stood together on the roof of the old barn on warm sunny days.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Only one pair was proven to breed in 2015 raising four young. However, given the number of adults located in suitable habitat throughout the breeding season it is reasonable to presume that other pairs also fledged young.

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 Little Owl remains uncommon around upland fringes and in the valleys of the mid-section of the main river systems. Always more common further to the east at lower elevations, reports from members of the Durham Bird Club in 2015 suggested that the species may be showing some signs of decline in its population within the county as a whole.

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 and from others, there were records from a total of 19 locations but breeding information came from only one of these, at Aspull, where at least 2 young fledged. Nesting was confirmed at a quarry in the east but the outcome was unknown.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study. The nest study in south east Northumberland only had one nest which fledged a single chick. In the Tyne/Wear area 3 pairs were located, but not followed though so the outcome is unknown. With a growing interest in this species, another study has been started this winter, with 10 boxes erected; we look forward to results in the summer of 2016.

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 species receives little targeted attention from the Merlin Group. However it does exist at a low density over the study area, being thinly distributed over farmland in the valleys and dales and moorland edge/in-by habitat. If nests are located they are monitored to outcome, although broods are seldom ringed, mainly because it is usually impossible to get at them due to the constrictive nature of the nest sites. One of five boxes monitored outside the NYMMG study area on the Tees Plain by G. Myers was occupied. For the second year in succession only a single chick fledged from this box. 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. No monitoring of Little Owl took place in 2015.

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. The group made no specific study of this species in 2015; however at one site near Ashford in the Water, the pair raised two young, observed on 11th August; this site has been occupied by Little Owls for over 40 years!

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Yorkshire Dales

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place. There has been an increase in casual records in some areas of the Dales, notably in Wharfedale which suggests that the population is increasing following significant declines during cold winter weather in 2010 and 2011.

Nidderdale

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

Level of monitoring: Occurs as a breeding species but no monitoring takes place. Little Owls appear relatively common in the lower parts of the Dale although there is no formal monitoring.

NERF regional summary

The Little Owl's preference for lowland, open arable habitat with old trees, mature hedgerows or farm out-buildings for nesting produces a bias away from it being seen and reported by RSG field-workers whose activities focus them into upland terrain. Nevertheless,

the species can be found in the NERF recording area at lower elevations though not at any great density.

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

Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*



UK population estimate

In 2005 the population was estimated at 50000 pairs (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, APEP 3: *British Birds* 106: February 2013). The Bird Atlas 2007-11 suggests a shallow decline of 17% 1967-2010 but the reasons for this are unknown. The Breeding Bird Survey 2015 suggested a 42% decrease 2014-15 and a 23% decline 1995-2014 with the caveat that nocturnal species are covered poorly by the scheme; for example the 2014 BBS found a 71% increase 2013-14!

Conservation status

UK	Amber
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

National and regional threat assessment

From causes that are not yet understood the UK breeding population of Tawny Owls has fallen by about a third over the last 25 years. Due to fears this represents a long-term decline in progress, the fourth review of Birds of Conservation Concern published in December 2015 moved the species from the Green to the Amber UK List.

One possible contributing factor to the decrease may be long-term effects of second generation rodenticides. However, as Barn Owls that predate the same range of rodent

species are now seemingly thriving nationally and exhibiting no marked warning signs of poisoning, this seems unlikely.

Direct persecution of the species by the gamekeeping fraternity occurs at an insignificant level these days and has no measurable detrimental effect on the population as a whole.

Individual birds, however, do succumb to either gun or that appalling, illegal contraption the pole trap, almost always at or in the vicinity of Pheasant coops.

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	20	7	13	NC	3	2	2	2	2	1.00	0.66
MRG	81	40	NC	NC	40	40	40	40	63+	1.58	1.58
NRG	N 246	79	0	0	76	75	71	70	162	2.16	2.13
	C 110	34	0	0	34	34	29	28	42	1.24	1.24
NYMUBSG	A27	6	0	0	6	6	4	3	3	0.50	0.50
	B 4	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2.00	2.00
PDRMG	19	12	NC	NC	12	12	8	8	16	1.33	2.00
Totals	507	179	13	0	172	170	155	152	290	1.71	1.69

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

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

Level of monitoring: Part upland & part lowland areas.

Tawny Owls are not monitored by Bowland Raptor Study group but good numbers do breed in the area. One interesting find was a pair which reared 2 young on a very remote crag that is a traditional Peregrine site; the Peregrine failed early in the season due to suspected persecution.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

There are large tracts of suitable habitat within the study area much of which contained singing males in spring. Seven territories were found to be occupied by pairs but only 3 nests were located, all in boxes, two produced young but the third box, which showed evidence of being used, was empty when checked.

There is little doubt that the species is overlooked and in an attempt to improve the situation the Group has erected 22 nest boxes across the study area.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

This is undoubtedly the county's commonest owl which can be found across the full range of woodland habitats including those adjoining open upland moor. Pairs were present along the higher reaches of the rivers Wear, Tees, Lune and Greta. Eight breeding pairs were confirmed in the Stang Forest.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; at least one long-term monitoring study. Peter and Norma Johnson monitored 25 boxes and found 49 young (average 1.96) in the Bury area. There were 15 other sites where breeding success was known and a minimum of 15 young fledged. One of these, from Leigh, had to be euthanized after sustaining a severe facial injury. A further 41 territories were deduced from other records.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

2015 was a good year overall.

Data was received from 6 areas in Northumberland. Some studies monitored as few as 4 boxes with the Kielder operation the largest, covering 125 boxes.

There are two independent studies in Cumbria: one in the north in Kershope Forest, and the other in the south, Grizedale Forest.

Cumbria returns were much poorer than those from across the border in Northumberland, with 34 nests producing a fledging rate per nest of 1.24 compared to 2.16 per nest in Northumberland.

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.

To judge from the results of the two regular nestbox schemes, yet another dismal breeding season was experienced by this species across the NYMs. Again it is curious that the lack of breeding success is in direct contrast to the fortunes of Barn Owls which for the second successive season were on the whole very successful. If one accepts the results from schemes A & B over the last few years are likely to be a reasonably accurate reflection of productivity across the NYMs, then clearly this species is experiencing problems in some respect or other. The South Cleveland RG data for the season are again included in the table below, for continuity purposes only at this stage.

**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
2012-15	112	21	18.8	14	23	1.6	1.10

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Brood sizes were noticeably smaller than in 2014, probably due to a reduction in available prey numbers in the study area and poor weather conditions making hunting difficult. Sixteen birds were ringed from eight nests.

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.

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

No indication of any change in status in the Dales area.

NERF regional summary

Regionally the species seems to be performing reasonably well with the exception of the North York Moors where the indications from long-term nestbox studies suggest the species is experiencing problems there.

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.
European	Not of concern
Global	Least concern

National and local threat assessment

The main threat to Long-eared Owl is thought 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.

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	14	13	1	2	11	11	11	11	34+	3.09	3.09
MRG	6	6	NC	NC	6	6	6	6	12	2.00	2.00
NRG	24	12	0	0	12	9	9	6	6+	0.67+	0.50+
NYMUBSG	4	2	0	0	2	2	2	1	2	1.00	1.00
PDRMG	23	20	NC	4	19	20	15	14	30+	1.50+	1.58+
SPRSG	5	5	0	0	5	5	5	5	8+	1.60+	1.60+
YDRSG	6	6	NC	NNC	3	3	3	3	8	2.67	2.67
Totals	82	64	1	6	58	56	51	46	100+	1.79+	1.72+

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

2015 was Calderdale's best year on record for this species. At one site up to 3 adults were heard singing from 15.00 hours onwards in early April. Another site held a single adult bird. During the breeding season 13 pairs were located, 11 of which successfully raised a minimum of 34 young. The remaining 2 pairs are thought to have failed early, probably at the egg stage, as no young were heard hunger calling later in the season.

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 currently no active studies of this much under-recorded species in the county. Across the county as a whole, members of the Durham Bird Club reported birds at 15 locations during the first quarter including a maximum of 6 roosting at one location. An apparently poor breeding season was suggested with just 2 confirmed successful nests and pairs at a further 6 locations. This year there was little evidence on the coast of any autumn influx from the continent with the highest count in the final quarter being of 3 birds roosting at the RSPB Saltholme Reserve.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Bob Kenworthy's work in the east found 4 pairs, each of which fledged 2 young.

Elsewhere, 2 begging young were found at another site not far away, and in the west, a pair fledged 2 young in a plantation on the Lancashire border.

Four nesting attempts were monitored by PDRMG in the Greater Manchester area.

Outside the breeding season, birds were observed at three sites where breeding has occurred in the recent past. Sadly, one of these was badly injured and had died by the time we got it to a bird sanctuary.

A winter roost of 3-4 birds was found at a traditional site in November.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Data was received from 3 areas:

In the main study at Kielder a poor year was noted with six nests fledging only 3+ young. A number of failed nests were recorded including Goshawk predation of nesting female, and at another nest the adult male was predated. A brood died due to hatching in particularly wet weather.

A Long-eared Owl chick approximately 25 days old was found amongst prey in a Common Buzzard's nest, along with another six bird species.

In the second monitored area on the Northumberland /Tyne & Wear border, two nests fledged 2+ young.

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.

Not a study species of the Group but dozens of old forest nests of raptors were checked for evidence of owl/raptor occupation over the course of the season. Two nests were located, both to the north of the North York Moors.

One was in a forest site, in a stand of mature Lodgepole Pine – the other in an old Magpie nest in a tall, unkempt Hawthorn hedge. This latter nest produced two fledged young, one of which was ringed. The forest nest site was checked thoroughly as a result of information being received that a young bird had been heard calling there last season. Sadly, 3 almost fledged young were found predated, with mounds of feathers found on the ground below an old Sparrowhawk nest. This was thought to be the work of a Goshawk active in the area as plucks of Pheasant, Woodpigeon and Grey Partridge were also located nearby.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Long-eared Owls were once again found to be in abundance in our study area in 2015.

Twenty breeding attempts were recorded, in what amounted to approximately one third of the suitable habitat available being checked; the remaining two thirds of suitable habitat was not fully monitored due to time constraints. Three nests failed due to poor weather, one nest failed due to predation, four nests were discovered with young too large to climb to, and one nest outcome was unknown. Twenty seven young were ringed from eleven nests. The weather and an apparent reduction in prey numbers at a key time in the breeding cycle resulted in small broods from what were good clutch sizes. Eleven breeding attempts were recorded in Derbyshire, four in West Yorkshire, four in Greater Manchester and one in South Yorkshire.

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.

Pairs were monitored at five sites in the SPRSG area and at least eight juveniles fledged. Conifer plantations on the edge of moorland are favourite breeding areas and nests can be difficult to locate, but calling young, as well as pellets and prey remains, often reveal the species' presence. Forestry Commission plantations offer excellent breeding habitat for Long-eared Owls, although when these mature and are thinned, other species, such as Tawny Owls, may move in and compete for food.

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.

Six territorial pairs were located with three pairs confirmed to have fledged young, and three other pairs probably breeding.

Given the type of habitat where there are known territorial pairs is found right across the Dales, it is thought that the population is higher and more widespread than these figures suggest.

No data was available for the Nidderdale area.

NERF regional summary

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

NERF monitoring suggests that 2015 was a mixed year for Long-eared Owl, with an increase in recorded breeding attempts. However, some groups reported a reduction in productivity: overall, it appeared to be similar to 2014 but this could be an artefact of the difficulty in counting fledged young in 2014 due to the close proximity of several nests in some areas.

Any open nests are vulnerable to predation by larger avian predators and several instances of failure due to the predation were reported in 2015. 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 areas.

Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*



The UK population is known to fluctuate markedly from year to year due to natural factors, such as vole numbers, but the latest estimate given is within the range 620-2180 pairs (Musgrove *et al*, APEP3: *British Birds* 106: Feb 2013). This is a notoriously challenging species to survey with any degree of accuracy but overall a long term decline in breeding pairs seems apparent (BTO Bird Atlas 2007-11). The RBBP report for 2014 gave a figure of 145-285 pairs, stating that “the extent to which this species was under-recorded is uncertain but could be considerable” and noted that relatively few reports were received from the Pennines and some areas of Scotland, compared with survey work done for the last breeding atlas.

Conservation status

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

National and regional threat assessment

Breeding numbers and success fluctuate with prey abundance, voles mainly, and possibly late winter and spring weather conditions. Short-eared Owls will nest early and can be on eggs by the end of March or in early April. The difficulties of surveying this species do mask any accurate assessment of local populations and even in good vole years sightings can be hard to come by and interpret. Nationally the level of reports and confirmed breeding remain low (Holling *et al*, Rare Breeding Birds in the UK in 2013 *British Birds* 108: July 2015) although the overall picture is improving, with the addition of this species onto the RBBP target list since 2010.

NERF Data

RSG	Home ranges checked	Home ranges occupied (pairs)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	10	8	0	0	8	7	6	6	12+	1.7	1.5
CRSR	13	12	1	0	12	12	7	5	16+	1.3	1.3
DUBSR	25	17	7	0	14	11	11	11	NC	-	-
MRG	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1+	1.0	1.0
NRG	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NYMUBSR	3	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
PDRMG	20	16	NC	NC	11	11	11	11	15+	1.4	1.4
SPRSR	4	4	NC	NC	4	2	1	1	2	2.0	0.5
YDRSR	17	5	12	0	5	4	4	4	NC	-	-
Nidderdale RSG	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	106	64	23	0	56	49	42	39	46	0.94	0.82

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

A “good” vole year was evident and this resulted directly in a strong showing of Short-eared Owls during the breeding season although no second broods were recorded. The figure of 12 fledged young is certainly very conservative given the demands on fieldworkers of monitoring other species and the habit of fledglings dispersing away from the nest before they are capable of flight.

The pairs monitored were all on the United Utilities estate and other known pairs on private estates were not checked.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

With high numbers across the whole study area, 2015 was a very good year for this species in Calderdale. Twelve breeding pairs were known to have raised a minimum of 16 young but resource limitations meant that not all attempts could be monitored throughout the season and several sites were not revisited to confirm their outcomes. Clearly the numbers fledged will have been greater than the data suggests. At least two pairs were known to have had second broods.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Good coverage, several large representative areas are studied annually. Reports collated for 2015 showed an encouraging and marked upturn in the number of confirmed or probable breeding territories. Unfortunately relatively few nests were monitored regularly through to their final outcome although the majority of reports did involve adults provisioning or defending young late in the season.

Sadly, direct evidence of targeted persecution was obtained through the discovery of two Short-eared Owl corpses, each shot and pushed down a pothole in Lunedale. Police investigations are continuing.

Away from the uplands an early migrant was noted at Whitburn Observatory on the coast, coming in off the sea on 12th July and a further 18 were recorded there between October and early December.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Breeds very rarely, so no regular monitoring.

There was one confirmed breeding in the east of the study of area.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The species' breeding status in 2015 appeared not to have changed from 2014; each being notably very poor years. There were no records to suggest breeding. A single bird on heather moor was seen in May near the Border Forest at Kielder, this being the first report from there since 2010. Compare this with the position in the mid-1980s when 4-10 pairs bred locally.

North York Moors Upland Bird (Merlin) Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

There were relatively few reports received suggesting that the species was thin on the ground over the NYM this season. Only one breeding attempt was located, this on a grouse moor.

The nest was found at egg stage, but continued monitoring by the fieldworker tracked a suspicious outcome. The estate was notified of the presence of the nest at the egg stage and assurances were received that it would not be interfered with. However, it subsequently failed with 5 young later disappearing in stages. Feather remains of an owl chick at the empty nest site implied natural predation, but when doubts were conveyed to the estate it was subsequently claimed two chicks had in fact fledged. Two photos provided to support this claim were falsely attributed to a date much later than when the fieldworker had actually seen the deserted and ostensibly predated nest and collected the feather remains.

On a more positive note, migrant owls were noted incoming at coastal watch points in October and subsequently birds were much in evidence across the NYMs through to year end. Up to nine were present together at one site.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage; several areas monitored.

Sixteen pairs were recorded and at least 11 pairs were successful. This figure is most probably quite conservative, with Short-eared Owls having been seen hunting in many more areas which couldn't be fully checked. The cold, wet and sometimes windy weather resulted in lower numbers of young fledging from some nests, particularly for the later breeding attempts. Early nesters fared better with the weather and prey availability and one female laying 10 eggs. Fifteen young were ringed from 5 nests.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

On the north Staffordshire moorlands at least two pairs nested with a minimum of 2 young fledging from one of the sites. Another two pairs were present in the upper Derwent Valley but there was no direct evidence of breeding.

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.

Yorkshire Dales: Records refer to birds seen in areas of suitable habitat and any more direct evidence of breeding behaviour such as food carrying. A total of 12 possible, one probable and 4 confirmed pairs were located in the course of monitoring for other species in areas surveyed annually. The figures suggest a good year for the species in the Dales.

Nidderdale: Just two singles were seen during the breeding season in areas that have in the past supported breeding pairs but no further sightings were made.

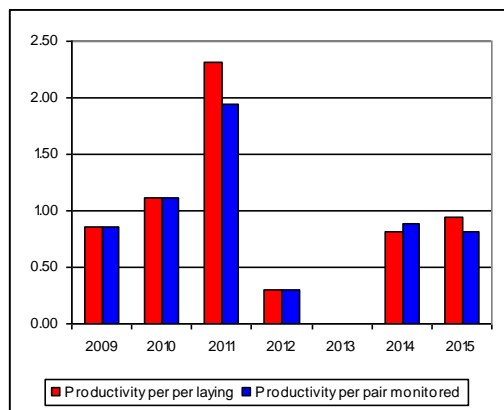
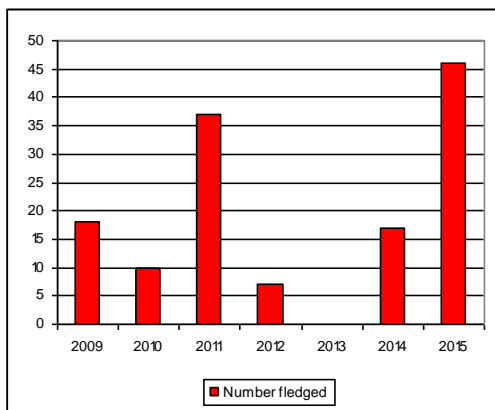
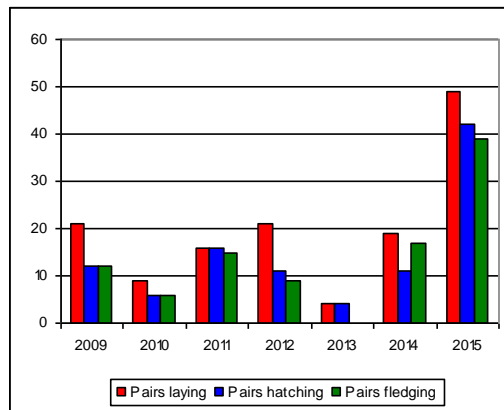
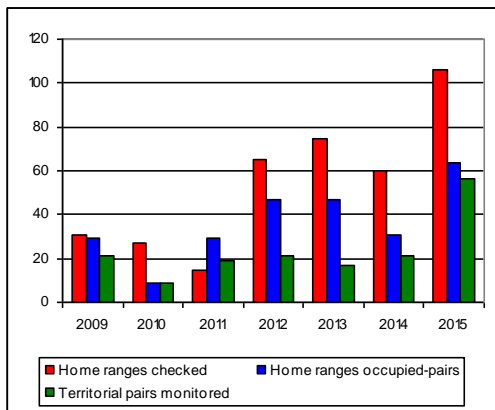
NERF regional summary

Overall, the evidence points strongly to this being the best year since NERF started collating the regional figures in 2009. The number of known nesting pairs at 49 (previous range 9-21 from 2009 to 2014) and the number of known young thought to be well in excess of

45(previous range 10-37+) represent a significant uplift. The increase was somewhat localised with the Peak District, Calderdale, Yorkshire Dales, Bowland and County Durham all experiencing above average numbers whilst Northumberland, North York Moors and South Peak appearing to have typically low populations. The reasons for this are unclear but it should be borne in mind that the figures are bound to be conservative given the challenges of accurately monitoring this species. Raptor study groups tend to find Short-eared Owl whilst covering ground in the course of their studies of other species and several groups commented that they don't have the considerable time and resources that would be needed to dedicate effort to fully understand the outcome of all occupied Short-eared Owl territories found.

Direct evidence of species' persecution was reported from two areas and it's feared that this may be replicated elsewhere.

Comparative data 2009-2015



Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*



UK population estimate

The Kestrel is one of the most widespread and abundant raptors in Britain, although it is absent from areas of south-west and central Wales and some upland areas of western Scotland. Densities are highest in central and eastern England, although the British Breeding Bird Survey of 2015 reported a 23% reduction in the Kestrel population between 1995 and 2014 in the UK. 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. The most recent UK population estimate of the species, reported by Musgrove *et al.* [2013], was 46,000 individuals. The BBS report 2015, though, also gave figures which showed that numbers in England increased by 43% in 2014 – 15. Despite these long-term 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

National and regional threat assessment

The population is in decline nationally. This is because the Kestrel population fluctuates and this 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 – yet going unnoticed. The ubiquitous presence of Kestrels seen hovering or perched above grass verges may induce raptor workers and birdwatchers alike to divert attention away from this species, whilst

concentrating on other more vulnerable species. Consequently a decline in local population may well go unnoticed for some time.

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	8	8	0	0	8	8	4	4	11+	1.37	1.37
MRG	96	57	NC	NC	57	57	56	56	83+	1.48	1.48
NRG	68	31	0	1	22	22	19	18	50+	2.27	2.27
NYMUBSG	25	3	1	0	3	3	3	3	14	4.7	4.7
PDRMG	10	10	NC	NC	5	6	5	4	16+	2.67	3.2
Totals	207	109	1	1	95	96	87	85	174+	1.81	1.83

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Breeds every year at regular sites but not a priority species for us. 2015 was a very good year for Kestrels in Bowland and the number of pairs hunting in the hills doubled due to it being a good vole year. One nest which was checked held a clutch of 7; this nested at a traditional Peregrine site which failed early due to persecution. Another pair fledged young twenty feet away from a successful Peregrine on the same crag

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 recorded eight home ranges occupied during 2015, an increase of two over 2014. However, the group does not have sufficient resources to fully monitor the sites throughout the year. Consequently the fledging rates are extremely unlikely to reflect the actual numbers. Indeed, taking into account the large number of juveniles reported in late summer and early autumn, it is clear that the species had an excellent breeding season.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Unfortunately there are no active monitoring programmes for this species in the county. Kestrels remain widespread in the county and members of the Durham Bird Club submitted almost 500 records in the first quarter of the year with display noted from mid-February onwards.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Records came from 32 sites with a total of 83 young. This assumes one young at those sites where the actual number could not be ascertained (eight sites) so the real number of chicks is likely to be in excess of this.

Peter and Norma Johnson monitored six boxes in the Bury area and these fledged 27 young (included in the figures above).

In Manchester city centre, three pairs hatched two young each. One of these broods was in a very small brick cavity (formerly used by a Black Redstart!) and the two chicks fell onto the pavement and were taken into care by the RSPCA. Four chicks in down were also taken into care from an electricity station in Chadderton, and one fell from an M6 viaduct when almost fledged. This went to Wild Wings Birds of Prey Centre, and was able to be released back at the site in August.

Three broods bred in Barn Owl boxes erected by this group.

Probable breeding, where pairs were seen mating or carrying food in the breeding season, was recorded at nine sites.

An analysis of records submitted to www.manchesterbirding.com suggested that territories were held at a further 30 locations.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland.

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

Data was received from three areas within the NRG study area. It was an improving population with a pleasing 31 ranges occupied; 22 pairs laid and 50+ young fledged (compared to only 32 in 2014). In the MOD /south Cheviots it was a poor year with few pairs on territory. A brood of five were predated, and many old traditional Kestrel nest sites are now occupied by Buzzards. In the Kielder Border Forest area breeding success was the best for ten years.

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.

Another season of moderate breeding success, if one accepts that the results from the South Cleveland RSG nest box study reflect the situation across the NYMs. However, the number of nesting pairs does actually represent a small improvement over 2014 returns. There certainly does not seem to be any noticeable absence of birds from any particular area in the NYMs and again to judge from the Barn Owl picture, rodent numbers were probably at reasonable levels throughout the area. As with Merlin, those pairs that do actually nest tend on the whole to do so successfully and fledge decent sized broods. The single bird in the table above, a female, occupied the territory where in 2014, two almost-fledged young were found dead in the box from no apparent reason. Perhaps her mate died during the brood-rearing phase last year with the subsequent adequate provisioning of the chicks proving beyond her - and she had not managed to pair up with a replacement male for this season? It is a rather isolated moorland site.

G. Myers monitored two boxes on the Tees Plain, one was occupied from which six young fledged, (not included in the table above),

The South Cleveland RSG data for the season are again included in the table below, for continuity purposes only at this stage:

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

Year Band	No. of sites	No. occupied	% occupancy	No. succeeded	Young ringed	Av. per successful nest	Average 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
1997-2001	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
2012-15	94	15	16.0	11	47	4.27	3.13

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Due to other commitments, once again only casual monitoring of a few pairs was undertaken in 2015.

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.

SPRSG does not monitor the species in any widespread way but accepts that further study is warranted.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Parts of upland and lowland areas.

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

Yorkshire Dales: Casual observations would suggest that it was a poor year in 2015, but there is no monitoring undertaken to determine any long-term trends.

Nidderdale: Reasonably commonly seen in the area but no nests located.

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 Kestrels as present in their respective study areas, although only few groups undertake any detailed monitoring of the species, with the best results being produced by nest box schemes. It is therefore difficult to assess the current status of the species without comparative quantitative data from all areas. This is perhaps an issue that needs to be addressed by all NERF members.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*



UK population estimate

The UK population estimate from the last national survey of this species in 2008, (Ewing *et al* 2011), was 1162 pairs. This represented a 13% decrease overall from the previous survey carried out over 1993/94 with the decrease for England alone being 25%.

Holling, M. *et al.* Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 2014 recorded 279-377 pairs monitored (*British Birds* 2016 109: 491-545) but stated that these represent only about 25% of the estimated UK total.

Conservation status

UK **Red**

The 4th review of *Birds of Conservation Concern* published in December 2015 returned this species to the UK Red List based on evidence from various monitoring schemes that indicate continuing worrying declines in breeding populations. (The species was moved from the Red to Amber category following the second Review in 2009.)

European Not of concern as far as is known

Global: Least concern

Listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

National and regional threat assessment

The usual threats to the well-being of birds of prey, principally persecution by acts of poisoning, shooting trapping etc are the least of problems in regard to Merlins. This species, unlike most raptors attempting to breed in our uplands – particularly on grouse moors – is generally well tolerated, and even indulged to some extent by many landowners and keepers, whilst instances of egg/brood thefts are generally few and far between these days.

Although the death of Merlins from organochlorine pesticides is no longer a significant contributory factor to mortality, mercury levels have been giving cause for concern for some time. Addled eggs and corpses continue to be routinely analysed for poisons at the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology at Lancaster.

It is however impossible to ignore the fact that some breeding populations are in trouble, certainly in the NERF area. Only the Durham population is significantly bucking the downward trend of others in the region. Causes behind the loss/disappearance of pairs may well lie with particular factors such as reduced prey availability or heavy habitat degradation but climate change may well be the principal cause of declines. This possibility is considered in the Summary below.

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	20	8	0	1	7	7	7	6	23	3.29	3.29
CRSG	5	4	0	2	2	2	1	1	4	2.00	2.00
DUBSG	70	54	0	4	50	50	45	44	164	3.30	3.30
NRG	73	23	0	5	18	17	11	9	26+	1.53	1.44
NYMUBSG	33	11	1	2	11	9	8	7	24	2.67	2.18
PDRMG	46	24	3	6	24	18	14	14	58+	3.22	2.42
SPRSG	11	1	5	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00
YDRSG	5	5	0	NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nidderdale RSG	7	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	4.00	4.00
Totals	270	132	9	21	114	105	88	83	308	2.93	2.70

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

Merlins continue to decline in Bowland mainly due to habitat destruction from burning on private estates. This state of affairs has reached a serious level as the estates have become increasingly extreme in their pursuit of ever higher numbers of grouse. Traditional sites that have been in use for over fifty years have been totally destroyed.

On the United Utilities Estate occupation is reasonably stable with 5 or 6 pairs being mostly successful although even here territories where pairs have bred in the past remain vacant.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The Group recorded 60 separate sightings during 2015 with birds being present in the study area in every month throughout the year. Four pairs were located in spring; unfortunately 2 pairs failed very early in the season and one pair failed at egg stage. The fourth pair was successful raising 4 young.

In addition to the monitored pair a juvenile was found freshly dead at a new site in late July with an adult seen close by suggesting that there was a fifth breeding pair that went undetected.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The period of cold weather during April and early May did not appear to affect breeding numbers or later productivity. Indeed 2015 proved to be the best year ever for this species in a study going back to the mid-1980s. The number of successful nests, young fledged and young ringed (122) all saw records set in the mid-1990s being broken. The average brood size per successful nest was 3.70. The reasons for this uplift are unfortunately perhaps as elusive as are the causes of recent decline in other regions of northern England. Clearly further study is needed. The year-year monitoring effort in County Durham is reasonably consistent. Several traditional territories which had remained vacant over the last 6-7 years were successfully re-occupied in 2015.

Two most interesting ringing recoveries concerned young from the same nest in central Durham which were ringed on 2nd July when still 8-10 days away from being able to fly strongly. A young male from this nest was found dead at the coast on Lindisfarne NR, Northumberland on 3rd August (movement 115 km N) and a young female sibling was coincidentally found dead at the coast on the very same day (3rd August) but this time at Spurn Point, Humberside (205 km SE). Over the 32 year lifespan of the Durham study the ringing recovery rate averages 5.7%.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

Level of monitoring: Breeds very occasionally.

The first known successful breeding for several years took place in the east of the county.

The nest was located, monitored and 4 chicks 3-4 weeks old (2 males, 2 females) ringed by the Peak District RMG 1st July.

Of 20 records in the early winter period, 8 came from the mosslands, 4 from the Elton Reservoir area, 3 from eastern moorland locations, and one each from Pennington Flash and Sinderland Green. The remaining three, in March and April, involved passage birds at Smithills Moor.

Autumn and late winter records totalled 24 and half these came from the well-watched Smithills Moor / Winter Hill / Scout Moor area, with 2 birds noted on 4 occasions. A first winter male was noted at Ashworth Moor Reservoir 5th-20th October, and Castleshaw Reservoirs had one 30th October. A bird at Dovestones 24th July may have bred nearby? Elton Reservoir hosted singles in September, October and November and a female was on Highfield Moss 17th October. The mosslands held singles 1st and 22nd October with 2 on 3rd December: birds were less frequent here than usual.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part of upland areas.

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

After a successful 2014, 2015 was a very poor year, no doubt due mainly in part to dreadful weather of heavy hill rain and mist prevalent on many days.

23 pairs were found at the early stages of the breeding cycle, (20 in 2014), but only 17 went on to nest of which 9 fledged 26+ young, (45 young in 2014).

In the Border forest, Kielder, where in 2014 19 chicks fledged, only one chick survived from 8 nests this season, most nests having failed at the egg stage, but one brood was predated by a mustelid and at another, a ground nest in heather, a chick (ca.20 days old) was killed by an avian predator.

The North Cheviots saw an improvement with 3 nests, 2 of which fledged 7+ young.

Comparatively, the South Cheviots /MOD Otterburn area was the most successful with 6 nests fledging 14 young. However, a significant comment was received from the fieldworker there: "Less than ¼ of home ranges are occupied now compared to 20 years ago" !

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.

A slight improvement in pair occupation and nest attempts over 2014 but ultimately only 7 pairs managed to fledge young this season. A new site was located on one moor and another traditional territory was occupied for the first time since 2009; sadly the brood there was predated, probably by a fox. The site re-colonised in 2014 was not occupied this season. One gets the impression that the NYM population is rather unsettled at present as regards loyalty of birds to traditional sites. Although a downward spiral in numbers has been very much in evidence over the last decade, numbers have stabilised over the past three seasons, albeit at a very low level. Does this represent a halt in the decline prefacing a gradual resurgence in numbers, or is it just a temporary pause in the proceedings before the decline resumes? Only time will tell.

One interesting recovery of a Meadow Pipit was obtained in May at a site on Glaisdale Moor where a BTO ring was found in a female Merlin pellet. The pipit had been ringed as a migrant at Spurn Point, East Yorkshire in September 2013.

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

With most if not all keepers co-operating fully with the Peak District Bird of Prey Initiative in 2015, coverage of known breeding territories was once again very good. In the PDRMG area fourteen successful breeding attempts were monitored; fifty eight young were ringed in the study area and a minimum of fifty three young fledged. Two sites were known to have failed at the egg stage, with a further failed attempt thought to be a second breeding attempt by one of these pairs.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

There were only two spring records from the traditional Beeley Moor area, with males only on 16th February and 18th April. On the North Staffordshire moors an adult male and a 1st year male were seen at two separate sites in April, but no evidence of breeding was found. In the usual Upper Derwent area one pair was located, five young were ringed, PTT tagged and successfully fledged. At another site a lone female was seen until late June.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Yorkshire Dales:

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

No systematic survey work is undertaken in the Yorkshire Dales area. Territorial birds were present at a minimum of five sites with two possible, two probable and one confirmed pair.

Nidderdale:

Extent of coverage: Part upland areas.

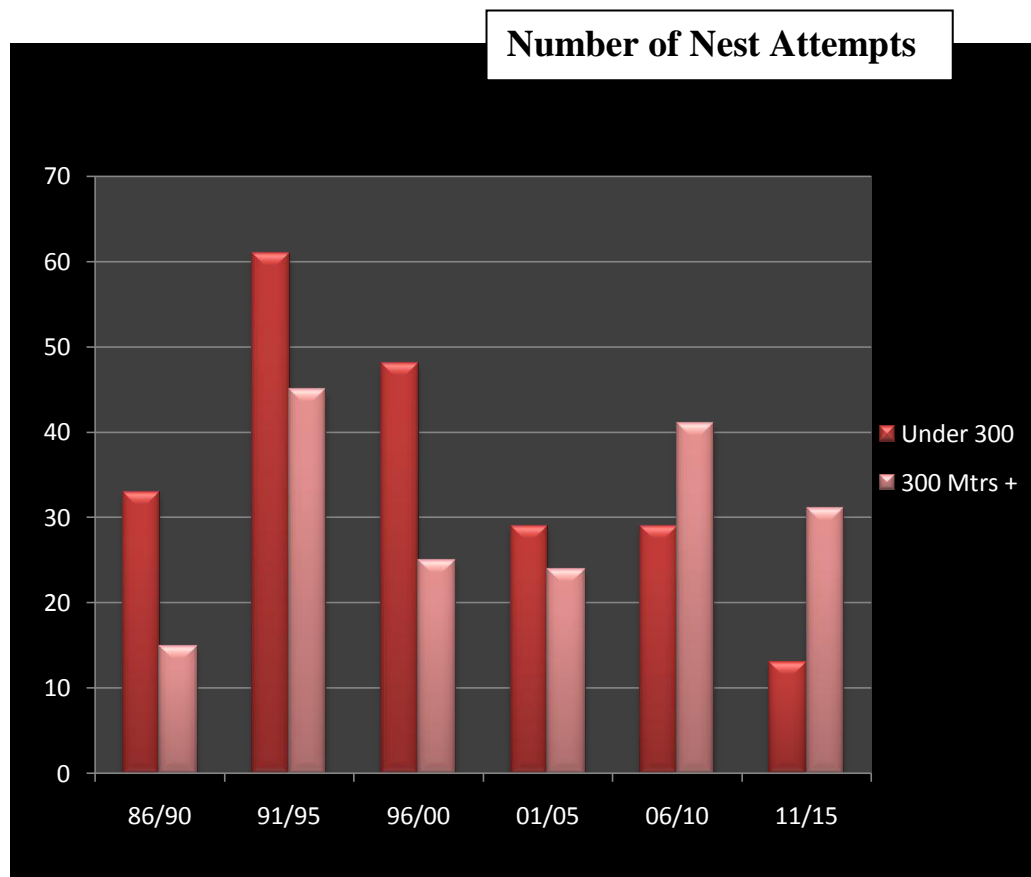
Level of monitoring: Reasonable coverage: at least one long-term monitoring study.

Poor status continues in the main Nidderdale study area with only one pair apparently breeding. In another moorland area, birds were seen in at least 3 other territories but sightings were not followed up.

NERF regional summary

It is difficult to comprehend why the North York Moors population is in comparatively dire straits compared to that of Durham, for example, where the species is doing consistently well. However, even there sites have been lost, and despite performing better than the NYMs birds, Calderdale, the Peak District and Northumberland pairs are also decreasing to some extent. It is possible that the loss of low moor sites in these areas is also to blame for losses.

The dramatic nature of the loss of NYM sites overall from the mid 1990's to date but particularly from those sites below 300 mtrs is clearly shown in the graph below. A complete reversal in the dominance of categories in the 5 years bands 1996/2000 and 2011/2015.



A simple illustration of just how severe the decline in the population has been is demonstrated by the following seasons' data:

1996 43 sites checked, 33 occupied by pairs, 30 pairs nested

2015 33 of same sites checked, 11 occupied by pairs, 9 pairs nested.

(The number of sites checked in 2015 is much understated owing to some Group members failing to submit individual nil returns for their sites.)

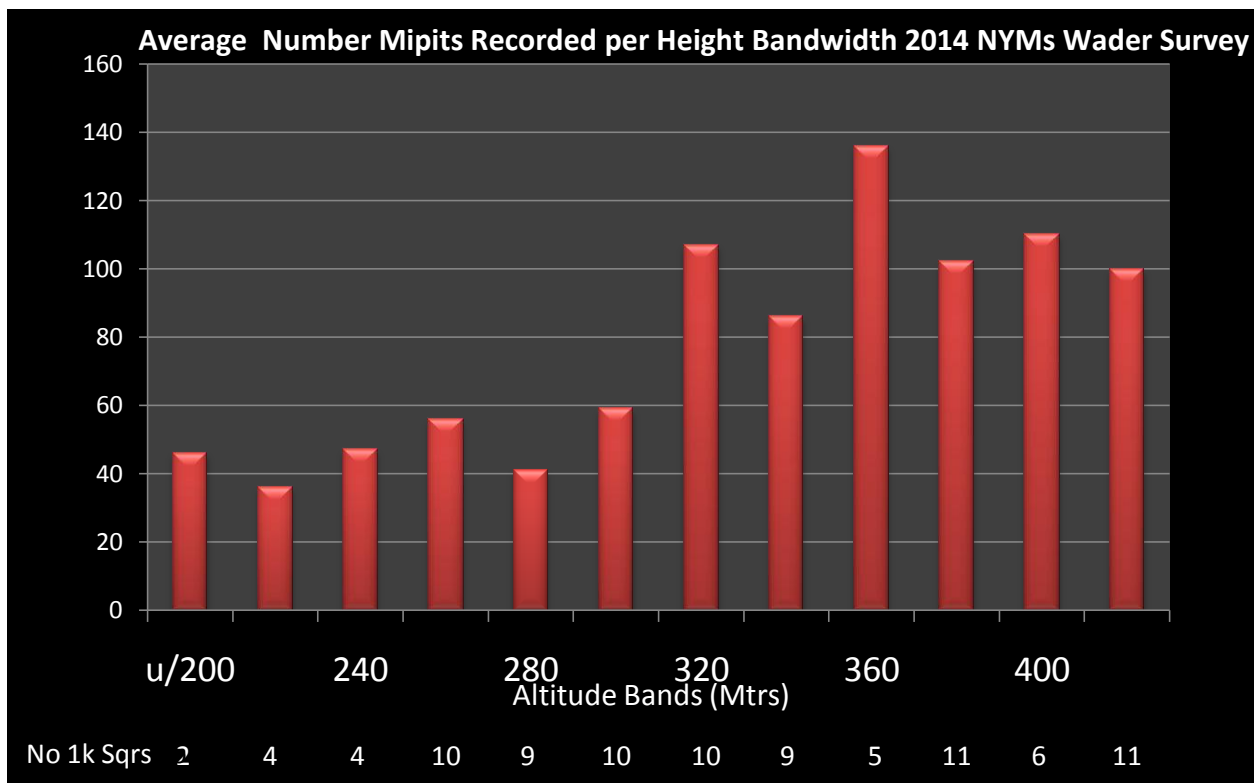
When looking for potential causes of a decline in a raptor species on grouse moors, three possible contenders are (a) persecution, (b) habitat degradation and (c) prey availability with combinations of these also possible.

As far the NYMs are concerned persecution is not considered a problem. The vast majority of grouse moor keepers are quite happy to tolerate breeding Merlins on their patches and indeed many take a real interest in helping with the monitoring of the birds. Also of course, it is one of the few species with which grouse moor estates can present a positive spin to the public at large and accrue "Brownie points" with conservation bodies. There are some concerns however, on some estates in regard to severe over-burning on some of the higher moors with suitable Merlin nesting heather belts now much reduced in number.

The Meadow Pipit is well known to be the principal prey item of Merlins during the breeding season. For a considerable number of years it was felt that numbers of these birds were declining on the lower moors in the NYMs National Park. Some evidence supporting this was available in the way of increases in the range of non-moorland prey species found at plucking sites - forest species such as Siskin for example, featuring regularly at these. In 1996, 2000, 2008 and 2014 the Park Authority in partnership with the RSPB organised surveys of wader species breeding on moorland. All four surveys were carried out on the same 91 randomly selected 1km squares. In 2008, two fieldworkers kept simple counts of the numbers of pipits recorded in each square they surveyed. When compared it was found that far higher numbers were recorded on the higher than lower moors.

To re-test this finding, the operation was repeated in 2014 with all four surveyors this time tallying pipit numbers across the whole 91 squares. The findings were examined in detail as follows.

The highest point in each 1km square was identified and the squares assigned to appropriate 20metre altitudinal bands, along with the total number of pipits recorded in them. As the numbers of squares in each band were not equal the average numbers of birds per bandwidth were calculated to provide an un-biased picture. The results are shown in the graph below.



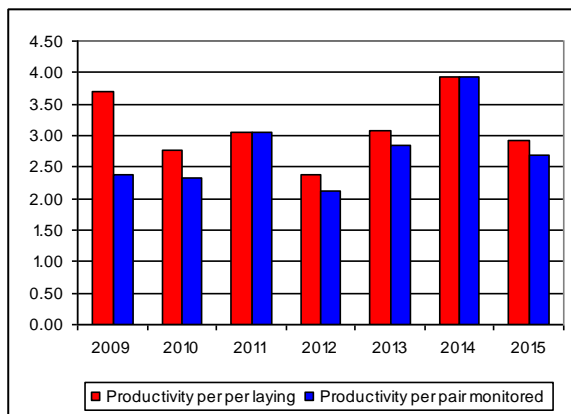
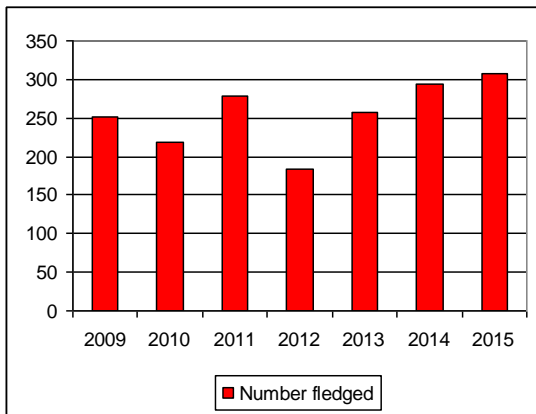
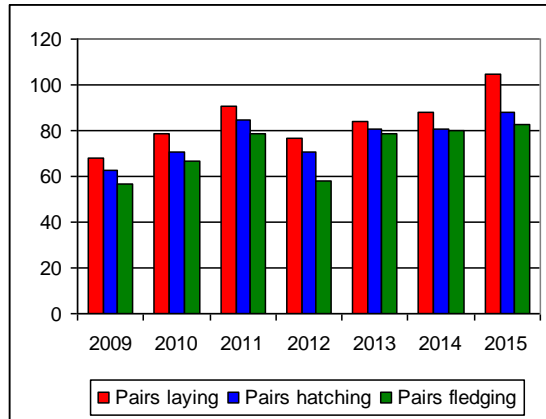
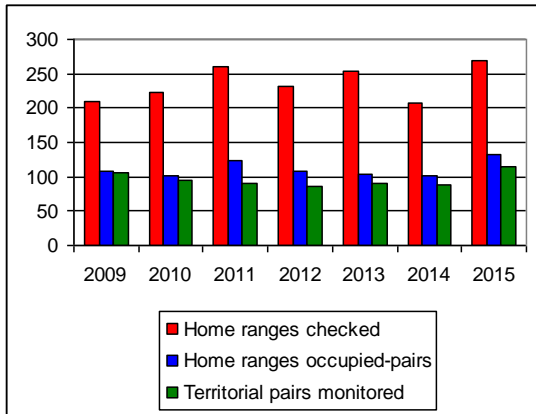
Quite clearly there are a lot more Meadow Pipits occupying the higher moorland. So, is this the reason for the abandonment of low moor sites in the NYMs – pipits contracting altitudinally and Merlins simply following them? If that were the case then the Merlin population should have remained stable with pairs from the lower moors re-distributing themselves across the higher moors and obviously this hasn't happened. The low moor pairs have simply disappeared!

Unfortunately there are no comparative figures for pipit numbers over the mid 1990s when the NYMs Merlin population was thriving. The picture presented in the graph above might well have been replicated then although the likelihood is it would have been one showing greater uniformity across the board. However, do the greater numbers on the higher moors represent an influx from below or as with Merlins, have low moor pipits just been lost and the higher moor numbers remained stable? The question that then springs to mind is why have pipits either moved uphill or been lost. It seems logical to conclude that in some way environmental factors are at work here.

The Merlin, as a sub-Arctic species, is on the southern limit of its range in Britain. We are already seeing the effects of climate change in the way southern species of warm environments have shifted their ranges substantially northwards over the past decade or two – Little Egret and Cetti's Warbler being two examples. It makes sense to assume that temperate zone-loving species such as Merlin are going to be forced northwards by the same environmental processes. And perhaps this is what is happening now. Again logically an altitudinal contraction would take effect initially with a latitudinal shift ever further northwards following.

It is tempting to speculate that the increase in breeding Merlins on the much higher Durham moors might be due to immigration from other populations such as the NYMs? With luck, the Pit tag project currently being implemented by NERF Raptor Groups may provide some answers in the not too distant future.

Comparative data 2009-2015



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 2015 shows a 34% increase for England 2014-15, and a 7% decrease 1995-2012.

Clements *et al.* (2016) estimated the UK population to be in the region of 3000 breeding pairs, so considering their northwards spread since that research, the current figure is probably considerably higher, and further work, 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 around 5000 territorial pairs, but it is recognised that more data on breeding density is required from marginal areas for that figure to be widely accepted (Clements, R. *et al.* 2016: The Hobby in Britain—A revised population estimate. *British Birds* 109:316-323).

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)	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
BMSG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CRSG	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	6	1	NC	NC	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
PDRMG	12	10	NC	NC	8	8	8	7	18	2.25	2.25
SPRSG	35	35	0	0	35	35	31	29	47	1.34	1.34
Totals	55	47	0	1	44	44	40	37	67	1.52	1.52

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.

Hobby is seen most years in and around Bowland. Two pairs were continually seen hunting in two separate areas of upland in 2015 but are breeding somewhere in the extensive in-bye land.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Twenty individual records were received between June and September 2015. A pair was present in the same location throughout the summer but once again there was no evidence of breeding. Surely it must only be a matter of time before a pair is proved to breed within Calderdale.

Durham Upland Bird Study Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

There was no confirmation of breeding in 2015, but given repeat sightings between May and August at some easterly sites it seems likely that a few undetected pairs will have nested. Odd birds were also seen over heather moorland in July and August. Two coastal sightings of single birds in September closed the year.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Once again the only confirmed breeding came from Sinderland, with two fledged young seen with the pair.

Sightings also suggested successful breeding on the east side of Botany Bay Wood, and territories at Pennington Flash, Smithills Moor, Elton, Irlam Moss and the western mosslands. However, a pair normally breeds just over the R. Glaze in Cheshire and hunt on the mosslands, so it is difficult to assess the breeding status on the mosses with certainty. Records on www.manchesterbirding.com also came from 17 other locations but were not sufficient to assign territories.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

One pair was 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.

Still no confirmed nesting to report. Individuals and hawking pairs observed at various times and places over the summer but no behaviour suggesting breeding. One most unusual, amusing and puzzling incident involving two Hobbies – a presumed pair - and a Red Kite, was observed on Rosedale Moor to the north of the study area. The falcons had been hawking over one particular slope for quite some time when the kite arrived and appeared to attack one of them. They both began “ringing” with the kite making valiant and determined efforts to catch the Hobby and both reached quite a height before the kite finally realised the futility of its efforts, peeled off and rapidly disappeared. The Hobby, quite unconcerned throughout rejoined its partner and resumed feeding!

Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Three nests were monitored in Cheshire, one nest was found with a ready-to-fledge young bird in it, but unfortunately this bird had become tangled in baler twine used in the nest lining and had perished. At a fourth site there was a pair in attendance and despite several visits the nest was not located, but post fledging there were three young and one adult occupying this territory. In West Yorkshire, three pairs were monitored and eight young fledged. A pair in South Yorkshire was present in a previously successful territory, but breeding was not proven. One site was monitored in North Yorkshire and fledged two young. There were a number of sightings at additional historic territories, but the group failed to locate the nests or see any fledged young, so as always with this elusive species, it cannot categorically be said if breeding occurred or not.

South Peak Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland & part lowland areas.

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

Anthony Messenger confirmed that in his 100 sq km core study area eight pairs were present, five of which were successful. Of the other three pairs one definitely failed, one pair was suspected of failing and the third pair was believed to have moved out of the core area. Nine young fledged in total (1.8 per successful pair, 1.13 per pair in occupation—the figures

virtually matching the mean figures for the worst previous three year period from 1992 to 1994.)

Across the whole of Anthony's southern study area there were 23 pairs present, (including the core area), from which there were 18 successful pairs, one definite failure, and four pairs where the outcome was unknown, although failure was suspected in at least two of these; 36 young fledged (2.00 per successful pair, 1.57 per pair in occupation), and a total of 11 young were ringed from five nests.

Anthony commented that, despite the low productivity in his core area, the total figures for South Derbyshire of fledged young per successful nest, (2.00) matched those for 1991, 1997, 2011 and 2012, while in respect of the number of young fledged per pair present, (1.57) has only been worse than 2015 in two years, (1993: 1.00 and 2007: 1.43)

In north-east Derbyshire and the Peak District, despite reduced observation time, Roy Frost, Mick Lacey and Mick Taylor thought a further 12 pairs bred, and at least 11 juveniles were seen at various sites, although one pair failed at the egg stage.

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

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

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

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

Yorkshire Dales: There were a number of sightings in one area which would suggest that one pair possibly bred.

Nidderdale: A reduction in sightings this year, with no mid summer sightings in the Dale for the first time in several years, so breeding thought unlikely.

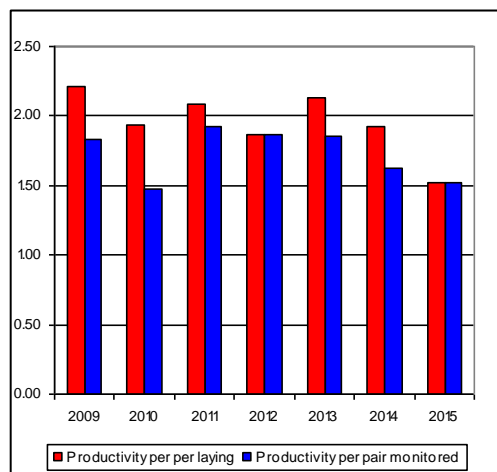
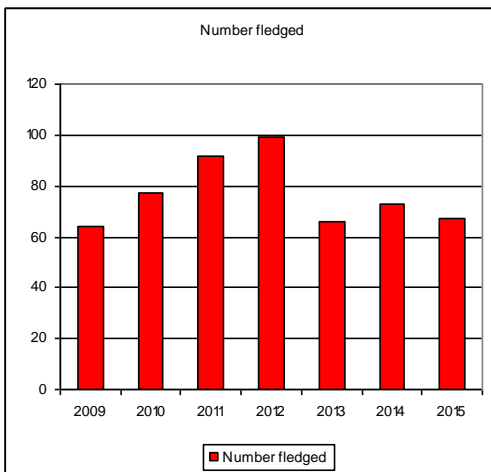
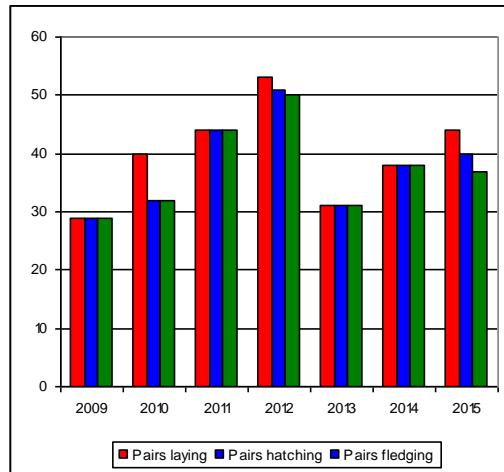
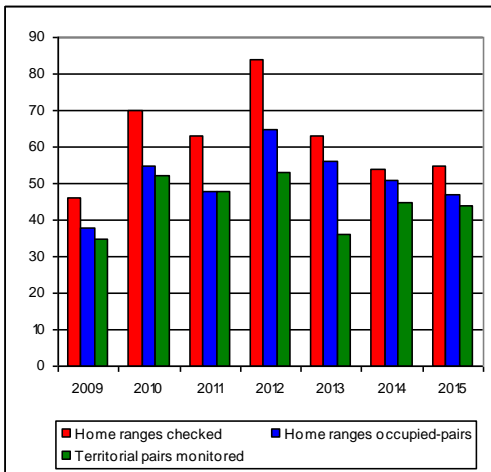
NERF regional summary

A considerable amount of work is undertaken by NERF Group members, particularly in the Peak District and South Peak Raptor Study Group areas. Hobbies were observed across the region and known to have bred successfully in 3 study areas, and are no doubt considerably overlooked in some other RSG areas.

Colour Ringing

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

Comparative data 2009-15



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 the 6th national survey in 2014 and this will give a figure of 1694 pairs in the UK and Isle of Man with 7 additional pairs in the Channel Isles (Wilson *et al* (in prep)).

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)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	15	6	0	3	3	4	2	2	5	1.25	1.6
CRSG	4	4	0	2	2	2	2	2	6	3	3
DUBSG	17	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MRG	9	8	1	0	8	8	6*	6*	20*	3.33	2.5
NRG	32	19	1	3	15	15	14	11	26+	1.73	1.73
NYMUBSG	4	4	0	0	3	3	3	2	4	1.33	1.33
PDRMG	17	3	3	1	3	2	2	2	4	2	1.33
SPRSG	34	28	NC	8	28	20	19	19	43	2.15	1.53
YDRSG	18	7	0	0	7	7	1	1	3	3	3
Nidderdale RSG	5	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Totals	155	79	6	19	70	62	50	46	113	1.82	1.61

*does not include the 2 young found in a house in NWCU raid (see below) almost certainly stolen from a nest in the MRG area

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland.

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

Peregrines continue to decline in Bowland due to persistent persecution on all estates. Six pairs were located early in the season but two of these soon disappeared. Four pairs laid eggs but one of these failed after laying two eggs. One failed to hatch a clutch of four under suspicious circumstances, leaving two pairs to hatch five young from eight eggs laid. One of these pairs was ten miles from driven grouse moor and the other was on the United Utilities estate. There are some Peregrines that continue to show wing damage due to being shot at.

Calderdale Raptor Study Group

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

Level of monitoring: Part lowland and part upland areas.

Altogether there were 94 records received during 2015, mostly from upland areas.

Four pairs of Peregrines were present during the spring but, unfortunately only two went on to breed with both pairs raising two young each.

Examination of the data in the tables reveal that six young, not four as would have been predicted, fledged from the study area. This anomaly was created by the fact that two additional young, stolen from the wild and seized by the Police, were fostered into one of the Calderdale nests. These were found in a house in Greater Manchester (see below) and probably came from a nest there.

NERF is a member of the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime and this collaboration with several partners, including the Police, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, the RSPB and the RSPCA, is an excellent example of the Partnership in action. Calderdale RSG, and NERF are especially grateful to Jean Thorpe, Ryedale Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre and Mark Naguib, Battle Flatts Veterinary Clinic for all of their hard work and dedication in preparing these two chicks for return to the wild.

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 in the table refer to upland territories only, where once again all known traditional/ historic eyries were checked. This resulted in just a single pair being seen at one site in early spring and lone bird at another, both of which failed to settle. No pairs have nested in the Durham uplands in the last 4 years and the last successful nest which fledged young was in 2009. More specifically and of notable concern, are those parts of Durham falling within the North Pennine SPA for which the Peregrine is a citation species. No Peregrines have nested here since 2002 and the last successful nest was in 1999. Even the signs of early season occupancy have much diminished in recent years.

A comparison with the species' fortunes in the Durham lowlands is instructive. In 2015 the Durham Bird Club & DUBSG recorded pairs present at 10 sites and a single bird at one. There were a total of nine nesting attempts of which seven were successful with a modest 13 young fledged. The number of successful nest sites represents a new high, and builds on the slow but steady growth in the lowland population shown in the 2014 national survey results from County Durham.

Sadly, there were two reports of Peregrines having been shot. A wounded bird was found in springtime at a lowland site and had to be euthanized, and another was found dead on the edge of the Stang Forest in the south of the county in August.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

Confirmed breeding was recorded at five secure urban sites, hatching 17 young. One juvenile taken into care after hitting a nearby building was found to have a calcium deficiency and a badly-healed fracture sustained in the nest and had to be euthanised, and another was found dead under a wind turbine at Denby Dale. Breeding was attempted at four quarry sites but successful at only two, one being within a RSPB reserve. At the remaining two, the eggs were deserted at one close to a grouse-shooting area, with local rumours of the female having been shot, and at the other, the pair re-laid after the first clutch was stolen. This second clutch was stolen just as they were due to hatch at the end of May.

In a remarkable turn of events, two chicks of the right age to be this brood, (18 days) were advertised on Facebook for £150 each. Reputable falconers informed the police and a raid was made on a house in Warth, Bury where the two chicks were recovered in a bucket under the stairs. The following paragraph is taken from the NWCUC press release 29th October 2015:

Having pleaded guilty to 'Prohibited offering sale of two Annex 'A' Species (COTES 1997) and 'Possession of two wild Peregrine falcons (WCA 1981), Liana Baker was sentenced to eight weeks in custody suspended for 12 months, ordered to attend a rehabilitation of offenders course and pay £345 costs. Alan Baker was also sentenced to 8 weeks in custody suspended for 12 months. He was given a curfew from 7pm to 7am for 8 weeks and ordered to pay £345 costs.

Although MRG campaigned strongly for a DNA test (the DNA of previous chicks is held up to 2011) this was considered to be too expensive. However, the age of these chicks, being a second brood, strongly indicated that they were the chicks from the quarry re-lay, as there were no other thefts in the area which matched this age range.

The two chicks were fostered into a nest in Yorkshire where they fledged successfully (below).



Other breeding season sightings involved the mystery of the birds seen frequently on pylons at Elton Reservoir continued, with sightings of single birds in the breeding season. More work needs to be done checking nearby mills in late May and June to look for noisy young! Two were seen at Piethorne 4th April, continuing a long series of breeding season sightings here since 1997, but the excellent coverage of the area has failed to find any breeding pairs on the GMC side of the county boundary running only 2 km away. A single bird was at a former breeding site 2nd July, and singles were at Isherwood Rd electricity sub-station, Carrington Moss, 31st July and 30th August – presumably a return to wintering quarters. For operational reasons breeding cannot be encouraged here.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The results are very similar to 2014 presumably due to the very poor summer weather, with many wet days on high ground around the time the young were hatching. A total of 16 nests fledged 26+ young (25 in 2014). It was particularly poor in the mid and west of the county and in the Border Forest area only two broods fledged a single, but a nice brood of four bucked the trend! In mid Northumberland it was just as bad with three nests fledging at least five young. In this area two pairs never laid, an immature female was paired with an adult male at another, and there was an interesting sighting of an adult female repeatedly stooping at a fox which had come too close to a nest, even though it was nesting on a crag.

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.

Both the usual nest sites failed this season. At one, well-grown chicks disappeared – presumably into the illegal falconry trade, at the other a late-sitting female was thought to be brooding small young on one visit but all activity had ceased by the next when the nest ledge was empty. Investigation of the site found no obvious evidence of interference, although this could not be totally ruled out. Worryingly, this is the first time these sites have failed in suspicious circumstances. Monitoring of both next season will have to be more intensive. Birds were regularly recorded by members of the Teesmouth Bird Club at Sleddale – the popular raptor site – and along the coast where two pairs bred successfully at cliff sites, each raising at least two young, one site falling within the NYM boundary the other just outside but included in the table above.

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.

Just two successful pairs in the PDRMG study area (three in the whole of the Dark Peak area of the Peak District National Park). The two successful pairs, one in Greater Manchester and one in West Yorkshire, each produced two fledged young. All four birds were ringed.

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 SPRSG recording area 34 sites were checked in 2015. Of these, six sites were unoccupied, including three sites in Upper Derwentdale, although at the traditional Alport Castles site the pair raised three young, following 2014's success with two young – the first since 2007. At the 27 remaining sites where pairs were present, 18 sites were successful, raising at least 40 young. Of the further nine sites, eight failed, perhaps because of poor weather conditions, sometimes after a failed first attempt, and at one site the outcome was unknown. The new site discovered on the edge of the White Peak in a working quarry in 2014, where the pair deserted due to the proximity of quarry workings, was successful in 2015; two young fledged and a third egg did not hatch. The traditional site in the Manifold Valley, which had been successful since its discovery in 2003 and which seemed not to have been occupied in 2014, was successful in 2015. Four young fledged from each of two sites, and three young each from a further four sites; all other sites fledged one or two young. Two lowland NE Derbyshire sites are included in the above figures; six young fledged from these sites. At a site on the edge of the Peak District, which had previously been unsuccessful for a

number of years due to disturbance and presumed persecution, two young fledged. In addition to the sites mentioned above, three pairs of urban Peregrines were successful: the pair at Derby Cathedral fledged three young which were ringed by Anthony Messenger, the pair at St. George's Church in Sheffield fledged two young which were ringed by Steve Samworth and the pair at DWT's East Mill in Belper fledged two young, although a third chick fell from the nest in early June. The Belper success was very welcome as a male Peregrine was found dead outside DWT's offices at East Mill on 17th January by a local photographer; the corpse was taken to a local vet, where it was x-rayed and shot was found lodged in its shoulder. Further expert veterinary analysis confirmed that this was a very recent shooting which was likely to have been linked to its death.

Of the three monitored sites in Staffordshire, two were successful, with a total of four young raised (3 + 1), one regular site failed; a fourth site was visited once and a breeding pair was observed, but the outcome was unknown. These figures are included in the above totals.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

Level of monitoring:

Yorkshire Dales: Excellent coverage; all or most sites receive annual coverage.

The contrast between Peregrine site occupancy in areas of different land use continues to show a marked difference, with seven nesting attempts away from grouse moors but no occupied territories on grouse moors. An adult male seen on one occasion in late March at a historically occupied nest site on the edge of a grouse moor was notable.

Overall, 2015 was the worst year in the YDNP for successful nesting attempts since 1979, presumed to be as a result of the poor weather in May. Four pairs failed at either egg or early chick stage and one pair once again failed to hatch any eggs, with the adults incubating right through the breeding season. The only successful site was at Malham Cove where despite the poor weather the successful viewing scheme operated by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and RSPB enabled over 12,000 visitors to watch the pair fledge two young.

A pair fledged two young just outside the YDNP boundary.

Nidderdale: at least one long-term monitoring study.

The two occupied sites were off grouse moors (although one is close to a grouse moor) and reared two young. The longest established safe quarry site held birds all season but there was no indication at all that the birds attempted to breed for the second season running. Three grouse moor territories were as usual vacant.

NERF regional summary

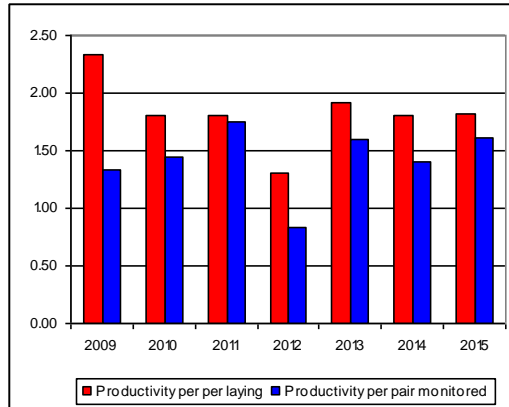
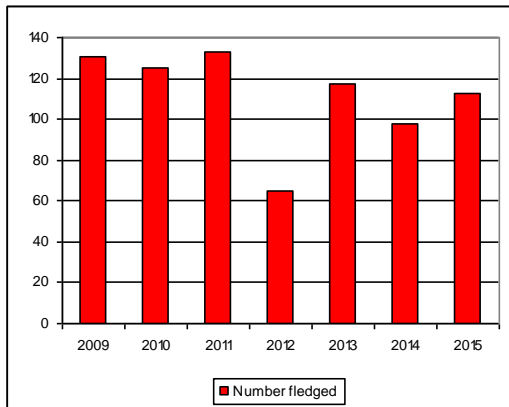
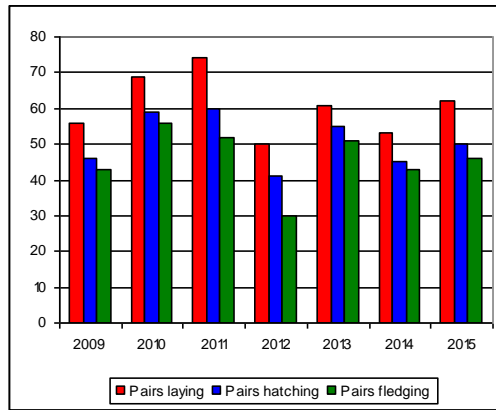
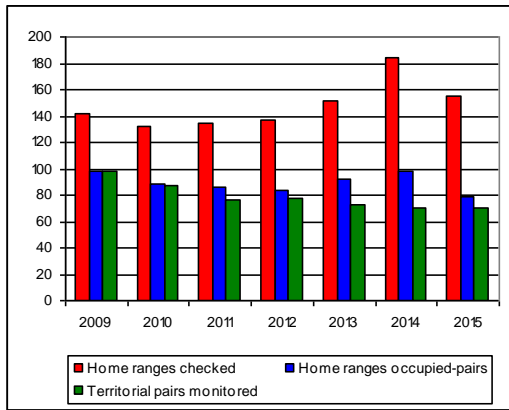
NERF members undertook a significant amount of survey work within their individual areas for the 2014 Peregrine survey. At the time of writing only the preliminary results had been published by BTO (2016), with an estimate of 1,505 breeding pairs. Although similar to the estimate from the last survey, there are notable changes in regional estimates with the number of breeding Peregrines recorded in England now higher than the number in Scotland for the first time. Of particular concern is the decline in breeding numbers in upland areas of the country, compared with stable or increasing populations in lowland areas.

The results of annual monitoring undertaken by raptor study groups in 2015 show a continued problem in the uplands. In areas away from managed grouse moors peregrines are doing relatively well, although poor weather particularly during the spring resulted in a poor breeding season in many areas. In many areas managed for grouse shooting, Peregrines remain absent year after year from traditional nesting territories that were occupied in the

1980s and 90s. In other areas, notably Bowland, the number of nesting attempts on or near grouse moor areas are in decline, in stark contrast to what is happening in lowland areas. There can only be one rational explanation for the differences in Peregrine occupancy in areas of different land use. Peregrines are simply not tolerated as part of current grouse moor management practice in northern England, with a very similar pattern reported by RSG in Scotland.

Reference: BTO (2016). Latest Results. <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/peregrine-survey/results> Accessed 8 Aug 2016.

Comparative data 2009-2015



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 2015 BBS Annual Report showed an 8% increase 2014-15 for England, and a 122 % increase 1995-2014.

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 recent years there has been a proliferation of gas guns being used in the uplands, including on and adjacent to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and in Specially Protected Areas that are designated as such for rare and vulnerable birds. The shooting industry justifies the use of these indiscriminate birds scaring devices on the grounds that they are protecting wader chicks and new born lambs from attacks by '*marauding flocks of Raven*'. There is no scientific, peer reviewed, data to show that Raven are having a significant impact on waders or lambs which tend to be born at lower altitudes away from heather moorland and yet at the time of writing [August 2016] Natural England, together with the Moorland Association, are drafting guidelines for the gas guns in the uplands. An analysis of Raven populations across the NERF study area is given in the NERF Threat Assessment.

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)	Homes ranges occupied (singles)	Pairs failing early / non breeding	Territorial pairs monitored	Known Pairs laying eggs	Known Pairs hatching eggs	Known Pairs fledging young	Known Number fledged	Young fledged per pair laying	Young fledged per territorial pair monitored
BRSR	2	2	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
CRSR	2	2	0	0	2	2	2	2	8	4.00	4.00
DUBSR	8	3	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
MRG	7	7	NC	1	6	6	6	6	24	4.00	4.00
NRG	32	26	1	4	22	18	18	16	36+	2.00	1.64
PDRMG	21	10	2	5	9	5	4	3	12	2.40	1.35
SPRSR	30	30	NC	NC	17	17	17	17	NC	NC	NC
YDRSR	21	11	0	1	11	10	10	10	29	2.90	2.64
Nidderdale RSG	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00
Totals	124	92	3	16	73	59	57	54	109	1.85	1.49

Group Reports

Bowland Raptor Study Group

Extent of coverage: Upland areas only.

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

The Group observed a reasonable number of non-breeding Ravens wandering through the study area during 2015. However, the number of breeding birds remains static at two pairs; one on the United Utilities Estate and the second on a private estate. Only one pair laid eggs but they failed to hatch.

Whilst it is possible that some pairs may breed undetected in shelter belts in remote areas near farms and at least one pair may be breeding in the large Gisburn Forest, the Group believes that persecution is likely to be suppressing the local population.

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.

There were a total of 91 records received by the Group during 2015, down 10% from the previous year. Once again these sightings came mainly from widely scattered upland areas. The number of breeding birds has remained static at two pairs for many years despite the fact that there is ample suitable habitat in Calderdale for several additional pairs. Both of the resident pairs nested successfully each raising 4 young.

Ravens are long-lived birds, typically living 10 to 15 years in the wild. Between 2009 and 2015, inclusive, 42 young have fledged from Calderdale and yet depressingly the population remains static. Of equal concern data from neighbouring RSGs indicates that the fledglings

from Calderdale are not being absorbed in to other study areas. The most likely cause for the failure of the local population to expand is persecution.

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 status of the Raven in the uplands has remained unchanged for decades. Ravens manage to breed successfully only on very rare occasions. More typically a few pairs are present in suitable habitat early in the year yet fail to nest. Persecution and deliberate disturbance are thought to be responsible. There were reports from at least 20 locations in the first quarter of the year with a maximum count of just 6 birds and 2-3 birds lingered during the summer in several upland areas. The maximum count in the final quarter was of a modest group of 5 individuals.

There were no reports from the eastern lowlands.

Manchester Raptor Group

Extent of coverage: Whole county.

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

During 2015 four young fledged from each of four sites. Additionally, three young fledged at Rochdale gasholder in the town centre and five young fledged in the Naden valley with one unhatched egg. There were credible reports of the pair at Bolton Town Hall breeding but these were not followed and had fledged by the time the Peregrines, which nest at the same location, were checked.

Shotgun wadding was later found at one site, suggesting that part or all of the family were shot out after ringing. This site is close to a grouse moor.

A pair commenced nest building at a site in a Wigan woodland used some years ago, but failed to breed. An analysis of other records suggested that territories were held at a factory at Hindley Green, Dove Stone RSPB reserve, Hobson Moor quarry, Holcombe Moor, and Ludworth Moor. Despite having no information about breeding success at these sites the Group believes that it is highly likely that there were more breeding pairs in the study area than the data above suggests.

Northumbria Ringing Group

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

2015 was a disappointing year when compared to 2014, with just 22 pairs fledging 36 young. Whilst this was a reduction of only 2 pairs, the number of fledglings produced was down by c30% from the previous year. This reduction in the total number of fledglings produced can be explained by the fact that many of the broods were unusually small, comprising of 1 or 2 chicks.

At one nest site the nest was '*removed*' from the crag, and although the pair was later seen in the valley it was too late for another breeding attempt. The nest had been built on a suitably wide ledge, and could not have fallen off without assistance. This incident followed a familiar pattern where interference at the nest site had been suspected previously.

With the number of Ravens being seen in the county throughout the year it is surprising that the trend in the number of occupied territories is increasing so slowly. The majority of the nests are to be found in the uplands yet Northumberland has large areas of suitable habitat in the in-between between the high ground and the lower farmland, which at the moment has very few if any nesting ravens. Hopefully this will change in the next few years.

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, once again there were no confirmed or otherwise verifiable records of Ravens in the study area during 2015.

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.

Breeding Ravens appear to be seriously under-represented in the PDRMG study area. Just two pairs were recorded breeding successfully in the Dark Peak area in 2015. One pair failed at the egg stage. A number of new nests were recorded but there were no birds in attendance and all appear to have failed early.

One pair failed at the small young stage in the south west of the Peak District for reasons unknown. However, a further successful pair was recorded by the Group away from the Dark Peak in Cheshire.

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 the species continued to expand, including in the north-eastern lowland areas where two quarry sites were monitored, with successful breeding at both. In the south of the recording area (south of Carsington Water) 15 tree nests were located, all of which were successful, but brood numbers were not ascertained. Seven pairs nested in Scots Pine, two in Corsican Pine, and one each in Cedar, Sycamore, Wellingtonia, Norway Spruce, Douglas Fir and Oak. The Oak tree nest was the lowest ever recorded by the group at only about 6-7m high. Initially one of the pairs failed due to the supporting branch breaking off in strong winds, but a replacement nest was found 1.25km away. 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 on the Staffordshire side. 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.

Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group

Yorkshire Dales

Extent of coverage: Part upland and part lowland areas.

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

It was the best year on record for the number of successful nests in the Yorkshire Dales, although many potentially suitable nesting sites were not occupied. The first confirmed tree nesting site in the Dales, which failed under suspicious circumstances during the 2014 breeding season was not occupied during 2015.

One site was not occupied, possibly as a result of the nest being removed outside the breeding season. It is suspected that this was done by climbers 'gardening' the crags by removing loose rock and vegetation.

Nidderdale

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

Level of monitoring: Part of upland areas.

Once again birds were present on their traditional breeding grounds early in the 2015 breeding season. However, as the season progressed there was no indication of breeding at

historically occupied nest sites, or that pairs had moved to other crags that breeding birds have previously frequented.

This is a familiar pattern in the region where records reveal that a pair has occupied the same site for many years and yet has, apparently, only ever bred once. There is ample habitat for several pairs across the study area but these sites, mainly on grouse moors, remain unoccupied. Why is this?

It is incomprehensible why Raven, a bird that once established usually breeds successfully year after year at the same site in other study areas, continually fails in Nidderdale year after year after year. The most likely cause of this annual failure is that their breeding attempts are being suppressed.

NERF regional summary

Raptor workers have, for decades, known that Raven populations have been suppressed in the northern uplands year upon year. Records from 1900 onwards reveal that the birds have been sparse along the Pennine Chain with c.20 breeding territories between the Tyne and Aire Gaps – a distance of 135 kilometres and c.5000 km². On average only half of these known territories are occupied annually. Compare this to the Lake District, an area of c.2000km² with 70 – 90 pairs (Ratcliffe, D. *The Raven* (1997) p. 220). Clearly the NERF area, which includes the Pennines, the Forest of Bowland and the North York Moors, is under-populated by Raven despite the fact that there is ample habitat across the NERF region to hold a substantial population. There are no doubt fringe issues that cause these population differences, however the main driver appears to be land use. The uplands in the Pennines, North York Moors and the Forest of Bowland are dominated by grouse moor management; The Lake District is not.

The NERF seven-year Raven data shown in the table below brings the issue in to sharp focus. During that period NERF has recorded 819 fledglings, an average of 117 per year, and yet the population remains static. Where are they? The breeding pair productivity rate per pair laying

All NERF annual Raven data

Year	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
2009	84	68	0	11	51	39	39	37	105	2.69	2.06
2010	111	85	0	6	49	43	40	39	122	2.84	2.49
2011	111	82	1	5	52	47	46	44	138	2.94	2.65
2012	91	65	1	4	51	50	50	46	132	2.64	2.59
2013	145	87	0	17	78	72	68	44	116	1.61	2.11
2014	96	62	1	19	50	41	35	34	97	2.36	1.94
2015	124	92	3	16	73	59	57	54	109	1.85	1.49
Totals	762	541	6	78	404	351	335	298	819	2.33	2.03
Av. / year	108.86	77.29	0.86	11.14	57.71	50.14	47.86	42.57	117.00	2.45	2.25

eggs is 2.45 chicks. The population should be expanding, yet it is not doing so. Perhaps more worrying is the fact that the 'NERF population' is predominantly based only in the South Peak and Northumberland. These populations are not expanding and the fledglings are not moving into adjacent study areas outside of the core territories.

There is ample evidence to show that persecution in areas managed for grouse shooting is suppressing the local Raven populations. There is also ample evidence to indicate that nothing will change unless there is Government intervention to prevent persecution.

Regrettably past experience indicates that this is extremely unlikely to occur.

Following the increased and widespread use of gas guns in the uplands, supported by the Moorland Association and allegedly being deployed to protect wader chicks from being predated by squadrons of Raven, the question of the legality of using bird scarers, designed to protect agricultural crops, on protected landscapes designated for their bird assemblages, was raised by NERF within the PAW Raptor Persecution Priority Delivery Group.

A small Working Group, which comprised of Natural England and the Moorland Association, was formed to draw up guidelines for their use, despite the fact that there is no current scientific evidence to show that Ravens have a significant negative impact on upland breeding wader colonies. It is interesting that the use of these devices, to allegedly protect waders, is being advocated by the Moorland Association, the organisation that represents grouse moor owners, and not the bird conservation organisations.

This response to a Freedom of Information Act query to Natural England regarding the deployment of gas guns, specifically asking how they would be deployed "*ensuring that gas guns are located so that they do not disturb breeding Schedule 1 birds*" was published on Raptor Persecution UK website on 25 August 2015.

Natural England replied:

In response to your query the onus is on the land manager or their representative not to cause disturbance as that would be unlawful. The use of gas guns aims to dissuade species such as corvids from causing damage to ground nesting birds or livestock. On large expanses of open moorland they should be able to be deployed away from Schedule 1 species. Most managers should know where these species are present but it would be best practice for Natural England and other interested groups, for example raptor study group members, to pass on information over the location of Schedule 1 species to the land manager so they are in a more informed position and then able to ensure that gas guns are deployed appropriately".

It is impossible to see how this guidance will benefit raptors that breed on grouse moors; indeed it is not designed for that purpose. It is designed to protect game birds. It is also difficult to understand why Natural England takes the view that devices for scaring corvids and gulls away from vulnerable wader chicks will not scare away raptors, adult waders or grouse for that matter.

Of equal concern to Raptor Workers is that if this policy is actually introduced during the 2017 breeding season, NERF members should brace themselves for being condemned by the shooting industry. The guidance from the Government refers to '*best practice*' and attempts to put some of the onus on Raptor Workers to ensure that protected species are not affected by the deployment of gas guns; this is ludicrous. In reality many are denied access to monitor raptors across vast tracts of our uplands, despite having a licence to do so. The only responsibility for not committing a criminal offence rests squarely on the shoulders of grouse moor owners and their employees, not the volunteers who monitor raptor populations.

NERF regional threat assessment

The national threat assessment for this species is applicable in the NERF region. Raven populations are suppressed by persecution.

NERF 2015 FIELDWORKERS' CONFERENCE

Held at Rishworth School, 21 November 2015

Summary of Speaker Presentations

The Work of the PAW - Superintendent Chris Hankinson, Chair of the Raptor Priority Group, Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime.



Chris spoke of how his natural passion for wildlife had led him in early 2015 to volunteer to chair the priority group within PAW looking at raptor persecution. He'd immediately realised that this was a very varied group with both conservation and shooting interests and with that came challenge. To find common ground and understand the respective issues he'd committed, in his own time, to spend a day with each interest group. He cited the previous production of poison-incident maps and the recent successful relocation of stolen Peregrine chicks found in Bury as good examples of cooperative working. Whilst asking the audience to accept that wildlife crime could not be an absolute priority for any police force in the current financial climate, he felt that NERF's award of Partner of the Year 2014 showed that agencies and voluntary organisations could nevertheless work together very effectively and achieve very positive results.

Introducing the new IPMR and Nest Record Scheme –Carl Barimore, BTO



Carl presented on the changes to the BTO Nest Recording Scheme and also introduced the new online recording software which is due to be launched in the spring of 2016 to replace the existing IPMR. Fieldworkers studying Schedule 1 species should by now be making sole use of Nest Record Cards for their end-of-season submissions. Guidance is available for codes that have been introduced to ensure ‘absence’ or ‘occupancy of a territory without a nest’, can now be recorded. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey was well suited to providing information on population trends for many species and Carl showed an index for “Meadow Pipit” as but one example. However, for raptors he suggested a more focused survey approach was needed. This might include Nest Box schemes for Owls or Kestrels and here the new IPMR on-line system would be more user friendly than before. The new system will also make use of Google maps on a nest location screen and all the information will be stored centrally to avoid the risk of users losing their data through home PC faults. The usual nest record data will be requested but there will be a greater degree of standardisation. All data will be held securely and such things as access to the location map by third parties will be fully protected.

**The Natural England Hen Harrier Recovery Project – Stephen Murphy,
Natural England**



Stephen looked first at the breeding data for 2015. There had been 13 nesting attempts in England, 6 of which had been successful in fledging a total of 18 young. Of those young that had been fitted with satellite trackers, 3 had lost their signals by September whilst still in northern England and investigations are ongoing. Across the extended study period 1986-2015 the population in northern England had shown some fluctuations but an overall decline from 2008 highlighted the species’ vulnerability. The Forest of Bowland has hosted the majority of nesting attempts with over 60% successful here yet this level of productivity has failed to deliver any real resurgence in overall numbers. The aim of the research has been to gather evidence on movements essential to informing land management practices that will benefit the species’ conservation status. The initial programme of radio tagging fledglings provided interesting but labour intensive data. It wasn’t until 2007 when satellite transmission tags began to be fitted that the true and fascinating picture of movements was revealed. To date, 47 satellite tags have been fitted which have provided location information for between 3 and 30 months duration. Two females are still transmitting as they approach a full 3 years. The data has allowed the four stages of the life cycle to be better understood, namely

“independence”, “leaving the natal area”, “autumn & winter ranges” and “return to breeding”. Although capable of significant daily movements the majority of English born females have their autumn and winter ranges within the North Pennine uplands probably within 70-100 km of their natal site and certainly favouring heather moorland. Some key locations are especially important. Males are more nomadic and far ranging, including those that have been tracked to France and Spain. Of 133 birds fitted with either radio or satellite tags 48% appear to have died (signal loss) within their first 9 months. The corpses of just 14 birds have been recovered. In summary: dispersal is complex with very different behaviour between males and females; their mobility makes conservation more difficult; females are largely year-round upland birds and males more nomadic; high first winter mortality feeds through to lack of annual recruitment. Future plans must be for more fieldwork and research. Land owners and managers must be provided with the information upon which they will be encouraged to aid the species’ recovery. A number of peer-reviewed papers will be published.

The RSPB Hen Harrier LIFE+ Project. David Hunt, RSPB



This is a 5 year project funded by the EU and aimed at enhancing the breeding population of Hen Harriers in the UK. Amongst a range of project objectives, David’s focus is on improving the understanding of movements and investigating instances of indirect or direct persecution throughout the seasons, all aimed ultimately at securing the species long term protection. The Hen Harrier is a citation species for the Bowland and the North Pennine Special Protection Areas (at 13 and 11 pairs respectively) – current levels fall well short, so action is clearly needed. The RSPB Hen Harrier LIFE+ project is able to support the costs of satellite tags on young birds in parallel to the work of Natural England. Private sponsors of tags are also now stepping forward. David stressed the importance of the use of information submitted to the RSPB Hen Harrier Hotline and the value of working closely with local raptor study groups through NERF. He recounted his experiences in his first full year of working on the project.

The Work of the Northern England Raptor Forum. Paul Irving, Chairman NERF



Paul reviewed recent events and issues of interest to NERF. He was delighted to acknowledge the award received by NERF from PAW as their “Partner of the Year 2014” – a very pleasing recognition for the voluntary contribution members make in species’ monitoring and publishing the information collected. Members of NERF’s raptor study groups had recently logged over 4000 hours of field observations during the spring and summer of 2015 under the RSPB LIFE + Hen Harrier project. NERF continues to reject the need for invasive brood management to be introduced at Hen Harrier nests whilst ever the English population is so critically endangered. The Hen Harrier is not alone in suffering illegal persecution; NERF’s data clearly demonstrates a lack of tolerance to upland Peregrines and perhaps even Short-eared Owls. NERF remains anxious to see that any applications to control Common Buzzards at game-bird release pens be properly assessed in full accord with the EU Birds Directive. The recent draft bill stemming from the Law Commission’s study seems disappointing in that the possibility of vicarious liability being introduced in England appears to have been set aside.

A Fieldworker’s Guide to Forensic Science. Guy Shorrocks, RSPB



The RSPB have 6 priority raptor persecution species in the UK; Goshawk, White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red Kite, Peregrine and Hen Harrier. Over 2000 examples of persecution of bird species have been reported between 1990 and 2014 but by their very nature the number recorded must represent only a very small part of the real levels of persecution. Of those people successfully convicted of crimes against birds of prey, two-thirds have been gamekeepers. The first custodial sentence and the first prosecution for

vicarious liability have recently been seen in Scotland. Guy explained that the work of RSPB Investigations was not really about generating friction with shooting estates but was about providing evidence for Governments to be able to do the right thing and forcibly uphold the law. Importance was drawn to anyone coming across a potential wildlife crime to “recognise”, “record” and “report” the information safely and accurately without disturbing the evidence. Examples were given of how forensics now make use of both human and animal DNA matching to secure convictions. Guy reviewed the very detailed scientific analysis which had confirmed that the Hen Harrier “Bowland Betty” had indeed been shot.

**The Cumbrian Osprey Project – a 5 year perspective. Nathan Fox,
Forestry Commission.**

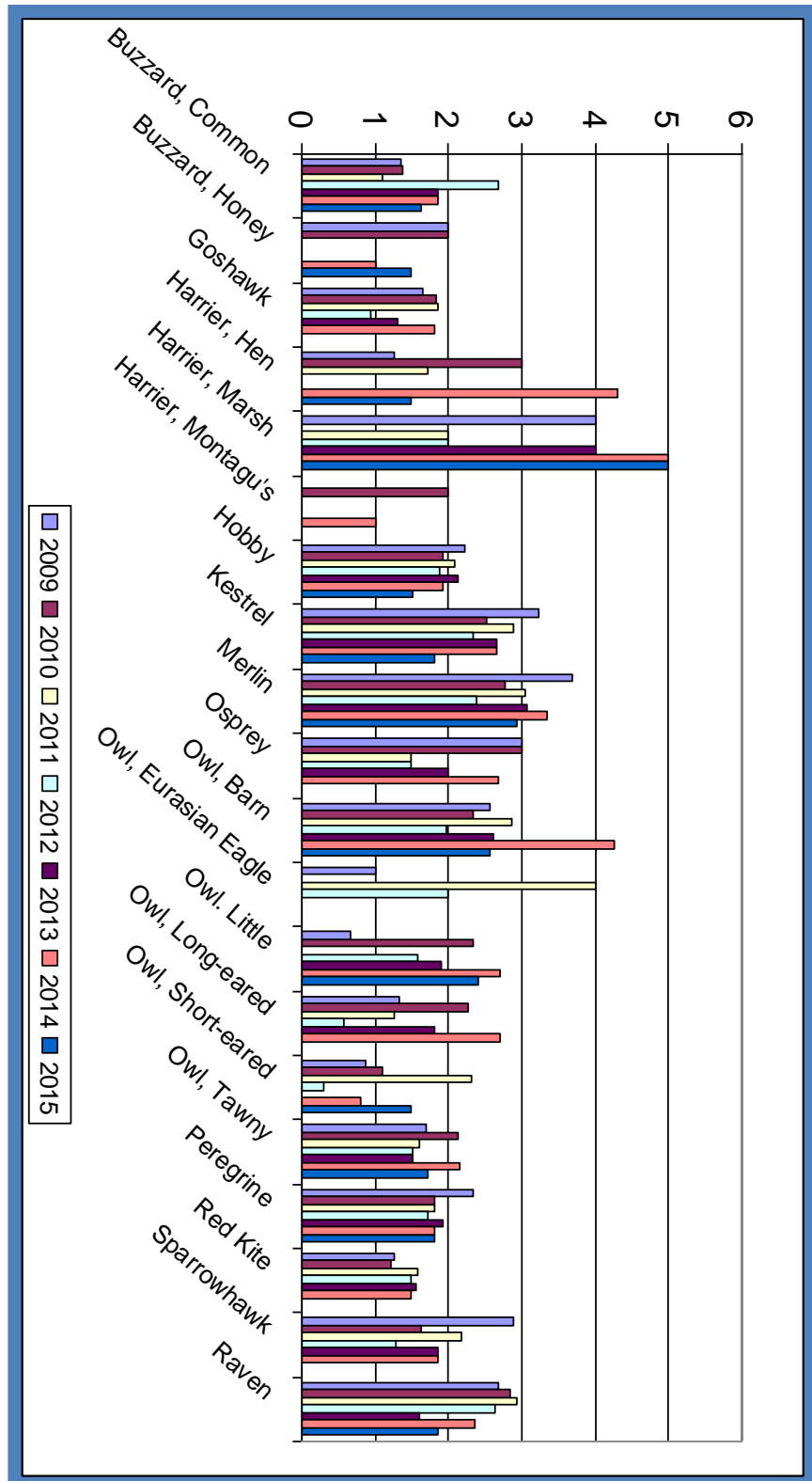
The story of Cumbria’s Ospreys is a very positive one which might perhaps provide lessons for the protection of other birds of prey. Ospreys have now bred successfully in the Cumbrian Lake District for the last 15 years raising a total of 30 chicks from what are now over 6 sites. The species’ status might now be considered to be in a phase of ‘establishment’. The project has been managed as a partnership between the Forestry Commission, RSPB and the Lake District National Park consulting with and involving other interested parties as required. Its aim was to show people the birds and inspire visitors; the Dodd Wood view point has attracted over 1.2 million and about 100 volunteers now register 3000 hours per annum. The value to the local economy has been estimated at £2 million pa and has created over 30 jobs. The project’s longer term aspiration is to have 20 pairs by 2020. Several young birds have been fitted with satellite trackers and these have revealed some fascinating information on life cycles. A young male made a 5 day crossing of the Sahara on its first autumn migration before settling in Equatorial Guinea for its first winter where it stayed for its subsequent first full year. It returned to northern Europe in its second spring and eventually came back to the Lakes later that summer before once again returning to Equatorial Guinea in the autumn.

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	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	3	1.5	1.5
Red Kite	48	36	0	11	25	25	20	16	33	1.32	132
Marsh Harrier	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	5.00	5.00
Hen Harrier	51	9	8	1	8	8	3	3	12	1.5	1.5
Goshawk	96	61	8	11	49	43	36	31	69	1.6	1.4
Sparrowhawk	79	65	0	3	42	42	32	30	81	1.92	1.92
Buzzard											
Osprey	4	4	0	1	3	3	3	3	6	2.00	2.00
Kestrel	207	109	1	1	95	96	87	85	174	1.81	1.83
Merlin	270	132	9	21	114	105	88	83	308	2.93	2.70
Hobby	55	47	0	1	44	44	40	37	67	1.52	1.52
Peregrine	155	79	6	19	70	62	50	46	113	1.82	1.61
Barn Owl	413	201	13	13	180	180	172	164	453	2.56	2.63
Eagle Owl	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Little Owl	55	17	15	0	7	7	7	7	17	2.4	2.4
Tawny Owl	507	179	13	0	168	174	155	152	290	1.71	1.71
Long-eared Owl	82	64	1	6	58	56	51	46	100	1.79	1.79
Short-eared Owl	106	64	23	0	56	49	42	40	45	1.5	1.5
Raven	124	92	3	16	73	59	57	54	109	1.85	1.49
Totals	2515	1357	102	107	1551	1393	886	876	1999		

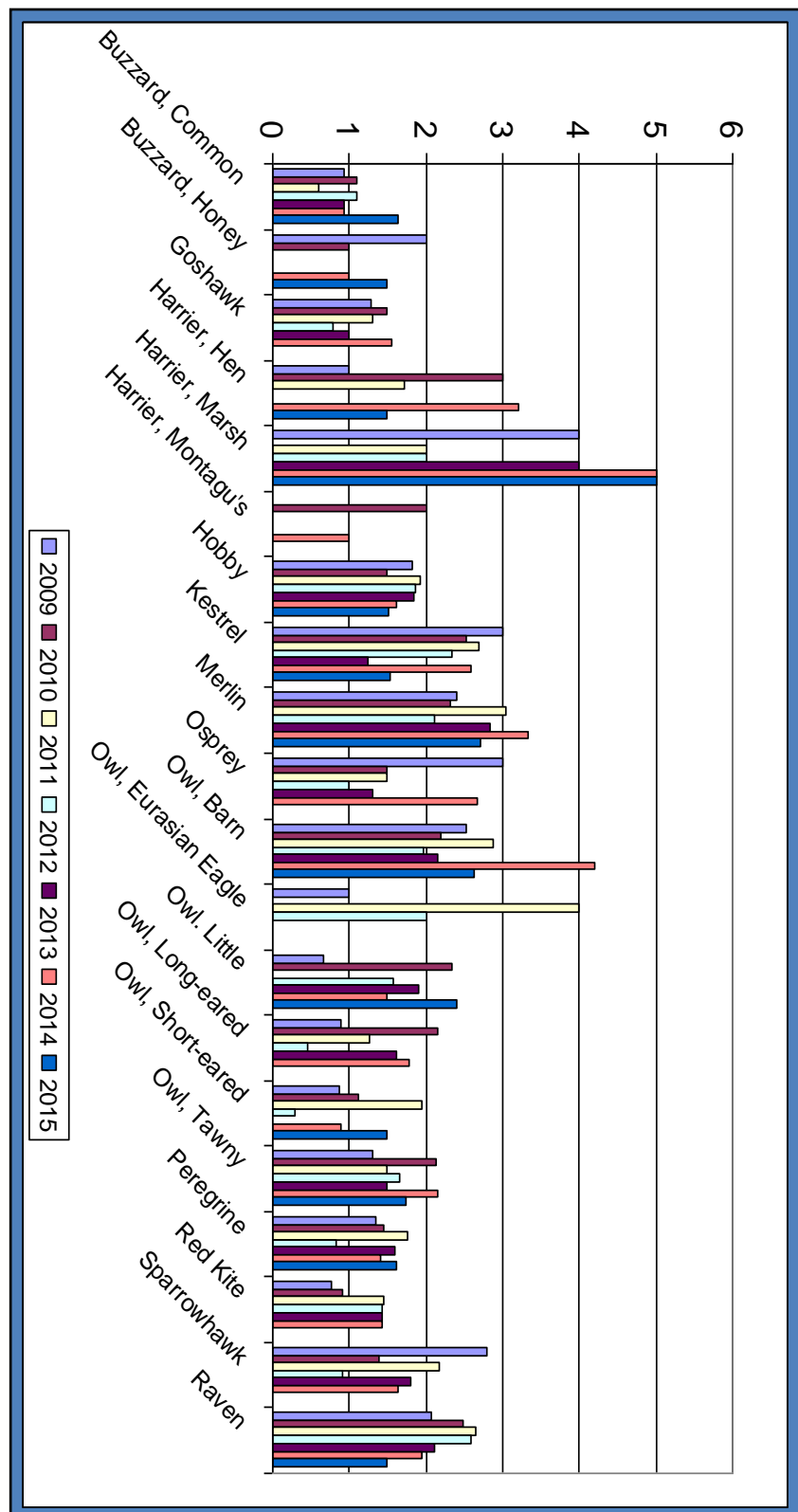
Appendix 2: Combined productivity graphs

a) young fledged per pair laying 2009-2015



Appendix 2: Combined productivity graphs

b) young fledged per territorial pair monitored 2009-2015



Appendix 3: Ring recoveries and colour ring sightings

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
NRG	Red Kite	GR81219	20/06/2014	Axwell Park, Blaydon	606km	Polgigga, Cornwall	Juv	606km	SW	Wing tags read in field
NRG	Red Kite	GR42318	14/06/2012	Black Isle, Highland	10/11/2012	Derwent Valley CP	Juv	334km	SSE	Wing tags read in field
NRG	Marsh Harrier	FH53187	01/07/2014	Errol, Perth & Kinross	04/06/2015	Big Waters	Juv	177km	SSE	Wing tags read in field
NRG	Goshawk	MA27869	23/06/2015	Kielder	11/08/2015	Bardon Mill	Juv	32km	S	Dead, hit window
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	DD47875	01/07/2011	Flockton, W Yorks	02/03/2015	Cudworth, Barnsley, W Yorks	1340 days	16km	SE	Freshly dead
PDRMG	Sparrowhawk	DN51552	28/08/2013	Norton, Sheffield	03/05/2015	Norton, Sheffield	613 days	1km	-	Freshly dead
NRG	Osprey	1174463	19/07/2012	Kielder	25/04/2015	Kielder	3 years	-	-	Read in field
MRG	Barn Owl	GV11698	10/06/2015	Affetside, Bury	07/09/2015	Toppings, Bolton	Juv	5km	W	Dead
NRG	Barn Owl	GR10897	07/07/2011	Howick	15/06/2015	Hermitage Farm	4 years	12km	S	Controlled
NRG	Barn Owl	GR34756	08/09/2011	Burradon, Thropton	03/07/2015, 29/10/2015	Long Horsley	4 years	21km	ESE	Controlled
NRG	Barn Owl	GR95031	10/07/2014	Dueshill Farm	27/06/2015	Lambert Hill Wood	Juv	21km	ESE	Controlled
NRG	Barn Owl	GR10806	31/05/2014	Wallington, Northumbria	04/04/2015	Otterburn, Northumbria	308 days	14 miles	NNW	Road casualty
NRG	Barn Owl	GR10757	06/08/2013	Rochester, Redesdale	09/03/2014	Fallowdon Hall	Juv	47km	NE	Controlled
NRG	Barn Owl	GR73344	21/06/2013	Holy Island	22/02/2014	Chibburn, Druridge	Juv	48km	SSE	Road casualty
NRG	Barn Owl	GR73345	21/06/2013	Holy Island	09/03/2014	Holy Island	Juv	-	-	Controlled
NRG	Barn Owl	FH92023	07/06/2014	Nunnykirk	07/10/2014	Elsdon	Juv	15km	W	Dead on fence
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC82493	10/07/2014	Guisborough, Cleveland	16/10/2015	Addlethorpe, Lincs	Adult	177km	SSE	Road casualty
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC82438	02/06/2014	Egton Flats, N Yorks	26/04/2015	Houlsyke, Whitby	Juv	7km	W	Freshly dead

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC82483	16/06/2014	Glaisdale, N Yorks	25/02/2015	Kirklevington, Stockton on Tees	254 days	34km	W	Road casualty
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC70517	27/06/2008	Egton Bridge, N Yorks	28/04/2015	Stainsacre nr Whitby	2496 days	13km	ENE	Dead, very thin
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GC98688	29/06/2013	Lingdale, Redcar & Cleveland	14/02/2015	Guisborough, Redcar & Cleveland	595 days	10km	W	Dead, eye injury
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GR87426	10/07/2015	Glaisdale, N Yorks	11/12/2015	Borrowby, N Yorks	154 days	10km	N	Dead, possible broken wing
NYMUBSG	Barn Owl	GR887427	10/07/2015	Glaisdale, N Yorks	12/08/2015	Glaisdale, N Yorks	33 days	-	-	Drowned in water trough
PDRMG	Barn Owl	FB04723	23/06/2015	Ingbirchworth, S Yorks	09/09/2015	Ravenfield, S Yorks	78 days	32km	SE	Dead
SPRSG	Barn Owl	GV30135	25/07/2015	Woodmansey, E Riding	02/11/2015	Holmesfield, Derbys	100 days	94km	SW	Freshly dead
SPRSG	Barn Owl	GR61843	30/05/2014	N Anston Brook, S Yorks	21/02/2015	N Anston, S Yorks	267 days	-	-	Road casualty
SPRSG	Barn Owl	GR96253	19/06/2014	Laneham, Notts	06/03/2015	Thorney, Notts	260 days	5km	SE	Long dead
SPRSG	Barn Owl	GR82838	29/06/2015	Sutton Scarsdale, Derbys	19/09/2015	Pleasley, Notts	82 days	9km	SE	Road casualty
NRG	Tawny Owl	GC73498	20/05/2010	Spadeadam	01/07/2015	Spadeadam	5 yrs+	-	-	Road casualty
NRG	Tawny Owl	GN00655	06/05/1998	Stonehaugh	4 times to 12/05/2015	Stonehaugh	17 yrs+	-	-	Controlled, breeding
NRG	Tawny Owl	GN00997	01/05/2005	Gibside	30/08/2015	Gibside	10 yrs +	-	-	Controlled
NRG	Tawny Owl	GN00977	14/05/2004	Gibside	15/05/2015	Gibside	11 yrs +	-	-	Controlled
NRG	Tawny Owl	GR57903	04/06/2013	Darling Howe, Cumbria	22/05/2014	Bassenthwaite Lake		5km	NE	Dead, hit window
NRG	Tawny Owl	GN65035	28/04/2007	Rufford Abbey, Notts	07/05/2014	Kielder	7 yrs +	251km	NNW	
SPRSG	Tawny Owl	GR82715	06/05/2015	Whitwell, Derbys	10/10/2015	Whitwell, Derbys	166 days	-	-	Drowned in fish pond
PDRMG	Long-eared Owl	GR82818	03/05/2014	Nr Denshaw, Oldham	21/08/2015	Burnley, Lancs	475 days	26	NW	Dead, not fresh

Group	Species	Ring No.	Date ringed	Location	Date recovered	Location	Age	Distance from ringing site (km)	Direction	Comment
PDRMG	Kestrel	EH11358	07/06/2011	Charlesworth, Derbys	13/12/2015	Kiln Green, nr Oldham	4yrs +	15km	N	Freshly dead
SPRSG	Kestrel	EN90575	22/09/2014	Beeley Moor, Derbys	12/01/2015	Beeley Moor, Derbys	112 days	-	-	Road casualty
SPRSG	Kestrel	ER41982	29/06/2015	Netherthorpe, S Yorks	29/08/2015	Aike, E Riding	61 days	81km	NE	Dead, not recent
DUBSG	Merlin	EY56183	24/06/2015	Middleton, Teesdale	03/08/2015	Normanton, Lincs	40 days	205km	S	Dead
DUBSG	Merlin	EY56198	02/07/2015	Middleton, Teesdale	03/08/2015	Spurn NR	32 days	181km	SE	Dead
DUBSG	Merlin	DE81642	02/07/2015	Middleton, Teesdale	03/08/2015	Lindisfame NR	32 days	117km	N	Dead
NRG	Merlin	EY56154	18/06/2014	Middleton, Teesdale	04/12/2014	Skelmersdale, Lancs	Juv	128km	SSW	Dead
NRG	Merlin	DB64983	18/06/2015	Edmundbyers, Co. Durham	13/12/2015	Darlington	Juv	41km	SE	Dead
NRG	Merlin	EW21485	27/06/2008	Middleton, Teesdale	04/10/2013	Bowes Moor, Durham	5 yrs +	14km	S	Dead, hit wires
PDRMG	Merlin	EY03558	01/07/2015	Nr Mossley, Gtr Manchester	30/07/2015	Aston-on-Trent, Derbys	29 days	85km	SE	Road casualty
PDRMG	Hobby	EL61964	31/07/2014	Emley, W Yorks	03/09/2015	Penistone, S Yorks	399 days	12km	SE	Into care, poor condition
SPRSG	Hobby	EW21684	02/08/2014	Breadsall, Derbys	08/07/2015	Worton, Wilts	340 days	188km	S	Freshly dead
MRG	Peregrine	GV11667 + colour ring NP	19/05/2015	Rochdale Town Hall	17/09/2015	Denby Dale, W Yorks	121 days	39km	ESE	Killed by wind turbine
MRG	Peregrine	GR26898+ colour ring FR	21/05/2012	Pear Mill., Stockport	01/01/2015	Dean Clough Mill Halifax	955 days	33km	NE	Long dead, fell down chimney
NRG	Peregrine	GC43385	28/05/2009	Kielder	16/04/2014	Din Fell, Borders	5 yrs	24km	WSW	Breeding, transponder
PDRMG	Peregrine	GV00160	15/05/2015	Holmfirth, W Yorks	20/07/2015	Kirkburton, Huddersfield	66 days	7km	NE	Wong injury, euthanised
SPRSG	Peregrine	GC20783	24/05/2015	Derby	20/11/2015	Egleton NR Rutland Water	180 days	61km	SE	Orange ring 030 read in field

Appendix 4: List of acronyms

a.s.l.	above sea level
BRSR	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
NYMs	North York Moors
NYMRSG or	Abbreviated acronym used in tables for NYMUB(M)SG
NYMMG	North York Moors Upland Bird(Merlin) Study Group
PDRMG	Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group
RBBP	Rare Breeding Birds Panel
RMG	Raptor Monitoring Group
RSG	Raptor Study Group
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SPA	Special Protected Area, under EC Wild Birds Directive [79/409/EEC commonly referred to as The Birds Directive]
SPRSG	South Peak Raptor Study Group
SREYRSG	South Ryedale & East Yorkshire Raptor Study Group
YDNP	Yorkshire Dales National Park
YD&NRSG	Yorkshire Dales & Nidderdale Raptor Study Group (formerly Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group)