



(c) KC

The Red Kite Review

SOUTHERN VISITOR TO NORTHERN IRELAND

Coloured wing-tags which are fitted to all known red kites in Northern Ireland allow us to track movements of individual birds, as well as monitoring breeding pairs. They also allow us to identify red kites from other regions which may be recorded associating with Northern Irish kites.

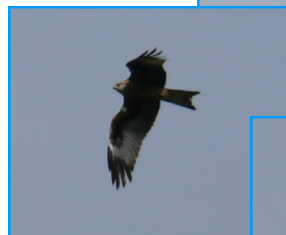
At the start of September I got a phone call from a birder who had seen a red kite on a large estate in County Antrim. He already had permission to birdwatch on the estate, but better news was that the 'keeper was happy to meet up and show me where the bird had been seen.

On meeting up with the birder and 'keeper, and despite a couple of false alarms, caused by passing buzzards, we unfortunately didn't manage to see the kite on the morning I visited.

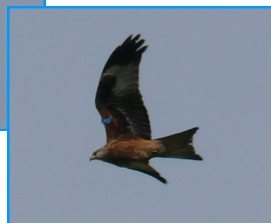
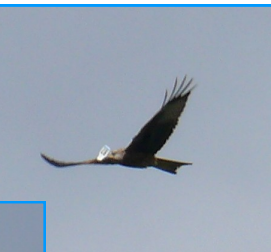
Thankfully though, the birdwatcher had his camera with him on the day he saw the bird and was able to get some photographs of the bird in flight (shown below).

We were able to zoom in on the wing-tags which were light blue on the left wing and white on the right. This colour combination immediately told me that this was a kite from the kite project by our partner, the Golden Eagle Trust and also that it was a bird, born this year (i.e. 2011).

Following up with Marc Ruddock, my counterpart in the south, it turned out to be a bird which was released at Newbridge



Pale blue/white B7 in County Antrim, September 2011 (c) CM

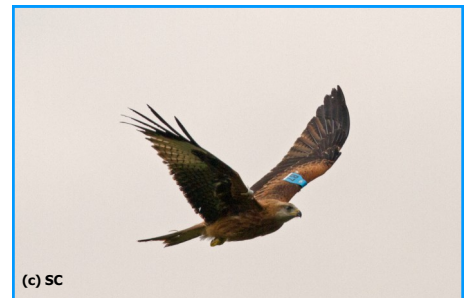


Demesne, north Dublin at the end of July.

Pale blue/white B7 stayed around the estate for several weeks before disappearing, only for me to re-sight it at the end of September.

The bird turned up at a site near Castlewellan, where it was feeding on worms in a recently reseeded field along with a couple of buzzards and several Northern Irish kites, including brown/pink e (pictured left). Pale blue/white B7 has been in Co. Down since this initial re-sighting, and hopefully will be for some time!

Information like this is vital to our understanding of these wonderful birds and monitoring is a major part of the project.



(c) SC

Pale blue/white B7 shortly after release at Newbridge Demesne.

Kite wing-tag colours used in UK & Ireland

Left wing (Region)	Right wing (Year)
Wales	2001
Chilterns	2002
North Scotland	2003
Central England	2004
Central Scotland	2005
Yorkshire & Cumbria	2006
Dumfries & Galloway	2007
Northeast England	2008
Aberdeen	2009
Republic of Ireland	2010
Northern Ireland	2011



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Irish chicks on the move...and not such good news

It's not just pale blue/white B7 who has been on the move over recent months: a couple of birds reared here in Northern Ireland this year have also been exploring the Northern Irish countryside.

Roxy (brown/white 35), pictured right, was one of three kite chicks reared at a site near Kilcoo this year and Scrapy (brown/white 38) was born in a nest near Downpatrick along with brown/white 39.

Since fledging the nest in mid-July, both birds have managed to end up on the same estate on the Down/Armagh boarder near Poyntzpass and have often been recorded flying, perched and roosting together. This represents a straight-line distance of around 13 miles for Roxy and it's about 30 miles from the nest held by Scrapy's parents, Caelum (brown/black A) and Troy (brown/black T).

Even though pale blue/white B7's venture has seen it travel a minimum of over 124 miles, all these distances have been eclipsed by another bird released in Fingal this year, pale blue/white "@" which travelled from Fingal on the east coast to Mayo and back, a distance of around 250 miles!

Unfortunately, this bird was recently found dead in North Dublin along with three other red kites which had met the same fate, all apparently having died as a result of being poisoned. This type of suffering and death is totally unacceptable and both RSPB NI and the Golden Eagle Trust are working hard to try and make instances like these a thing of the past.



Recent adopt-a-kites

As part of the adopt-a-kite initiative offered by Northern Ireland Red Kites, schools, businesses or interested individuals who adopt a kite can choose to name their bird. Among the recent schools to take advantage of our adopt-a-kite scheme were Rockport School in Holywood and St. Francis' Primary School in Drumaroad.



- Rockport chose the name "Scrapy" as kites are scavengers and as part of their diet they feed on scraps such as road kill.
- St. Francis' chose to name their kite "Downy" as red kites are black and red, the same colour as the Down flag.

A full list of adopters is included at the end of this newsletter, and a massive thanks must go to all of you. Your support goes directly to helping protect these magnificent birds of prey here in N Ireland.

If you would like more information on the adopt-a-kite scheme, please visit www.rspb.org.uk/nireland/redkites or contact Jen Banks at the RSPB NI office on 028 9049 1547 or email Jen at jen.banks@rspb.org.uk

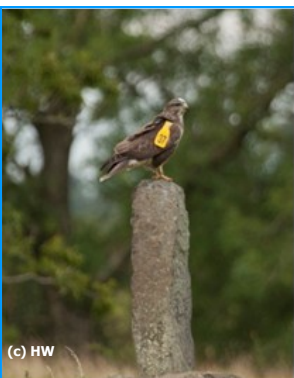


Rockport School (above) and St. Francis' Primary School (left) showing off their certificates for their kites.

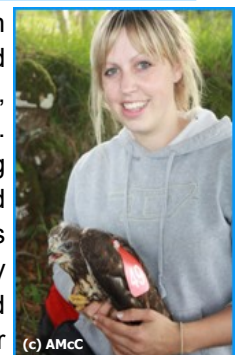
(c) RSPB

Update on buzzard study

The reports of wing-tagged buzzard chicks have been coming in thick and fast. Most chicks are still within their parents' territories but a couple have been sighted further afield. One bird has been seen flying south towards Greenore, and another in the opposite direction moving northwards at Sallagh Braes, Larne. As the numbers on the wing-tags of these birds could not be read I have to assume that they are from the next closest nests to where they were spotted – but that still means these chicks have travelled a minimum of 23.5km and 17km respectively! The first BTO return from a ringed buzzard chick has also been



received; a chick I ringed in Moneyslane, Co. Down, was found near the railway tracks at Dunadry, Antrim, having been hit by a train. Sad news for the chick, but interesting news for us – the chick had travelled 43km in the month after it left its parents' territory! It will be really interesting to see where tagged chicks travel to during the winter months – and whether they survive and return next year. So please keep your eyes peeled for yellow and orange tags and remember to keep the information coming at buzzardsni@hotmail.co.uk. Thank you all in advance!



Eimear Rooney: Queen's University, Belfast

Update from Irish White-tailed Sea Eagle Reintroduction

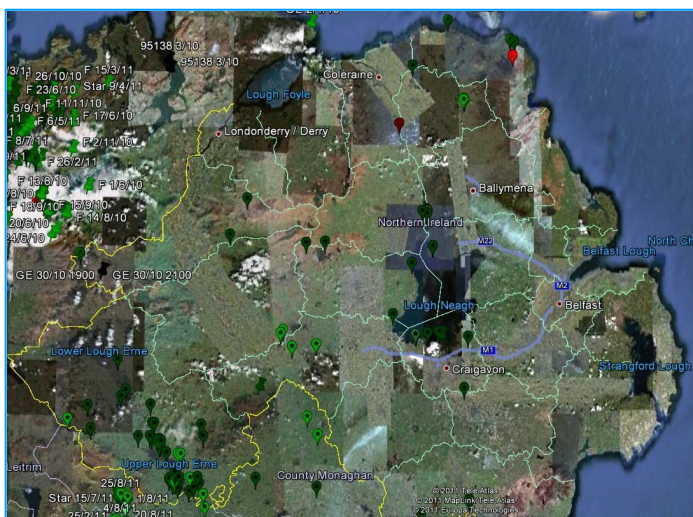
Twenty three young White-tailed Sea Eagles have been released in Killarney National Park (KNP), Co. Kerry, in 2011 as part of the reintroduction of this iconic eagle in the Republic of Ireland. Over the first 5 years of the reintroduction programme a total of 100 young WTSEs, 51 males and 49 females, have been released into the wild in KNP. Birds were collected as chicks from nests in Norway in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research and the Norwegian Ornithological Society. Birds were transported by air to Kerry and released into the wild in August after 5-7 weeks of care and familiarisation with their release site in specially designed flight cages. In 2011 most birds remained within KNP over the first two months post-release but had dispersed within south Kerry by October joining some birds from the 2010 release cohort. Some birds dispersed beyond Kerry within a few weeks post-release. In previous years birds have dispersed widely including sightings and confirmed reports from Galway, Mayo, Donegal, the Midlands and Northern Ireland.



Male WTSE in Armoy, Co. Antrim, Sept 2010 (c) BD

At least five birds have been located in Scotland over the past few years including one male now in the care of the Scottish SPCA having been rescued after apparently being found oiled on the coast in Aberdeenshire.

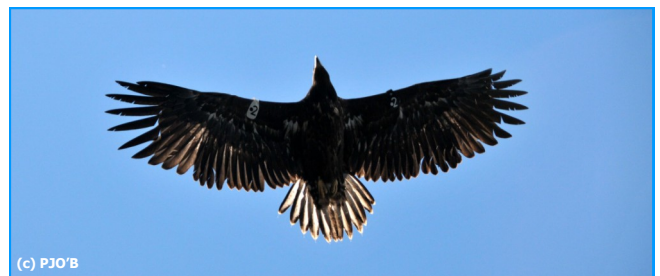
Northern Ireland continues to be an important area for dispersing WTSEs. Several WTSEs have "summered" in Northern Ireland before returning to Kerry to spend the winter. Particularly important areas include Upper and Lower Lough Erne, Lough Neagh, Lough Beg, Lough Foyle, the Sperrins and the N Antrim hills around Ballypatrick (Fig. 1).



Map showing roost locations of GPS satellite tagged WTSEs, released in Kerry, in Northern Ireland

Birds were tracked by radio and satellite telemetry to assess dispersal, range and habitat use. Three satellite tagged birds have spent extensive time in N. Ireland including a 2009 released male called Star (Fig. 2).

The first pairings of WTSEs were documented at two coastal sites in south Kerry in early 2011. No nesting behaviour was observed although one pair was documented mating on offshore islands. Unfortunately tragedy struck as the male from this pair was found dead in April and the female deserted the site before being refound on the Inisowen peninsula, Co. Donegal, a few weeks later!



(c) PJO'B

As of late 2011 three potential breeding pairs have been identified and we are hopeful that spring 2012 will bring the first nesting attempts by WTSEs in Ireland in over 110 years!

To date 19 birds, 10 males and 9 females, have been recovered dead over the first five years of the project. Of these 9 birds have been confirmed poisoned. One bird was found dead on Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland in 2009 having apparently been shot. In 2011 two WTSE were recovered dead having been apparently killed by strikes from wind turbines, the first documented records of eagles being killed by turbines either in Ireland or the UK. However, poisoning remains the key limiting factor for WTSEs in Ireland. Establishing a viable, self-sustaining population depends on eliminating or reducing the effects of poisoning, especially on adult and sub-adult birds, as well as recruiting young produced in nests in the wild in Ireland into the breeding population.

To find out more information on the WTSE reintroduction go to our website at www.goldeneagle.ie including the latest movements of our satellite tagged eagles, or follow us by looking up the Golden Eagle Trust's Facebook page. You can also report any sightings of eagles and other raptors on the website and do your bit for eagle conservation!

UK and Ireland Red Kite breeding figures 2011

	No. of nesting pairs	% of pairs successful	No. of chicks reared	Chicks/breeding pair	Chicks/successful pair
Wales	>1000*	65	920*	0.92	1.48
Southern England	800*	-	>1000*	-	1.65
East Midlands	140	81	203	1.45	1.80
Yorkshire	82	78	119	1.45	2.05
NE England	18	67	24	1.33	2.00
North Scotland	55	89	106	2.00	2.26
Central Scotland	59	68	76	1.29	1.90
Dumfries & Galloway	65	91	100	1.79	1.89
Aberdeen	17	88	30	1.76	2.00
Wicklow	16	77	17	1.31	1.55
Northern Ireland	9	56	8	0.89	1.60

*estimated figures

Thank you...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Forest Service and all the farmers, landowners and members of the public who have taken the time to report sightings of red kites and permit access to their land for surveying and monitoring red kites. Without your co-operation, support and assistance the project would not be possible.

Thanks must also go to the following schools and individuals who have helped NI Red Kites by adopting a kite: Annsborough Integrated PS; Anthony Wallace; Ballyclare High School; Drumlins Integrated PS, Ballynahinch; Edenderry NS; Fairhill PS, Dromara; Holy Trinity College, Cookstown; King's Park PS, Lisburn; Larne Grammar School; Pauline & Aidan; Poyntz Pass PS; Riverdale PS, Lisburn; Rockport School; Rory McAlinden; Spa PS; St. Coleman's, Dromore; St. Malachy's, Castlewellan; St. Malachy's, Newry; St. Mary's, Dechoment; St. Mary's, Annalong; St. Matthew's, Castlewellan and Tonagh PS, Lisburn.

Funders



Phase II of Northern Ireland Red Kites has been made possible through support from Newry and Mourne, Down and Banbridge Councils through the Ulster Wildlife Trust's Landfill Community Fund.

Additional support has been received from NIE and RES Ltd.

Project partners

Northern Ireland Red Kites is the first species reintroduction in Northern Ireland and part of an All-Ireland project to bring back these wonderful birds to our shores.



Project partners are the Welsh Kite Trust, the Golden Eagle Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.



If you would like to:

- Report a sighting of a red kite
- Adopt a kite
- Volunteer with Northern Ireland Red Kites
- Receive a talk about Northern Ireland Red Kites
- Receive further information about the project

Please contact:

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