

Raptor Patch

A new survey brought to you by the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme



Can you help with your local piece of the Scottish raptor jigsaw?

Introduction to Raptor Patch

Raptor Patch is a new survey being piloted by the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (SRMS) in 2016. It focuses on four widespread species for which more information is required: **Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk** and **Raven**

By taking part you will develop an intimate knowledge of the raptors and other wildlife visiting your local patch of the Scottish landscape while also providing essential information on the breeding populations of four widespread species.

Interested in getting involved? Please read on to find out more about why *Raptor Patch* is important and how you can get involved.



Ravens aren't raptors! The SRMS has adopted Raven as an honorary raptor. Numbers of this extremely intelligent and sociable passerine are on the increase as it returns to haunts from which it was previously lost in the 19th and 20th centuries due to persecution.

Why do these species need monitoring?

The fact that these species are considered common or widespread does not lessen their requirement for

monitoring. Monitoring generates data that we can use to produce trends in raptor numbers and productivity (how many chicks are reared). This allows us to monitor the health of our raptor populations, understand the causes of population change and identify problems that conservation NGO's, statutory agencies and ultimately Scottish Government can act on to protect these magnificent birds.



Kestrel is one species that we need to get a better handle on. It has declined by a staggering 67% between 1995 and 2013. Sadly there are less than a handful of existing long-term studies looking at the plight of this exquisite raptor.

Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Raven do not currently receive sufficient monitoring by existing raptor fieldworkers to enable us to produce robust trends in numbers or productivity at a regional or Scotland-wide scale.

By participating in *Raptor Patch* you will provide these essential data to allow us to produce these trends and also contribute data to support a wide range of other work areas that benefit raptors, from helping to develop effective conservation policy to helping to combat wildlife crime.

What does *Raptor Patch* entail?

Through participating in *Raptor Patch* you will be supported to take on the monitoring of a defined geographic area (or “patch”) of your choosing, where you will ultimately be able to get to grips with all the breeding raptors within it. This patch may be as small as 1 km x 1 km.

Your efforts will be focussed on confirming occupancy (whether or not a nesting range is occupied) and fledging success (whether or not chicks successfully fledge from the nest) of one or more of the following species – Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Raven.



If you wish to start by monitoring a single species then we suggest Buzzard is the one to go for.

Please note that if you are more interested in reporting *ad hoc* sightings of raptors then Raptor Patch probably isn't for you. We would encourage you to submit these records to BirdTrack: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/about>

What skills and experience do I need?

The fact that these species are considered common or widespread does not mean they are any easier to monitor than some of the rarer species, and in many cases they are arguably more challenging. However, do not worry as we will help you to learn. All we would ask is that you need to be prepared to put in the time and energy that it will take to get to know your patch and the birds within it intimately, accepting that this might happen over a number of years rather than just over the course of a single breeding season.

Raptor Patch has been designed so that you can progressively develop your knowledge and skills. You do not need to get to grips with every species straight away but could focus on just one species in a relatively small area to get you started. Learning to monitor raptors takes time and experience but can also be extremely rewarding and fun so we hope you will choose to get involved.

The only equipment that is essential to be able to take part in *Raptor Patch* is a pair of binoculars.



Getting to grips with your Raptor Patch might take a bit of time but we are here to help.



Perhaps surprisingly, the best way to locate Sparrowhawk nests is searching for field signs rather than the birds themselves.

How do I sign up?

All the information that you need to get started is available on the SRMS website:

<http://raptormonitoring.org>

Or contact Amy Challis, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme Coordinator:

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