

Raptor Patch

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



Getting Started

Introduction

If you are reading this it is hopefully because you have already decided that you want to get involved with *Raptor Patch*.

Please read on for guidance on how to select your Raptor Patch and get it registered with the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme (SRMS).

If this is the first time you have heard of *Raptor Patch* you may wish to read our "*Raptor Patch – An Introduction*" leaflet to find out more about why *Raptor Patch* is important and why you might want to get involved before reading on.



Raven – one of the four focal Raptor Patch species.

Selecting your Raptor Patch

It is ultimately your decision as to where you choose to locate your Raptor Patch but the following guidance should help you pick somewhere that will generate the most useful information for the SRMS.

Don't deliberately choose your Raptor Patch based on any prior knowledge of existing nest sites

The focus of *Raptor Patch* is about helping the SRMS get a better handle on the distribution and abundance of some of the more widespread raptor species such as Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Raven.

If you follow the guidance below, it is likely that your Raptor Patch will have the potential to support one or more breeding pairs of at least one of these species. However, it is also important to remember that negative data (telling us where one or more of these species are absent) are extremely useful – though less fun to collect.

Accessing your patch

Your Raptor Patch needs to be somewhere that you can access regularly - at least once a month during the breeding season. This might mean that you choose somewhere near to where you live or work, somewhere that you already visit on a regular basis, or somewhere new to you that you can get to without difficulty and want to become familiar with.

Keep it manageable

Bigger is not necessarily better. We would much rather see you taking on a relatively small Raptor Patch, say or a 2 km x 2 km square (also known as a tetrad) or even a 1 km x 1 km square that you know that you can commit to surveying comprehensively year-on-year rather than being overly ambitious and biting off more than you can chew. Consistency is key. Some habitats will be more challenging to survey than others, especially when you are getting started, so if you are in any doubt about what you think you might be able to manage with the time that you have available please get in touch for further advice. It will be possible to systematically expand from a very small patch, once you have had a chance to find your feet.

Know your boundaries

Your Raptor Patch needs to be well defined. Whether, you choose a regular square based on Ordnance Survey grid or opt for a more irregularly shaped patch, perhaps delimited by physical features such as roads, rivers or forest edges, it is important that you know where the boundaries of your patch are and that you consistently monitor within these limits.

Indulge your curiosity

It is important that you are genuinely interested in your Raptor Patch, as you will need to feel motivated to locate all the raptors of the focal species breeding within it. Raptor monitoring should be fun!



A. Hogg

Buzzards can breed at quite a high density with up to 5 breeding pairs in a single 1 km x 1 km square.

Where are the gaps in coverage that need filling?

At the moment there are few studies focussing on the widespread raptor species across Scotland, so the chances are that wherever you are proposing to locate your Raptor Patch there won't be anybody already monitoring these species intensively. If you take a look at the species pages for the widespread species on the SRMS website you will see where the existing long-term studies are located.

If having read this you would like further assistance in selecting an appropriate area, please contact Amy Challis, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Coordinator. She, or someone else familiar with the SRMS, will be happy to recommend an appropriate area that is manageable according to the time that you are able to commit to monitoring and be able to ensure that your study is compatible with any ongoing study of rarer species that may already be operating in the same area.



J. Gilliland

Kestrels do not build a nest but scratch out a scrape either on a ledge in a cliff face, a ledge in a building, a stick nest of another species, or a hole in a tree.

Registering your Raptor Patch

When you think that you have settled on your Raptor Patch, please get in touch with Amy, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Coordinator, to discuss your selection and also to check whether there may already be other volunteers already operating in this area or nearby that it might be mutually beneficial for you to liaise with. Once you have finalised your Raptor Patch with Amy, she will be able to help you register your Raptor Patch.



J. Brain

Kestrels will readily use nest boxes. In good vole years Kestrels may lay a clutch of 7-8 eggs.

What happens next?

Now that you have selected your Raptor Patch and got it registered you are ready to embark on the next stage - getting to know your patch. Please consult the SRMS website or hunt out the next leaflet in the series – My Raptor Patch.

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