

Raptor Patch

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



My Raptor Patch

Introduction

If you are reading this it should mean that you have now officially have taken on your piece of the Scottish Raptor jigsaw – Congratulations!

This leaflet takes you through a few ideas to help you get to grips with your Raptor Patch in the early days.

The breeding season for the majority of raptor species runs from February to the end of August. When the breeding season comes along you will be spending time out in your Raptor Patch looking out for flying and perched raptors (particularly in the early part of the breeding season when territorial birds will be displaying), identifying active nests and also looking for other field signs such as pellets and prey remains. It is therefore worth investing time during the non-breeding season to get to grips with your Raptor Patch, both remotely and on the ground, and planning ahead for the forthcoming breeding season.

Desk study of my Raptor Patch

This may well sound extremely boring especially when you just want to be getting out there and cracking on with monitoring – but trust me – this is time well spent.

Spend a little bit of time studying a 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map of your Raptor Patch and also some aerial photography or satellite imagery. You may wish to explore the following online resources to assist you with this:

Grab a grid reference:

<http://www.bnhs.co.uk/focuson/grabagridref/html>

Bing maps: <https://www.bing.com/mapspreview>

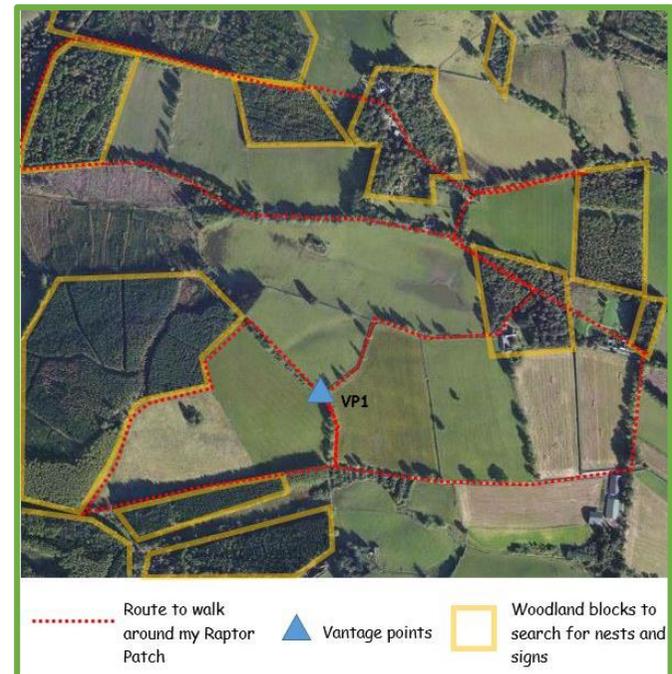
Where's the path:

<http://wtp2.appspot.com/wheresthepath.htm>

This will allow you to:

- consider access routes in and around your Raptor Patch.
- identify potentially suitable vantage points (VPs) from which you could watch for signs of raptor activity in different parts of your Raptor Patch.
- get a feel for the extent of broad habitat types that your raptor patch contains and, therefore, which of the widespread raptor species – Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Raven – your patch has the potential to support.

Even if you think you already know your Raptor Patch fairly well, there may be some areas within it that you are not familiar with, and which you should be careful not to neglect.



Exploring my Raptor Patch on foot

Having sussed out the terrain, potential routes and vantage points from the comfort of your chair, spend some time recce-ing your Raptor Patch on foot. You should vary your route around your Raptor Patch to ensure that you explore it all - follow your nose! It may help to draw lines delimiting your view from particular vantage points on a map to see whether there are gaps in coverage, and to identify how best these might be filled in. Move, add to or remove vantage points to ensure efficient cover of your whole Raptor Patch.

The non-breeding season does not have to be a complete non-event in terms of doing some valuable field work either, and in fact there are a number of activities you can do that will put you in good stead for the coming breeding season. These include looking out for Buzzard and Raven (both these species occupy their home range all year) and identifying and mapping potential nest sites where Kestrels might breed, clusters of old Sparrowhawk nests and large nests in deciduous woodland.

Which species shall I monitor?

Most raptor species follow a cycle of breeding activity, which typically follows the pattern: occupation of home range>territorial display>nest building>egg laying>incubation>hatching>young in nest>fledging> juvenile dispersal. The timing of all of these different activities is different between different species so on any given visit the activities that you are likely to be looking out for are likely to vary between species. The table shows the breeding activities that you might be expecting for each of the species in a given month. You should be able to see that the Raven breeding season starts

Aim of visit	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
To check for occupancy	BZ, K., RN, SH							
To locate active nests	BZ, K., RN, SH							
To check for young	BZ, K., RN, SH							
To check for fledged young	BZ, K., RN, SH							

Breeding calendar of the Raptor Patch focal species – Buzzard (BZ), Kestrel (K.), Sparrowhawk (SH) and Raven (RN).

and finishes ahead of the breeding seasons for the three other species.

Ahead of the breeding season you should decide whether you want to focus on monitoring a single species or look to monitor two, three or even four species. To help you decide you might want to take a closer look at the available species-specific guidance so that you can appreciate what the field work will entail once the breeding season arrives.



The winter is a good time to get to know your Raptor Patch.

Contact Amy Challis

amy.challis@bto.org Office: 01786 466558

Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme
C/O BTO Scotland, School of Biological & Environmental Sciences, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA

<http://raptormonitoring.org>

