

## Encountering other raptors in your *Raptor Patch* – a guide to the essentials

*Raptor Patch* is specifically targeting four widespread but under-monitored species for which the SRMS would like to have more information. However, we do not want you to completely ignore other raptor species that you might come across during the course of your monitoring.

The four *Raptor Patch* species (Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Raven) are protected, so at all times it is important to ensure that every effort is taken to minimise disturbance. However, no license is required to visit the nests of these species, making them more suitable species for new volunteers getting to grips with monitoring raptors for the first time.

This guide takes you through what you should do if you come across any other raptor species that may be breeding in your *Raptor Patch*.

### What to do if you encounter Owls breeding in your *Raptor Patch*

As you undertake vantage point watches or travel around your *Raptor Patch* on foot you may be lucky enough to encounter (either by sight or sound) one of our four native owl species – Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Long-eared Owl or the day-flying Short-eared Owl. Barn Owl is given special protection in law (please follow the guidance in the next section). Like the four *Raptor Patch* species, no license is required to visit the nests of Tawny Owl, Long-eared Owl or Short-eared Owl, making them also suitable species for new volunteers getting to grips with monitoring raptors for the first time.

The SRMS would be very keen for you to record encounters with these species in the same way that you would for the four *Raptor Patch* species and for you to attempt to determine occupancy and then locate active nests.

Please note that Owls can be particularly vulnerable to disturbance at the egg stage so do not attempt to approach nest of these species unless you have firm evidence to suggest there are chicks in the nest. If you are out visiting your *Raptor Patch* on a fine summer evening you may well be alerted to the presence of the nest through hearing squeaking Tawny or Long-eared Owl chicks.

You may find the following resources useful if you wish to learn more about Owls:

- *Tawny Owl*, from *Raptors: a Field Guide to Survey and Monitoring* by Hardey et al. (2013) The Stationery Office. [Available online here](#).
- *Long-eared Owl*, from *Raptors: a Field Guide to Survey and Monitoring* by Hardey et al. (2013) The Stationery Office. [Available online here](#).
- *Short-eared Owl*, from *Raptors: a Field Guide to Survey and Monitoring* by Hardey et al. (2013) The Stationery Office. [Available online here](#).

### What to do if you think you have a rare, threatened or vulnerable raptor (Schedule 1) species breeding in your *Raptor Patch*

The SRMS monitors all native raptor species found in Scotland, the following of which are given special protection in law:

>100 pairs in Scotland	<100 pairs in Scotland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Kite</li> <li>• White-tailed Eagle</li> <li>• Hen Harrier</li> <li>• Goshawk</li> <li>• Golden Eagle</li> <li>• Osprey</li> <li>• Barn Owl</li> <li>• Merlin</li> <li>• Peregrine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honey-buzzard</li> <li>• Marsh Harrier</li> <li>• Hobby</li> </ul>

These species (referred to as Schedule 1 species) are listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and a special license is required to visit their nest sites. In Scotland the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 makes it an offence to cause “reckless” disturbance to Schedule 1 birds. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 whilst it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young.
- disturb the dependent young of any wild bird listed on Schedule 1.

White-tailed Eagle and Golden Eagle are afforded additional protection through being listed on Schedule A1 making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly at any time take, damage, destroy or interfere with any nest that they habitually use. White-tailed Eagle, Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier & Red Kite are listed on Schedule 1A making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly harass them at any time.

As you undertake vantage point watches or travel around your Raptor Patch on foot you may be lucky enough to come across one of the raptor species listed above, either at or away from a nest site, during or outwith the breeding season. The probability of finding these species varies greatly with species and location.

**If you encounter a rare, threatened or vulnerable raptor away from any known nest sites...**

- (i) Mark the encounter on your field map as you would for any other species.
- (ii) If over a period of several visits you have built up a pattern of encounters that leads you to strongly suspect that you might have a rare, threatened or vulnerable raptor species breeding in your *Raptor Patch* then contact the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Coordinator to discuss your findings. Signs of occupation could include flight displaying, carrying of prey items, plucking posts, alarm calling, juvenile food calling. Depending on the situation the SRMC may be able to identify a more experienced raptor fieldworker with the appropriate Schedule 1 license who would be happy to accompany you to locate and subsequently monitor Schedule 1 nests in your *Raptor Patch*. Please remember that, even when you do not know exactly where a nest is, you should take care to minimise the risk of disturbing breeding Schedule 1 birds. Until the nest is found, avoid areas where you suspect nests are located, or where protected species consistently react to your presence

**If you encounter a rare, threatened or vulnerable raptor at or near its nest site...**

- (i) **If there is a risk that you might be causing disturbance, retreat to a position where this is no longer the case.** Some disturbed birds may be very vociferous and some may escort you away from the nest (e.g. Peregrine). You should also be aware that it may not always be apparent that you have caused disturbance. For example, if disturbed, Golden Eagle, will often leave the nest silently and go and sit some distance away until the cause of the disturbance has gone.  
**N.B. If you return to the vicinity of the nest site again from this point without an appropriate Schedule 1 license (or in the company of somebody who has) you could be committing an offence under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.**
- (ii) Mark the location of the nest site on your field map.
- (iii) When you get home contact the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Coordinator to report your encounter. Where possible the SMRC will endeavour to identify a more experienced raptor fieldworker with the appropriate Schedule 1 license who would be happy to accompany you on further visits to monitor the breeding attempt through to conclusion. Through this process you will gradually obtain experience in best practice of monitoring these species. If this is not possible The SRMC will discuss with you how best to avoid disturbing breeding Schedule 1 raptors while continuing to monitor your *Raptor Patch*.