Edition # 32 April 2026

>>> NEWSLETTER <<<

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# SCOTTISH RAPTOR

**Bringing you the latest news from the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme**


**We thank the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who contribute raptor breeding records to the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme. We thank all scheme partners for their financial and other support for the scheme, and the partner representatives for their time and input to the running of the scheme via the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Group. The BTO contribution to the scheme includes funding from gifts in Wills for which we are extremely grateful.**

**Photos: Unless otherwise stated all photos are creative commons open source. The SRMS always welcomes photo contributions for use in our newsletter and other SRMS products.**

## CHANGES TO SRMS

The representatives of the SRSG at the SRMG table have recently changed. Logan Steel and John Simpson have done an hugely important job helping stir the Scheme and carrying the voice of the SRSG at the SRMG table prudently and scrupulously. Now, they pass the baton to Stuart Williams (Orkney RSG Chair), Logan Johnson (Zetland RSG Chair), and Gwen Evans (Uist RSG Chair). It is wonderful to have increased representation from the Scheme's largest data contributor.

The SRMG representative for BTO, Chris Werham, who has been an instrumental part of the Scheme since its very early days will be leaving the BTO and thus leaving the SRMG.

BTO's voice at the SRMG table will be carried on by Mark Wilson (Acting Head of Science BTO). All nine SRMS partners will continue to work together to conserve raptors across Scotland.

I have been the Coordinator for the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme for two years, but I will be leaving my post at the end of May. Each one of you, interested in raptors, contributing for raptors or advocating for them, has enriched my life. You are an inspiration and being able to facilitate you help raptors has been the highlight of my job! I have no doubt that our paths will cross, that the Sottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme will continue to improve and that raptor monitoring in Scotland will continue to be the envy of many countries. Keep up the good work!

# SRMS News

* **The 2024 SRMS annual report will soon be published** and will be available on the scheme website here. The report contains summaries of the nearly 6,000 records received.


A huge thank you to all data contributors for their hard work collecting and entering the data, and to the authors who requested SRMS data for their work and shared their updates with the Scheme. The 2025 SRMS annual report is in preparation.

* This year, the North East Scottish Raptor Study Group branch oversaw the organisation of the Scottish Raptor Study Group Conference which was dedicated to the memory of Patrick Stirling-Aird. The event was a great success; inspiring and informative with presentations of long-term studies, strategies to improve raptor conservation, new studies, and very welcome stories of population restoration success, amongst others.

There were plenty of opportunities to catch up with colleagues, exchange knowledge and tips, and plan for the coming monitoring season.

# Donald and Jeff Watson award



**By Tayside & Fife Raptor Study Group branch**

The Scottish Raptor Study Group established the Donald and Jeff Watson Award in 2007 in association with the Watson family. The Award was established as a memorial to father and son, Donald and Jeff, in recognition of their contributions to the study and conservation of Scottish raptors. The Award celebrates a significant long-term amateur contribution to the study of raptors in Scotland and this year the award was presented to Mike Nicoll at the Scottish Raptor Study Group Conference

Mike was born and brought up in Arbroath. He attended Arbroath High School before he went to Aberdeen University where he studied Zoology, graduating in the early 1970's. Through school and the Boy Scouts, he met Norman Atkinson, a kindred spirit who shared Mike's passion for wildlife, and birds in particular. Around 1967, their interest continually developing, they would become early trainees of the Tay Ringing Group at which time Jim Dunbar (latterly Senior RSPB warden at Loch of Strathbeg) was their trainer. These were early pioneering days for Mike when ringing was regarded as an 'unusual' hobby, and trainees lacked the benefit of the wide array of knowledge available today. As a member of the Tay Ringing Group, he met Adam Ritchie, Alex Rollo and Keith Brockie who were monitoring Peregrine and Golden Eagles in the Angus Glens. Their initial plan was just to ring the chicks, but he soon ended up monitoring territories as well. Mike is a guy who loves the outdoors and his inquisitiveness, patience and determination in the field drove him to become a knowledgeable and accomplished naturalist. His mode of transport in the early days was a bike, and he cycled miles to pursue birds. He would cycle regularly from his home in Tayport, to Seaside for a morning ringing session and then back to Dundee for work.

After leaving university he joined Dundee Museum. In 1973 he was appointed Assistant Taxidermist by fellow raptor enthusiast Adam Ritchie who was the Natural History Curator at the time. He became Taxidermist when the post holder subsequently retired. Keith Brockie also ended up working at the museum and the three friends would regularly leave work, head to the glens to check sites and then retire to the Clova Arms for a well-earned pint afterwards.

During this early period, it became apparent that a group of raptor enthusiasts based in Aberdeenshire were carrying out similar monitoring work. With a shared geographical border, it was logical to cooperate and work together to share data, monitoring and recording skills, and also to prevent duplication of effort. In 1980, a formal group, of which he was a leading force, known as the North-east Raptor Study Group, was formed covering Aberdeenshire, Angus and Perthshire, East of the A9. Eventually, in 1991, as a result of the rapid growth of interest and participation in raptor monitoring, the group split and the Tayside Raptor Study Group (now Tayside & Fife RSG), covering Perthshire, Angus and Fife, was formed.

Mike is a consummate field naturalist with an interest in many areas, with his taxidermy background and bird handling/ringing experience he can identify a bird species from the smallest, most insignificant looking feather. The golden eagle and peregrine were his main interests initially, mostly in the eastern Angus glens. In these early days persecution was

more overt, and an intimate knowledge of the ground was essential to understanding the overall raptor picture, and huge amounts of fieldwork was vital to this end. Mike has also been involved with other raptor species including hen harrier, merlin, goshawk and keenly followed up the re-occupation of Angus by the raven (an honorary raptor!). Mention an occurrence you have witnessed or observed where raptors are concerned and there are few Mike hasn't already observed or isn't able to expand upon. However, he is very unassuming about the significant amount of knowledge he has accumulated over the years, but he never fails to encourage and help others to participate in monitoring. A great many people have benefited from his knowledge, skills and enthusiasm over the years when carrying our studies into a wide range of birds.

*"His mode of transport in the early days was a bike, and he cycled miles to pursue birds."*

His expertise extends to projects with other bird species such as upland and coastal waders especially the purple sandpiper - colour ringing and counting on Scottish shores preceding studies in their breeding grounds in Norway, Iceland and Svalbard. Another project he has been involved with is a study of ring ouzels breeding in the Angus glens and following them to their wintering grounds in the Atlas Mountains of Morocco. Dipper populations in Angus have been a major interest since early days.

Mike was awarded the BTO's Bernard Tucker medal in 2011.

Despite mobility/health issues, Mike continues to contribute significantly to the Tayside RSG annual monitoring effort including being the Species Co-ordinator for Buzzard and Red Kite in Angus. He is dedicated, determined and full of enthusiasm about birds in general but most especially where raptors are concerned.

**Mike receiving prize** from Chris Rollie, Photo: Kelvin Thomson, T&FRSG

For this reason and for his 40+ years of experience monitoring birds of prey, Mike was awarded the 2026 Donald & Jeff Watson Award.

# Inverness Urban Sparrowhawk Study Area

By Thomas Plant (Highland Raptor Study Group)

In 2013, I was living in Edinburgh and I heard about the Edinburgh Urban Sparrowhawk Project and decided to volunteer and to attend a training day led by Mike Thornton. Along with a couple of friends, I volunteered on this project in 2013 and 2014 before moving up to Inverness. I really enjoyed being part of the Edinburgh project and thought it would be great if there was something similar in Inverness. However, it wasn't until 2020, when lockdown hit, that I had the time to start searching for territories in Inverness. Along with my partner Bea, we began searching all the parks, cemeteries, golf courses and woodland blocks within 5 km of our house in the centre of Inverness. It was slow going at first, cold searching all the suitable habitat within the city, however, in 2021, we recruited the help of our friend Shona and managed to cover more territories. We are now a group of around 10 to 15 people helping in various ways, from monitoring to tree climbing and bird ringing.

Perhaps our most interesting general finding to date is that the sparrowhawk, in this urban setting, seems to have adapted to the presence of humans and some recreational disturbance within their territories. In many cases, the sparrowhawks themselves often go completely unnoticed by people walking their dogs on paths directly below nests. In one territory, there are dirt bike tracks below the nest site, and the sparrowhawks appear to have been productive most years despite the noise of the dirt bikes whizzing around the woods.

Although our study hasn't been running for very long and has quite a small dataset of around 10 core territories, our findings so far


Highland Raptor Study Group (HRSG) sparrowhawk training day 2023.

suggest that urban sparrowhawks in Inverness tend to have higher brood sizes and breeding success rates than rurally nesting birds (likely due to higher prey availability). This was also one of the findings of the Edinburgh Sparrowhawk project.

*It would be fantastic to see other similar small study areas popping up in other Scottish cities and we'd be happy to talk to anyone who is thinking of setting up a similar project for sparrowhawks elsewhere.*

In 2024, we began colour ringing sparrowhawk nestlings in Inverness, and we also distributed colour rings to some other ringers in other areas of the Highland region, primarily for fitting to adults at mist netting sessions. So far, 28 nestlings and 5 adult sparrowhawks have been colour-ringed. We hope that as the number of colour-ringed individuals increase, the number of resightings will also increase.

So far, the movement of the ringed and coloured-ringed sparrowhawks from the Inverness Study Area have been a mix of local movements within the same or subsequent year and longer distant movements, within the same or subsequent year. In total, there have been four local resightings within the study area (all less than 5km from where they were ringed) and one movement from the Inverness Study Area to Muir of Ord (10km away) and another to Beauly (18km away), one movement within the Black Isle, from Kessock Wood to Avoch (8km) and one longer distant movement from Inverness to Aberdeen (131km). See full table of movements below.

We hope that by using camera traps in territories (i.e. on plucking posts and perches), we may be able to generate more colour ring resightings in the future and to learn more about repeat occupancy of territories and turnover of individuals in breeding pairs.

It would be fantastic to see other similar small study areas popping up in other Scottish cities and we'd be happy to talk to anyone who is thinking of setting up a similar project for sparrowhawks elsewhere.

There is also a fascinating study and colour-ringing project up in Shetland, which is looking into the very recent occurrence of breeding sparrowhawks on those islands.


Table for movements and resightings from the Inverness Sparrowhawk Project.

| Ringing Age | Ringing Location | Ringing Year | Colour Ring | Resighting Detail | Distance from Ringing location |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 - Nestling | Kingsmills, Inverness | 2022 | None | Recaught at Longman in Dec 2024 and fitted with a colour ring (**BA**). | 2 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Longman, Inverness | 2023 | None | Resighted in Leachkin in Aug 2023 (metal ring read from Photo). | 5 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Longman, Inverness | 2023 | None | Found dead in March 2024 in Muir of Ord. | 10 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Lochardil, Inverness | 2024 | **AH** | Resighted several times in nearby garden in Autumn 2024. | <2 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Lochardil, Inverness | 2025 | **BF** | Recaught in nearby garden in Autumn 2025. | <2 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Milton of Leys, Inverness | 2025 | **AV** | Found dead in Beauly in early 2026. | 18 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Kessock Woods, nr. Inverness | 2025 | **BK** | Photographed in Avoch in early 2026. | 8 km |
| 1 - Nestling | Lochardil, Inverness | 2025 | **BC** | Found dead in Aberdeen in March 2026. | 131 km |

# SRMS announcements:



## >>>SRMS DATA CONTRIBUTION

Every year the SRMS partners review the Scheme's data sharing agreement and use of data policy. You can see the revised 2025 version HERE

## >>> SRMS ONLINE COURSES

**I am finishing recording some courses for you to access at your own pace through the SRMS website: https://raptormonitoring.org/srms-online/tutorials**

**General use of Online SRMS (Part 1)**

For new or established users of SRMS Online. In this session I will take you through how to use the SRMS Online platform to submit your data online.

**SRSG Species Coordinators:**

For new to the role or established SRSG species coordinators. In these sessions I will focus on the more common tasks performed by a species coordinator and tasks you may need to perform to help your group use SRMS Online.

**General use of Online SRMS (Part 2)**

For new or established users of SRMS Online. In this session I will take you through how to use the SRMS Online platform to submit your data online. Follow up from Part 1.

# Lessons learnt in Spain regarding the conservation of large raptors

By Prof Des Thompson

An excellent conference on large raptor conservation was hosted by the Fundación Migres in Jerez, Spain during 14 and 15 January 2026. The large audience was delighted to see Miguel Ferrer recovering so well from a stroke. There were several highlights, including a talk by Ian Newton on his long experience of working with raptor reintroduction programmes.

Virginia Morandini and Miguel gave excellent talks on the prospects for White-tailed Eagle reintroduction in Spain, and lessons learnt from reintroducing Spanish Imperial Eagles in Cadiz. Agustín Madero and Miguel detailed the remarkable recovery of the Spanish Imperial Eagle more widely. Jesús Bautista gave an entertaining talk on his work with Golden Eagles. The videos found in the previous links are well worth watching.

# The Rare Breeding Birds Panel and the SRMS

By Dr Mark Eaton, SRMG

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel (RBBP) was formed in 1972 with the aim to “collect in one place all information on rare breeding birds so that changes in status – both increases and decreases – could be monitored, and so essential information is not lost…”. It has stuck to this task for over 50 years, collating breeding data on a growing list of rare and scarce species, publishing annual reports on their numbers, distribution and trends, maintaining a secure archive of this data for conservation and research uses, and working to encourage improved recording of the species it covers.

We are an independent organisation, although our work is funded by the JNCC (on behalf of the national statutory nature conservation

bodies including NatureScot) and the RSPB, with an additional contribution from the BTO. The Panel's nine members bring a huge range of expertise on bird recording, including members involved in raptor studies (most notably, at present, Paul Castle, who works on species such as Montagu's Harrier in southern England, and Jenny Weston, who is Red Kite coordinator and group secretary for the North East of Scotland Raptor Study Group). A Secretary – that's me – is employed on a part-time basis to deliver the work of the Panel. Our data are held in a secure geographical information system - in over 50 years of operating, our stringent security systems and protocols over data-sharing have ensured there has never been an accidental, inadvertent, or inadvisable release of data. This database now holds over 200,000 records, covering 181 native and 41 non-native species.

*We can combine – and contrast and compare – data from monitoring efforts in all four of the UK's countries (as well as the Isle of Man and Channel Islands)*

The 43 species listed in the RBBP's first report, covering 1973, included eight species of raptor and owl: Goshawk, Red Kite, Honey Buzzard, Marsh Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Osprey, Hobby and Snowy Owl, although Honey-buzzard was listed as 'no records received'. In the years since, the Panel's remit has extended to cover some less rare species, below a threshold of roughly 2,000 pairs in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man. Therefore, our species list has expanded to include Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle (the reintroduction programme had not started back in 1973, of course), Hen Harrier, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, Merlin and Peregrine, although Red Kite was dropped from reporting in 2012 as the population had increased above our threshold. Twelve of the species covered by the SRMS are on the Panel's current species list.

Data reaches the RBBP from a range of sources, including annual submissions by county bird recorders, RSPB reserves, Schedule 1 licence returns, ringing and nest-recording schemes, seabird monitoring, species studies and of course from raptor study groups across the UK. We have been a partner in the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme since its inception in 2002. Prior to the scheme, data on rare breeding birds, including raptors, submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage (as was) in Schedule One licence returns were provided to the RBBP (as it still is for all non-raptor species, and a few raptor records submitted outwith the SRMS). Nowadays, of course, records from Scottish RSG's are submitted to SRMS. Unlike raptor data from elsewhere in the UK, we do not hold SRMS data on the RBBP database – it remains on the SRMS system although we can access it through the secure portal, same as other scheme partners. We are able to combine data from other sources not submitted to the SRMS (long-eared Owl records from county bird recorders, for example) with the SRMS data to derive annual totals for Scotland and its recording areas, and to contribute to our UK totals.

While we aspire to achieve complete monitoring of all rare breeding bird species, this is simply not possible. Much of our data comes from the recreational activities of volunteer observers, and so is inevitably subject to biases in

coverage; there are relatively few species for which we can be confident that annual reporting is complete, and a number of species for which it is poor. The ongoing developments in the analysis of SRMS data, led by the BTO team, offer great promise of more robust trends for Scottish raptor species at a regional and hopefully national scale. We are also working with a PhD student at the University of Durham on new statistical approaches to overcome spatial and temporal biases in some UK species datasets.


Figure 1: annual totals of Peregrine in the UK reported by the RBBP and national surveys. Numbers are of 'maximum total pairs' included possible, probable and confirmed breeding pairs.

Nevertheless, for many species the data collated by the RBBP are sufficiently robust to measure population change with a reasonable degree of confidence, and we publish UK population trends for nearly 50 species annually. We can combine – and contrast and compare – data from monitoring efforts in all four of the UK's countries (as well as the Isle of Man and Channel Islands), and there are many insights on the changing status of our rare breeding birds to be found in our annual reports (available from our website, www.rbbp.org.uk).

For example, Figure 1 shows the annual totals of Peregrines reported by the RBBP since 1996, along with the higher estimates produced by national surveys in 2002 and 2014. As you can see, the data submitted to the RBBP annually represents about 60% of the actual population as estimated by those surveys. Recording effort is reasonably consistent, although there may be some relatively minor between-year variations in effort, and more complete recording in southern Britain, and in urban areas (due to higher observer densities) may mean the RBBP trend is biased towards the positive.

Notable in this figure is the 18% downturn in numbers between 2022 and 2023; as well as at the UK scale as shown in the graph, this was evident in the trends for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. At a finer scale, a between-year decrease was evident in 53 counties, whereas an increase was recorded in only 12 – it seems very likely there was a UK-wide decline in breeding Peregrine numbers between 2022 and 2023. We know that Peregrines are vulnerable to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) of the strain H5N1, probably owing to their avian diet, with many reports of breeding failures and adult deaths attributable to HPAI: a previous analysis of SRMS data showed a decline in productivity linked to HPAI (Wilson *et al*. 2023), as did a study of Lothian & Borders RSG data (Smith *et al*. 2025). A decline due to HPAI mortality is perhaps the most plausible explanation for this between-year drop. A similar widespread between-year decline was shown by Goshawks between 2022 and 2023, again across most of the UK, and it is tempting to speculate that this may have had the same cause.

Smith, G. D., McGrady, M. J., Beckmann, B. C., & Oli, M. K. 2025. Potential effects of HPAI on occupancy rates, breeding success, age and turnover of breeding Peregrine Falcons Falco peregrinus in southern Scotland. *Bird Study* 72: 69–73.

Wilson, M. W., Wetherhill, A. S., & Wernham, C. V. 2023. *An Analysis of Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme Data to Improve Understanding of the Impact of the 2022 Avian Influenza Outbreak on Raptors and Raptor Populations in Scotland*. NatureScot Research Report 1331.

# Highland Raptor Study Group training days

## By Adam Ritchie and Brian Etheridge, HRSG

The Highland Raptor Study Group was formed in 1982 under the chairmanship of Roy Dennis. Its primary aim was to coordinate the fieldwork of raptor enthusiasts based in the Highlands and Moray, the majority operating in an amateur capacity.

Many of these individuals operated alone and specialised in one or two species. They tended to conduct their field work in the restricted habitats of the species concerned.

With the onset of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme in 2002 the structure of HRSG became more formalised and under the chair of Doug Mainland the group adopted a more open membership policy.

This led to an increase in membership. Some of these new members were young professionals such as ecological consultants and Forestry Commission Scotland (now Forest and Land Scotland) rangers. They were enthusiastic, keen to learn yet lacked field experience. With the increasing age of the “old guard” and, in a few cases, reduced mobility there became an urgent need for their store of knowledge and field craft to be passed on to the next generation.

In April 2015, led by Brian Etheridge and supported by senior group members, the first one day woodland training course was held in FLS woodland on the Black Isle, attracting eleven members (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Highland Raptor Study Group members on the first woodland raptor training course, April 2015.

The purpose of this course was to pass on knowledge of woodland breeding raptors with

an emphasis on Sparrowhawk (which are under-recorded) and Common Buzzard.

This involved looking at the age, species and structure of coniferous woodland and plantations and the process of searching for signs of raptor occupation (moulted feathers, plucks, old nests, etc). We were able to discuss timing of the breeding cycle and the frequency of monitoring visits. With the potential presence of rarer raptor species such as Goshawk and Red Kite, differences and identification of moulted feathers of the four species, their breeding requirements and nest structure are also covered.

Three weeks later in early May a second course was held, this time focussing on heather moorland and led jointly by Jim Craib and Brian. The primary species that were looked at were Hen Harrier and Merlin. Field craft on moorland demands a greater period is spent watching over suitable nesting habitat from vantage points rather than the cold searching that occurs in woodland monitoring.

The greater time together gave those attending more opportunity to meet new colleagues, share experiences and discuss current issues.

The social aspect of being in the field with fellow enthusiasts can be a major incentive to retaining new members.

Following the popularity and success of the first two courses, one-day training courses have now become an annual event on the HRSG calendar.

Raptor training courses require the minimum of time and skills in planning. All that is needed is the attendance of experienced field workers who are willing to pass on their knowledge. A recce in advance of the meeting could be advisable to ensure the suitability of the site though in recent years, because we have favoured land managed by FLS, this is no longer carried out. One advantage is it places both the experienced and inexperienced members on the same footing in the search for breeding raptors.

There are no handouts or paperwork on HRSG training days though those attending are encouraged to take notes as the day progresses.

***"The social aspect of being in the field with fellow enthusiasts can be a major incentive to retaining new members"***

# The role of forests in goshawk dispersal



By Elouise Mayall, PhD student, University of Aberdeen

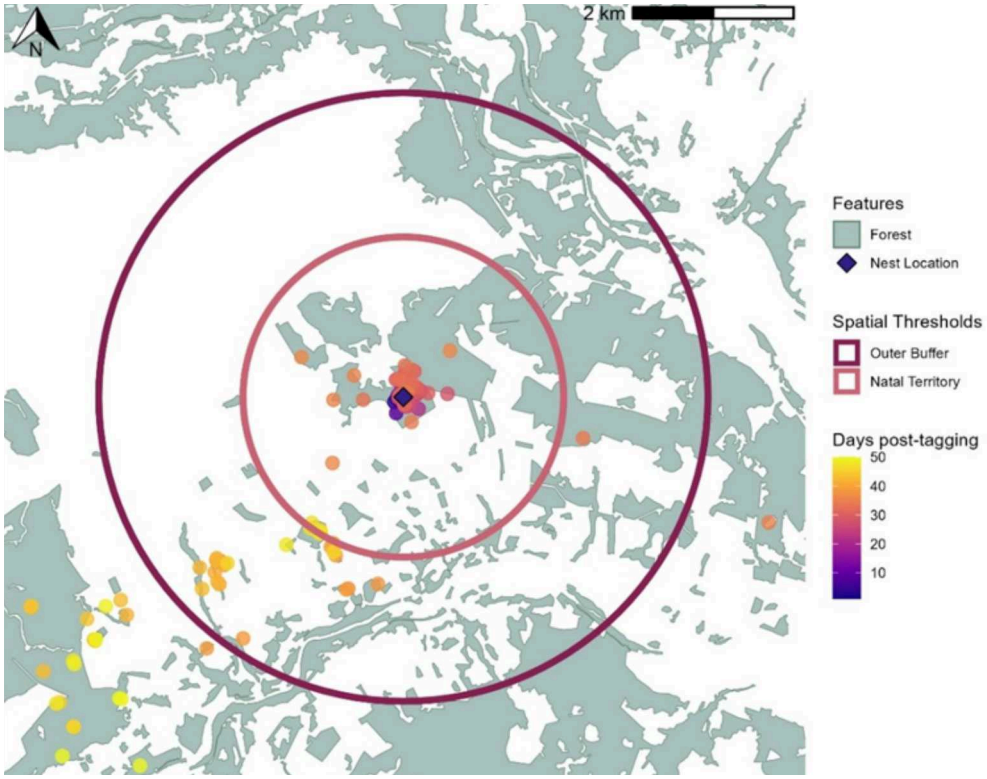
Funded by QUADRAT NERC, Forestry and Land Scotland, Forestry England, Tilhill Forestry and Scottish Woodlands

Thanks to the impressive work of many dedicated raptor workers, we have a strong understanding of the breeding distribution of the Eurasian Goshawk (Accipiter gentilis) across Scotland. However, much less is known about their movement behaviour between fledging from the natal site and establishing a territory the following year. Learning more about their natal dispersal is particularly valuable as the population is still expanding.

To help address this gap, a large team of goshawk enthusiasts led by Dave Anderson fitted approximately 80 goshawk chicks with solar-powered GPS tags across central and southern Scotland since 2016. My PhD focuses on analysing this dataset to better understand the goshawk's dispersal movements and shed some light on this stage of their life cycle.

The first stage of my PhD aimed to define when dispersal begins and what influences its onset. We defined natal dispersal as starting when an individual's mean daily distance was greater than 2 km from the nest for at least two consecutive days. We then focused on the period between when fledglings were confidently flying and when they started dispersing — the transition from dependence to independence.

The duration of the post-fledging dependence period (PFDP) ranged from two days to over six weeks. Some of this variation was methodological, due to reduced tag performance under the forest canopy, but clear biological patterns also emerged. For instance, females tended to remain near the nest on average 6 days longer than males, consistent with slower maturation due to their larger size.



The GPS locations (solid circles) of an individual goshawk in the first 50 days post-tagging. The pink ring is the natal territory, and the purple is the outer buffer.

The amount of forest habitat in both the natal territory and the surrounding landscape (outer buffer) also had an additional and significant impact on the duration of the PFDP. Individuals with a greater area of forest within their natal territory dispersed approximately 4 days earlier than those raised in smaller or more fragmented patches. If forest area reflects habitat quality and prey availability, improved foraging opportunities and a faster development time may explain these shorter PFDPs.

More interestingly, individuals with a higher ratio of forest cover in the surrounding landscape (relative to within their natal territory) also dispersed approximately 5 days sooner. This pattern suggests that forest availability and connectivity facilitate dispersive movement, while limited forest beyond the natal territory may delay departure. Goshawks in more fragmented landscapes may hesitate to leave, potentially reluctant to cross unfamiliar or risky open ground until a lack of food or reduced parental tolerance pushes them out.


Overall, these findings highlight that post-fledging behaviour and dispersal onset in goshawks are shaped not only by individual development but also by forest configuration. Areas with both high forest area and connectivity may therefore support juveniles to develop and disperse more rapidly.

The current stage of my PhD is now focused on the transient stage of dispersal, working to identify when they settle and what might influence their decision-making. The SRMS records are particularly useful here as they allow me to consider how dispersing individuals may be interacting with already occupied territories as they fly across Scotland.

I would like to thank the data contributors for their continued support and dedication to these remarkable birds.

# RECENT RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS THAT SRMS HAS BEEN MADE AWARE OF


>>> Dvořák, T. and Riegert, J., 2026. Diet of Breeding Eurasian Sparrowhawks (Accipiter nisus) in Relation to Land Cover, Food Supply, and Prey Species Characteristics in Central Europe. Population Ecology, 68(2), p.e70021. https://doi.org/10.1002/1438-390x.70021

>>> Gallego-García, D. and Sarasola, J.H. (2025), Ecological drivers of variation in the extent of the post-fledging dependence period in the largest group of diurnal raptors. Ibis, 167: 345-356. https://doi.org/10.1111/

>>> Ghilan, M., Ajder, V., Ursul, S. and Baltag, E.Ș., 2026. Recovery of the White-Tailed Eagle Population in the Republic of Moldova: A Step Forward in Biodiversity Conservation. Sustainability, 18(6), p.2722. https://doi.org/10.3390/su18062722

>>> Jardine, D.C. (2025): Golden Eagle nesting in a quarry. Scottish Birds 45:3, 236

>>> Loretto, M.C., Beck, K.B., Smith, D.W., Stahler, D.R., Walker, L.E., Wikelski, M., Mueller, T., Safi, K. & Marzluff, J.M. 2026. Ravens anticipate wolf kill sites across broad scales. Science 391: 1151-1154. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adz9467

>>> Ozaki, S., Barnett, E.A., Carter, H., Chaplow, J.S., Charman, S., Galloway, M., Pereira, M.G., Potter, E., Sainsbury, A.W., Shadbolt, T. and Sharp, E.A., 2026. Probabilistic approach reveals the toxicity threshold values of free-living raptors in Great Britain, United Kingdom, for the lethal effect of second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides.

Environment International, p.110099. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2026.110099

>>> Penttinen, I., Nebel, C. and Laaksonen, T., 2026. Habitat imprinting in breeding territory selection of a long-lived bird of prey. Journal of Animal Ecology, 95(3), pp.470-481. https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.70202

>>> Stahlecker, D. W., Nielson, R. M., Tator, K. J., & Watts, T. J. (2025). Interspecific proximity reduces breeding success of Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*) but not Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*). *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15594491.2025.2580138

>>> Stroud, D.A., Eaton, M.A., Francis, I.S., Baker, H., Holling, M., King, A., Norman, D., Stanbury, A.J. and Balmer, D.E., 2023. The Rare Breeding Birds Panel: five decades of monitoring the UK's rare breeding birds. *British Birds*, *116*, pp.191-209. https://rbbp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Stroud-et-al.-2023-RBBP-paper-in-British-Birds-.pdf

>>> Urwin, F., 2025: Young Voices - Felix's Peregrine Watch. Scottish Birds 45:3, 261-264.

>>> Väli, Ü. and Mirski, P., 2026. Diverse foraging strategies of an avian apex predator in an old-growth forest. Scientific Reports, 16(1), p.8880. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-43036-3

>>> Wilson, M.W., Beckmann, B.C., Challis, A. and Wernham, C.V., 2026. NatureScot Research Report 1367-An analysis of Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme data to improve understanding of the impact of Avian Influenza in 2023 on raptors and raptor populations in Scotland. https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1367-analysis-scottish-raptor-monitoring-scheme-data-improve

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# WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

## EVENTS, TALKS, COURSES AND CONFERENCES

THESE ARE SOME EVENTS THAT HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED BY SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS AND PARTNERS. IF YOU HEAR OF AN EVENT THAT YOU THINK WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO FELLOW READERS, PLEASE SEND THEM OUR WAY!

>>> **4TH INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION TRANSLOCATION CONFERENCE**

**7-9 September, John McIntyre Conference Centre, University of Edinburgh**

Keynote speakers include Cat Barlow talking about the successful reinforcement of the Golden Eagle population in south Scotland.

http://www.ictc26.org

# Update on the CMS Raptor MoU

**By Des Thompson**

Ahead of the recent Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) COP15 in Campo Grande, Brazil a lot of work was undertaken under the CMS Raptor MoU. Already this year, updates are available on a new LIFE programme to make powerlines safer for most of Europe's threatened raptors; progress with developing work in support of the Sooty Falcon; and various national programmes on vulture conservation.

The COP15 meeting covered a wide range of actions for raptors. The Snowy Owl was proposed for listing under the CMS due to concerns over major declines. Detailed papers concerning raptors covered prevention of illegal killing and trade; prevention of poisoning; Steppe Eagle Global Action Plan (led by Jenny Weston); African-Eurasian vultures; Saker Falcon Global Action Plan (Task Force led by Colin Galbraith); and Internationally Important Raptor Areas (an ambitious proposal which builds globally on the Raptor MoU, covering Africa and Eurasia, and drawing on experience on the successful establishment of Important Mammal Areas, and Important Shark and Ray Areas).

More broadly, there are a large number of papers relevant to pressures on raptors, notably on Cumulative Effects Assessments; Renewable Energy; and Climate Change.

# GABY OOT

**The 2026 breeding season it's in full swing!**

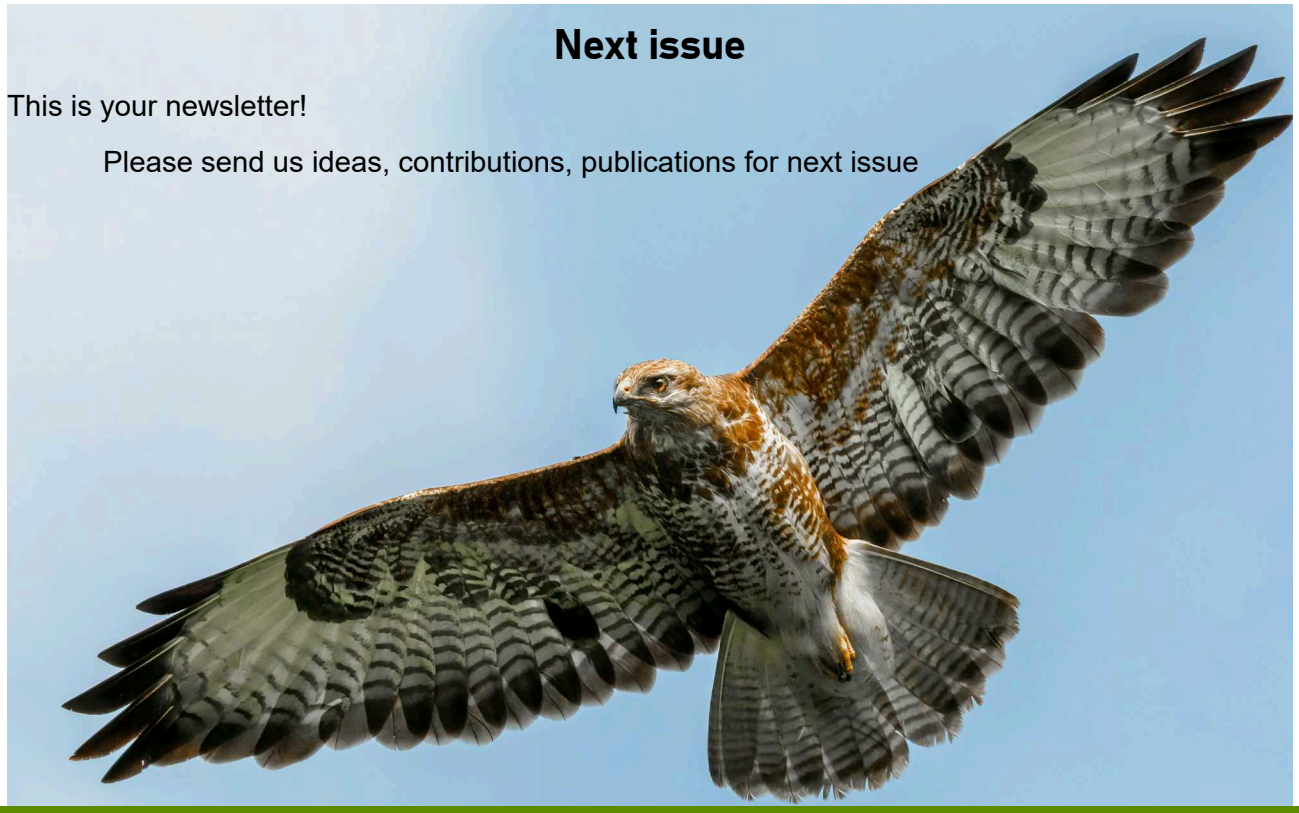
Since moving just outside the edge of the city of Edinburgh I have been enjoying mapping my new patch and discovering who is around. Now is the time to see who is renovating the dilapidated nests which I found during the winter and is now ready for breeding! I have seen signs of the Goshawk pair sighted at the tail end of last year's breeding season, a Buzzard pair getting ready to breed and a pair of sparrowhawks prepping their nest. The kestrel continues to keep me busy as I haven't yet confirmed their nest.

I hope your season is going well and that you are out and about enjoying the outdoors, walking the miles and doing your bit for the raptor world.

## Next issue

This is your newsletter!

Please send us ideas, contributions, publications for next issue



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