

SPRING 2011 UPDATE

In 2008 RSPB Northern Ireland began the country's first ever species reintroduction. The three year project has brought back about 80 red kites, a bird of global conservation concern, to Northern Ireland having been extinct here for over 200 years.



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Northern Ireland Red Kite Project

THE RED KITE RETURNS

www.rspb.org.uk/nireland/redkites



Figure 1: Kite receiving unwanted attention from a hooded crow (Pat O'Hare).

Winter Wanderers: We have another new arrival in County Down, not more kite chicks yet this time, but a red kite from Scotland! Red/Blue 52 hatched last year in Perthshire and was first seen back in January and spotted again in March, we hope it will stay and become a breeding bird here in future years.

The wanderer Blue 25 was reported in our last update and has continued its travels. Following its seaside break at Ardglass, 25 had returned to Castlewellan but the return to the release area was short-lived and it ventured deep into the Mourne Mountains between Hilltown and Warrenpoint before disappearing again. The radio transmitter fitted to Brown/Blue 25 allowed it to be tracked to just outside Clogher in County Tyrone. 25 stayed there for a few weeks before getting itchy feet again and returning to the Mourne Mountains where it has remained since...for the time being!

Our own Northern Ireland hatched chicks have

been frequently observed since they fledged from their nests here and have begun mingling freely with the chicks which were released in the last phase of our reintroductions. It's extra exciting to see these kites knowing they are the first generation of wild born red kites to grace Northern Irish skies for over 200 years

Fright Night: Once again RSPB Northern Ireland hosted a spooktacular Halloween event based on our red kites. 'Red Kites, Frights and Things That Go Bump In The Night' was organised by our education assistant Jen Banks. The Loughs Agency provided the venue in Derry and there was no shortage of wannabe ghosts and ghouls to get everyone in the Halloween mood. Around 800 people came along on the day and were treated to a variety of red kite themed games, activities and frightening fun. Highlights included dissecting actual red kite pellets which showed that they had been feeding on rabbit, starling, sheep carrion, beetles and probably worms judging by the amount of grit and grass present as well as unidentified bone fragments and hair. An evil witch had also kidnapped one of our red kites so children had to follow a trail of clues to release it from her evil clutches! An excellent day was had by all and a special thanks to Jen and Catherine from our education team, membership assistant Caroline and RSPB volunteers Lindsey Manson and Agnès Borrut.

Carry on kites: Things are looking very positive for the coming breeding season with many of last year's kites rebuilding nests. Issy and Sparky, as well as Paprika and Dobbin are back on their respective territories hoping to produce young again this year. Jasper and his mate Black E however have not only abandoned last year's nest site but they have also split up! This is especially surprising considering that they were the most successful birds last year, the only pair to rear two young. Jasper has taken up with Honky, who lost her mate last year, presumably to an incident in a nest dispute with buzzards; whereas Black E has paired off with a mystery toy boy, a male from 2009 whose identity is still unknown. This story may yet have a twist in the tail so watch this space!



Want to be the next red kite officer?

Phase one of the red kite reintroduction has almost come to an end. During that time RSPB Northern Ireland has successfully released 80 kites and some of which have bred and produced chicks of their own. Things are going to plan and the future is now looking bright for red kites in Northern Ireland. RSPB Northern Ireland is now on the brink of beginning a second phase of the red kite project. This phase will concentrate on monitoring the birds and ensuring that we help the kites to

Figure 2: Brown/blue 22 in flight (Pat O'Hare) inspire people by their beauty and allow them to spread into new areas without any risk of being persecuted through ignorance. If you know anyone who might be interested, the job is advertised on the RSPB website at www.rspb.org.uk/vacancies/.

Spreading my wings: As Red Kite Project Officer, I have had an amazing experience working with the kites and the people I've met through the project but am now handing over the reins to pursue life in France. I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved in the project for their support and wish the new Outreach and Monitoring Officer all the best when they come on board in June 2011.

If you would like to:

- Report a red kite sighting
- Adopt a kite
- Volunteer with the project
- Receive a red kite community talk
- Receive further information about the project

Please e-mail redkiteni@rspb.org.uk or contact:

Red Kite Project Officer
RSPB Northern Ireland
 Belvoir Park Forest
 Belfast
 BT8 7QT
 028 9049 1547

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www.doeni.gov.uk



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Northern Ireland Red Kites is the first species reintroduction in Northern Ireland and part of an All-Ireland project to bring back these wonderful birds to our shores. Project partners are the Welsh Kite Trust, the Golden Eagle Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds