

RECORDING RAPTOR PRESENCE GUIDANCE NOTE



Introduction

It is extremely important in the current political climate that landholdings with a shooting interest can both demonstrate competent identification of raptors species present on the land but also provide robust data around breeding raptor success. Consistency of recording techniques will provide a sound evidence base when it comes to demonstrating the extent of raptor presence across land managed for shooting.

We appreciate that there are a range of abilities and willingness across WES accredited landholdings when it comes to use of digital facilities and therefore the recording methodologies detailed below have been designed to be undertaken on three different platforms: smart phones, computers/laptops and on printed paper.

Note:

It is imperative that the data collection is undertaken in complete compliance with the law which will vary depending on the species involved. All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, due to their rarity, vulnerability or sensitivity to disturbance, birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Act are afforded even greater protection. This includes an offence of intentionally or recklessly disturbing Schedule 1 species whilst they are building a nest or are in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb the dependent young of such a bird. 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. 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.

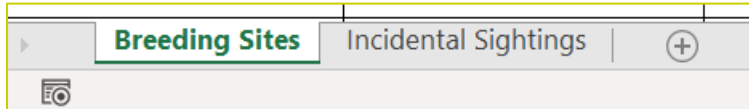
The level of protection applying to each species, as well as the relevant breeding cycles, can be found on Page 3 of this guidance.

Recording Relevant Data

There are three methods of recording and for each, the relevant spreadsheet, needs to be downloaded from the WES pages on SLE's website. The link to these pages is [here](#) and the file requiring downloading

is called 'Recording Raptors Spreadsheet'. Once this has been downloaded, it is up to the user as to which of the three recording methods below they chose to use.

When the spreadsheet is opened, if you look to the bottom left-hand corner, you will see that there are 2 tabs (see below): one for information pertaining to Breeding Pairs and the other for Incidental Sightings. The Incidental Sightings tab is for recording birds which are observed when away from nesting sites. These birds may or may not be nesting on the landholding.




The Breeding Sites tab requests the following information:

- **Species ID:** Define the raptor observed (a list can be found on Page 3 of this guidance note). For visual ID, the [Bird Spot](#) website provides clear images as well as audio clips of the birds calling.
- **Observer:** Please identify the person(s) who witnessed the sighting
- **Breeding Year:** Please note the year
- **Breeding Successful:** Please identify whether a pair was successful in breeding. For example: are the adult birds incubating? Have chicks been observed? Have the adults been observed carrying food to and from the nest site? Yes (Y) or No (N) is all that is required. If incubation occurs but no chicks emerge, please put a Y here. **You must not under any circumstances disturb any bird on its nest unless you have a license to do so. If this information cannot be obtained from a distance through binoculars please leave the box blank.**
- **Number of chicks known to have fledged:** Signs which may indicate fledgling success include family units observed later in the breeding season, large accumulations of droppings and the remains of kills in or close to the nest and also accumulations of down. If you are unsure of the exact number, enter the minimum number followed by a '+', for example '1+'.
- **Satellite Tagged parent(s):** Please indicate Yes (Y) if you are aware that one or more of the birds is tagged. If you don't know, please leave this blank
- **Long range photos?:** Please indicate whether you managed to capture the observation on camera. This could be using a smart phone, camera, video, camera trap etc, but should be taken without disturbing the birds. **Digital photos are integral pieces of evidence when it comes to verifying sightings. They are time, date and very often location stamped which provides irrefutable evidence provided the image is of a certain quality. This type of evidence is so important and we would encourage as many sightings as possible to be documented as such within the parametres of the law as detailed in page 3 of this guidance. Where these images are stored is up to the individual managers however we advise that they should be stored in the same place and named by date so that they can be tied to the individual sightings records.**
- **Notes:** Please enter any further pertinent information here for example you may have witnessed, or even caught on camera, eggs or birds being predated or there may have been adverse weather or environmental conditions which affected breeding success, or you might have witnessed pressures from other raptor species etc. The more additional information provided, the clearer the picture of both positive and negative impacts on the various species.

For the 'Incidental Sightings' tab, the column headings are similar but there is also a request for location information which could be a GPS reference (if recorded), a place name or a description using local reference points.

Smart Phone Method

1. Download the free Excel app from the App Store.
2. Open the downloaded form in Excel. You will need to create a basic account to be able to alter documents within it.
 - a. Save a copy of the form to Excel on your phone to edit it (it will open as a read only document initially).
 - b. To enter text, double tap the cell
 - c. To switch between tabs, tap this icon: 
3. Record the data as and when it is safe and convenient to do so but preferably at least once weekly.

Computer/ Laptop Method

1. Save the downloaded spreadsheet to a relevant file.
2. Record data weekly or as often as is feasible.

Printed Method

1. Print both the Breeding Sites tab and the Incidental Sites tab independently in landscape style. You will need to specify the number of pages you wish to print off but we would recommend just printing 1 page at a time to both save paper but also to retain the column headings.
2. Record the data as and when it is safe and convenient to do so but preferably at least once weekly.

Important Species Information

Species ID	Level of Protection (UK)* ¹	Conservation Status (UK)**	Nest Building ²	Clutches Laid	Incubation Period	Fledging Period	Typical Lifespan	Notes
Barn Owl	Schedule 1	Green List	Mid Feb-Mar	30 Mar - 4 Jul	32 days	53-61 days (late Jun – early Oct)	4 years, typically breeding from year 1	2 broods possible
Buzzard	Basic protection	Green List	Mar- early Apr	Mid Apr- mid May	34 days	44-52 days (Early Jun –Jul)	12 years, typically breeding from year 3	
Golden Eagle	Schedules 1, 1A and A1	Green List	Feb-Mar	March	43-45 days	65-70 days (Late Jul – Aug)	23 years, typically breeding from year 4	Species was Amber listed until 2015
Goshawk	Schedule 1	Green List	Mar	Mar-early May	35-38 days	35-42 days (May-Jul)	7 years, typically breeding from year 2	
Hen Harrier	Schedules 1 and 1A	Red List	Mid Mar – Mid Apr	Mid Apr- mid May	34 days	37-42 days (End May – end Jun)	7 years, typically breeding from year 2	
Hobby	Schedule 1	Green List	May	29 May - 2 Jul	29 days	30-40 days (Jul – mid Sep)	5 years, typically breeding from year 2.	
Kestrel	Basic protection	Amber List	Mar	5 Apr - 14 May	28-29 days	32-37 days (Jun – mid Jul)	4 years, typically breeding from year 1	
Long Eared Owl	Basic protection	Green List	Mid Feb-mid Mar	19 Mar - 9 May	28 days	29-34 days (Mid May – mid Jul)	4 years, typically breeding from year 1	

¹ <https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/birdfacts>

² <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2017-07/A303080%20-%20Bird%20Breeding%20Season%20Dates%20in%20Scotland.pdf>

Species ID	Level of Protection (UK)* ¹	Conservation Status (UK)**	Nest Building ²	Clutches Laid	Incubation Period	Fledging Period	Typical Lifespan	Notes
Marsh Harrier	Schedule 1	Amber List	Apr	Apr – Early May	31-38 days	35-40 days (Jun – late Jul)	6 years, typically breeding from year 3	
Merlin	Schedule 1	Red List	Apr	27 Apr - 29 May	30 days	28-31 days (End Jun – end Jul)	3 years, typically breeding from year 1	Species was Amber listed until 2015
Osprey	Schedule 1	Amber List	Late Mar – mid Apr	Mid Apr- late Apr	37 days	53 days (Jun)	9 years (with notable exceptions), typically breeding from year 3	
Peregrine	Schedule 1	Green List	Mar	23 Mar – 28 Apr	31-33 days	39-40 days (Jun- early Jul)	6 years, typically breeding from year 2	
Red Kite	Schedules 1 and 1A	Green List	Mar	April	31-32 days	50-60 days (Jul)	4 years, typically breeding from year 2	Species was Amber listed until 2015
Short Eared Owl	Schedule 1	Amber List	Mar - Apr	Mar - May	27 days	26-32 days (May-Jun)	4 years, typically breeding from year 1	
Sparrowhawk	Basic protection	Green List	Apr	30 Apr - 29 May	33 days	27-31 days (late Jun - Jul)	4 years, typically breeding from year 2	
Tawny Owl	Basic protection	Amber List	Mid Feb - Mar	5 Mar - 4 May	30 days	35-39 days (May – Jul)	4 years, typically breeding from year 1	Species was Green listed until 2015
White tailed Eagle	Schedules 1, 1A and A1	Red List	Feb – mid Mar	Mid March – mid Apr	38 days	70-75 days (Jul - early Aug)	21 years, typically breeding from year 5	

*The **Level of Protection** refers to the species' status as designated in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 or the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011. These acts were enacted to implement the Bern Convention and the Birds Directive in UK law. The following definitions apply:

- **Basic protection:** All wild birds, other than game birds, are subject to basic protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to:
 - kill, injure or take any wild bird (other than game birds);
 - take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
 - takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird.
- **Schedule 1:** Birds that are protected by special penalties above those afforded by basic protection
- **Schedule 1A:** Birds that may not be intentionally or recklessly harassed at any time
- **Schedule A1:** Birds whose habitually used nests may not be intentionally or recklessly taken, damaged, destroyed or otherwise interfered with when not in use

The **Conservation Status of 246 regularly occurring birds in the U.K. has been reviewed by leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations (Eaton et al. 2009). This resulted in each species being placed on one of three lists: Red, Amber or Green. The conservation status of each species is reviewed regularly. The categories are as follows:

- **Red List** species include those which are:
 - globally threatened;
 - suffering rapid population or range decline in recent years; or
 - declining historically and have not shown a substantial recent recovery.
- **Amber List** species are those which:
 - have an unfavourable conservation status in Europe;
 - have suffered a moderate population or range decline in recent years; or
 - have declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery.

It also includes rare breeders and those for which the UK holds internationally important or localised populations.

- **Green List** species fulfil none of the above criteria and are of least conservation concern.