

Red Kites in East Powys Welsh Kite Trust 2015

The area bounded by the A488 road from Knighton to Penybont, the A44 to Crossgates, the A483 to Newtown (plus the hillsides to the west in the Ithon catchment), the A489 through Kerry to the Shropshire border, and the Wales / England border back to Knighton, was monitored for 11 years, 2003-13 inclusive.

Following a change in monitoring policy by the Welsh Kite Trust, from 2014 the monitoring area was restricted to south of the Kerry Ridgeway and the top of the Ithon catchment, where Kites have been found in previous years.

The initial search effort has been broadly constant over all these years, consisting of 4 days initial searching for new pairs in late March and early April, followed by 4 more days of looking for new and established pairs in mid-April. After that, each site occupied in the previous 3 years was checked, to confirm whether or not birds were sitting, and then each nest found was checked for young in early June. The time commitment for this second stage has increased, as the number of nests has grown. Some nests with young were then revisited for tagging, and between 2008 and 2011 also for taking chicks for the Irish reintroduction programme. This latter commitment has reduced from 2013 as tagging Welsh Kites has largely ceased.

In 2015, a total of 21 nests was found, the highest number since monitoring began. Another nest was located, but not specifically found (access permission refused by owner). Eight further pairs were seen, but no nest was located (total 30 pairs, again the highest number found in the area).

A further 33 sites where Kites have nested in previous years were visited or observed from a distance, without result.

The population growth in the area has resumed, with 2014 and 2015 being two of the best four years for pairs found, the best two years for nests found, and two of the best three years for fledged young. This followed two particularly poor breeding seasons in 2012 and 2013, when the number of nests found, and successful nests, were abnormally low due to severe weather. However, the 2013 Report concluded that breeding population in the area was probably similar to that found every previous year since 2006: 20 – 26 pairs. It appears to have increased now.

Seven of the 22 nests failed, but the 15 successful nests produced at least 21 young (the number of fledged young in one of the successful nests is unknown, as permission for monitoring was refused by the owner) The number of young in several other nests might have been underestimated, as they were viewed from the ground using a telescope, sometimes with an incomplete view. The count at many nests has been more accurate in previous years, when the tree was climbed for tagging the chicks. The same assumption has been made as in previous years – i.e. birds big enough to tag went on to fledge

No young were tagged in the area for the first time since 2003, and the total still stands at 102.

The productivity of those nests that were found, and the productivity of successful nests, were both the same as the average since 2003.

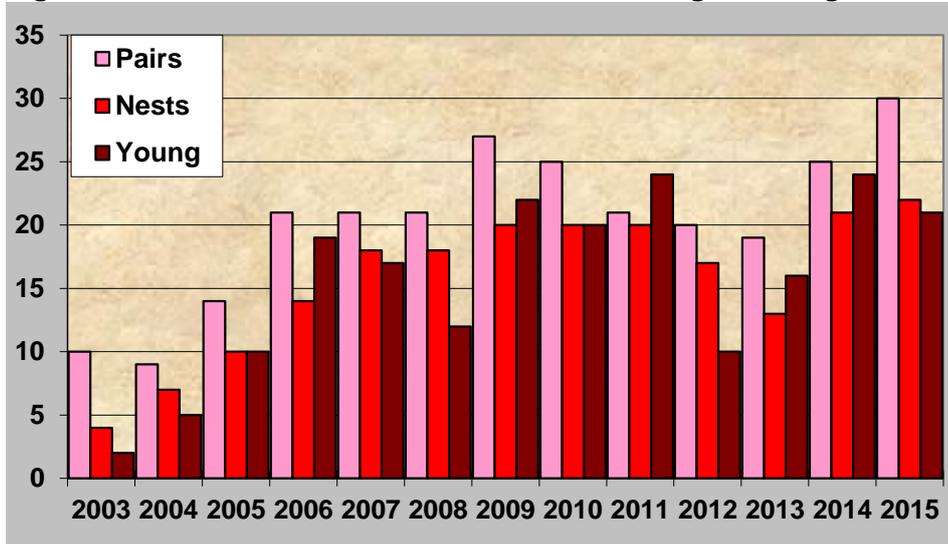
Cumulative totals since monitoring in this area started in 2003 are shown in the Tables.

| Nests & Outcome | Year | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | |
| Pairs Found | 10 | 9 | 14 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 26 | 25 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 25 | 30 | 262 |
| Nests Found | 3 | 5 | 8 | 14 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 21 | 22 | 202 |
| Successful Nests | 1 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 13 | 11 | 15 | 14 | 16 | 8 | 12 | 17 | 15 | 143 |
| Nestlings Tagged | 1 | 4 | 3 | 13 | 13 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 12 | 10 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 102 |
| Nestlings to Ireland | | | | | | 1 | 6 | 1 | 6 | Re-introduction programme complete | | | | 14 |
| Fledged Young | 2 | 5 | 10 | 19 | 19 | 12 | 16 | 19 | 6 | 10 | 16 | 24 | 21 | 179 |
| Total Young | 2 | 5 | 10 | 19 | 19 | 13 | 22 | 20 | 24 | 10 | 16 | 24 | 21 | 205 |

| Productivity (East Powys) | Year | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | |
| Young / nest | 0.7 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.1 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 0.6 | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 1.01 |
| Young / successful nest | 2.0 | 1.3 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.43 |

Some of the same data is presented graphically in Figure 1

Figure 1. Number of Pairs, Nests Found and Fledged Young 2003-15



Seven of the found nests were at new sites, five other pairs used the same nest as last year, and four others were at the same site as last year, but changed nest trees. Apart from the seven sites occupied in 2015 for the first time, four others have been occupied from 2010 or later. Although 11 sites were first occupied before 2010, only three have been continuously occupied since they were first found.

All breeding Kites were inspected for tags, but only two were found. Blue H3, the male at Upper Pentre, has been there since 2012 and came from Nantywellan Wood, 3.1 km distant. An unread Yellow (2013) tagged male was near Llanbister Road. This pair laid very late (still nest building on 25 April), and failed early.

Two other tagged Kites were seen near Heartsease, Yellow 29 and Yellow 30, fledged in 2013 from Nantywellan Wood and Cwm Cefn-y-Gaer respectively. Both were within 2km of their natal site.

In total 19 different tags have been read on nesting Kites since 2004, 11 males and 8 females. The males have moved an average of 17 kms, and the females an average of 12 kms.

Female white J, tagged near Upper Berthgoed, Strata Florida in 2002, and found breeding at four different sites in the area all about 36 kms from her natal site. She was first found in 2005 and then, after a gap, every year from 2008 to 2013, when she was last seen aged 11. Male Orange [therefore sign], from Waen, Bwlch - y Sarnau in 2005, was seen at Source of the Ithon, 3.5 km distant, in 2011 and 2013, when he was aged eight. Two others reached five years old, including Blue H3, but none of the others reached five years old. Siblings Purple 73 and 74, from Bryn Golfa in 2007, were found breeding together for three years running (2009-11) at two separate sites, 4 and 5 kms from their natal site.

In conclusion, in terms of pairs found and nests found, 2015 was the most productive year since monitoring started in 2003.