

The UK's leading specialist Bird of Prey Rehabilitation Organisation.



**RAPTOR  
RESCUE**

Registered Charity No. 283733

An organisation dedicated to ensuring all sick or injured birds of prey are cared for by qualified people and that whenever possible released back into the wild.

# NEWSLETTER

Issue 1, 2019



**European Kestrel**

#### In this issue:

- ✚ Chairman's Chat
- ✚ Members and Donations
- ✚ Helpline Activities
- ✚ Rescues/Releases
- ✚ In the News
- ✚ British Birds of Prey
- And lots more!

National Help & Advice Line: 0870 241 0609

Online: [www.raptorrescue.org.uk](http://www.raptorrescue.org.uk)

PLEASE NOTE; THIS IS NOT A 24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE, IF YOUR CALL IS NOT ANSWERED AN ANSWER

## Chairman's Chat



Welcome to our 2019 Newsletter and to a mixed start to the Year. In March, we received the devastating news of a major electrical fire at the Gentleshaw Wildlife Centre which sadly destroyed three enclosures and caused the death of three giant tortoises, a meerkat and some 15 fruit bats. Gentleshaw is a mainstay of Raptor Rescue providing the National Help and Advice Line Service as well as providing all important Bird of Prey rescue and rehabilitation facilities.

I visited recently and was pleased to hear how family, friends, visitors and the public at large have all rallied round to assist with the massive clean-up and rebuild activities by volunteering their time and services, as well as making significant donations to finance new enclosures. Please visit their webpage for more details;  
<http://www.gentleshawwildlife.co.uk/>

At our last Trustee Meeting, we formally welcomed the appointment of two new Trustees, Lesley Thomson and Libby Jackson, to complete our current team. Now we have Trustees spread all over the country, including Scotland, Wales and the Central and East Midlands, we will be looking to use Skype or similar conference call facilities to address the travel distance, time and costs for Trustees.

We are still following up on a revised logo for Raptor Rescue and we expect to be able to review potential designs by mid-June. Once agreed we can order some new leaflets for general distribution to supporters and for release at shows. With reference to shows, I had a prolonged discussion with my Local Council as to whether the Raptor Rescue show and display activities require an Animal Activities Licence but finally managed to agree our status as a nonprofit making charity.

Last year we were able to support our Top Rehabilitators, i.e. those who had rehabilitated more than 10 birds referred by Raptor Rescue during 2017, with a cash recognition to assist with their activities. We also were able to report at the Meeting that, having reviewed our current financial situation, we are able to continue this for 2018. Thank you and well done to all our dedicated Rehabilitators.

We have started the process to streamline and update our rather tired Webpage and will announce the revised version as it is developed. I am grateful my contribution will be editorial and not hands on with a computer!

On a personal note, we have recently returned from a visit to family in Australia and, as is noted later in the Newsletter, we were surprised by the number of the birds of prey, but also the numbers and variety of wildlife, venturing out of the bush into urban areas because of the drought conditions. We did have an interesting, and thankfully non-lethal, experience with a brown snake by the side of the road. Our hosts delighted in detailing the venomous nature of this rather insignificant looking snake which reinforces my view not to put in a takeover bid for Reptile Rescue.

Bird wise, we had a busy 2018 with both rehabilitation and re-homing activities but this year seems a little quieter, mainly due to our Australian trip I think, rather than a lack of calls to the Helpline. Much to our surprise, bearing in mind our distance from any major water course other than ditches, we caught a mink mooching around our aviary area last year; which probably explained the sudden demise of wild mallard ducklings and young moorhens at our pond. It seems having suffered one visit we may have received another now the mallards and ducklings are back. Time for a camera by the pond, I think.

Thank you all for your continuing support and please tell your friends and family about us and our vital work for Birds of Prey.

### Members and Donations

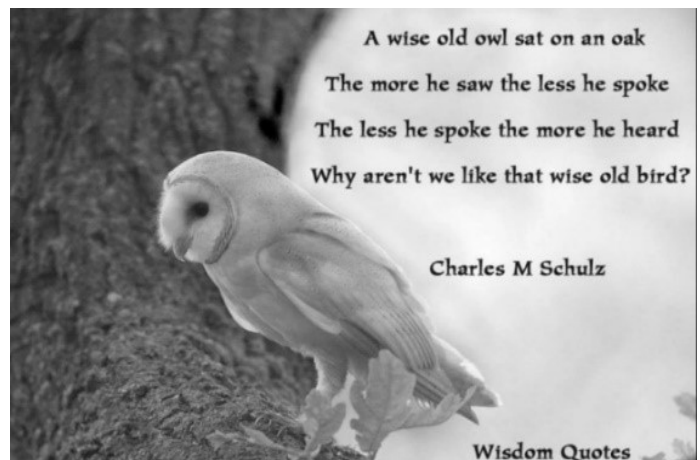
Raptor Rescue, like many charities, is wholly dependent upon its Membership and additional donations to maintain and expand activities.

A warm welcome to our new members; Ian McKenzie-Rugg and P. Gillet, The Wildlife Haven, Ms Eileen Lewis and Richard Acklam.

A massive thanks for donations from Avian Veterinary Services, Martin Gifford Watson, Roger & Yvonne Taplin, Holly Fitzgerald, A.I. Forman, Sharon Beech, Gabriela Rabin, Krista Langley, Badrunnisa Patel, Mrs H. Scruton and Ms Eileen Lewis

### Raptor Rescue Helpline Calls October 2018 to March 2019

October 2018	108
November 2018	102
December 2018	66
January 2019	91
February 2019	87
March 2019	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>525</b>



### Gentleshaw Rescue Activities



A male Kestrel suffering from Frounce and a bad attitude. The little guy fought all the way and his tough attitude paid off. He was released following treatment.



A Sparrowhawk lost one of its nine lives when she was clipped by a car and then a second car ran over her. She got away with some small grazes to her feet and a bit of a headache; and was later released with a reminder of the Green Cross Code.



A female Buzzard also with a bad dose of Frounce and an almost severed toe. It appeared to be an old injury.

## In the News

### Injured Red Kite comes around in rescuer's car



A goodhearted motorist who was driving towards Henley on Thames in Oxfordshire stopped for an injured Red Kite in the road and put the unconscious bird on his passenger seat. After driving for about 15 minutes, the bird started to open its eyes, ruffle its feathers, and then suddenly stood up. The driver stopped at a nearby garage and called the RSPCA. They

arrived three-and-a-half hours later to collect the Kite and take it to a specialist vet.

*Independent - April 2018*

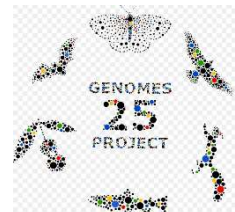
### Golden eagle genome study 'a conservation game changer'



British scientists have made a breakthrough that could help safeguard the future of the golden eagle. With the Golden Eagle under threat in some areas, this study led by the Wellcome Sanger Institute could help in returning them. Golden eagles are found around the globe - in North America, Europe and Asia. But some country's populations are small and declining. As an apex predator - at the top of the food chain - these

birds of prey are essential to their environment. In the UK, they're an endangered species and there are many projects to try to conserve it, understanding its biology and some of this information can be gleaned from having the genome of this species."

*BBC News August 2018*







### **Stunned Sparrowhawk**

A Northern Wheatear had a lucky escape recently while being chased by a young Sparrowhawk across a boat at a North Sea offshore wind farm. The Sparrowhawk crashed into a window and knocked itself out. To add insult to injury, the Wheatear then landed on the unconscious bird for a moment. The Sparrowhawk recovered 20 minutes later and went off to catch

another less fortunate bird.

*BBC News - September 2018*

### **Bird of Prey poisonings 'at record low' in Scotland**



2017 saw only one Bird of Prey illegal poisoning being reported in Scotland, this is the lowest number recorded since records began in 2004. The official figures also show a fall in all recorded Bird of Prey crimes, with nine compared to fourteen in 2016. The figures were compiled for the government by The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW). In addition to the poisoning incident, there were two shootings,

two illegal trappings and three cases of disturbance. The Environment Secretary Roseanna Cunningham has welcomed the reduction in Bird of Prey poisonings, but she warned that reports from early 2018 indicate it remains a problem in some parts of Scotland.

*BBC news - October 2018*

### **Birds of Prey flocking to cities to escape drought**



Birds of Prey such as Eagles and Hawks have flocked to cities and towns in Australia due to the drought forcing them out of the parched countryside. Birdlife Australia has compiled data from citizens and scientists which shows that 27 of Australia's 34 raptor species have been spotted in capital cities in large numbers. However, city life is not all a bed of roses, it brings risks for birds from vehicle strikes, collisions with buildings, overhead

powerlines and poisoning from pesticides.

*ABC Net News – October 2018*

### **Illegal Eggs**



The International Centre for Birds of Prey in Newent, Gloucestershire, received an unexpected delivery. A collection of Bird of Prey eggs that were illegally brought into the UK by a smuggler. Staff at the Centre have successfully hatched the eggs, which were from endangered species of Vultures, Eagles and Hawks. They hope to breed the birds that are now fully grown and thriving.

### Tagged Hen Harrier disappears from South Lanarkshire moor



A young Hen Harrier which had been fitted with a satellite transmitter has disappeared on a moor in South Lanarkshire. RSPB Scotland said this bird was the latest to have gone missing in suspicious circumstances, its tag abruptly stopped working on 7 February. RSPB Scotland's head of investigations, Ian Thomson had appealed for anyone with information about the bird's disappearance to get in touch.

This area of South Lanarkshire has been notorious for some years as a black hole into which protected Birds of Prey simply disappear.

*BBC News May 2019*

### Scottish Borders Bird of Prey shootings investigated



Police Wildlife Crime Officers on the Scottish Borders are investigating the shooting of two birds of prey. The first incident happened on 14 February when a dead Goshawk was found on land near Abbey St Bathans. The incident was reported to RSPB Scotland. Forensic analysis confirmed the bird had been shot and police were then contacted. Officers are also probing the shooting of a Goshawk found dead by a dog walker near Eddleston Quarry on 2 March. Police have

appealed for information about both incidents.

*BBC News April 2019*

### Dumfries & Galloway Red Kite Feeding Stations



On a recent trip to Dumfries & Galloway, Carol and I visited the Bellymack Hill Farm - Red Kite Feeding Station, which is located off the B795 road, at Bellymack Hill Farm (300m east of Laurieston village). The Kites are fed daily at 2pm with the station open from 1pm to 4pm in the summer and 1pm to 3pm in winter. The Kites have been congregating at Bellymack Hill Farm since 2001 when they were reintroduced to Galloway. This is partly due to the prevailing SW winds

which create updrafts from the hillside, enabling Kites to ride the air effortlessly over the farm. Since 2003 the feeding has allowed visitors to get close first-hand experiences of these gregarious birds when they come in spectacularly to snatch food provided for them.

The visitor center provides all-weather, close-viewing of the action, together with more distant views of perched birds against the panoramic Galloway countryside. A fantastic experience. that benefits Kites through public support. As the population of Kites increases in Galloway, they are expanding in range and the chances of seeing them elsewhere are increasing. However, viewing Kites at the feeding station is certainly the most dramatic way

to encounter them up close as they display and interact with each other in large numbers. While we waited for the feeding to begin, I counted 30 birds circling the field and a further 50 birds sat in nearby trees, with more birds lazily drifting towards the farm from the surrounding countryside. At the height of feeding we estimated between 150 and 200 birds, but it was difficult to count them. This is a fantastic spectacle and a great way to get close to these magnificent birds. The feeding station is only 20 minutes' drive from RSPB Scotland's Ken-Dee Marshes Reserve and the towns of New Galloway and Castle Douglas.

*Steve Davidson*



## British Birds of Prey

Each issue will be taking a closer look at one of our native birds of prey. We start this issue with the Kestrel as the cover picture.

### European Kestrel - *Falco tinnunculus*



Kestrels measure 32–39 cm (13–15 in) from head to tail, with a wingspan of 65–82 cm (26–32 in).

Females are noticeably larger, with the adult male weighing 136–252 g (4.8–8.9 oz), around 155 g (5.5 oz) on average; the adult female weighs 154–314 g (5.4–11.1 oz), around 184 g (6.5 oz) on average.

Like the other *Falco* species, they have long wings as well as a distinctive long tail. Plumage is mainly light chestnut brown with

blackish spots on the upper side and buff with narrow blackish streaks on the underside. Unlike most raptors, they display sexual colour dimorphism with the male having fewer black spots and streaks, as well as a blue-grey cap and tail. The tail is brown with black bars in females and has a black tip with a narrow white rim in both sexes. Common Kestrels have a prominent black malar stripe. The cere, feet, and a narrow ring around the eye are bright yellow; the toenails, bill and iris are dark. Juveniles look like adult females, but the underside streaks are wider; the yellow of their bare parts is paler.

Hatchlings are covered in white down feathers, changing to a buff-grey second down coat before they grow their first true plumage. While hunting, the Kestrel characteristically hovers about 10–20 m (33–66 feet) above the ground while searching for prey. UK Population 46,000 breeding pairs. UK Range 'green' present all year round white absent.



**Patrons**  
**Chris Packham - Steve Lingham**

**Honorary President - Mr Bryan Paterson**  
**Honorary Vice President - Mr Robert Haddon**

**TRUSTEES**

**Malcolm Robbins** – Chairman, Events and Re-homing Coordinator – Tel:07734 845288 – contact for any issues relating to external magazine articles, press releases or TV related activities, re-homing birds of prey, rehabilitation, displays and code of conduct.

**Oscar Godson** – Treasurer – Tel: 07525 818656 – contact for any financial issues, donations, membership payments and first aid equipment.

**Lesley Smith & Jenny Morgan** – Acting Secretaries & National Helpline – Tel: 01785 850379 – contact for any issues relating to the National Helpline, to order publications or to request attendance at events.

**Gabriela Rabin** – Web Editor.

**Liz Conway** – Sales & Marketing, Stock Control.

**Barbara Royle - Keith Hollingworth - Lesley Thomson - Libby Jackson**

**Other Roles**

**Shakila Towasin** - Membership Coordinator, contact for new membership subscription and renewals  
Tel:-- 07507 649 763

**Steve Davidson** – Newsletter Editor – Tel:07784 476136

Membership of Raptor Rescue is open to anyone with an interest in birds of prey who wishes to support the Charity. Annual membership fee £15.00. Applications forms are available from our web site.

**PLEASE NOTE: The National Help & Advice Line is NOT a 24-hour emergency service.**  
**However, an answerphone is available outside of normal operating hours.**  
**All calls are charged at the national rate.**

This issue published June 2019 Raptor Rescue - Design and Production -Steve Davidson

Pictures:

In the News – BBC News – Independent - ABC Net News  
Kite Feeding - Internet

PLEASE NOTE: Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of this publication, no responsibility for loss occasioned to any person as a result of any statement contained in it can be accepted by the author or publisher. Comments made by the author(s) do not constitute advice. The guidelines we issue are advisory only and have no force in law.

This issue published @ 2019 Raptor Rescue  
Design and Production -Steve Davidson  
Printed by Claymore Signs, Warrington

Pictures:  
Cover – Malcolm Robbins/Steve Davidson/Oscar Godson  
Gentleshaw – Jenny Morgan/Lesley Smith  
Raptor Rescue Facebook page  
BBC News Archives

**National Help & Advice Line**  
**0870 241 0609**

**[www.raptorrescue.org.uk](http://www.raptorrescue.org.uk)**



**RAPTOR  
RESCUE**  
Registered Charity No. 283733