

Scottish Schoolchildren Take on Satellite Tracking to Monitor Their Local Bird of Prey

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Satellite tags provided by Microwave Telemetry, as part of their PTIs for schools program, have enabled an exciting Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) tracking education project to go ahead last year. In the Scottish Highlands, the Black Isle is a beautiful pen-



Red Kite perching on branch.

insula and important area for one of the UK's most spectacular native birds of prey, the red kite (*Milvus milvus*). Illegally persecuted to near extinction across the UK during the 1900s, red kites have since been successfully reintroduced by the RSPB throughout the British Isles, with the Black Isle population now an important Scottish stronghold for the species.

This project involved three young birds being attached with the satellite tags, and working closely with the local Ben Wyvis School to

help children (4–12 age range) track the birds' movements as they dispersed from the nest. Children have been absolutely fascinated with this insight into the young birds' lives, and the accessibility of this screen based learning has proven very inclusive for a broad range of ages. Learning within the classroom has been complemented with outdoor trips to RSPB's nearby

nature reserve, Fairy Glen, where the children were awed to see close-up views of these wild birds in their local habitat. Red kites are such a feature of the local area that they are fast becoming a daily highlight for children and local communities, frequently spoken about in conversation and seen when out and about.

During the summer school holiday open events were held at RSPB's local 'Tollie' Red Kite Centre which helped over 350 members of the local community to understand and appreciate red kites. Children watched as the birds swooped down to eat the venison that had been left out for them by local volunteers! RSPB Biologist Stuart Benn and schoolchildren from Ben Wyvis introduced the satellite tagging project to the wider community and discussed how it helps to protect these birds through monitoring their habitat and highlighting any threats to it, such as the continuation of illegal persecution. Local people were very engaged, as these birds carry strong natural and economic significance within the area, and some hadn't previously understood they were threatened. Additional open days have given the opportunity to talk about red kites, specifically on their protection and how the satellite tagging is helping to better understand these fantastic birds of prey.

The project has really boosted enthusiasm and a more in-depth scientific understanding amongst children of red kite ecology and uses of tracking equipment. The wider community has engaged with real interest in the project too and genuinely seems to wish to do more for the red kite. We hope this project will help establish greater stewardship and sense of local pride in our younger generation to safeguard a future for this magnificent bird as part of the north Scotland landscape.



Tollie Red Kite.

Photo by Andy Hay

Reminders

Refurbishment

As a courtesy to our customers we are happy to offer refurbishment of transmitters. You are welcome to return recovered PTIs, GSM transmitters and Pop-up Tags to us at any time. However, we may not be able to give them our immediate attention, as new production remains our highest priority. We have set aside the months of August through February for refurbishment of PTIs and GSM transmitters. Please return your transmitters as soon as possible so that we can complete the work in the time allotted and return them to you for next field season.

Data Extraction

The archival abilities of our X-Tags allow for extraction of high-resolution time-series data (2-minute records.) The extraction process is extremely time consuming. Please allow several months for delivery of extracted data reports.

Peer-reviewed Publications

Please send us links/citations for your 2012 and 2013 publications that use MTI products. We will add these to our online reference library.