



giving
nature
a home

Northern Ireland

RSPB NI
RKites Project

Returning red kites
to our skies

Red Kite

Activity Booklet

Name: _____

School: _____



Hello!

You are one of **1200** pupils in schools across counties Down and Armagh (where red kites live) taking part in the RKites project. We're excited to share with you more about this majestic species and with your help we can make sure our red kite population in Northern Ireland thrives, flourishes and expands despite the many challenges that they face.



Fact file

1

What are birds of prey?

The red kite is a bird of prey. Birds of prey – or raptors – are a group of birds that eat or prey upon other animals. This prey can be mammals, other birds, carrion (dead animals), fish and even insects!

Apart from what they like to eat, there are three main differences that set birds of prey apart from other birds:



EYESIGHT

The most important feature birds of prey have is their incredible eyesight. Their eyes are very large compared to the size of their heads, which means they can see much better than we can. Owls though rely mostly on their amazing sense of hearing, which is so good it allows them to catch prey even in complete darkness.



TALONS

All birds of prey have really sharp talons for catching and holding their prey.



HOOKED BEAK

Although they come in many shapes and sizes, all birds of prey have a strong hooked beak for tearing up their food.

Activity

1

Wordsearch

BEAK

CHICK

EXTINCT

FEATHERS

NEST

PREY

RAPTOR

RED KITE

ROOST

TALON



Fact file

2

Red kite basics

Latin Name: *Milvus milvus*

Wingspan: 1.5-1.7m

Weight: 750-1600g

Length: 60-66cm

How long do they live: 10-20 years

Habitat: Can be seen over rolling hills and farmland across counties Down, Armagh and Antrim. With all of our hedgerows and woodlands, there are so many places for them to nest and they could turn up anywhere!

Favourite food: insects, small mammals and carrion (dead animals), young crows and magpies.



Fact file

3

Red kite history

Red kites have had a long and sometimes difficult relationship with humans.

Thousands of years ago, red kites would have been a common sight around human settlements, feeding on the scraps and waste thrown out.

Hundreds of years ago, their scavenging abilities earned them royal protection as they cleaned food scraps and waste from the streets.

However, the fortunes of the red kite were about to change. Persecution in the form of shooting, trapping, poisoning and egg collecting caused their numbers to drop so low that they became extinct in all of Ireland, Scotland and England. Projects like RKites have helped bring them back!

Activity 2

Red kites by numbers

We spotted 20 pairs of red kites in Counties Armagh and Down this year – how many red kites in total did we see?

Red Kites are given wing tags to help us to identify them. Fill in the missing numbers below to help us keep the wing tags in sequence.

0	1	1	2	3	5	8	—	—
1	4	9	16	—	—	49		
5	—	15	20	—	—	35		



Red kite

Activity

3

Spot the difference



Buzzard

Red kites and buzzards are sometimes confused. Can you circle **three differences** you see between these two birds of prey?

Fact file

4

Extinction to reintroduction

Extinction means that a particular species of plant or animal dies out completely and none remain. This can be in a small, localised area, an entire country or globally.

Over time, many different species have been made extinct across the UK and Ireland. Apart from natural events like the meteor strike that contributed to killing off dinosaurs, there are two main reasons that cause extinction.

Human activities: Throughout history, humans have knowingly and unknowingly brought harmful species like rats or cats into new lands, causing the native species to suffer because they had not evolved to deal with these new threats. Far more destructive though is human hunting, either for food or because a particular species is seen as a pest or a threat. Many animals once present here - like wolves, eagles and red kites - were all made extinct in the past for one reason or another.

Habitat change: These may be natural changes to habitats over time or may be caused by humans, for example climate change, building houses and cutting down forests. Loss of habitat means there are no places for species to live, breed and find food. Some species can cope and do well from these changes, for example finding somewhere else to live, but others may suffer and disappear completely.

Activity 4

Unscramble challenge!

Can you unscramble the names of some birds of prey found in Northern Ireland?

1



ONGL DERA E WOL

2



DRE TKEI

3



TREKSEL

4



NHE IREHRR A

5



ROWARPS AKHW

6



ZUBZARD

Activity 5

Investigation

Two hundred years ago, red kites were extinct all over Ireland, England and Scotland; only a handful remained in the rugged hills and valleys of Wales. They were seen as a threat to farm animals and game birds and were shot, trapped and poisoned over many years until none remained.

Then in 2008, RSPB NI started a reintroduction project. Along with the Golden Eagle Trust and the Welsh Red Kite Trust, the RSPB collected and released 80 Welsh red kite chicks in County Down and, for the first time in hundreds of years, red kites were seen flying in the skies above Northern Ireland again!

Investigation Activity:

- ? Find out about a bird, a mammal and an insect that has been reintroduced. Once you have discovered an example of each, choose one and investigate:
- ? Why did it become extinct?
- ? What year and where did the reintroduction take place?
- ? What job does this species do in the ecosystem?

Activity 6

Over to you

Now try **drawing your very own red kite**. To enter a competition to win a red kite prize send us a scanned image of your drawing to redkiteni@rspb.org.uk

Name: _____

School: _____

What can you do now?

1 Why not create a display of your red kite pictures in your school?

2 Have you seen a red kite?

Every year people tell us about seeing red kites and this helps us track and protect these amazing birds. If you want to tell us about your sighting, please email us at redkiteni@rspb.org.uk with the following information:

- Time/date/location of sighting
- Wing tag colours, letters and numbers
- Number of birds
- What they were doing eg. flying, roosting, feeding on the ground

3 Did you know you can adopt a red kite chick? If you are interested in finding out more about how the adoption programme works, please contact redkiteni@rspb.org.uk

4 Are you ready for a Wild Challenge?

Do you want to do more for wildlife? Why not take up the RSPB's Wild Challenge? Your school can join in or you can join in at home as a family. Help wildlife, explore nature, and work towards bronze, silver and gold awards by making your way through a variety of wild activities. Register for free through the RSPB's website by searching for Wild Challenge.

5 Don't forget to send a scan of your drawing to redkiteni@rspb.org.uk to enter a competition to win a red kite prize!

Thank you for taking
part in the RKites
Project and looking
out for red kites in
Northern Ireland!



Helping to give nature a home



Images: red kite by Bob Sharples; buzzard by Nature Photographers Ltd (all alamy.com); red kite and buzzard by Ben Hall, beak by Mark Hamblin, red kite by Andy Hall, red kite by Ben Andrew, kestrel by Richard Brooks, hen harrier by Mark Thomas, sparrowhawk by Dean Bricknell (all rspb-images.com); barn owl by mitumal, talons by outlook and long eared owl by MikeLane45 (all istockphoto.com); wing tags by Kendrew Colhoun; red kite by James Leyland.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654. All rights reserved. RSPB licence 100021787. 840-1488-17-18