

Red Kites in Dumfries & Galloway

Update – September 2017

How many kites are there in South Scotland?

The population of red kites in Dumfries & Galloway is growing and expanding in range. As it is difficult to monitor every single kite in the area, it is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the 'number of individual kites'. Like all species, the early years of red kites are their most dangerous. A third of fledged young will be lucky to survive their first winter, although if they do, their future survival is more certain. Owing to some young kites' propensities for dispersing, some after fledging and some the following spring, survival and population numbers can only ever be an approximation. The number of breeding kites, currently at 224 individuals (**112 pairs**), is a much more reliable indicator of our minimum population in the region.



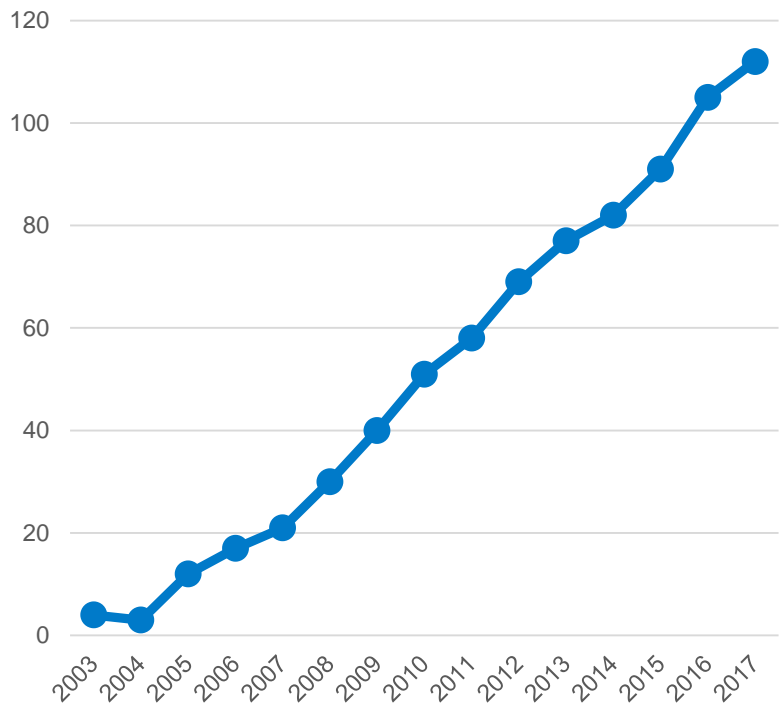
Red kite image © Angus Hogg

The population continues to grow

Since kites began breeding in this area, following their reintroduction, the population has increased steadily. Issues such as illegal persecution or strikes with road traffic no longer appear to be affecting the growth rate and these birds of prey are doing well in this area.

Last year (2016), the project celebrated its first record of over a hundred nesting pairs for the first time since these birds were returned to the area.

Number of nesting pairs of red kites in South Scotland



Breeding progress

In 2016 and 2017, the number of young per laying pair (productivity) was poor compared to previous years. This was most likely a result of the wet summer weather, affecting the breeding condition of birds and so less eggs were laid and young fledged.

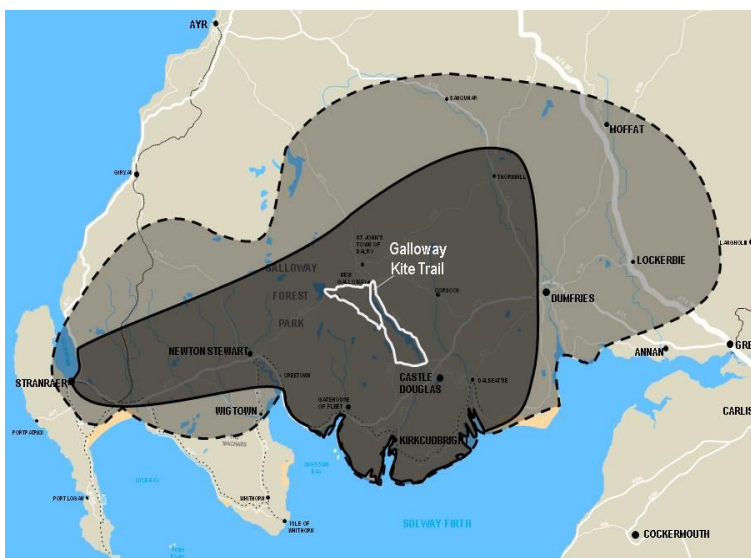
Year	No. of pairs located	No. of laying pairs	No. of hatching pairs	No. of pairs fledging Young	% of pairs fledging Young	Total young fledged	Productivity (No. young per laying Pair)
2003	4	4	1	1	25	1	0.25
2004	7	3	2	2	66	3	1
2005	14	12	10	10	83	18	1.5
2006	19	17	14	14	82	27	1.59
2007	22	21	19	19	90	38	1.81
2008	32	30	26	25	83	53	1.77
2009	41	40	33	31	77.5	58	1.45
2010	52	51	49	47	92	98	1.92
2011	65	58	53	53	91	104	1.75
2012	73	69	56	52	75	97	1.41
2013	86	77	64	63	82	91	1.18
2014	88	82	71	67	82	97+	1.15
2015	97	91	82	77	84.6	112+	1.23
2016	113	105	88	85	81	120+	1.14
2017	118	112	*(68)	*(59)	*(86.7)	*(79+)	*(1.16)
Total	831	772	*(627)	*(605)	*(78)	*(992+)	*(1.28)

* Values in brackets show sites monitored to conclusion. Resources are now targeted on expansion and the periphery of breeding population. For 2017, every known nest site was visited in spring/early summer, to confirm incubation/breeding.

How far have they spread?

Our red kites are breeding in all 3 vice-counties (The Stewartry, Dumfriesshire and Wigtonshire) across Dumfries & Galloway (dark-grey area, shown on map). A pair are now breeding near Stranraer, to the far west of the region.

Anyone familiar with the area will notice that the expansion of the D&G population is affected by conifer forests and our high hill ranges like the Rhins of Kells, Merrick and Fleet ranges, which kites tend to avoid.



Kites can disperse great distances from their natal nest sites, so anyone with knowledge of their presence outwith the shaded area on the map can assist the project by contacting us at **RSPB Scotland Crossmichael office, on 01556 670464.**