


**Table 10 (continued)**

G/P 9	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P 10	M	Galloway	Newcastle area
G/P A	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P B	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P C	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P D	M	Galloway	Last seen 04/11/2007
G/P E	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P F	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P G	M	Galloway	Last seen 29/12/2007
G/P H	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P J	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P K	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P L	M	Galloway	Last 25/07/2007
G/P M	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P N	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P O	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P P	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P Q	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P R	F	Galloway	Last seen 25/07/2008
G/P S	F	Galloway	Last seen 01/04/2008
G/P T	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P U	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P V	F	Galloway	Last seen 25/07/2007
G/P W	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P Z	M	Galloway	Present core area



a million  
 voices for  
 nature



# Red kites

Angus Hogg

## In Dumfries and Galloway



Ian Saunders

A reintroduction project

Bulletin No.15  
 Autumn 2008



## Contents



Welcome	3
Breeding in 2008	4
Sites	6
Mortality	12
Additional points of interest	13
Other kites in Galloway	14
Movement of Dumfries & Galloway kites	15
Kites elsewhere	16
Galloway kite trail	17
How can you help?	18
Acknowledgements	20
Appendix	21



G/G E	F	Galloway	Present core area,
G/G G	M	Galloway	Last seen 25/04/2007
G/G H	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G J	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G K	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/G M	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G N	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/G P	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G R	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/G S	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/G U	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G V	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G W	F	Galloway	Last seen 02/07/2007
G/G X	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G Y	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
R/G 2J	F	C. Scotland	Present core area, bred
B/G X	F	Wales	Present core area, bred

**Table 10. 2007 cohort, Galloway bred 33.**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/P 1	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/P 3	F	Galloway	Last seen 30/05/2008
G/P 5	F	Galloway	Last seen 27/10/2007
G/P 6	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P 7	F	Galloway	Present core area
G/P 8	M	Galloway	Present core area



**Table 8. 2005 cohort, released 4, Galloway bred 18**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/O 101	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 102	M	Galloway	Last seen 22/01/2008
G/O 105	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 110	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 111	M	Galloway	Present core area,
G/O 112	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 114	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 117	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/O 118	M	Galloway	Present core area,
G/O 120	M	N.. Scotland	Present core area, bred

**Table 9. 2006 cohort, Galloway bred 27. Incomer 2.**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/G 1	F	Galloway	Last seen 11/01/2008
G/G 2	M	Galloway	Last seen 30/05/2008
G/G 3	M	Galloway	Present core area
G/G 4	M	Galloway	Newcastle area
G/G 5	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G B	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/G C	M	Galloway	Present core area,
G/G D	F	Galloway	Present core area,

## Welcome to our 2008 issue of the Dumfries & Galloway Red Kite Reintroduction Bulletin.



With the reintroduction phase of the project ending in 2005, our bulletin is now an annual account of the breeding, movement, survival and mortality of red kites in Dumfries & Galloway. The bulletin also reports on the progress of other kite reintroduction projects throughout the UK and Ireland. An update on the Galloway Kite Trail and related website is also featured, highlighting the positive links between the kite project, local communities and the economy. We hope that the bulletin provides a comprehensive report on the red kite reintroduction project to inform and be enjoyed by all its readers.

### Release update

A total of 104 young kites were released in Dumfries & Galloway between 2001 and 2005; of these, there are 39 known alive, 38 in Galloway and one in Central Scotland. Of the 39 released kites known alive only one, a 2003 male (GR Y), was not recorded breeding in 2008.



**Table 1: Status of 104 released kites in Dumfries & Galloway from 2001 to 2005.**

Year	Released	Known alive 2008	% known alive 2008
2001	33	5	15%
2002	24	6	25%
2003	33	20	61%
2004	10	7	70%
2005	4	1	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37%</b>



Extensive winter monitoring confirmed good numbers of the 2006 cohort, so this year's healthy breeding figures were no surprise. Like the year before, last winter was fairly mild and may have influenced the impressive survival rate to breeding age. Territorial pairs were up ten, laying pairs up nine, successful nests up six and 15 more young fledged than in 2007. Once again all breeding attempts were in the same five 10km squares as in previous years, however there was a relatively significant geographical expansion due to a successful pair choosing a nest site to the East of St. John's Town of Dalry. On the assumption that kites attract other kites, this nest opens up a large tract of countryside North of the core area to the movement of kites, hitherto perhaps only lightly used. However, it does take nesting kites to within four kilometres of the proposed Blackcraigs wind farm development, which is subject to the outcome of a public inquiry. Another relatively significant pair, in terms of range expansion, was initially monitored in the Fleet valley, where copulation was recorded and a nest eventually found, but not before the pair disappeared. Perhaps they dropped back into the core area, but their disappearance from the Fleet was a disappointment.

All 30 active nests were roughly in the core area, a slowly expanding and infilling core area, 24km being the greatest distance between any two nests and 0.4km being the shortest distance between any two. Nine types of tree were chosen for nests; oak having eight nests; Scots pine and Sitka spruce having five nests each; larch with four nests; birch, Douglas fir and Norway spruce two nests each; and sycamore and Lawson's cypress one nest each. Heights above ground to nests ranged from six metres in a birch tree to a record breaking 33 metres high in a Douglas fir. Shakespeare's line in *A Winters Tale* 'when the kite builds, look to lesser linen' rang true with one pair, they added a green striped tea towel last year and this year it was a 9-10 year old's white tea shirt. More usual nest adornments were plastic bags, paper and coloured string. Of the 30 nests found, five ended in failure, four at the egg stage and the other at the small chick stage, but the remaining 25 were successful, fledging 53 young. Forty-eight young kites were fitted with BTO rings, whilst five others had fledged before the ringing date. As part of our ongoing study on the dispersal, movement and survival of red kites, young had radio transmitters fitted to them, allowing them to be tracked. Owing to a glitch in the recently passed Animal Health and Welfare [Scotland] act making



G/R X	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R Y	M	Chilterns	Present core area,
G/R Spot	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R Z	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred

**Table 7. 2004 cohort, released 10, Galloway bred 3, incomer 1**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/Y J	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y R	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y P	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y Q	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y S	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y W	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y U	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/Y O	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/Y T	F	Galloway	Present core area, bred
G/Y Z	M	Galloway	Present core area, bred
B/Y 53	F	N.Scotland	Present core area, bred



**Table 6. 2003 cohort, released 33, Galloway bred 1**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/R 1	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R 2	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R 3	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R 4	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R 5	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R 7	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/R J	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R L	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R Q	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R S	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R U	F	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R V	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/R W	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred

## Breeding in 2008 (continued)



no allowance for scientific studies like our reintroduction project, we were unable to fit wing tags this year. So recording juveniles at the feeding station is not as easy as in previous years. However, we had a group of seven untagged juveniles by the last week in July and the numbers will steadily grow as the young venture further from their nests. A great moment for the project, thwarted last year by failure, came to fruition this year when four pairs of first generation Galloway kites bred successfully, fledging seven young between them. It will be very interesting and rewarding in the future to chart the progress of these initial, second generation Galloway kites, or at least those that have been fitted with radio transmitters.

Kites continue to show a liking for the forest edge of Galloway Forest Park, managed by Forestry Commission Scotland, with six successful nests, a 100% increase on last year's three. The Galloway breeding population had two welcome recruits in two 2006 females, one from Central Scotland, the other from Wales. With only three confirmed sightings of Welsh kites in Scotland ever, including this female, this makes for pretty exciting news. The female from Central Scotland was the first of any sex from that area to breed here. Sadly, both breeding attempts failed. We will just have to locate them again next year, although participants in failed breeding attempts are not guaranteed to stay together or even remain in the area.

**Site 1. Male: Green/Red S. Female: Green/Blue J.**

Following last year's incident at this site, where a kite chick died after ingesting Diazinon (sheep dip) through being fed lambs' docked tails by the parent, it was great to see two young fledge this year. Worryingly, the adults continue to bring numbers of these discarded and easily acquired tails to the nest.

**Site 2. Male: Green/Red 2. Female: Green/Red F.**

Given that this pair were successful last year, it was surprising that they moved 2.5km to a new nest site. Nevertheless they fledged two young -it will be interesting to see where they decide to nest next year. The only reason for the shift that I could determine was that there were a couple of trees blown over close to the old nest tree during the previous winter.

**Site 3. Male: Green/Red V. Female: Green/Orange 105.**

Surprisingly the first nest to be found in a sycamore tree, found 100 metres from last year's, which was in a birch. The pair repeated last year's result and fledged one young.

**Site 4. Male: Green/Red W. Female: Blue/Yellow 53.**

A lot going on at this site, nesting ravens forced the pair to move elsewhere and once they found a new nest site (our first nest in a Lawson's Cypress) it was seen that the female had two males attending to her. An unattached male (green/yellow U) had joined the pair to make a threesome that resulted in one young being fledged. This polyandrous relationship existed for the entire breeding attempt, with the younger, previously unattached male always in close attendance near the nest tree. It will be very interesting to see what or 'whom' the relationship will involve next year.

**Site 5. Male: Green/Red L. Female: Green/Yellow R.**

Like many of our kite pairings, this pair's fledging success has improved with each succeeding breeding season. With maturity comes experience and in 2006 they fledged one young, two in 2007 and now a healthy brood of three in 2008.

**Site 6. Male: Green/Red Spot. Female: Green/White C.**

One of two pairs to use the same nest tree for four years running, and joint third in our most prolific breeders' table, ten young produced in four years, including this year's brood of three.

**Surviving Red kites: released/bred/incomers in Dumfries & Galloway 2001 - 2008.****Table 4. 2001 cohort, released 33.**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
G/B 4	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/B A	F	Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/B J	F	Scotland	Present core area, bred
G/B U	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred
G/B W	F	Chilterns	Present core area, bred

**Table 5. 2002 cohort, released 24.**

Kite	Sex	Origin	Status summer 2008
GW 3	F	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
GW 5	F	N. Scotland	Central Scotland, bred
GW 7	F	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
GW 9	M	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
GW C	F	N. Scotland	Present core area, bred
GW X	M	Chilterns	Present core area, bred



Throughout the year Ray Hawley, Chris Rollie, Ian Saunders, Angus Hogg, David Hunt, Calum Murray and his many volunteers, including Michael Cole, Jeff Sutcliffe, Karen McKenzie, Jean Southall, Paddy McDonald, Allison Davidson, Kevin Murray and Andrew Orr provided valuable wing-tag readings. Thanks to long distance tag readers Kevin Duffy and Duncan Cameron (Central Scotland), Ken Sanderson (Gateshead), Doug Simpson (Yorkshire) and Tony Cross (Wales). Thanks for the many sightings from RSPB Local Group members. Thanks to Bard Veterinary Practice and the Barony Wildlife Hospital. Thanks to Angus McKay of gpxweb.com for his continued support of the Galloway Kite Trail website, which he stylishly constructed.

Many thanks are due to Brian Etheridge for his tagging guidance, instruction etc, Colin Watret (ringing/wing-tags/monitoring) and Ciril Ostroznik (tree climbing and nest observations). Thanks are due to our colleagues at both the RSPB Glasgow office and the Lodge, whose continued support of the project and the Galloway Kite Trail is much appreciated. Thanks to our project partners, SNH, FCS, D&GRSG, for their continued support, and to Sulwath Connections, Dumfries & Galloway Council, SNH and Heritage Lottery Fund in relation to GKT.

Many thanks to Anne Johnstone and Pam at Bellymack Hill Farm Feeding Station for their hard work in providing the wonderful spectacle, in hosting Calum, and in supporting the project in so many other ways. Thanks to the staff at FCS Clatteringshaws visitor centre and to all businesses on the Galloway Kite Trail for their positive feedback and assistance with pin badges, leaflets etc. Visit Scotland Dumfries & Galloway assists RSPB with leaflet distribution and promotion of the Trail.

Special acknowledgement must also be made of the assistance, access and patience granted to the project from the ever-growing group of landowners, farmers, gamekeepers and members of the public within Dumfries & Galloway. Many thanks to everyone in these groups, particularly those with breeding kites, hosting our release cages on their land and monitoring kites in any way.



### Site 7. Male: Green/White 9. Female: Green/White 7.

This pair re-used last year's successful nest high up in a Douglas fir, nesting within view of the estate gamekeeper. There was a healthy brood of three and a wealth of food detritus around the nest.

### Site 8. Male: Green/Red X. Female: Green/Red H.

The first time in four years for this pair to re-use a previous year's nest and went on to fledge two young. This was a good result considering that one egg fell from the nest during incubation. One of the young had fledged prior to our ringing date and so did not have a BTO ring fitted to it, the other was the heaviest kite weighed out of 48 this year at 1,270 grams.

### Site 9. Male: Green/Red D. Female: Green/Red U.

Anyone who has read the last three bulletins regarding the precarious nest this pair uses will be interested to know that once again they have re-used it. The nest continues to defy gravity and as last year, they fledged two young.

### Site 10. Male: Green/White X. Female: Green/White 3.

Joint third in our most prolific breeders table, they re-used last year's nest high in an oak and produced a healthy brood of three.

### Site 11. Male: Green/Red 3. Female: Green/Red 5.

Another pair to re-use last year's nest in a larch and the brood of two had just about fledged on our ringing visit. It was good that they were so close to fledging as the nest had collapsed and there was not much left of it, but it had done its job and the kites will build a new one next year.

### Site 12. Male: Green/Red Q. Female: Green/Red 7.

Interesting observations at this site, the pair moved 200 metres from last year's nest, and the female may have instigated the move. On two occasions I saw the male bring food to last year's nest, then the female appeared took the food and returned to the new nest site nearby. The new nest site went on to produce two young. More on this male's behaviour at [site 29](#).



Ian Saunders



**Site 13. Male: Green/Red 1. Female: Green/Red Z.**

A straight repeat of last year, used the same nest and produced a healthy brood of three. While observing this nest, the male was seen to deliver food every 15 minutes in one particular hour, with food provisioning like this it is no wonder they produce these healthy broods. Female `Red Z' was our first Galloway fledged kite in 2003.

**Site 14. Male: Green/Red 4. Female: Green/Blue A.**

The only pair to nest in a different tree every year for the last four years, even although they have been successful each year. There is a greater propensity for kites to re-use a successful nest, however this pairing bucks that trend. They are second in our most prolific breeders' table with 11 young in four years, including this year's brood of three.

**Site 15. Male: Green/Blue U. Female: Green/Blue W.**

Both kites being from the original 2001 release make them the oldest combined pairing in our population, incidentally two of only five remaining of that cohort. With their fourth brood of three in a row, they remain the most prolific breeders in the population; this is impressive given that they failed in their first two attempts!

**Site 16. Male: Green/Red E. Female: Green/Yellow T.**

They remain our most northerly nest and re-used last year's nest, fledging two young. An insight into the growth in young kites was gained when a second visit eight days later to this site was carried out. Two young gained 165 grams and 130 grams in weight and wing length had increased 154mm and 174mm respectively (!), sadly a third chick (the runt of the brood) had disappeared. Possibly its demise had not been in vain as it may have fuelled its bigger siblings' development.

**Site 17. Male: Green/Red J. Female: Green/Yellow S.**

Following last year's early egg predation and subsequent successful relay, this year was more straightforward. The pair re-used last year's successful nest in a Scots pine and produced two young.

**Site 18. Male: Green/Yellow Z. Female: Green/Yellow P.**

One of two nests this year where I was too late to ring the fledged young, in this case a brood of two, like plants in the garden kites appear to develop quicker the more sunshine they receive, obviously along with a good food supply.



**Table 3 Wing-tag colours, origin/year code.**

Year	Left tag (origin)	Right tag (year code)
2001	green (Galloway)	blue
2002	green	white
2003	green	red
2004	green	yellow
2005	green	orange
2006	green	green
2007	green	purple
2008	(No tags fitted in Galloway this year)	black

Since 2001, kites wing tagged in UK and Eire have used a standardised colour code, each release area having their own left wing tag colour and the right wing tag coloured as **table 3**. Most years we have had kites dispersing from the North Scotland, Central Scotland and more recently the Aberdeen project; they have blue, red and purple left wing tags respectively, and, as mentioned above, right wing tags are coloured according to the standardised year code in **table 3**. As can be seen in the above table, there were no wing tags fitted in D&G this year. This was due to a recent glitch in the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) act, which made no provision for studies such as our reintroduction project, hopefully, however this will have been remedied for next year.

**If you have any enquiries about kites, the Galloway Kite Trail, or wish to report any sightings or would like to offer help to the project in any way, you can call RSPB Scotland on 01556 670464.**

**George Christie,  
RSPB Red Kite Officer, Dumfries & Galloway.**





Stephen compiled the many interesting and useful facts such as the visitors' hometowns, their reasons for visiting our region, where are they staying and how much they spend when they got here. One of the most important facts is the visitor's actual worth to the local community whilst visiting our region. Extrapolation of the visitor questionnaires shows that visitors to our region could be putting approximately £700,000 annually into the local economies while visitors who's sole reason for visiting the region was to see the red kites put approximately £156,000 annually into the local economy. Both figures show the positive and worthwhile contribution that the Galloway Kite Trail makes to local communities that host it.

Once again, a pair of ospreys was easily seen around the kite trail this year, the male was identified as fledged from a nest in Wales and at only two years old, his immaturity could be the reason no eggs were laid. The resident pair at the Wigtown site had a better year raising three young, and there were at least three other non-breeding pairs about in the region.

The Galloway Kite Trail has featured in many publications throughout the year, from regional local papers like the Galloway News, Standard and Gazette to Visit Scotland publications, FCS Galloway Ranger and The Scottish Caravanner. A major highlight was the GKT winning an award from Dumfries and Galloway Leader+ Rural Awards 2005-2008 in the category of 'Interpretation, Access and Enjoyment of Rural Areas' which featured in the Leader+ Good Practice Guide: Making a Difference in Rural Areas publication.

Our excellent website, kindly constructed and maintained by Angus McKay of [www.gpxweb.com](http://www.gpxweb.com), continues to attract on average 2,000 visits per month. The website now offers a downloadable copy of the most recent bulletin. Find us at: [www.gallowaykitetrail.com](http://www.gallowaykitetrail.com)

### How can you help?

The red kite reintroduction project continues to be most grateful for sightings of kites, particularly away from the Loch Ken area. Any sightings where wing tags are read are most important and helpful to the project. Almost all kites have coloured wing tags, which either have a number, letter or a symbol as their individual identification. Some kites are untagged and are considered equally important sightings.



### Site 19. Male: Green/Green M. Female: Green/Green P.

Our first recorded incestuous pairing; in 2006 green/green P was found at the foot of the nest tree, having left the nest prematurely, she fledged from a nearby stump three days later. This premature fledging may have caused her to forget her siblings, which included her mate green/green M; such in-breeding has been recorded in other areas, notably Wales. They built a nest 30 feet high in an oak tree, the female laid two eggs, but the breeding attempt went on to fail at the egg stage.

### Site 20. Male: Green/Yellow Q. Female: Green/Orange 114.

Following last year's failed nest, as expected, this pair moved (1.3km). Although still within the same estate, they chose the biggest tree in a small wood, an oak. They fledged one young to get them off the mark as a breeding pair.

### Site 21. Male: Green/Yellow J. Female: Green/Yellow W.

They re-used last year's nest in a Sitka spruce, but I do not think they will be here next year. On the day of the ringing program, a well-grown kite chick was found dead on the ground, close to the otherwise empty nest. It is thought that the kite fledged from the nest prematurely and was predated on the ground. A sad ending, however young kites are known to fall from the nest when they reverse to the edge of the nest to defecate.

### Site 22. Male: Green/Orange 110. Female: Green/Orange 112.

Following last year's failed attempt, this pair moved 1.1km to a new site within the same estate. Sadly, given that it was both a much better location and a tree, the attempt again failed at the egg stage.

### Site 23. Male: Green/Yellow O. Female: Green/Green U.

One of four successful breeding pairs this year, where both participating adults were first generation Galloway bred kites. This is an event that was always going to happen, but nevertheless great to document the period in our project when we recorded further evidence of a self sustaining Galloway breeding population. This pair produced two young.



**Site 24. Male: Green/Orange 101. Female: Green/Blue 4.**

Wing tags, like them or loath them, are delivering a thrilling insight into the movements of some individual kites, the female at this site being an amazing example. She was one of our first released kites back in 2001, dispersed to Central Scotland in 2002, joined Central Scotland's breeding population in 2003 fledging three young, then returned to winter in Galloway. She returned to Central in the Spring of 2004, remaining there until 2007, in total breeding successfully four out of five years, including 2007, only to return to Galloway in 2008 to breed successfully with a much younger first generation Galloway male and produce two young. This kite was originally from the Chilterns area, an area considered to have sedentary genes (from their Spanish ancestors). Movement of this type has never been documented before and may go on unrecorded in other populations, especially those with large numbers of untagged kites.

**Site 25. Male: Green/Orange? Female: Green/Green 5.**

A new pairing, where I have still to identify the male owing to the nest being 110 feet high in a Douglas fir tree, our highest nest. We were very fortunate to get a brood of two from this nest as on the day of ringing the nest was found to have fallen out. The young were hanging on to branches and their general appearance and biometrics showed their development was retarded by the experience. Our intrepid climber, Ciril, rebuilt the nest; an action that I am sure will have been much appreciated by the young.

**Site 26. Male: Green/Green X. Female: Green/Green V.**

A new pairing of first generation Galloway kites, they moved into this site last used unsuccessfully by kites in 2005. The nest was high in a Norway spruce on the forest edge, so its aspect allowed easy nest monitoring. A single young was ringed and a cracked, addled egg was in the nest.

**Site 27. Male: Green/Green Y. Female: Green/Green H.**

Another new pairing of first generation Galloway kites and they produced one young. The body of a small



Ian Saunders



Improvements continue unabated on the Galloway Kite Trail (GKT) with two interpretation/information structures already manufactured. One has been positioned at Glenlaggan, looks great, and awaits its interpretation boards, which are in production. The other, to be positioned at New Galloway requires planning permission and this is being sought from the local authority at this moment. A third structure to be positioned at Parton is under construction. Road signage for these information points are in place and when completed these very individual information points will offer visitors a wealth of information on not only the kite trail and the local natural history but also on the local social history of the area. One other minor but much needed improvement was the replacement picnic table at the viewpoint of the Parton Walk, indeed part funded by the Parton Walk's landowner Mungo Bryson. RSPB Community Liaison Officer Calum Murray and the Sulwath Connections Project are managing these improvements made possible through funding granted from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, Dumfries & Galloway Council and RSPB. Calum spends a great deal of his time at Anne Johnstone's Bellymack Hill Farm Feeding Station, (at the moment Anne is in the process of planning improvements in the shape of a new viewing area and toilets for the feeding station) interpreting kites and promoting the local area and GKT to the many visitors. He has also visited many of the local schools at their request and has been giving talks to local groups and clubs, most recently well-received talks to the WRI group in New Galloway and Tynron, a SWT members centre in Ayr and the Thornhill Probus Club. Given that the summer weather was so terrible, visitor numbers to the Trail are on a par with previous years and visitor feedback continues to be very positive. This year's Crichton Campus student on placement with us was Stephen Ross, from Haugh of Urr. As part of his degree, Stephen collated the information from our returned visitor questionnaires and produced a summary of interesting facts relating to visitors to the GKT.



Ian Saunders

## Kites elsewhere



The 2008 figures for Scotland show that in total there were approximately 137 territorial pairs, 122 breeding successfully. In addition to our D&G figures, North Scotland had 49 pairs, of which 39 nested successfully and reared 82 young, Central Scotland had 55 pairs of which 33 nested successfully and reared 76 young.

Therefore, 2008 is turning into a big year in the reintroduction of red kites in not only Scotland but the whole of the UK. D&G, Central and North Scotland all made good progress in numbers of breeding birds and young produced. With a small but significant rise in breeding pairs, even North Scotland appears to be creeping out of its stagnant period. Aberdeen released 35 young kites in this, their second year of reintroduction. A precocious young pair from last year's release laid a clutch of two eggs, however, the breeding attempt subsequently failed, though, historically, this was the first recorded breeding attempt by red kites in the area for approximately 120 years. In their second year of releases, Co Wicklow in Southern Ireland released 26 young kites; and as last year, these kites were sourced from Wales, in partnership with The Welsh Kite Trust.



The Welsh Kite Trust have also supplied Northern Ireland with 27 young for their inaugural release at their Co Down base. I am looking forward to recording my first Irish kite in D&G, I am sure it is only a matter of time. Over our border and due east from here, Newcastle area's Northern Kites breeding population continues to rise impressively with 23 pairs in only their third breeding year, early days but this early increase in breeding figures is matched only by the Chilterns. With Yorkshire, East Midlands and especially Chilterns and Wales having highly successful self-sustaining breeding populations, the UK is now having a serious input into the conservation of the red kite in a global scale, and hopefully Ireland will soon follow. There are approximately 1,200 breeding pairs in the UK and this equates to 5% of the world population. With problems like land use changes, secondary poisoning and persecution having an impact in the main European populations of Germany, France and Spain, it is all the more important that the UK is having this positive and timely input.

## Sites (continued)



chick was found at the foot of the nest tree. It had a badly damaged wing and became this year's second case of a young falling out of the nest, possibly whilst defecating.

### Site 28. Male: Green/Orange 120. Female: Red/Green 2J.

A nesting attempt that contained an incoming female (our first) from Central Scotland, an exciting event that sadly ended in failure. A clutch of three eggs were laid in a birch tree nest barely 18 feet high. The female was to experience two bouts of unintentional disturbance, which would have almost certainly resulted in the eggs being chilled. Incidentally, this is another site that had been used previously by another pair, way back in 2003.

### Site 29. Male: Green/Red Q. Female: Black/Green X.

Probably the most exciting site of the year for various reasons and it was a shame when it ended in failure. First, it was another site with an incoming female this time from Wales. With only ever three previous sightings of Welsh kites in Scotland, all three in Dumfries & Galloway, including this female, to have one in our breeding population was both historic and plain fantastic. Secondly, it was our first recorded case of a polygamous pairing; the male already had an incubating female at **site 12**. It is thought that the attempt failed at the small chick stage, almost certainly due to the female leaving the young unguarded from both the elements and possible predation when she left the nest to procure food.

### Site 30. Male: Green/Green B. Female: Green/Green J.

A new pairing of first generation Galloway kites, nesting in a Sitka spruce, they produced a cracking brood of three. On our ringing date the young were like three peas in a pod with only 15 grams between the lightest and the heaviest and two had the exact same wing measurements.



**Table 2: Summary of breeding, Galloway 2003-2008.**

Year	Pairs located	Pairs laying eggs	Pairs hatching eggs	Pairs fledging young	% pairs laying that fledged young	Total young fledged	Productivity young/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
total	98	87	72	71	82%	140	1.6

## Mortality

Many thanks to the landowners; gamekeepers, employees of estates and members of the public who have alerted us on finding trapped or debilitated kites. Some kites, particularly young inexperienced ones, have no fear over entering crow traps, pheasant pens etc in their quest for carrion and hence will be inadvertently trapped. I am very grateful for receiving these calls and for the opportunity to identify, treat and release these kites.



Ian Saunders

Monitoring nesting attempts gives us the opportunity to check on adult survival, any changes in personnel are usually picked up on at this time. It was great to find that all the previous years

## Movement of Dumfries & Galloway kites



Galloway released female, Green/white 5, remains in Central Scotland and bred successfully for the first time in three years, fledging one chick. She was joined in Central by another Galloway female, green/orange 117, who bred successfully at her first time of trying, fledging two young. Green/orange 117 becomes the first known Galloway fledged kite to disperse and breed elsewhere. Another Galloway bred kite took itself up to Central Scotland this year - female, green/purple W was scoped tucking into carrion in Glen Quaich, Perthshire in the last week of August only to be recorded back in Galloway in the second week of September. Green/green G may well be in North East England where it has been recorded in the past, green/purple 10 and green/green 4 are definitely in NE England and the former is thought to have bred successfully fledging one young, whereas green/purple 3 and 5's whereabouts are currently unknown.



David Hunt

A female, green/green E, returned from its sojourn at Gigrin Farm in Wales in the spring, but was not found on a territory, although she remains in the core area. The most interesting piece of kite movement so far for the project is of green/blue 4 explained in **site 24**. So far, only one of the trackable 2008 cohort has dispersed, though I expect more to follow, but maybe the very wet late summer/early autumn is blunting their desire to explore. I continue to be fascinated by the comings and goings of these dispersing kites, and I am extremely pleased that there is increasing evidence of the fact that they now appear to be able to travel relatively unhindered the length and breadth of the county.



trapping area, thinking that the contents of these pellets would maybe add to or substantiate the list of species she trapped. Our final task is to gather pellets regurgitated at communal roosts to complete her required samples for analysis. It only leaves Laura to finish her analysis, write up her dissertation and gain her degree; we wish her all the best, and look forward to seeing her results!

### Other kites in Galloway!

Last year's other incomers: leucistic black/purple V8 from Wales, blue/purple red bar from North Scotland, red/purple X4 from Central Scotland and from the Aberdeen project purple/purple 26 and 02, all were deemed to have left the region by the spring of 2008, just as we would expect. Purple/purple 26 was last recorded in D&G on 07/04/08, identified in Central Scotland from around the third week of April and then returned to D&G on 04/07/08 where he remains and can be seen about the feeding station on occasion. As mentioned in the sites section red/green 2J and black/green X remained with us and joined our breeding population, although both had failed breeding attempts. It remains to be seen whether either or both will still be with us next year, this would have been virtually guaranteed had they been successful. With kites appearing from all points of the compass the recording of these movements are invaluable and fascinating. Natural dispersal of young from all project areas should ensure a good gene pool that should guarantee a healthy self-sustaining red kite population in Scotland and elsewhere.

Areas with regular sightings this year have been the Fleet valley (first ever territorial pair recorded here, but no nest found, maybe next year?); Durisdeer (pair recorded on three different occasions) and Dalswinton.

These areas are highly suitable for red kites, as they contain an abundance of the nesting and foraging habitat required by breeding red kites. We remain keen to hear reports of any kites away from the Loch Ken, core area.



pairings were intact and present on their territories, so adult survival continues to be very good.

The year 2007 had a final sting in the tail when in the last few days of December; a young kite was recovered dead from a tree in Laurieston. The kite, green/purple 2 had died through ingesting the poison Carbofuran. This was the first illegal poisoning in the region since December 2004 and caused much outrage; the police carried out a full investigation but could not identify the culprit who laid out the poison. We were glad to see the back of 2007, a year that saw us lose three kites, two to the illegal use of Carbofuran (the other incident was in south Lanarkshire).

As mentioned in the sites section there were two kite chicks found dead at or near to their nest trees, prior to fledging. One being five to six weeks old may have left the nest too early and then was predated on the ground and the other being two to three weeks old perhaps simply fell from the nest, possibly while defecating.

Evidence of the probable death of a kite was sent to us recently. A wing tag belonging to green/green Q was found washed up on Ramsey beach on the Isle of Man. Green/green Q, a male, was one of a brood of two fledged from **site 18** in 2006.

As always I finish the mortality section with a positive look to the next year, with 20 of the 2007 cohort identified in the core area recently, 8 females and 12 males, these should continue the steady progress required to deliver a self-sustaining breeding population, the ultimate aim of our reintroduction project.

### Additional points of interest

In our area this year, we have had a student, Laura Whittaker-Bush from Cumbria University, Penrith carrying out interesting research on the diet preferences of red kites. This research is the basis of her dissertation to be presented next year as part of her Degree in Animal Conservation Science. During this breeding season we have been collecting regurgitated pellets and itemising prey/carrion remains from around the nest sites for Laura. Meanwhile Laura has been working in the field 'live trapping' small mammals using Longworth traps within the foraging areas of breeding kites. We also collected some barn owl pellets from a site close to Laura's