

The Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme Newsletter – Summer 2008

WE'RE MOVING HOME!!



As part of its restructuring exercise, the Centre of Ecology and Hydrology (CEH), which runs the predatory bird monitoring scheme (PBMS), is closing its site at Monks Wood. Consequently the PBMS will be moving to CEH Lancaster which is located within the Lancaster Environment Centre. We hope that this move will be as smooth as possible and we intend to operate the scheme throughout this transitional stage. Therefore, we would still like to receive dead birds of prey should you find any.

Should you find a dead bird of prey please initially call Lee Walker on telephone number:

01524 595830

We will then send out the approved packaging in which to post the bird to us (postage pre-paid).

Important advise:

- When picking up a bird ensure that it is safe for you to do so – especially if it is beside a road.
- It is a good idea to minimize skin contact with the bird, for example; use an inverted plastic bag to pick up the bird.
- ALWAYS wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling the bird.

Eggs still wanted:

The scheme would also like to receive addled and deserted bird of prey eggs from licensed egg collectors via the post, as in previous years. If you would like to contribute eggs to the scheme but haven't done so previously please see our website for instructions on how to do so; or contact Lee Walker (details overleaf). We recently published a paper investigating the concentrations of pollutants in the eggs of gannets from colonies at Bass Rock (east coast Scotland) and Ailsa Craig (west coast Scotland). This study showed that there are significant differences between the levels and trends of pollutants between the two colonies. For further information go to our website at: <http://pbms.ceh.ac.uk/news.asp>.



News

PBMS teams up with Natural England and the Institute of Zoology to increase our monitoring of Red Kites.

A re-introduction programme for the red kite (*Milvus milvus*) has been led by Natural England since 1989, resulting in the establishment of four separate breeding populations. In order to assess the causes of morbidity and mortality of red kites, a detailed post-mortem examination is carried out at the Zoological Society of London's Institute of Zoology. From 2008 onwards a sub-sample of the bird's liver will be passed onto the PBMS so that the concentrations of anti-coagulant rodenticides can be determined. Kites may be exposed to rodenticides when they consume prey that has residues in them. This new arrangement will both provide vital information to Natural England and enable the PBMS to gain a better overview of exposure to rodenticides in wildlife.

For more news from the scheme visit our website: <http://pbms.ceh.ac.uk/>

What is the Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme?

The Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme (PBMS) quantifies the levels of pesticides and pollutants in predatory birds from throughout Britain.

We do this to:

- quantify their exposure to toxic chemicals
- determine how exposure varies (between species, regions and over time)
- assess the risk the chemicals pose to the birds
- quantify the success of mitigation, such as restrictions or bans on use of certain compounds



Sparrowhawk eggs are analysed for brominated flame retardants

Why is it important?

The PBMS started in the mid 1960s and was instrumental in proving that organochlorine pesticides (for example DDT) caused mass declines in species such as the kestrel and sparrowhawk. Our work helped demonstrate the need for a ban on the widespread use of many of these pesticides. We have shown these bans were effective in Britain where exposure in predatory birds was reduced and populations recovered.

Monitoring continues (funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (CEH), Environment Agency and the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use) and the scheme is the longest running of its kind in the world. We now also measure mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), anticoagulant rodenticides, and participate in a scheme in which brominated flame retardants are measured in wildlife. All these chemicals pose a potential threat to wildlife.



Both Kestrels and barn owls are routinely monitored for anticoagulant rodenticides.

What birds do we want.

We currently analyse **sparrowhawk, barn owl, kestrel** and **red kite livers**. These species have been selected because they are especially vulnerable to contaminants, or because their distribution or prey-preference makes them suitable for monitoring geographical and temporal trends in pesticide and other chemical use.

However **ALL** birds received are given a post-mortem examination and tissues (liver, brain, muscle, kidney, bone, fat and a selection of feathers) are archived. This archive gives us a unique capacity to determine long-term trends in other chemicals that may be recognised in the future as posing a significant risk to wildlife.

And Finally...

The success of our work depends upon the contribution of volunteers sending in birds of prey. If you find a bird and would like further advice please contact:-

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