



How the Trust helps

Through our education service and community projects, we help children and adults to appreciate the importance of birds of prey.

By supporting practical research the Hawk and Owl Trust is increasing knowledge and understanding of owls and other birds of prey.

We have a great conservation track record of working on our own reserves and with others across the UK to create and manage vital habitat for birds of prey and the whole web of life on which they depend.

"Work with farmers and other land managers to improve habitat and provide nest sites for barn owls has demonstrated conclusively the effectiveness of this approach," points out Chris Packham.

"Similarly, the Trust is proving highly successful in creating and managing habitat on its own reserves – for marsh harrier at Sculthorpe Moor, Norfolk, for hobby and buzzard at Shapwick Moor, Somerset, and for merlin, short-eared owl and harriers on Fylingdales Moor, North Yorkshire."

The Trust is also a key member of the Environment Council's Hen Harrier Dialogue, a group set up to resolve differences between grouse shooting interests and English hen harrier populations.

The Hawk and Owl Trust will:

- publicise illegal persecution – and wants to see a dramatic reduction in the number of birds of prey killed, illegally
- educate and inform about birds of prey – through its education and outreach projects, its website and publications
- continue to protect birds of prey – through its reserves, and advice and support to land managers and others.

You can help by:

- spreading the word
- reporting to the police any birds of prey found in suspicious circumstances. Many, though unfortunately not all, police forces have a dedicated wildlife crime unit
- ringing the chairman, Barbara Handley (01761 462017) or conservation officers Nigel Middleton (07867 572794) or Chris Sperring (01275 849287) so that the incident can also be included in the Trust's records
- adding to scientific knowledge by sending the corpse of any bird of prey or owl found in the UK to the national Predatory Bird Monitoring Scheme, run by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, which carries out post mortem examinations (download the guidance on what to do at pbms.ceh.ac.uk).

Land managers seeking advice for specific problems should email their queries to Trust conservation officers nigel.middleton@hawkandowl.org or chris.sperring@btinternet.com



Hawk and Owl Trust calls for the killing to stop

Hawk and Owl Trust President Chris Packham is spearheading our crusade for a complete end to any form of persecution of birds of prey so that they can achieve their full potential.

"The Hawk and Owl Trust feels that it is completely unacceptable for any bird of prey to be killed – and should remain absolutely illegal," says Chris. "It is time for all who want to make Britain a better place for birds of prey to take a firm stand.

"There is no excuse for shooting birds of prey, poisoning them or crushing their eggs – these are all 19th-century reactions. Whether a problem is real or merely perceived, the last thing anyone should do is reach for a gun. There are other solutions today."

Hawk and Owl Trust manifesto

As the only national UK charity devoted solely to conserving wild birds of prey and their habitats – and to increasing knowledge and understanding of them – we:

- want to see birds of prey reaching their full potential as a vital and beautiful part of the UK environment
- will support anyone – landowners, farmers, householders – wanting to improve habitat and nesting places for birds of prey, through expert advice and practical action, as far as our resources allow
- want to see birds of prey universally recognised, as top of the natural food chain, for their vital role as indicators of the health of the environment we all share
- will share the beauty of birds of prey, and help people understand and appreciate them through our education service, our reserves, outreach to landowners and community projects
- deplore illegal persecution of birds of prey and see its complete cessation as an urgent priority for all in the countryside
- call for any alternative to be sought to lethal control where humans come into conflict with birds of prey.

Working for wild birds of prey and their habitats

Helping birds of prey reach their full potential

The Hawk and Trust's opposition to persecution reflects our commitment – through conservation, research and education – to helping bird of prey populations reach their full potential.

By this we mean the full range of birds of prey that have lived in the UK since the Ice Age and for which the climate is currently suitable, and as full a distribution as current and future habitat allows. And there is still a long way to go before this is achieved.

"Birds of prey are protected by law and there's a very good reason for that," says Chris Packham, the Trust's President.

"They are a crucial part of our natural environment – in fact, key indicators of its health – but are only just recovering from centuries of persecution, habitat loss and, in the 20th century, drastic pollution from now-banned DDT pesticides.

"And it is recovery from an appallingly low population. Numbers are still way below what they were before the gung-ho persecution of the 19th century when birds

of prey, seen as a threat to game, were poisoned, trapped or shot. Egg collectors and taxidermists also helped to push many species towards extinction.

"We hope we have at last reached the low point for habitat and are now turning the corner, with conservation on a landscape scale extending both the species and the range of birds of prey in the UK," says Chris.

"The red kite is an outstanding example of a species only now heading towards its potential in the UK. And that's because of active and imaginative measures to increase the population.

"Unfortunately, however, the RSPB's latest Birdcrime figures include 227 reports of shooting and destruction of birds of prey in one year. That's 227 too many – and those are only the incidents that are actually reported."

Habitat is the key

Time and again science has shown that habitat is often the key to bird populations – be they birds of prey or their prey.

Predation is essential to drive evolution

The Hawk and Owl Trust was founded in 1969 to help save the peregrine and other birds devastated by the effect of organochlorine pesticides on the whole ecosystem.

Today we work for all wild birds of prey and are taking a robust position to defend them against the tiny minority of people who break the law.

"Yes, birds of prey are predators – but predation is both natural and essential for life," Chris points out. "It drives evolution through natural selection and improves the genetic stock – the fitness – of both predator and prey species."

"Where populations of other species are declining we need to identify the cause and not blindly blame birds of prey when farmland and songbird numbers, for example, are down primarily because of habitat loss, and moorland game birds can suffer because of overgrazing," says Chris.

Science shows that bird of prey populations are always limited by their food supply. If there are fewer prey for them to catch and feed to their young, their numbers will go down.

They need many more prey than they could ever catch to be able to find enough food.

They also move where the food supply is – so if there is less suitable farmland habitat, bird tables are a great resource.

Study after study has shown birds of prey to have little or no impact on wild or even semi-domestic birds like racing pigeons.

Research by the Hawk and Owl Trust, carried out for the then Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions and reported in 2000, showed that birds of prey cause only 7 per cent of pigeon losses.

It also showed that of the 50 per cent of racing pigeons that fail to return home, 20 per cent stray from their routes, 20 per cent are killed or maimed after colliding with overhead wires and other objects, and about 8 per cent are shot, become entangled, oiled or accidentally poisoned.

Supporting the rural economy

Within the limits of its resources, the Trust backs with expert advice – which can help unlock Government and other funding – and practical conservation action anyone who wants to help birds of prey by reversing the great loss of habitat.

Many farmers and land managers depend on wild birds of prey as tourist attractions and this can attract Government and European Union investment to help communities develop the economic potential.

In its work with land managers, the Trust is always sensitive to economic realities and aims to help them achieve as much as possible for birds of prey with the minimum loss of production. Small changes can make all the difference as to whether barn owls can find enough voles to feed their young.

"The Trust is keen to support the rural economy and if people feel that birds of prey have an economic impact we will work with them to secure a solution which does not involve killing birds of prey," says Chris.

A wide range of measures have already been developed, such as the design of pheasant release pens and, at a larger habitat scale, provision of better cover for gamebirds by good woodland management. The Larsen Trap for controlling crows has been particularly successful in removing the temptation to use illegal means like indiscriminate poisoning.