

# Red Kite factfile

**This factfile intends to provide the background information necessary for teachers to use the lesson plans and worksheets confidently. A number of other websites that may be useful include Wikipedia, ARKive, BBC Nature, Naturenet, RSPB and The Wildlife Trust.**

The species nests in trees, often close to other kites. Nests are built from dead twigs lined with grass and sheep's wool. They normally pair for life, although they may spend some time apart over the winter. Courtship and nest-building begins in March, usually around 2-4 weeks before the first eggs are laid. 1-3 eggs are laid in April, usually at intervals of around 3 days. This results in a dominant chick which will usually outlive the others if food is scarce. Incubation is around 32 days, most of which is undertaken by the female.



Red kites are scavengers, meaning they are particularly sensitive to poisoning. It is estimated that at least half the kites in Wales die through the deliberate misuse of agricultural chemicals; poison baits intended for foxes or crows.



The UK breeding population decreased until there were only a handful of pairs in Wales (one figure suggests 2 pairs in the 1930s). Successful re-introductions across the UK have resulted in a positive trend, recent figures put the population at 1,000+ pairs (RSPB). A recent Neath Port Talbot survey identified 9 breeding pairs (Gower Birds, GOS, Vol 8, No.4, Nov 2006). The



[www.npt.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.npt.gov.uk/biodiversity)





population was prevented from re-establishing and expanding for some time due to egg-thieves. Collectors risk heavy fines (up to £1,000 per egg).

The main threats to Red kites are summarised as;

- Lead poisoning (due to feeding on carcasses of shot animals)
- Egg collecting
- Abuse and misuse of poisons

Red kite feeding stations have been established in some parts of Wales, where the birds are fed to both sustain and increase the population and also to act as a tourist attraction. The Black mountain feeding station in Llanddeusant, Brecon Beacons is visited daily by over 50 birds, whilst Gigrin farm Red Kite feeding station near Rhayader has between 200 and 500 kites visiting per day.