

This Species Action Plan sets out to maintain and enlarge kestrel populations on Caravan Club-owned sites, and has been drafted for Club Site Teams and Site Wardens. It provides background information on the kestrel and makes recommendations on sympathetic habitat management for this species.

Introduction

The Kestrel is probably the most common British bird of prey, and can be seen all year. With characteristic pointed wings and a long tail, it is a familiar sight in some areas, and can be seen hovering above a range of habitats, including road verges, embankments, fields, and heathland.

The Caravan Club audit 2006 revealed that kestrels are present at some 42 Club sites

How to recognise this species

- Pointed wings and long tail with a dark posterior band
- Outer wings are brown-black
- White underside with black flecks
- Male has a pale, reddish back and a blue-grey head
- Female has a barred, pale brown back and inner wings
- Hovers while hunting



Current status

- Still a common bird-of-prey in most areas of the UK, but the breeding population has suffered a decline of 25-49% in the last 25 years
- It is therefore a UK amber list bird species, and is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- Internationally the kestrel is of unfavourable conservation status in Europe, and is protected by the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
- Populations naturally fluctuate, due to cycles in small mammal populations, disease and harsh winters. However, long-term decline is also caused by:
 - Bioaccumulation of rodenticides from prey
 - Mercury-based seed dressings
 - Agricultural intensification (habitat degradation, causing reduction in prey populations and loss of nest sites)
 - Vehicle collisions
 - Shooting

Ecology/management requirements

Habitat: a wide variety, from cities to mountains, woodlands, heaths, and farmland – although there have been recent significant population declines in the latter. Suitable nesting sites are bare ledges on cliffs and quarries, holes in mature trees, disused crow nests, derelict buildings and high window ledges.

Food: Mostly small mammals, especially voles. Also hunts small birds, lizards, beetles, and earthworms, particularly when rodents are scarce.

How to look after this species

	Site safeguard and management	Species management and protection
DO'S	<p>DO <u>Leave areas of longer, un-mown grass</u> to create a mosaic of grassland habitats on site. If cessation of mowing is not possible, relax mowing regimes to boost small mammal populations</p> <p>DO Cut large grassland areas from the <u>middle outwards</u>, if possible. This allows small mammals to escape</p> <p>DO Safeguard prey populations and prevent poisoning by <u>eliminating pesticide use</u> (herbicides as well as insecticides and rodenticides)</p> <p>DO <u>Allow mature trees to grow</u>, to provide future nesting opportunities</p> <p>DO <u>Create areas of scrub and long grassland</u>, to provide habitat for small mammals</p>	<p>DO Erect suitable <u>nest boxes in trees</u>, in areas where natural nesting sites are lacking.</p> <p>DO Erect suitable <u>nest boxes on poles</u>, in appropriate locations, if no mature trees are present</p> <p>DO Erect Interpretation signs (as simple as posters on site notice boards) on site, explaining the conservation management in place to protect this species</p> <p>DO Start a weekly <u>bird sightings board</u>. This can be used to monitor kestrel sightings at the site, and to educate and enthuse visitors</p>
DON'TS	<p>DON'T Use any <u>rodenticides, herbicides, or insecticides</u> on site</p> <p>DON'T <u>Cut more than ½ the available grassland</u> at any one time. Rotate cutting so that there is always some longer grassland present for hunting</p>	<p>DON'T Unnecessarily <u>publicise active nest locations</u>; egg collection, while illegal, does still occur</p> <p>DON'T <u>Allow the trapping or shooting of kestrel on Caravan Club owned land</u></p>

For further information on this species visit:

The Caravan Club Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for kestrel: <http://www.caravanclub.co.uk>

Birmingham and the Black Country Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for kestrel:
<http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/urbanwt/ecorecord/bap/html/kestrel.htm>

Pembrokeshire LBAP for kestrel: http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/objview.asp?object_id=389