



Kestrel Highways Project

2012 Report

The Hawk and Owl Trust is pleased to report that 25 kestrel pairs used Kestrel Highway Project nest boxes during the 2012 breeding season; which was an additional uptake of 11 nest boxes when compared with the previous year. Despite the wet weather, a total of 75 chicks were known to have survived to ringing age and for the first time, kestrels occupied Kestrel Highway nest boxes sited in Gloucestershire and South-West Scotland.

Near the A303 in Wiltshire, 10 out of the 30 nest boxes were occupied by breeding kestrel; nine clutches hatched and 40 chicks were ringed. Five out of 10 of these nest boxes were also occupied by kestrel during 2011. In Somerset, five out of the 34 nest boxes installed near the A38 and A370 were re-occupied by breeding kestrel during 2012; all of these breeding attempts were successful and 20 chicks were ringed.

In Norfolk, two out of the 20 nest boxes sited near the A148 were re-occupied by breeding kestrel during 2012; both breeding attempts were successful and eight chicks were ringed.

In Gloucestershire, kestrels used six out of the 40 Kestrel Highway boxes sited close to the A38, B4058 and A420 roads, however only five chicks survived to ringing age.

In South-West Scotland, kestrels occupied two out of the 10 nest boxes close to the

A75, with one clutch failing and only two chicks surviving to ringing age. Meanwhile there were no results from unchecked nest boxes close to A40 and A465 along the Welsh border or the A24 in West Sussex. Kestrels did not occupy nest boxes sited near the A171 and B1416 in Yorkshire as the sites had been compromised due to lack of internal nesting material.

Whilst take-up rates are still low in some regions, it is worth noting that it can take several years for kestrels to locate vacant nest boxes therefore these early results are very encouraging. In addition to installing and monitoring Kestrel Highway nest boxes, sub-teams have been working hard to raise public awareness of the plight of the kestrel and this project, particularly in local schools and communities.

Furthermore, you can now report sightings of kestrels close to the road sections included in the Project via the Hawk and Owl Trust website under the 'Report a Kestrel Highways Project Sighting' subsection. Finally, Emily Joáchim is reviewing the box occupancy data to explore if kestrels are more likely to occupy a nest box if it is surrounded with specific habitat. This information will be useful when choosing new sites for Kestrel Highways nest boxes and when assessing the necessity of reinstalling unoccupied nest boxes in more suitable habitat. Some of the unoccupied nest boxes were relocated in South Gloucestershire during 2012.

This project has entered its sixth year and it continues to be supported by Luc Hoffman. So many volunteers have generously donated their time in support of this project, in particular the project coordinator Nigel Lewis (Wiltshire) and the following sub-team leaders: Barrie Watson (Sussex), Barry Gray (Somerset), John Edwards (Yorkshire), Phil Littler (Norfolk), Stuart Robson (South Gloucestershire) and Tom Greenaway (Scotland). Kestrels remain faithful to a breeding site if their most recent breeding attempt was successful thus we are hopeful that most of the boxes occupied in 2012 will be re-occupied



Photographs: [main] Kestrel at Salthouse November 2012 © Andy Thompson [Centre column, top-bottom: 1] Charlie © Nigel Lewis [2] Charlie's mate and family © Nigel Lewis [3] Kestrel adult with chicks © Nigel Lewis [4] Kestrel Ringing © Nigel Lewis