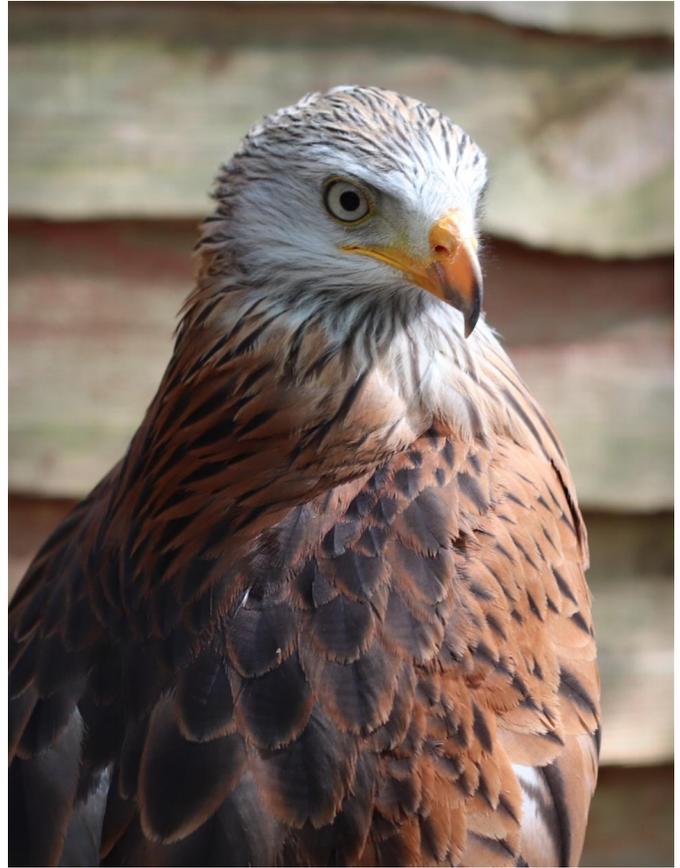


RED KITE

Red kites are one of the larger British birds of prey, and can be identified by their long V-shaped tails.

They are a scavenging bird, meaning they are more likely to find food that has already died (known as carrion) rather than hunting it themselves. Despite their size, they'll also commonly prey on worms, though small mammals and birds will be taken if necessary.

During the Middle Ages, they were highly valued birds as their scavenging would keep the streets clean. They were even protected by a royal decree, and killing one was punishable by death!



▲ Aida, Huxley's red kite.

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Milvus milvus

DISTRIBUTION

UK, western Europe

WILD POPULATION

1,800 UK pairs est., 25,000 pairs est. total

WINGSPAN

Approx. 175 to 195cm

SIZE & WEIGHT

Approx. 65cm long, 800g to 1.3kg

LIFESPAN

Up to 25 years in the wild

MAIN DIET

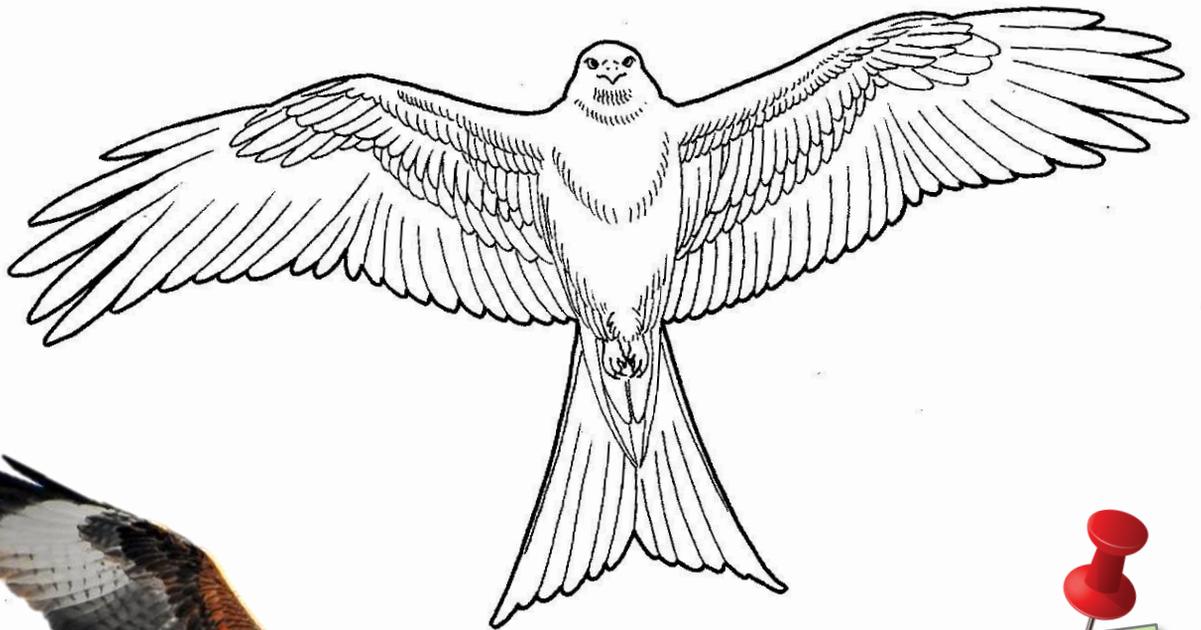
Carrion (dead animals), worms, small mammals

FACT FILE

Red Kite

Sadly, just a few hundred years later they were seen as vermin, and hunted towards the brink of extinction. By the 1900s, the UK population had been reduced to a just a handful of pairs in Wales. In fact, DNA analysis has shown that today's Welsh population are all the descendants of just one female.

Protection efforts started in 1903, in Wales. However, due to less than ideal breeding conditions, and their continued persecution including egg collectors, it took until the 1990s for the population to reach 100 breeding pairs. Thankfully, additional re-introduction programmes across England and Scotland have seen numbers rise, estimated to be by over 1,000% since 1995!



**COLOURING
PAGE**

Image by Tambako The Jaguar (flickr)

Red Kite



FILL IN THE BLANKS

Use the words below to complete more facts about red kites! Each word is used only once.

BREEDING

HABITATS

FIGHTS

WETLANDS

WOODLANDS

CIRCLING

ROOST

EYESIGHT

HUNT

AFRICA

AEROBATIC

MIGRATE

Typical _____ for red kites include _____, valleys and _____.

Like most birds of prey, they have excellent _____ and _____ from the air, by _____ over open ground in search of food.

European populations may _____ to as far as Turkey, and there is a small population in north-western _____.

Pairs will bond through courtship games, involving mock _____ and performing _____ manoeuvres together.

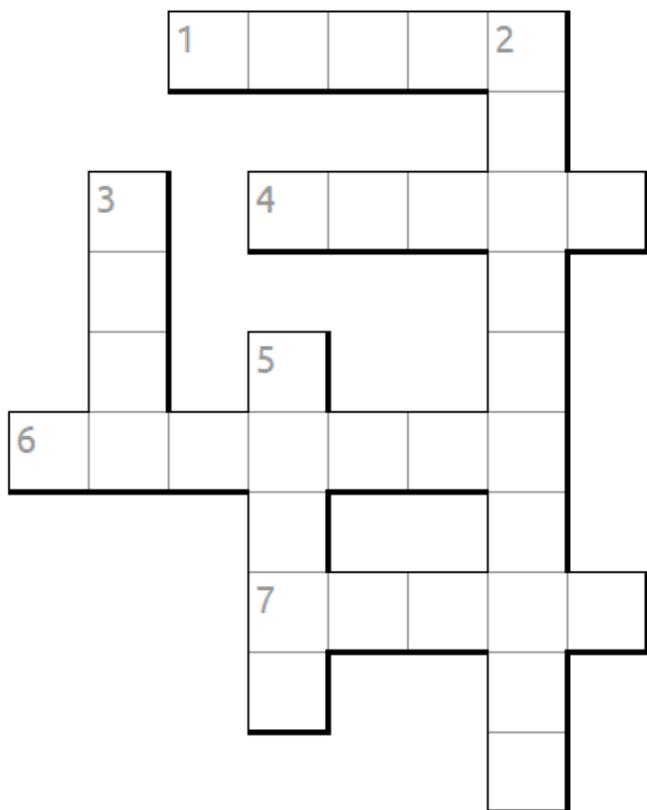
Outside of the _____ season, many red kites may _____ together.

Red Kite

The red kite is attracted to shiny and colourful objects, often incorporating them into their nests, which are usually built on top of old crow or buzzard nests. Shakespeare made several references to this in his works. In *A Winter's Tale*, he writes 'when the kite builds, look to lesser linen' meaning you should put less washing out when kites are nesting, as they might take your clothes!



Solve the clues to complete the crossword. All the answers can be found within the information on this activity sheet!



ACROSS

- 1 – Common prey for red kites, w_____.
- 4 – In the Middle Ages, these birds were well liked because they kept the streets _____.
- 6 – The name for the dead animals that are the main food source of kites, vultures and others
- 7 – The area of the UK where breeding efforts first started

DOWN

- 2 – Red kites are _____. They mainly feed on animals that have died of natural causes.
- 3 – The name of Huxley's red kite
- 5 – A type of bird that a red kite's nest may be built upon