

New Forest Raptor Monitoring Group Conference 2025 summary

2024 was a very busy year for the Raptor monitoring group with the ever increasing number of sites to check, nests to find, brood productivity to monitor and young to ring.

The monitoring of Goshawks takes up a large chunk of our time and effort. With sixty known sites to check, there is a considerable amount of work to do locating nests, ensuring they are protected from Forest operations, and climbing and ringing the chicks.

Poor weather this spring and summer severely hampered field work, but that said, Goshawk appeared to have had a good breeding season with nesting confirmed at a minimum of forty five sites, plus four sites where only a single bird was presumed present giving forty nine occupied sites. No signs of occupation were noted at a further eleven sites that have held birds previously.

2024 was also the first year of a new project to colour ring Goshawk chicks to go alongside our contribution to a long standing national colour ringing project of Honey buzzard.

Ninety three young were fledged from the thirty nine successful nests and six sites failed at incubation or with small young. Seventy of these young were BTO and colour ringed. An additional three broods were ringed outside of the Crown Lands.

Considerable effort went into resuming our breeding Common buzzard survey work and we recorded nests or young on the wing at fifty sites. We believe a number of pairs still remain unrecorded but these figures provide reasonable proof that numbers are not significantly different to what they were in the 1990's before comprehensive surveying was relaxed.

Sparrowhawk numbers are still considerably lower than they were before the arrival of Goshawks. That said, we encountered Sparrowhawks at a few more sites this year and found nests at five of these. We even managed to ring ten young from three nests which are the first chicks ringed here since 2009 when the population was rapidly declining as Goshawk numbers surged.

Arrival of Honey Buzzards from spring migration was protracted with numerous reports of birds arriving late. Although Honey buzzard are well able to find wasp nests even in poor years, it would appear there was a distinct lack of wasp activity this year probably as a result of the continual wet and cool weather we experienced resulting in some pairs only rearing one young. Our work on this species spans Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Sussex and breeding was found at nine sites.

This summer migrant Hobby is one of our latest breeding birds and while the New Forest population remains low, breeding was proven or strongly suspected at nine sites.