Welcome to RED KITES in the Chilterns

This pack is full of information and activities about the wildlife of the Chilterns and particularly the spectacular red kite, which has recently been re-introduced into this beautiful landscape.

All activities are linked to the National Curriculum.

Look out for Rusty!

Rusty pops up throughout the pages to help and guide your students.

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**Scientific name:** *Milvus milvus*

**Length:** 60 – 65 cm (males on average are slightly smaller than females)

**Wingspan:** 175 – 195 cm

**Weight:** Up to 1.2 kg

**Lifespan:** Can live for up to 25 years but average life expectancy in the wild is 8 – 10 years


**What does the red kite look like?**
The red kite has a grey/white head with a reddish-brown body and a deeply forked tail. It is slightly larger than a buzzard and has longer wings. When foraging for food, it soars with its wings pushed forward and tail always moving.

**How does it sound?**
The red kite has a mew-like “weoo-weoo-weoo” call, which is rapidly repeated.

**World distribution:**
In the UK, red kites can now be found in the Chilterns, mid-Wales, north Scotland, central Scotland, south Scotland, east Midlands and Yorkshire. All these birds, except those in Wales, have been re-introduced.

Outside the UK, they can be found in parts of Europe, and a few along the north African coast.

**Breeding:**
Kites normally breed at two to three years old. In March, they begin to spend more time in suitable nesting areas. They will use nests abandoned by other birds, or will build their own in tall trees. Although easily disturbed by people, kites do not mind other pairs of kites nearby. The nests are made from large sticks and are normally lined with wool. The birds collect sheep’s wool, which is often caught in fences and brambles, as well as other, more unusual items to make up their nests, such as pieces of plastic and sometimes even items of clothing.
By mid-April, the female lays up to four white eggs, flecked with light brown. These usually hatch after 30 – 32 days. The young are ready to fly when they are 48 – 50 days old, but have to depend on their parents for food for a further two to four weeks.

**Feeding habits:**
Red kites eat mainly dead animals that they are able to find (carrion) – their feet are too weak to kill any prey much bigger than a small rabbit. They will also feed on chicks, small mammals and invertebrates such as beetles and earthworms.

The kite finds food by flying low over open country. It uses its forked tail to steer, twisting it like a rudder. Live prey is usually caught by surprise rather than speed, although kites sometimes make fast, twisting chases.

**The kite’s countryside:**
Kites are adaptable – they can live in a wide variety of countryside. The rolling hills, woodlands, chalk downland and varied farmland of the Chilterns provide ideal areas for the birds to nest and feed. Many local farmers are managing their land to benefit wildlife.

**What the law says:**
Red kites are protected at all times. It is illegal to disturb the birds while they are nesting or at any other time.

**Helping the red kite:**
Red kites disappeared from England and Scotland by the end of the 19th century because of humans. People killed them in the belief that they attacked lambs and game birds (eg pheasants). In fact, kites pose no threat to sheep farming or game rearing, although they will eat dead lambs and pheasants.

A few pairs of red kites survived in Wales. In 1989, a plan to bring the red kite back to England and Scotland was begun. Between 1989 and 1993, chicks from Spain and Sweden were released at specially protected sites and allowed to fly free.

**Threats:**
Although red kites are breeding successfully in the Chiltern Hills, they are still under threat in Great Britain as a whole. Causes of death include being hit by vehicles, electrocution on power lines, shooting, poisoning and egg collecting. Birds may also die through eating rats killed with rat poison. If they feed a poisoned rat to their young, all the red kite chicks may die.

Changes in the law and attitudes towards birds of prey means that deliberate persecution is much less common than in the past.
Before...
During mediaeval times, the red kite was one of the most common birds of prey in Great Britain. They were often seen scavenging in towns and villages, as well as in the countryside. They were protected because they helped to keep the streets clean.

In Tudor times, the streets were cobbled and became much cleaner. Kite numbers started to drop because there wasn’t as much food for them. Then, in the 1560s, red kites were added to a list of animals and birds classed as vermin. People were encouraged to kill them and were even paid for each kite head. Not surprisingly, their numbers dropped again.

In Victorian times, shooting game birds like pheasants and partridges became a popular pastime. Gamekeepers thought red kites killed their game birds and farmers thought they killed their lambs. Although this was not true, red kites were shot and poisoned until, by the end of the 19th century, they had disappeared from England and Scotland. Only a few pairs survived, in the valleys of mid-Wales.

A Kite Committee was set up in 1904 to protect these Welsh birds, and farmers were paid to protect red kites nesting on their land. Slowly the Welsh population started to recover. By 1992, there were 79 nesting pairs and by 2000, this number had risen to over 250 pairs.

The recovery of the kites in Wales was very slow, probably because rainfall was high and the countryside did not provide much food. The birds had only managed to survive here because the area was so remote.
...and after
It was thought that the kite population would take a very long time to recover to its former levels naturally, so in 1989 the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB started a re-introduction programme in England and Scotland.

The Chiltern Hills were chosen as the English re-introduction site because the landscape was very similar to parts of Europe where kites were common. The area was also known to be protected and rich in wildlife.

Between 1989 and 1994, a total of 93 young birds was brought to the Chilterns from Spain. These birds had been collected from their nests before they could fly. They were reared in special cages, or aviaries, at the release site in the Chilterns, until they were fully grown and ready for release.

After they were released from the aviaries, the kites were still fed for a few weeks until they had got used to their new home.

Some of the birds stayed close to the release site, but others travelled a long way and then made their way back.

The released birds first started to breed in 1992 and, since then, their numbers have increased dramatically. The number of young produced has almost doubled every two years. In 2000, 109 breeding pairs produced 202 young.

Every June the nests are checked and all young kites are fitted with wing tags. A different colour is used each year to make it easy to see how old the bird is, wherever it is seen.

Because so many young kites have been reared in the Chilterns, since 1999, some have been moved to re-introduction schemes in Yorkshire, Scotland and the Midlands. The kites in these new areas should breed when they are about two to three years old.

The re-introduction of red kites to England is one of the greatest conservation success stories of all time.
The Chiltern Hills were declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965.

This means that the countryside is among the finest in England and Wales.

The Chilterns AONB covers 833 sq km and stretches from Goring-on-Thames in Oxfordshire, across Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

The Chilterns is a low-lying belt of hills to the north-west of London. The hills are made of layers of chalk, with further layers of clay, sand and gravel on top. The chalk layers have tilted to form an escarpment. The Chilterns escarpment has a steep scarp face to the north-west, and a gently shelving dip slope running towards London in the south-east. The scarp can rise to 250 metres (two and a half times as tall as Big Ben) above the Vales of Aylesbury and Oxford and the dip slope (gently sloping shelf) is divided by a series of rivers, which run parallel to each other in a south-easterly direction.

In the Chilterns, there are:
- Woodlands
- Chalk downland
- Mixed farmland
- Commons
- Chalk streams
- Brick and flint buildings
The Chiltern Hills

Chilterns Woodland

- The Chilterns area is famous for its beech woods.
- As well as beech, these woods contain oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, whitebeam, also yew and other conifers. Some of the woodlands are more than 400 years old.
- Until 200 years ago, many of the woodlands in the Chilterns were coppiced. This means that trees are cut close to ground level. This does not kill the tree. Instead, the stump sends out several shoots. These grow straight and so are ideal for making fence posts, stakes or building poles.
- Other trees were left to grow to full height. This meant that each wood had trees of different ages and sizes.
- Lots of beech trees were planted in the 18th century. The timber was used for making furniture, tools and toys. Many people were employed turning wood on pole lathes to make chair legs, or spindles for chair backs.
- It is now cheaper to get wood from abroad, so the Chilterns woodlands are mainly managed for nature conservation and public enjoyment, although some still produce timber.
- Many wildflowers grow in woodlands. These include foxgloves, bluebells and primroses. These flowers grow best in places where light reaches the woodland floor.

Red kites nest high in the trees. Woodpeckers, finches, tits, nuthatches and treecreepers also live in the woods, along with foxes, badgers, dormice and other mammals. Dormice are rare throughout the UK and are found only in woods that have been coppiced.

Some animals cause damage to the trees, and have to be carefully managed. These animals include grey squirrels, rabbits, edible dormice and deer.

Many insects live in woods, especially where there are lots of dead trees and fallen wood. Butterflies can be seen in clearings and on the woodland edges and bees collect nectar from the wild flowers.
The Chiltern Hills

Chilterns Chalk Downlands

Chalk *downlands* are among the most important features of the Chilterns. *Downlands* are grassland areas on rolling chalk or limestone hills.

For many years, people have used this land to graze their animals. On slopes that are too steep to farm, there are often ancient woodlands.

Many species of plant and insect depend on grazing animals to create the right conditions for their survival. As fewer farmers graze animals on the slopes, so rough grasses and bushes (*scrub*) have started to grow.

Despite this, lots of different of plants and insects are still found on the Chilterns chalk *downlands*. Some interesting plants are Chiltern gentian, monkey orchid, wild candytuft and juniper. You can also see some wonderful butterflies including chalkhill blue, marbled white, silver spotted skipper and Duke of Burgundy.

The *scrub* that covers much of the Chiltern *downland* is also important for wildlife. Many birds and insects find food and shelter among the bushes.

Chilterns *downlands* have many places where we can see into the past, to look at the lives of the people who lived here centuries ago. The *archaeology* of the Chilterns is very important. You can see Iron Age hill forts, burial mounds and Roman cross dykes. You can also see some more recent history, like the First World War ‘practice trenches’ at Whiteleaf Cross above Princes Risborough and at Marlow Common.

Chalk grassland is valuable to people too and attracts many visitors to the Chilterns. People come to enjoy the views over the Vales of Aylesbury and Oxford and along the scarp (the steep edge of the hills). They come to see the wildlife and to walk the footpaths that run along the downs, including the Ridgeway National Trail and the Icknield Way, part of one of the oldest ‘roads’ in Britain.
Farming in the Chilterns

Farmers have shaped the Chilterns countryside for over 5,000 years.

Long ago, they cleared the forests and cultivated the land for crops. They used the slopes with thin soils for grazing their animals, because crops did not grow well on this poorer land.

Small, differently shaped fields are used to grow arable crops and grassland. Hedges, woods, open heath and downs make up this mixed landscape.

Over the last 100 years, there have been many changes in farming. Up to 1939, the amount of land for growing crops was reduced and grassland used for grazing animals was increased.

During the Second World War, much of the old grassland (including downland and commons) was ploughed up to grow crops, as food could not easily be imported. A lot of important places for wildlife, or habitats, were lost or damaged.

After the War, the government encouraged farmers to keep producing as much food as possible. There have been major changes over the last 50 years. New chemicals were used to control insects, weeds and plant diseases. Hedges and other wildlife habitats were removed to make way for big machinery. Land that was important for wildlife was ploughed up to grow crops. This made it difficult for the wildlife to stay there.

More recent changes, such as falling farm incomes, BSE and foot and mouth disease, have led to lower sheep and cattle numbers and fewer people working on farms. With fewer people, it is sometimes difficult to manage important wildlife features like hedgerows, ponds and woods.

Many farmers are now doing other things on their land to make money, like growing new crops and providing bed and breakfast for tourists.

Farmers can now get help to look after the environment, as well as produce food. Government schemes encourage farming that is better for wildlife.
Chilterns Commons

The idea of ‘common land’ dates from mediaeval times. People grew crops on the best soil, but they used the poorer land for grazing their animals and gathering wood and turf for fuel.

The Lord of the Manor owned all the land in an area, but some local people (called ‘commoners’) had legal rights to use it.

These rights were:
- **pasture** (grazing of animals such as sheep and cattle);
- **pannage** (allowing pigs to eat acorns and beech mast);
- **estovers** (small branches found on the ground could be taken for fuel or repairing buildings, bracken could be taken for animal bedding);
- **turbary** (taking turf or peat for fuel);
- **piscary** (fishing);
- **common in the soil** (sand, gravel, or other stone for use on a commoner’s land).

There are some commons in the Chilterns where commoners’ rights still exist. Commons are important places for people to walk, play games and watch wildlife. Many commons are great for wildlife because they have never been farmed with modern farming methods. If we want to make sure they stay that way, we need to look after our commons with wildlife in mind.

Your local common has played an important part in the history of the place where you live. There is much to discover about its past and a lot to see and do there today. Many conservation volunteers help to look after their local commons by coppicing wood and maintaining ponds.
Chalk Streams

Chalk streams are a rare habitat in the world. Most are in north-west Europe and New Zealand.

They have clear waters and stable conditions, and support many plants and animals. In the UK, they are home to some of our most threatened species, such as water voles.

There are chalk streams in the Chertens; they add to the beauty and diversity of this special area. The streams include the Ver, Bulbourne, Gade, Misbourne, Chess, Wye, Hughenden Stream and Hambleden Brook.

Did you know that Ratty from Wind in the Willows was really a water vole?

Chalk streams are fed by ‘groundwater’. This is stored in an aquifer – layers of chalk that work like a sponge, soaking up water until it emerges at ground level to form the stream.

Groundwater levels drop in summer as there is less rainfall and water quickly evaporates in hot weather. The upper parts of the chalk streams dry up. These sections are called ‘winterbournes’ as they only flow in the winter.

Winterbournes have their own special wildlife, which is adapted to cope with the lack of water in summer.

Stream water crowfoot, grey wagtails, kingfishers, mayflies and water voles are all found in Chertens chalk streams. People take water from the aquifer too. Every time we turn on the tap, we take water which could be flowing in the chalk streams.

By using water wisely, we can reduce our impact on the streams and help to keep them flowing.
Traditional building in the Chilterns

Since about 1600, most houses in the Chilterns have been built of brick. Soils in the Chilterns vary in colour and so the house bricks in some areas are different to others. For example, old houses in the Luton area often have purple-coloured bricks, while those around Chesham are dark red or orange. As well as brick, flint is often used as a building material. These ‘brick and flint’ buildings are an important part of the Chilterns landscape.

In mediaeval times, many roofs were thatched with reeds, but now very few of these remain. There is a lot of clay to be found in the Chilterns and most roofs were made from red clay tiles.

There are grand country houses and parks all over the Chilterns, such as West Wycombe Park House and Hughenden Manor. Many of these houses had gardens designed by the most famous landscape designers of the time.
Birds of prey are also called raptors. They usually hunt and catch live animals. Some also scavenge on dead animals known as carrion.

Birds of prey are at the top of the food chain, so what happens to them tells us about the state of the environment. If they are doing well, it means there is plenty of food available and a healthy environment.

Some birds of prey, like red kites, are thriving now, but others aren’t doing so well. Red kites are threatened by changes in the places they live, by chemicals used to control insect pests on farmland, and poisons used to control rats. They are sometimes persecuted or deliberately killed.

It’s easy to see red kites in the Chilterns, but if you look a little bit harder, you may see other birds of prey as well. The following are birds of prey that hunt during the day (known as diurnal). Look out for them if you take a walk in the countryside.

**Kestrel**
- Length 33 – 36 cm, average wingspan 75 cm.
- Males have a blue/grey head and tail and a red/brown body, (females are brown all over). Both sexes have a long tail and long, pointed wings.
- Seen hovering with a fanned tail over roadside verges, also seen over farmland, in parks and in towns.
- Nests on ledges or in holes, often on buildings, or in old crows’ nests.
- Feeds on small mammals, birds and insects.
- Still the most common bird of prey in Britain, but numbers have dropped recently because there is less food around.

**Buzzard**
- Length 51 – 56 cm, average wingspan 120 cm.
- Broad rounded wings, short neck and short, slightly rounded tail.
- Mainly brown in colour, lighter underneath.
- Often seen flying over open country, or in well-wooded areas. Will occasionally hover.
- Nests in trees.
- Feeds on rabbits, voles, young birds, frogs, worms and insects. Also scavenges for carrion.
- Buzzard numbers are recovering from declines caused by persecution and pesticides. They recently came back to breed in eastern and southern Britain.
**Birds of Prey**

**Sparrowhawk**
- Length 28 – 38 cm, average wingspan 70 cm.
- Long, square ended tail and short, blunt, broad wings.
- Males have a grey back (females brown) and both have black bands on their tails. Both sexes are whitish underneath, with bars of orange (males) and brown (females).
- Flies with a burst of rapid wingbeats followed by a short glide.
- Found in or near woods and over farmland – sometimes in urban gardens.
- Nests in trees.
- Feeds on small birds, which it chases along hedgerows and through woodland.
- Numbers dropped significantly during the early 1960s, due to use of organochlorine pesticides. By 1990, sparrowhawk populations had mostly recovered, but now numbers are falling again. Perhaps this is due to a lack of food – the numbers have fallen of some of the songbirds they eat.

**Hobby**
- Length 30 – 36 cm, average wingspan 74 cm.
- Short tail and long scythe-like wings. Looks like a large swift.
- Slate-grey back and white underneath with heavy black streaks. Reddish thighs.
- Comes to southern England in the summer to breed. (Spends the winter in Africa). Prefers downland and farmland with old hedgerow trees, and woodland edges.
- Nests in old crow nests.
- Feeds on large insects such as dragonflies, and small birds, particularly larks, martins and swifts.
- Flies with a burst of rapid wingbeats followed by a short glide.
- Found in or near woods and over farmland – sometimes in urban gardens.
- Nests in trees.
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**Owls in the Chilterns**
- There are four species of owl that might be seen in the Chilterns: barn owl, although this is quite uncommon in the area now, tawny owl and little owl. There are long-eared owls in the Chilterns but these are difficult to find. Owls are birds of prey: they catch and kill their prey using their sharp talons, and then eat it whole. Unlike the other birds of prey, owls mainly hunt at night, although you may be lucky and see one in the early evening.

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Since the end of the Second World War, the way the land is farmed in the British Isles has changed. These changes have wide-ranging effects on the wildlife that lives there.

Birds are good indicators of environmental change. Because they are often near the top of the food chain, they are easy to monitor, but changes in farming also threaten many insects and plants.

### Farmland Birds

Some of the changes in farming include:
- The type of crops grown
- Increased use of chemicals – herbicides, insecticides and inorganic fertilisers
- Removal of hedges
- Changes in crop sowing times, drainage and ploughing.

The following are some of the species whose numbers have fallen:

#### Grey partridge
- **down 78%**
- Small, plump, brown *game bird*
- Often found in *coveys* (flocks) on open farmland throughout the year
- Nests on the ground in the bottom of hedges
- Feeds on the green leaves of grass, cereals and clover, and wild flower seeds.

#### Lapwing
- **down 46%**
- Looks black and white at a distance and has a wispy crest on the head
- Often seen in flocks on open farmland throughout the British Isles
- Nests in a slight depression in the ground, in spring-sown crops and grassland
- Feeds mainly on snails, slugs, worms, and other *invertebrates*, but some plant material is taken.

#### Skylark
- **down 60%**
- In summer, often seen and heard singing high over open farmland
- Nest of dried grass found on the ground in crops and grassland
- Feeds mostly on insects and wild flower seeds, but also a small quantity of young shoots of grass, corn and other greenery.
**Farmland Birds**

**Corn bunting**
- Buff grey/brown dumpy bird
- Often seen singing on wires, telegraph poles and tops of bushes
- Nests on the ground in a thick tangle of grass or in a clump of thick vegetation
- Feeds mainly on seeds (especially cereals), plant material and insects.

**Linnet**
- Smaller than a sparrow
- Often seen in small groups, mainly on farmland.
- Nests generally in dense, often thorny, trees, scrub or hedges, near the ground
- Feeds almost entirely on small seeds.

**Yellowhammer**
- Longish tail, yellow head and rusty-red rump
- Found in open country and hedgerows. Male usually seen singing from the top of a hedge or wire – song said to sound like ‘little bit of bread and no cheese’
- Nests low in a bush or hedge
- Feeds mostly on seeds and berries.

**Barn owl**
- The white owl of the countryside; with a flat, heart-shaped face
- Often seen hunting along roadside verges or near ditches, hedges and banks at dusk
- Nests in a hole in a tree, or in a building such as a barn, church or tower
- Feeds mostly on voles, but also on mice, shrews, rats and small birds.
Farmland Birds

**Bullfinch**
- Deep rose-pink breast, black head and blue-grey back
- Nests in a tree or bush
- Feeds mainly on wildflower seeds and berries; also eats insects in summer

**Song thrush**
- Brown plumage on back; underneath is creamy white with black spots
- Nests in trees, shrubs, climbing vegetation (eg ivy), or sometimes on the ground
- Feeds on snails which it smashes on a hard surface to open, worms, slugs, grubs and insects; also on berries

**Swallow**
- Long, forked tail, dark metallic blue back, white underneath
- Summer visitor often seen hunting low over fields, ponds and lakes
- Nests of mud, grass and feathers usually found on a ledge including beams, 2 – 5 metres off the ground
- Feeds entirely on winged insects, mostly caught in flight.

**How some farmers are trying to help**
- Farmers are asked by the government to set aside land – this land is not used for crops and so can have weeds and insects that birds like to eat.
- Organic farmers do not use chemicals on their crops – some organic farms are good for wildlife.
- Farmers can be paid for leaving a strip of ground at the edge of the field without crops on it.
- Lots of farmers put up nest boxes for barn owls and small song birds.
- Some farmers look after their hedges so that they provide lots of food for birds and a safe place for them to nest.
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Activity 1: The return of the red kite

Aim: to understand the changing fortunes of the red kite over time

Learning objectives:
- To consider ways in which living things in the environment need protection
- To understand how our actions have a bearing on the environment

Resources
Copy sheet for Activity 1
Red Kite Re-introduction fact sheet
Time line sheet
Scissors and glue

What to do
Whole class or group

- Read to the class Red Kite Re-introduction fact sheet.
- Note on a flipchart the important periods that are mentioned in the red kite’s history, ie mediaeval, Tudor and Victorian. Younger children may need to be given the appropriate dates for each of these, while older or more able children could use reference material to research them.
- Provide each child with a copy of the activity sheet. Explain that the story is similar to the one that they heard earlier, but that it is in the wrong order and you need their help in sorting it out.

Extension activity
Mark on the timeline the important events in the history of the red kite. The children will need to refer back to their previous work and summarise it. To finish their timeline they could illustrate the events.
Activity 1

The Return of the Red Kite

This story of the history of the red kite is in the wrong order. Can you rearrange the paragraphs so that they make sense?

High rainfall and unsuitable countryside meant that the Welsh population of red kites was slow to increase, so in 1989 the RSPB and English Nature made the first re-introductions of red kites into England and Scotland. Over the next four years, 93 young kites, mostly from northern Spain, were released in the Chilterns, and 93 young kites from Sweden were released at a site in the north of Scotland.

By the end of the 19th century, no more than a handful of pairs of red kites survived in the remote hills of mid-Wales. Organised protection began in 1904 when the Kite Committee was formed. The RSPB took over the management of this fund in 1922.

The red kite was a very common bird in mediaeval Britain. In towns and cities, refuse, excrement and animal carcasses littered the streets. Red kites were useful because they ate the rubbish and helped to clean the streets. People found them so valuable that anyone who killed one was punished by death.

In 1992, the project was proved successful when the first kites for well over 100 years bred in England (and also in Scotland). Since 1992, the number of young kites produced in the Chilterns has doubled every two years. Since 1999, chicks have been taken from this area to re-introduction sites in other parts of the country.

As the shooting of game birds became a popular pastime, landowners employed gamekeepers. Their job was to rear game birds for shooting and to keep vermin under control. The Victorian Game Laws finished off many birds of prey and mammals by trapping, poisoning or shooting. Egg and skin collectors also killed kites.

During Tudor times, streets were paved with cobbles and drained. Household refuse was no longer dumped in the streets. this reduced the red kites’ food supply in towns and their numbers dropped. In the countryside, kites and a whole range of other birds and mammals were unfairly seen as vermin and a threat to food production. In 1566, the red kite was added to a list of birds and animals to be killed. For every dead kite a penny was paid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Mediaeval Britain</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>Tudor Britain 1485 – 1603</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td></td>
<td>1700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victorian Britain 1837 – 1901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher’s notes

Activity 2: Desirable residences

Aim: to become aware of the needs of the red kite

Learning objectives:
- To understand that different plants and animals are found in different habitats
- To understand the importance of diet and feeding relationships in an ecosystem

Resources
Copy sheet for Activity 2
Red kite fact sheet for children to share
Glossary

What to do
Whole class or group

Provide enough copies of the red kite fact sheet so that all the children can see it. Read through it together and discuss any unfamiliar language. This could lead to work on how to use a glossary. Referring to the fact sheet, ask the children to complete the activity sheet.

Extension activity
- Produce their own fact sheet, summarising the one provided, eg ‘Five facts about the red kite’
- Ask the children to find words from the text that they are unsure about and write down what they think they mean. After checking their meanings against those in the glossary, they could create their own or a class glossary of red kite words which can be added to as they continue the project.
Activity 2

Desirable Residences

Use what you have learned from this pack to design an ideal home for a breeding pair of red kites. Consider their needs during winter as well as summer, and when they are rearing their young.

Imagine that you are an estate agent and complete the following form for your new customers, Mr and Mrs R Kite.

CHILTERNS ESTATE AGENTS

Name of customers: ______________________________________________

Preferred habitat for home: _______________________________________
__________________________________________

Which of these do you need? Fields/bushes/tall trees?  
__________________________________________

Have you any particular dietary requirements?  
__________________________________________

Is there any behaviour on the part of your human neighbours that you would be unable to tolerate?  
__________________________________________

Please list any other specific requirements:  
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
Teacher’s notes

Activity 3: Ideas for writing poetry

Aim: to develop children’s understanding of red kites and the children’s ability to express that knowledge, using a variety of poetic forms

Learning objectives:
- To use red kites as the inspiration for creative writing
- To use a variety of techniques to write poetry

Resources
Red kite fact sheet
Red kite re-introduction fact sheet
Examples of poem written in different styles

What to do
- Make lists of suitable words to describe the way red kites fly, using
  - Double consonants: swoop, swish, swerve
  - Alliteration: gliding gorging, greedy
  - Adverbs: gracefully, smoothly, silently, majestically
  - Rhyming words
- Write poems using the word list (individually, small groups, whole class)

Possible poetry forms:
- Shape poems:  Fill the shape of a red kite with phrases that describe that part of the bird – for example, in the tail, ‘An ever-twisting fork, cutting through the air.
- Rhyming couplet:  Circling, gliding, round and round
  Prey spotted, swoop to the ground.
- Haiku: Japanese in origin. Three lines – five syllables, seven syllables, five syllables
- Cinquain: Five-line poem of 22 syllables
- Kenning: Metaphorical compound word or phrase, used in old Norse and Old English poetry:
  - My Cat:
    Night-prowler
    Mouse-catcher
    Cream-lover
    Contented-purrer
- Simile and metaphor:
  - The red kite
    Like a . . .(simile)
    It speeds through the air
    Like a . . .(simile)
  - The red kite
    Is a . . .(metaphor)
    Flying through the air
    It is a . . .(metaphor)
    Speeding across the sky.
- Contrasts: Then and Now. One verse, alternate lines contrasting an issue, eg the persecution of red kites
- Letter poems: Write a letter from one of the re-introduced kites back to its homeland in Spain, explaining what it is like in the Chilterns.
**Teacher’s notes**

### Activity 4: The progress of the red kite

**Aim:** to plot the increase in numbers of the red kites in the Chilterns

**Learning objectives:**
- To interpret tables and graphs appropriately
- To represent data in the form of a bar graph
- To understand and use measures of average

**Resources**
- Copy sheet for Activity 4
- Squared paper, coloured pencils, calculators

**What to do**
- Look at and discuss the table with the children.
- Why is the number of young fledged more than the number of breeding pairs? How many different wing tag colours have been used? How many more breeding pairs were there in 1995 than in 1989?
- If the children have experience of drawing graphs, recap the main features and then ask them to draw a bar chart, using the data provided. (They will need to understand about variable scales to be able to draw this independently. Younger or less able children could be given the axes already drawn and just draw in the bars.)
- To work out the average number of young raised per pair per year, divide the number fledged by the breeding pairs. This activity is a useful exercise in rounding numbers to whole numbers, one decimal place or two decimal places, depending on the experience and ability of the class. You may decide to use this as an extension activity or as a separate lesson altogether.

**Information**

The figures for 2001 are estimates, because the spread of the birds is now extensive, making monitoring difficult. Foot and Mouth disease has also made it impossible to visit all sites. Since 1999, young have been removed from the Chilterns to help other re-introduction projects in the UK. This may be one reason for the slow down in the number of breeding pairs. In 1998, a two-colour system was introduced to help identify which re-introduction area the birds came from. Birds hatched in the Chilterns are fitted with a yellow tag on the left wing. Another coloured tag on the right wing indicates the year they were born.
Activity 4

The Progress of the Red Kite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wing tag colour</th>
<th>Breeding pairs</th>
<th>Number of young fledged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Yellow/Green</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Yellow/Black</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Yellow/Pink</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Yellow/Blue</td>
<td>Estimated 113</td>
<td>Estimated 240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Plot a bar graph to show the increase in breeding pairs of red kites in the Chilterns. (Year along the x-axis; number of breeding pairs along the y-axis)
- Colour each bar in the corresponding wing tag colour.
- Explain why the number of red kites is increasing in the Chilterns.
- For each year, calculate the average number of young raised per pair.
- Looking at your graph, what do you think will happen to red kites in the Chilterns in the future?
- Look back at the re-introduction fact sheet. Can you think why the increase might have slowed in 2000?
**Activity 5: Comparing wingspans of bird species found in the Chilterns**

**Aim:** to draw and interpret a scatter graph

**Learning objectives:**
- To understand and use measures of average
- To represent data appropriately and interpret it
- To look at how things are suited to their environment (adaptations)

**Resources**
- Copy sheet for Activity 5
- Calculators, tape measures
- Database program (Excel or similar)

**What to do**
- Provide each child with a copy of the activity sheet.
- Explain the term ‘average’ in this context and how it can be calculated. (This could coincide with other teaching of averages). Work out the first few average wingspan lengths together. Then the children can work individually, in pairs or with adult supervision, depending on their experience and ability.
- Using a database program on the computer, the children can format the data into a spreadsheet, and then produce a scatter graph. It may be useful to explain what a scatter graph is if the children have not experienced them before.
- Experience of percentages is needed to work out how big the wings are in relation to the rest of the body.

**Extension activity**
- How big are the red kite’s wings in relation to the length of its body?
- How big are your arms in relation to your height?
  (If you can, write two sets of measurements and work out the percentage)
- Work out how big the wings are in relation to the body for the other birds.
Activity 5

Size of the Matter

Comparing wingspans of bird species found in the Chilterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Body length</th>
<th>Wingspan</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red kite</td>
<td>60 – 65 cm</td>
<td>175 – 195 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kestrel</td>
<td>34 cm</td>
<td>68 – 78 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heron</td>
<td>90 cm</td>
<td>175 – 195 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapwing</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>82 – 87 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skylark</td>
<td>18 cm</td>
<td>30 – 36 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn bunting</td>
<td>18 cm</td>
<td>26 – 32 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey partridge</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>45 – 48 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullfinch</td>
<td>15 cm</td>
<td>22 – 29 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn owl</td>
<td>34 cm</td>
<td>85 – 93 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellowhammer</td>
<td>16.5 cm</td>
<td>23 – 29 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linnet</td>
<td>13.5 cm</td>
<td>21 – 25 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Find the average wingspan for each species
- Use a database program on the computer to produce a scatter graph. (Body length x-axis, wingspan y-axis)
- Which bird has the smallest wingspan?
- Which bird has the smallest body length?
- Which bird has the longest wingspan?
- Which bird has the longest body length?
- Which birds have a wingspan of over 40 cm?
- Do birds that have a similar wingspan also have a similar body length? Give reasons and examples with your answer.
- What is the relationship between wingspan and body length?
**Teacher’s notes**

## Activity 6: What is happening to farmland birds?

**Aim:** to develop an awareness of the decline in farmland birds.

**Learning objectives:**
- To interpret graphs appropriately
- To understand percentage decline
- To understand how the natural environment works to support the things living within it

**Resources**
- Copy sheet for Activity 6
- Farmland birds and Farming in the Chilterns fact sheets
- Calculator
- Cards: if you have a class of 30 you will need:
  - 12 cards marked with SL – (Skylark has declined by 60%)
  - 16 cards marked with L (Lapwing has declined by 46%)
  - 4 cards marked with TS (Tree sparrow has declined by 87%)
  - The numbers will need to be adjusted if your class is larger or smaller.

**What to do**
- Use an introductory activity with the whole class to highlight the scale of the decline in some bird species and give an understanding of percentage decline.
- Give out the cards.
- Ask all the children to stand and imagine that they represent all the skylarks that were in the UK in the 1970s.
- Ask all the children to sit down unless they have a card with ‘SL’ written on it. The children who remain standing represent the number of skylarks that can now be found in the UK.
- Ask all the children to stand again and repeat with the other species. This is representing percentage decline in a visual way. The graph (Activity 6) shows another way of showing the same information.
- This also works well as an exercise in assembly.
- Look at the graph and discuss what it shows. What does each of the bars represent? Give the questions on the activity sheet to the children to work on individually, in pairs or in groups.
Activity 6

What is happening to farmland birds?

Write a sentence to explain the graph.

What is the decline of the song thrush? Express this as a percentage.

Which bird shows the smallest percentage decline since 1970?
Which shows the greatest percentage decline?

If there were 300 skylarks on a farm in 1970, how many would there be today?

Why do you think some species are in decline? Use the Farmland birds and Farming in the Chilterns fact sheets to help you.

What do you think should happen in the future?
Teacher’s notes

Activity 7: Adaptation, hunting and feeding

Aim: to identify the different ways in which the red kite is adapted to live in its environment and to examine its feeding relationships at different times of the year.

Learning objectives:
■ Pupils will find out about how animals are suited to their environment.
■ Pupils will use secondary evidence to examine the diet of a red kite and link this to food chains.

Resources
Copy sheets A and B for Activity 7
Simple data handling software

What to do
Whole class, group or individually
Ask the children to;
■ Read the description on Copy sheet A of a kite feeding, noting the adaptations that the kite has.
■ Complete the table, matching body parts to their function and adaptation.
■ Complete the rest of the activities on Copy sheet B, looking at the diet of a red kite at different times of the year.
■ Using the information in the table and pie chart, answer the questions.
■ Using a simple data handling software programme, draw a pie chart to show the kites’ diet in winter.

Extension activity
■ Use the red kite, birds of prey and Chilterns fact sheets to draw up food chains in the Chilterns, which end with red kites or other birds of prey.
■ Look at how a woodland food chain would be different to one in a farmland or downland habitat.
■ Make a mobile that shows a red kite food chain.
Activity 7a

Adaptation

Kites are wonderfully adapted to the lives they lead

- Read the description below of a kite flying and feeding.

As I crossed the brow of the hill, I watched a red kite soar on long narrow wings, its eyes scanning the field for any likely meal. With a twist of its forked tail, the kite swooped down low for a closer look. After two or three swoops, the kite carefully landed next to a dead rabbit. Its sharp beak tore at the flesh, while long curved talons held it firm. Contented after its feed, it took off to soar once more, riding high above the hills.

- Label the parts of the body that help it to feed and fly.
Activity 7a continued

Using the headings given below, say how each part of the kite’s body will help it to do its job. (See example)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body part</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>How it is suited to do this job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wings</td>
<td>Flight</td>
<td><em>Long and narrow which means the birds can glide easily and manoeuvre quickly</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although it is a large bird, the red kite is not particularly strong or aggressive. It is mainly a scavenger and an opportunist; it feeds on *carrion* such as dead rabbits and other small mammals whenever it gets the chance. Many roads criss-cross the Chilterns and animals and birds are often killed by cars. This provides plenty of *carrion* items for the kites to eat.

The red kite is also a predator. It will sometimes take live prey, ranging from earthworms to small mammals and chicks.

Like all birds of prey, the red kite cannot digest some parts of the food that it eats, including feathers, wool and the cases of insects. The birds form these parts of the food into pellets and then regurgitate them. If you study these pellets, you can find out what the kites have been eating.

**The contents of red kite pellets in England**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species/group</th>
<th>Occurrence in pellets Winter (%)</th>
<th>Occurrence in pellets Breeding season (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabbit and hare</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rat</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mice and voles</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pheasant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthworms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Use the table of information about kite pellets to answer the following questions:
   a) What is the most important food for red kites in England?
   b) Compare the diet of the red kite in winter and the breeding season – what differences are there? Can you think of any reasons for this?
   c) Are there any food items that surprise you? Which ones and why?

2. Can you find a way to represent this data – eg a bar chart? Decide on the best way and produce a chart for each season.
Activity 8: Food webs

**Aim:** to understand the inter-relationships of species in different habitats in the Chilterns.

**Learning objectives:**
That habitats support a diversity of plants and animals that are interdependent (Students understand that food webs are composed of several food chains)

**Resources**
*Chilterns and Farmland Birds fact sheet* - enough copies for all the students to be able to access the information easily
Copy sheet for Activity 8 and plain paper

**What to do**
- Discuss the main habitats found in the Chilterns and how they support different species.
- Discuss the terms ‘producers’, ‘consumers’ and ‘top predator’. Can the students identify these within each habitat?
- Ask the students to look up information about different species on the fact sheets.
- Ask students to complete the activity sheet and draw their own food webs from the species given for each habitat.
1. Look at the example of a food web for Chilterns downland. Answer these questions.

- **Energy from a live kill**

- **Energy flow from scavenged dead food source**

a) The arrows show the flow of energy through the species in a habitat. What is the *origin* of the energy? Add this to the food web.
b) Identify which species are producers, which are primary consumers and which are secondary consumers. Devise a method of showing this on the food web, eg colours or symbols.
c) Which species are top predators?
d) What type of creature are chalkhill blue and marbled white? Can you find out what predators they might have?
e) Complete the table on the next page. Use the fact sheets or identification books to decide which species would live in each habitat. Put a tick in the correct column. Some species may be found in both habitats.
### Activity 8 continued

#### Food Webs in the Chilterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of species</th>
<th>Woodland</th>
<th>Farmland</th>
<th>List of species</th>
<th>Woodland</th>
<th>Farmland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kestrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dead leaves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn owl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wild cherry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red kite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sparrowhawk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Caterpillar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field vole</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leaf hopper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthworm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bluebell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skylark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primrose</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linnet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foxglove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swallow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Woodpecker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragonfly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Greenfinch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grey squirrel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Poppy</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rabbit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beetle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spider</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Draw a food web like the one on the previous page for either woodland or farmland. Show how the species are inter-related. Remember that some species may live in both habitats.

3. Answer the appropriate questions for whichever food web you have drawn.

**Farmland** The plants written in italics are weeds found on farmland. They are often found on land that is not being farmed because it has been ‘set aside’, or is at the edges of fields. What happens to farmland birds if these weeds are killed with sprays?

**Woodland** From 1790 until the mid 1900s, what was mainly made from timber from the Chilterns? What would happen to woods that were left alone and not managed?
Teacher’s notes

Activity 9: A perfect place to live

Aim: for students to understand the landscape features of the Chilterns

Learning objectives:
- To develop students’ geographical vocabulary
- To develop understanding of maps, co-ordinates, scale and symbols
- To develop students’ knowledge and understanding of the landscape of the Chilterns

Resources
Copy sheet for Activity 9, one for each child
Glossary sheets to share
Red kite fact sheet to share
Chiltern Hills fact sheet to share

What to do
- Look at the map together as a class and discuss the features that you can see.
- Discuss the position of the red kite nests. Kites will nest quite close together and will also feed together. They nest in sheltered woodland and the mixed farming and common land in the Chilterns means that they can find plenty of carrion, worms and beetles to feed on.
- In discussion with the children, you can build the use of vocabulary in describing where the kites are nesting and what features they can see. As the students complete the activity sheet, they will practise the use of co-ordinates and scale. Take time to explain these concepts if they are not familiar with them.
- Students will use the fact sheets to complete the final activity, referring to the ancient names for kites.

Extension activity
- Can students discover the meanings of some of the village or road names close to the school?
- Compare the map on the activity sheet with a map of a contrasting area, e.g. Norfolk. How is land use different and how is the topography different? (OS map 154 covers a very flat agricultural area.)
- Can the students plan an afternoon walk taking them through villages, fields and woods? Could they write the directions and produce an illustrated guide?
1. Look at the different ways in which the land is used. Colour the map according to land use.

2. What will you find at these co-ordinates (15,74), (17,55), (02,65)?

3. Give the co-ordinates for the following:
   - Glada Church
   - The junction of Puttock Lane and Kitnor Way
   - Barcud Manor
   - The furthest east kite nest
   - The furthest south kite nest

4. How far is it by footpath from Crotchtail Village to Glada Church? If the church service starts at 9.30 am, what time would you need to leave Crotchtail? (Most young people walk at no more than 3 km/hour).

5. Write a paragraph to describe the landscape shown on the map. These are words that you might find useful.
   - Steep
   - Common land
   - Stream
   - Fields
   - Narrow
   - Valley
   - Woodland
   - Village
   - Farmland
   - Lane
   - Contours

6. Using the glossary and red kite fact sheet, can you suggest how the features on the map got their name?
   - Scoul Stream
   - Kitnor Hill
   - Glada Village
   - Puttock Lane
Teacher’s notes

Activity 10: Spreading their wings

Aim: to learn about the behaviour of red kites and increase knowledge of places in southern Britain.

Learning objectives:
■ To use an atlas to locate towns in southern Britain
■ To understand the migratory behaviour of red kites in different seasons and at different ages

Resources
Copy sheet for Activity 10
Atlas of Great Britain
Access to the internet (for extension activity)

What to do
■ Discuss why kites might want to disperse during their immature years.
■ Using an atlas, ask the children to plot the sightings of red kites on the map.
■ What are the advantages and disadvantages of breeding close together?

Background information
We are still studying red kites to understand their behaviour. They have not spread out from the Chilterns as quickly as the scientists expected them to. We now have a very high density of red kites breeding in the Chilterns, which must mean that there is a rich source of food in this very special area of England. Adult red kites only rarely undertake long-distance journeys, tending to remain within 4 km of their nest site throughout the year. In contrast, young birds in their first year may fly great distances. Many of these birds will return to their birth place or release site to make their first breeding attempt at around the age of two or three.

Extension activity
■ Search the internet or reference books to look up information about some of the places which red kites have visited over the summer months. Here are a couple of sites to start with:
  www.eastofenglandtouristboard.com
  www.southeastengland.uk.com
■ How are they different to the Chilterns?
■ Write a postcard from one of the red kites describing its journey and the places it has seen.
Red kites breed in the Chilterns but they don’t necessarily stay there all year. The coloured wing tags mean that we can identify where the kites from the Chilterns go on their migrations. Below is a list of places and dates where red kites hatched in the Chilterns have been seen. Most of these were young birds that were not yet ready to breed. Most of these birds eventually come back to the Chilterns to breed.

1. Use an atlas to look up the places where Chiltern kites were seen.
2. Mark on the map of southern Britain overleaf where they were seen and when.
3. What does this table tell us about the behaviour of red kites? Can you think of any reasons for this

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area where the kite was seen</th>
<th>Date when the kite was seen</th>
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<td>Fakenham, Norfolk</td>
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<td>6/8/94</td>
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<td>South Worcestershire</td>
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<td>Gravesend, Kent</td>
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<td>Bulith Wells, Wales</td>
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<td>St Ives, Cornwall</td>
<td>18/6/96</td>
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<td>Lincoln</td>
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<td>Sheerness, Isle of Sheppey, Kent</td>
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<td>Grantham, Lincolnshire</td>
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</table>
Activity 10 continued

Spreading their Wings

[Map of England with cities labeled]
Teacher’s notes

Activity 11: Close to home

Aim: learn about the feeding behaviour of red kites and the different ways of interpreting data.

Learning objectives:
- Find the area of an irregular shape
- Interpret scales and carry out accurate measurement
- Interpret, discuss and synthesise information presented in a variety of forms

Resources
Copy sheet for Activity 11
Ruler

What to do
- Ask the children to use the maps showing the locations of red kites to work out the areas that the birds use for feeding.
- Discuss what the children think about this form of representing the data. Could it be represented in a different way?
Below are two maps representing the locations of two kites during the course of a winter season. The red kites were located by radio tracking equipment. Each kite had a tiny radio transmitter attached to it that gave signals at a particular frequency.

1. Mark on Map A where you think this kite roosted.

2. What is the farthest distance from the roost site that each bird travelled to find food?

3. Work out approximately what area a red kite will use in winter to find its food. Give your answer in square kilometres.
**Teacher’s notes**

**Activity 12: Dance**

**Aim:** to create a dance that expresses the flight of a red kite

**Learning objectives:**
- To recognise how sounds are used to achieve particular effects
- To respond to the changing character and mood of music
- To compose and control movements, practising and refining them to improve performance

**Resources**
- Extract from *The Kite’s Tale* by Roger Lovegrove (below)
- Suitable music, or musical instruments
- Benjamin Britten – *Four C interludes – Dawn*
- Pierre Belmonde – *Light of Experience*
- Igor Stravinsky – Extracts from *The Firebird – The Dance of the Princesses*
- *I Believe I Can Fly* – 1997 pop song by R Kelly
- *Albatross* – Fleetwood Mac

**What to do**
- Read the extract from *The Kite’s Tale* to the children and ask for their response to it. This is a descriptive account of the way a kite flies.
- Choose a piece of music that will suit the flight of a kite (or the children could make up their own music). Ask the children to listen carefully to the different instruments and how the music changes. Can they identify the different sounds (instruments)? What mood does the music communicate?
- Ask the children to create a dance that expresses the flight of the red kite and practise it to perform it to the rest of the class.
- Ask them to comment on their own and others’ routines.

**Extension activity**
Perform the dances in assembly, along with associated work on red kites – eg poetry, pictures

**Excerpt from *A Kite’s Tale***

‘Much of the time it spends in soaring, often for long periods, high above the valleys in which it lives. It rises in loose, widening circles with set wings and a silhouette which is very distinctive – wing held slightly forward, angled and gently arched.

It will circle, gradually gaining height and all the time balancing, steering and adjusting its position by the ceaseless twisting of its tail: no bird uses its tail more in flight than does the kite; no bird is more ethereal on the wing, drifting and floating with the gossamer lightness of blown thistledown.’

Roger Lovegrove  *The Kite’s Tale*
Activity 13

Flapping Red Kite

**Resources:** (to make one kite)
One long, thin, straight stick, pencil or straw
Two pipe cleaners, approx 10 cm long
Photocopy of cut out on paper
Coloured pencils
Sellotape or blue tac
Scissors

**What to do**
Colour in the top of the red kite and cut it out

X – attach a long thin stick or pencil to the underside of the cut out, using sellotape or blue tac.

O – attach the end of a pipe cleaner using sellotape

Wrap the free ends of the two pipe cleaners around the stick.

Push the ‘knot’ of pipe cleaners up and down the stick making the wings flap.
Activity 14

Finger Puppet

Resources:
Photocopies of the finger puppet
Coloured pencils
Scissors
Sellotape
Glue

What to do
- This is probably best if the children work in pairs.
- Colour in both pieces of the red kite puppet and cut around them.
- Cut out the small finger strip. Wrap it around your finger and sellotape the ends together.
- Line up the cut out with the wings and glue on to the piece on your finger so that the wings are in the right place.
**Red Kite Mobile**

**Resources:**
Photocopies of the mobile
Coloured pencils
Scissors
Cotton
Sellotape

**What to do**
- Colour in both sides of the red kite and other parts of the mobile.
- Cut along the dotted lines.
- Stick together the matching pieces of the mobile.
- Make holes through the ‘plus signs’. Take care doing this.
- Put together your mobile, as shown in the picture.
- Cut five pieces of cotton – one piece 40 cm long, and the other four all 20 cm long.
- Thread the longest length of cotton through the hole in the red kite’s wing. Fix it to the centre of the cross piece with clear sticky tape. Leave 10 cm of cotton above the cross, to hang up your mobile.
- Use the four other pieces of cotton to hang each picture from the cross piece. Thread the cotton through the holes and fix with clear sticky tape.
Activity 15

Red Kite Mobile
Activity 15

Red Kite Mobile
Red Kite Mobile

Note to teacher: Make two copies of this page.

Water voles have dark brown fur.

The wings of the chalkhill blue butterfly are light blue.

The flowers of the Chiltern gentian are a pinky-purple colour.

Beech leaves are light green.
Red Kite Mobile

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