

Activity 1: The return of the red kite

KS 2/3

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*
- To understand how people's attitudes towards the red kite have changed over time
- To understand the effect of changing attitudes on the *populations* of red kites

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 the *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.

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 to make a timeline that is in the correct order?

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 *medieval* 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 proved successful when the first kites for well over 100 years bred in England (and also in Scotland). The number of young kites produced in the Chilterns has doubled every two years; therefore chicks have been taken from this area to re-introduction sites in other parts of the country, such as Rockingham Forest.

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.

In 1995, red kites were released in the Rockingham Forest area of the East Midlands. The relocation project has proved a great success here with more than 20 pairs of birds breeding in 2002. Red kites have now been released at six sites in England and Scotland.

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.

- Produce an estate agent's details for a red kite home. Children can look at the details produced for houses and think about the type of language used. They can then write red kite details and comment on the size, age and location of the nest. Does it need rebuilding, or is it well decorated? Is it located close to a good source of food, or near other kites? Does it have a view?

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.

ROCKINGHAM FOREST 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 from your human neighbours that you would be unable to tolerate?

Please list any other specific requirements:

Aim: to develop children's understanding of red kites and their 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 poems 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, gobbling*
 - Adverbs: *gracefully, smoothly, silently, majestically, tentatively*
 - Rhyming words: kite – tight, feather – weather
- 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
eg red kite high up there, hangs on threads that I can't see, makes me hold my breath.
- 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 Rockingham Forest.
- * For the shape, you could photocopy the red kite mobile picture on page 48.