

# Satellite tagging of young kestrels

**Satellite tagging of six young kestrels**  
[progress report](#) - last updated 21st March 2017

## Overview

At the end of June 2015 six young kestrels were satellite tagged in the main study area. It was the culmination of a year and a half's planning, seeking sponsorship, gaining a licence and obtaining the tags from Microwave Telemetry in the USA. The licence was granted by the BTO, sponsorship obtained from the Dumfries & Galloway and South Strathclyde Raptor Study Groups, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, Natural Research and Falck Renewables Wind Limited, and I am extremely grateful for their support. Roy Dennis sourced the tags.

## 5 gram satellite tag



## tag with harness



The tags were fitted by Dave Anderson, more used to tagging golden eagles and harriers than the feisty kestrels, with me as a trainee. Two birds from each of three broods were selected, the aim being to use a male and female from each brood. However the fourteen young birds turned out to be eleven females and three males, two of the latter being in the same brood so we had to go with the flow and only two males were chosen. The intricate and finicky process was compounded by the aggressive nature of the birds despite the calming effect of a falconer's hood. The young had to be fully feathered to take the tag and harness so they were at their most lively.

hooded kestrel with tag attached



kestrel with falconers hood



The tiny five gram tags are powered by a solar panel with contact details on the reverse, and started data collection when the birds fledged from the nest sites, two were in nest boxes in shelter belts and one in a Dam.



The pairings were a male, George (Scottish Ornithologists' Club) with a female, Kirky (named by pupils of Kirkmichael Primary School), two females from the Dam, Maddie and Alice (National Research and Dumfries & Galloway Raptor Study Group) and the last pairing, Rabbie and Rosie (South Strathclyde Raptor Study Group and Natural Research).

Gordon with tagged youngster



Free flying female showing aerial at base of tail



Each phase had its stresses and problems, the setting up of the project, the tagging itself and the waiting for the first indication that all six were transmitting. As far as I am aware this is the first time common kestrels have been satellite tagged in Britain and probably in Europe so it's a journey into the unknown. Hopefully data will be forthcoming on the dispersal, distribution and mortality of these birds to help us assess why this falcon is declining so rapidly.

Dave with tagged female





Dave with brother Graham and Anna-Marie Ford

