

Endangered Scottish birds of prey killed

by UPI

EDINBURGH, Scotland -- At least 11 endangered red kites have been killed illegally in Scotland in 2007, raising fears for a bird brought back from extinction. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said the red kites died after consuming poisoned bait, The Scotsman reported. The society said the birds may be collateral damage, consuming bait left out by gamekeepers trying to kill foxes or crows. Nine of the dead kites were found on shooting estates, suggesting that the culprits were gamekeepers trying to protect game animals. Whatever the intent, the death toll is a record for recent years. The previous high was 10 in 2001, when Britain was experiencing a foot-and-mouth epidemic and many farmers believed wild birds were spreading the disease. Only five red kites are known to have been killed illegally in 2006. About 80 pairs of red kites are now breeding in Scotland. A reintroduction program was started in 1989.

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