

Teaching material on biodiversity Conservation (TMBC)

Titel: Robert the Red Kite

Author: Janina Schöttler

Quality assessment: Carsten Hobohm (UF)

Level: primary school

Type of material: Story and questions, craft material and didactic reserve

Aim: emotional relationship to an animal, become familiar with the habitats, threats and protection measures

Process:

1. History of Robert the red kite: Information about the red kite, its habitat, appearance and behaviour. Explanation of the threats it faces and protective measures
2. Worksheets: Craft materials, sketch for the labeling of body parts and a quiz about the information from the text

Information for the teacher:

Sievert, R. Naturschutz heute, Ausgabe 1/00 4. February 2000.
(<http://www.nabu.de/nh/100/milan100.html>. Accessed: 30.11.2013)

IUCN.2013. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Version.2013.2).
(<http://www.iucnredlist.org>. accessed on: 29.11.2013).

Robert, the Red Kite

Part 1: Hello, I am Robert. I am a red kite and I live in Germany. I am a bird of prey. Birds of prey are big birds that attack from the air and capture their prey with their strong claws. Eagles and falcons are birds of prey, too. I will weigh 1.2 kilos when I'm an adult and my wingspan will measure about 1.7 meters.

Now you know how big and how heavy I am. But do you know what I look like?

My head is grey, my eyes are light and my hook beak is yellow and sharp. My beak ends in a black tip, but when I'm adult it will be all yellow. My belly is light-brown with some fine dark lines. My wings are chestnut red, their tips are black. My tail feathers are chestnut red, too, but only on the top, underneath they are white with black stripes. My long outer tail feathers are black at their tips. What makes my tail special is that its feathers fork at the tip. That's why people can easily distinguish me from other birds of prey in the sky, even without using binoculars. My legs and toes are as yellow as my beak, and my long, curved claws are black.

Part 2: Where and how do I live?

I live in forests, and on the edge of forests, too. However, for hunting I need some open countryside nearby. I'm very good at flying and hunting. I like to circle over open fields, but as soon as I spot some prey, I swoop down and grab my prey with my claws. My flying skills result from the movements of my wings and my tail feathers. I prefer to eat small birds like blackbirds or pigeons, but small mammals like mice or rabbits are fine, too. But I'm also a scavenger, so I also eat dead meat. Like many other birds I fly southwards in the cold winter months, because it is warmer in the south. But I'm here in Germany for the breeding period. I build a nest then, help my "wife" hatch two to five eggs and look after our chicks. I am easily startled and frightened during the breeding periods.

But do you know what is really sad?

For a number of reasons there are not many red kites left. On our long journey south danger lurks everywhere. It comes from wind turbines and high-voltage lines. But the biggest problem is that there is not enough food for us. Many of us do not manage to feed themselves and their chicks properly. As I have already told you, red kites must circle over open countryside to spot their prey. But today more farmers tend to grow maize. And maize grows so high and dense that we cannot recognize prey from above. As I have already said, we are scavengers, too. So we also eat dead meat but we do not find enough dead animals any more. Besides, we are so easily startled and frightened that we leave our nests to avoid danger at the slightest disturbance.

Luckily enough, there are human beings who have realized that we need help and who want to help. They campaign for an increase in the number of red kites. Scientists have tried to count us and have tagged some of us with tracking devices to find out what southbound routes we fly and if we come back in good health.

People should be better informed about us so that they know how they can help. People should not startle us in breeding periods, for example. If it is known that a pair of red kites is breeding nearby people should avoid going there and disturbing them.