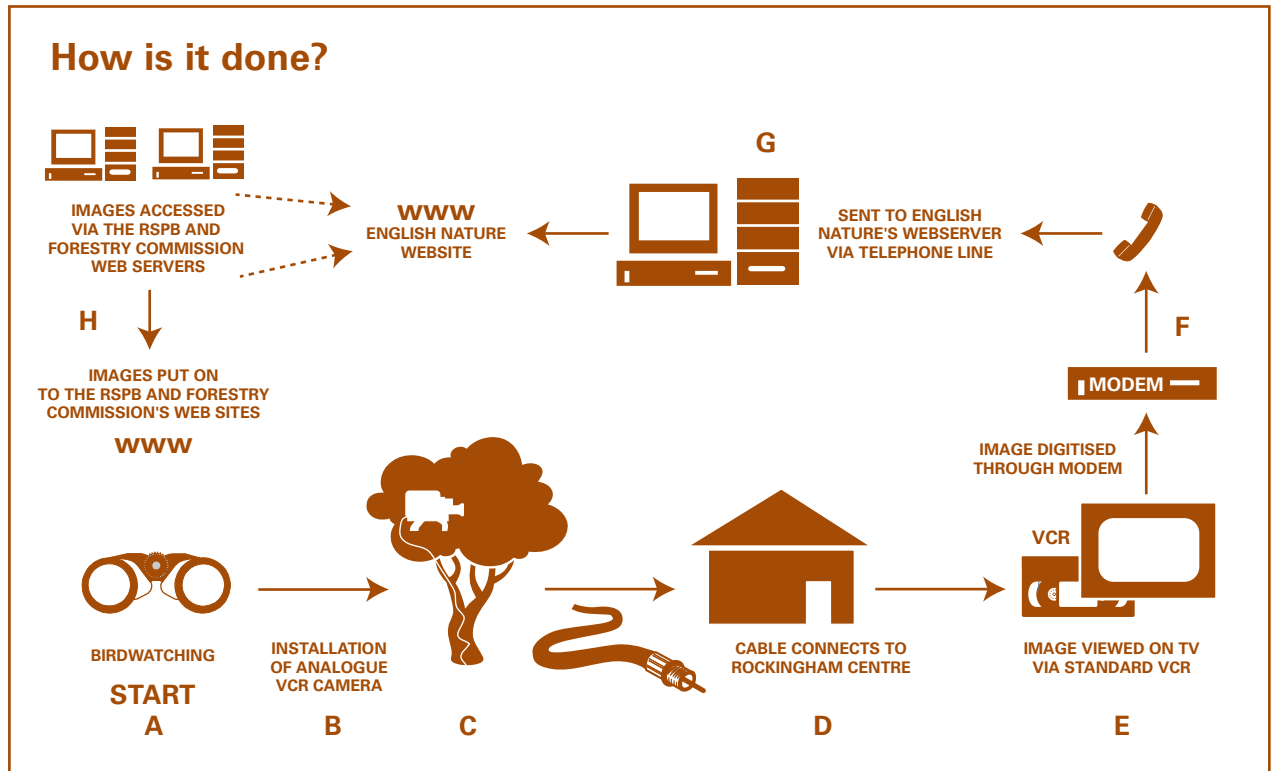


## Activity 8

# TV Stars

The red kites at Rockingham centre is unique in having live webcam contact with a pair of breeding red kites, at their nest.



At the start of the breeding season rangers and birdwatchers kept a look out for signs of red kites starting to nest build (A). As soon as a pair began to build in trees fairly close to the centre (although still a kilometre away!), a ranger climbed the tree and installed an *analogue* video camera there (B), taking care not to disturb the would-be parents. (The ranger even cut the sleeve off his jumper, and put it over the camera to camouflage it, just in case it was too shiny!).

The camera is connected to a kilometre-long cable that goes down the tree trunk (C), through the wood and all the way back to the red kites at Rockingham centre (D). Here it is fitted into the back of a normal video-recording machine, and the picture shows up on the TV (E). This is the one you see when you come to the centre.

The same video recorder is connected to a modem (F), which *digitises* the signal. This goes down the phone lines and is taken to English Nature's web server (G). It is then put onto the English Nature website. Forestry Commission and RSPB servers (H) take the image from this website and put it on to their own websites.

**Thus you can receive live information of the action at the nest delivered to your classroom!**

# TV Stars

Here are a few ideas of activities based around this webcam link:

- Investigate what prey these predators catch – ask the children to monitor the site, perhaps give each child 15 minutes during the day to do this (every 15 minutes the picture is updated at least twice). Keep a log of what food the parents bring in, and how often. You could compare one day one week with the same day the following week. Or perhaps one very hot day with one cold/wet/windy day.
- Food chains. Who is eating what/who? If a rabbit is brought in, what will that have been eating – what is its energy source? How will that have grown, and what was its energy source? Write up the real red kite food chains.
- Timing of food drops by parent birds. Does this vary from day to day? What might affect this?
- Competition – between birds of the same species, and within the same family. Does one chick get more food than the other does? Why do you think that is?
- By monitoring the behaviour of the chicks at intervals over several days, your pupils will build up a picture of what it is like to be a red kite chick. They could keep a diary of this, or write a story about 'A day in the life' of a chick, including weather conditions and how this affected them, feeding behaviour, preening, being warmed by the parent, etc. Or you could write a story from the day it hatches to the day the first feathers come through, or up until it fledges (flies away).
- Take a picture from the site each week and display them along a time line – watch the progress of the kite chicks. Children could estimate/ predict when the birds will fledge.
- Create a 'press release' for your school magazine or local newspaper. You need to include information under the following categories: who, what, where, when and why. Put an interesting angle on it in order to grab the editor's attention. Get a quote from a birdwatcher, or even perhaps interview one of the chicks!