



## Newsletter, Spring 2022



### Red Kite Winter Roosts – Ken Sanderson

In our last Newsletter I reported that red kite numbers were building up nicely and that the main roost near, Hamsterley Mill, had built up to forty-nine birds by the end of November, but the roost lower down in the valley at Rowlands Gill had not yet formed.

This prompted a search for additional roost sites in the area including Sherburn Towers and Victoria Garesfield, sites used in previous years, but none were found. It wasn't until the 2<sup>nd</sup> January that a roost was confirmed lower down in the valley when circa ten kites dropped into the wood above Lockhaugh Meadow, Rowlands Gill. Numbers were also continuing to build at the roost near Hamsterley Mill and a record seventy-one birds were counted there on the 5<sup>th</sup> January.



*Photo by Paul Danielson*

So, it was all looking good for the National Red Kite Roost which took place on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and we were not disappointed. Eight potential roost sites were covered, involving twenty volunteers and between them they produced a record count of ninety- four red kites. As expected, by far the biggest count was at the main roost near Hamsterley Mill, in the Pontburn Valley, where seventy-four kites eventually dropped into roost. The count here was very complicated with birds at pre roost spread out over a wide area, with many birds taking to the air at times. But having observers on both sides of the valley ensured we got an accurate count when they all drifted over to the final roost. Lower down the valley, fifteen kites roosted in the wood above Lockhaugh Meadow. The five remaining kites that made up the total were probably resident birds roosting on territory.

Various locations at the top end of the Derwent Valley and south west Northumberland, which had not been covered in the past, ie. Snod's Edge, Crooked Oak, Minsteracres, Devil's Water, Dipton and Eals Bridge were also surveyed. There were up to 11 kites observed at these locations up to mid-afternoon but none were noted going to roost.

Our results have been sent to the UK Co-ordinator who, in turn, will send them to a European counterpart.

Many thanks to the 20 volunteers who took part in the survey.

May the progress the kites are making continue into the breeding season.

### **Life's Better with Friends - Karen Mathieson**

Do you know anyone who would like to support our important conservation work with the red kites in Gateshead's Lower Derwent Valley and to monitor the kites' health & welfare? If so, our membership form is available on our website: <https://friendsofredkites.org.uk/membership>

FoRK Membership would also make a great gift!

### **Presentation to groups to raise awareness of our red kites - Harold Dobson**

After red kite conservation, raising public awareness about our magnificent birds of prey is arguably the next most important task for us. Currently, a lot of information about the red kites is on our website and Facebook pages.

We are happy to offer a 40-minute powerpoint-assisted talk called "The Red Kite Returns" to various groups e.g. WI's, Church/U3As/Photographic and Wildlife groups.

The talk chronicles the fascinating story of the re-introduction of the red kite in the north-east of England between 2004-2006, after an absence of over 170 years. It includes the history and annual natural history of this raptor and outlines the work done by FoRK to conserve the red kite.

We are willing to consider any request for the talk subject to my availability. We have a basic minimum charge of £25 on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the group. Travel expenses are also requested as we are not funded by any external group.

Please get in touch for a booking form via the "Contact Us" page on our website or by emailing me: [hfdobson@btinternet.com](mailto:hfdobson@btinternet.com)

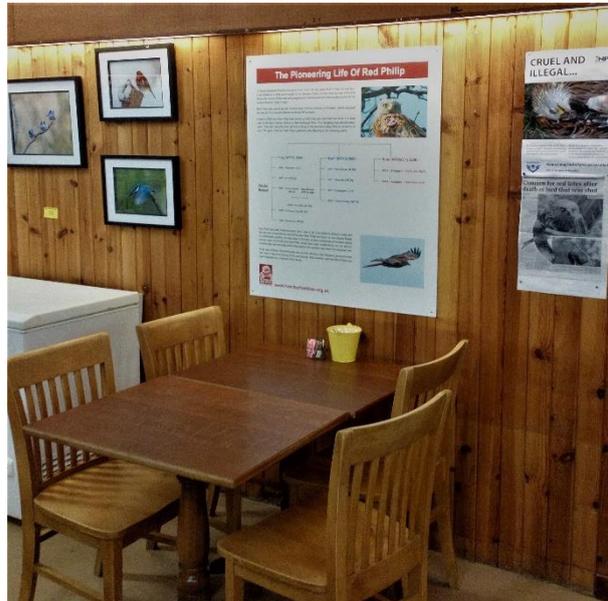
### **The Pioneering Life of Red Philip - Harold Dobson**

We reported in our Spring 2020 Newsletter the sad demise of Red Philip which was one of the first of the 94 red kites reintroduced in the Derwent Valley between 2004- 2006.

At the end of 2019, Red Philip was found on the Gibside Estate in a distressed condition. He was taken to the vets and, reluctantly, the decision was taken to euthanise him at the age of 15. Red Philip had a full life and, with his three partners, had fathered 11 young.

His body was, fittingly, buried on the Gibside Estate with nine FoRK friends in attendance. His grave is marked with a small tree and, currently, we are in discussion with the National Trust for a memorial plaque to be produced and located near to Red Philip's grave.

In order not to forget this iconic bird, there is now a large information panel on display at Thornley Woodlands Centre (picture below) which summarises his life. Do feel free to pop in to see it and, perhaps, have a snack and a tea/coffee from the Thornley Cafe.



**Are you interested in wildlife and Gateshead's Countryside?**

**Do you like engaging with people?**

**Do you have 3 hours to spare each week?**

**If so, then...**



**.... at Thornley Woodlands Centre**

Why not become one of Gateshead Council's Volunteer Countryside Rangers based at Thornley Woodlands Centre? You will receive full training & support to provide advice to members of the public and work alongside Thornley Café staff.

If you'd like to know more then why not pop into the Centre for a chat or leaflet? Further information and the facility to express your interest in becoming a Volunteer is available on the Council website: <https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/2878/Countryside-Volunteers>

**[www.friendsofredkites.org.uk](http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk)**