



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter, Summer 2022



Kite Breeding – Ken Sanderson & John Barrett

All but one of the kite territories that were occupied last year are active again this year. Of these, at least 18 have progressed to the incubation stage and the first chicks were observed on 19 May. This is 6 fewer compared to the same time last year. One of the territories, which is near Tanfield Lea, had one of the pair in rehab for a short period, after it was found grounded, but the pair did not go on to use last year's nest which they had refurbished. Last year, two of the five garden nests failed, neither have used the same nest sites this year but the birds are still on territory and any new nests have yet to be located. It is a similar story for the other active territories. Given that we are only part way through the breeding season, most chicks will be approximately three weeks old at this time; there is enough time to discover more nests before the youngsters fledge.



As for last year, only two active nests have been confirmed in Northumberland so far, both using the same nest sites again. However, it is encouraging to report that there are more sightings further west in Northumberland and we are hopeful that a couple more nests may be confirmed as the season progresses.

Kite down at Harperley Wood Nature Reserve - John Barrett

On 3 April, FoRK was alerted to a grounded kite at the Harperley Woods Nature Reserve.

Volunteers from the Tanfield Lea Countryside Group had found the kite in the morning; it having become stuck in mud at the edge of a pond, become waterlogged and cold and then unable to fly. It is assumed the kite had seen a frog in the pond and misjudged its flight to capture the frog. The kite was rescued from the pond and taken to a volunteer's house and FoRK contacted.



Mick Render attended, on behalf of FoRK, and found the kite had dried out by the time he arrived. There was some concern that the kite may have been in the pond overnight so a decision was made to take the bird to a local falconer, Chris Bennett, who has helped with the rehabilitation of kites for FoRK for a number of years. The bird, thought to be a male, was checked for any signs of trauma or other injury but all appeared fine. It was housed in a pen, given food and left overnight. The following morning it was inspected. It was perching, so could clearly fly but hadn't eaten any of the food. By the end of the day the kite had consumed some food. It was kept housed for a further night and given some more food with the intention to release it the following day.

On 5 April the bird was alert and feisty so time to be released. It was taken back to the woodland where it was found and where it would, hopefully, be re-united with its partner. In 2021 there had been a successful nest in the wood so it was important, given it was the start of the egg laying period, to get the bird back out as soon as possible.

The volunteers who found the kite, Chris Bennett, Mick Render and I were in attendance. The carrying box was opened but the kite played dead, deciding it was warmer staying put in the box. The kite was lifted out and placed on the grass in front of the box and it still played dead.



Photographs by Mick Render

After a couple of minutes of looking around it decided all was well and took to the wing calling as it went to alert its partner that he had returned. It flew off strongly through the trees and as we left the release site was seen flying with its partner.

Many thanks to the volunteers from the Tanfield Lea Countryside Group, Chris Bennett and Mick Render for all their help and support.

Remembering Red Philip – Harold Dobson

In 2020, we sadly reported the sad demise of our pioneering red kite, Red Philip, who fathered the first red kite chick (Geordie) to hatch in the North-East in 2006 after an absence of 170 years.

Red Philip had a full life fathering 11 chicks with three partners (Flag, Swift and Soar). [Red kites are supposed to pair for life]. At the age of fifteen, he was found on the Gibside estate in a distressed condition. Following a visit to the vets the injury he had suffered showed signs of arthritis, leaving him unable to fly very far without considerable pain. Reluctantly the decision was made to euthanise him. He was fittingly buried, with due ceremony, on the Gibside Estate with his Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) and Gibside National Trust Staff in attendance. His grave is marked with a red oak tree.

FoRK, in conjunction with the National Trust, have now produced a memorial plaque at Red Philip's grave commemorating his life (photo below).



Annual General Meeting – Harold Dobson

Our 12th Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 22nd June at Swalwell Cricket Club. The meeting itself should last no more than 30-40 minutes.

After the meeting, John Barrett, our Kite Welfare Officer, will give a short talk entitled "*The Status of the Red Kites in the North East*" which will outline the trends in the red kite population and examine the reasons for the slow rate of growth and expansion in their range.

The talk will then be followed by a buffet supper (£7.50 per head). The formal invitation to, and the paperwork for, the AGM are included separately in this mailing.

A poem submission by a humble gardener – Jim Third

With the approach of summer and loving working in my garden, I am reminded of a poem about gardening by Rudyard Kipling:

The Glory of the Garden

*Our England is a garden that is full of stately views,
Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns & avenues,
With statues on the terraces and peacocks strutting by;
But the Glory of the Garden lies in more than meets the eye.*

*And there you'll see the gardeners, the men and 'prentice boys
Told off to do as they are bid and do it without noise;
For, except when seeds are planted and we shout to scare the birds,
The Glory of the Garden it abideth not in words.*

*And some can pot begonias and some bud a rose,
And some are hardly fit to trust with anything that grows;
But they can roll and trim the lawns and sift the sand and loam,
For the Glory of the Garden occupieth all who come.*

*Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him, sees
That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden that it may not pass away!*



Volunteering with FoRK

We really appreciate your membership as a Friend of the Red Kites. If you have 2-3 hours to spare each week, then you may like to consider doing some voluntary work with us for which you will receive full training and support?

Some of the areas which may be of interest to you are:

- ❖ Red kite monitoring (as part of a small team you would go out weekly to locate and check on the progress of red kite nests (February-June) and winter roosts (September-January).

- ❖ Leading our Health Walks (lead, back-up or support on a rota basis) on a Monday afternoon.
- ❖ Staffing our FoRK stall at external events e.g. Red Kite Family Fun Day at Gibside.
- ❖ Maintaining our website or Facebook page.
- ❖ Giving talks to community groups.
- ❖ Joining our Management Committee (meeting the second Monday of each month).

If you'd like to know more about any of the above then why not email us via the "Contacts" page of our website: www.friendsofredkites.org.uk

"Nature everywhere, for Everyone" Petition

Please find below a Wildlife & Countryside link to the above petition which has just below 32,000 signatures. It calls for a legal right to nature near where you live. Have a look at the petition and see whether you can give it your support:

<https://action.wildlifetrusts.org/page/97830/petition/1>