



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter, Autumn 2021



Red Kite Breeding Report – Ken Sanderson

In recent reports I've announced new record figures and this one is no exception. We know of forty-four chicks that have fledged this summer, from twenty successful nests, beating last year's figure of forty-two. Sadly, there were six nests which failed with four of the failures due to the hailstorms and the cold, wet weather of May. Of the five garden nests reported in the last Newsletter, two were lost during that period, but the three remaining successful nests fledged seven chicks.

Only one day's ringing and tagging of red kite chicks was possible this year and this took place on the 16th June. The session went extremely well with four nests being visited. In total eleven chicks had leg rings fitted of which nine were big enough to wing tag. A really successful outcome. This year's right wing tag colour is red.

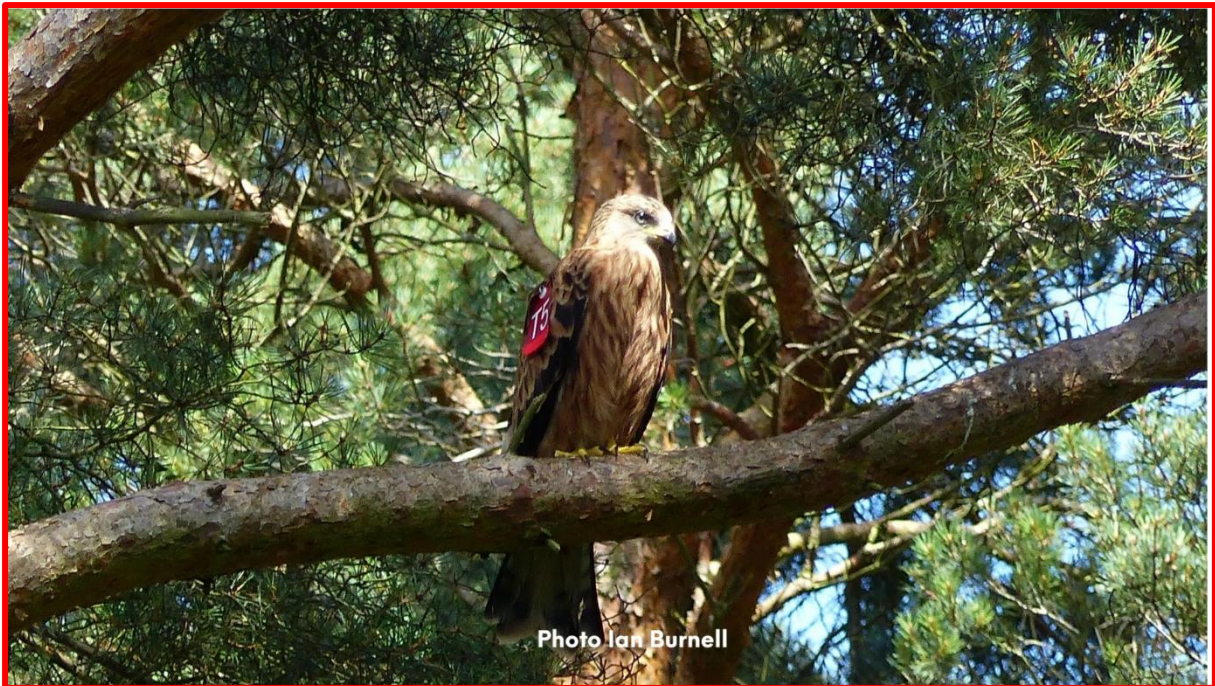


Photo by Ken Sanderson

There were three very late nests discovered this year: One was in Spen Banks, near Sherburn Towers Farm, Rowlands Gill and another was a re-lay in the Harperley Nature Reserve, near Tantobie. The third nest found was north-east of Whitley Chapel and this brought the total of known nests in south-east Northumberland up to three. The youngsters in the nest at Spen Banks fledged in late July, as did the Whitley Chapel brood of three, but the chicks in the Harperley nest did not fledge until the fifth of August. Kite chicks

normally fledge by the end of June.

Unbeknown to us a juvenile kite was found grounded near Derwentcote Steel Furnace, Hamsterley Mill on June 22nd and was taken to Blyth Wildlife Rescue. It only came to our attention when the organisation posted an article on Facebook of the successful release of the bird into the wild following a month in rehab. The finder was a visitor to the area and had not been aware of the existence of FoRK.



So, in summary, it would appear that our kites are doing reasonably well and going from strength to strength. We now look forward to the autumn and winter roosts when numbers counted should reflect the successful breeding seasons of late.

Footnote: Also mentioned in the last Newsletter was the finding of two dead kites, early in the season, at or near active nests in Chopwell Wood and Spen Banks. Post-mortems on the birds showed nothing untoward and we are still awaiting toxicology reports.
Photo by Ian Burnell

Virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) - Harold Dobson

Having cancelled last year's AGM and, with the Covid-pandemic still prevailing this year, we decided to try and hold this year's delayed AGM via the Microsoft Teams video conference.

We had 13 members join the conference at 19.00 on Wednesday 28th July. It was interesting seeing one member having his tea during the meeting and another slowly dozing off ! We managed to get through the agenda: Chairman's, Secretary's & Treasurer's Reports for the last two years, acceptance of the Annual & Financial Reports, Election of Officers & Committee Members in a record 26 minutes.

I'm not convinced this would ever replace our face-to-face AGM as it seemed more impersonal and, of course, there was no buffet and informal chat afterwards.

Trees – Mother Earth's generous gift – Jim Third

A considerable amount of my time since the easing of Lockdown restrictions has been spent with the monitoring team trekking around various woods looking for, and sometimes finding, red kite nests amidst the trees. It has inspired me to remember a poem by *Nita Wells* dedicated to people working in the conservation of our forests and the beautification of our environment. I have shortened it slightly:

*Oh tree, you open up your generous hand
Jutting out outstretched like holding a wand
Upon your branches nesting birds building
assured of comfort their weary wings living*

*Oh tree, you provided them a place to dwell
New flock ready to chirp and sing away
Calling with their melodious notes so well
And dreams of places so far away*

*Oh tree, your shadows lend comfort to creatures who long
resisting the unending turbulence of life furious strong
Like a river's current sweeping, tugging and tagging us along
As we remain steadfast in our quest for peace here we belong*

*Oh tree, a generous mother earth's gift
God the great provider to mankind so swift
With kindness abundance for everyone to enjoy
To protect, preserve, conserve and not to destroy*

Resumption of Health Walks – Jackey Lockwood

Health Walks have resumed following the lifting by the Government of Covid-related restrictions. It has been sixteen months since our last led walk so it has been good to get out on our regular Monday afternoons once again. We have made a few minor changes to our routine: a Leader wearing a mask records the attendance on the register rather than passing the board and pen around; the pace of walks in the first few walks has been gradual with a shorter walk available for those who need to build up their fitness, stamina and confidence; and we allow for plenty of space for people to be in a group but also distanced.

July's two walks were in the Derwent Valley. There was a variety of wildlife recorded such as grey wagtail and mallard along the river, red kites and buzzard overhead and contact calls of blackcap and chiffchaff from the trees. A few flowers such as campion were still out. Refreshments were available at the Red Kite pub or Café Shrub for those who wanted to partake.

August's five walks were in Watergate Park and Washingwell Woods. There are plenty of paths to vary the route walked. Wildlife sightings were mostly focused around the lake. A pair of swans with four cygnets were there all month as were little grebe with chicks, black-headed gulls, mallard, tufted ducks, moorhen and coot. Swallows were seen overhead as was a sparrowhawk. Crows, magpies and wood pigeons were seen mainly around the farmland. The weather was very warm (except for the Bank holiday!) and the café was open for refreshments and socialising at the end of each walk.

The average number of walkers has risen slightly from 20 in July to 22 in August and the pace has picked up a little. We have a few new walkers who have joined us. The programme of Health Walks is on the FoRK website. I hope people continue to enjoy the fresh air and exercise in our open and accessible green spaces. Once again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our trained Health Walk Leaders without whom these walks would not happen, and the walkers themselves whose enthusiasm keeps us all going!



Time to renew your Membership – Karen Mathieson

September is an important month in the Friends of Red Kites calendar. The work carried out throughout the year by our team of dedicated volunteers who monitor the health and welfare of the red kites in the Derwent Valley and surrounding areas is very dependent on our wonderful members giving their continued support to enable this essential work to prevail.

Sadly, 2021 has seen an increase in deaths of a number of red kites, some of which are still under investigation. The work FoRK undertakes has never been more vital - the renewal of your membership contributes greatly to our mission to sustain and protect the stunningly, beautiful red kite adorning our skies.

Friends of Red Kites have had to cancel social and fundraising events in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It is very much hoped some Covid-safe events will be able to go ahead in the next twelve months.

Members will be sent information of any upcoming events along with the Newsletter which is posted out four times a year.

FoRK look forward to having you as a member in 2021 – 2022. Please find the membership form on the next page

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



September 2021

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Dear Friend,

Your annual membership subscription for 2021-2022 is now due for renewal.

- **£7.00 for an individual**
- **£10.00 for a family or household**

Your subscription will help towards running the FoRK group, wing-tagging the red kites to aid identification, assisting with monitoring expenses and contributing towards the conservation of these magnificent raptors from the ever-increasing threat of persecution.

How to pay:

- **By cheque or postal order made payable to "Friends of Red Kites"**
- **By cash and please include your name and address**
- **By standing order. The details for the standing order are: Nat West Bank, Sort code: 54-10-58, A/c name: "Friends of Red Kites", A/c no.: 19063695**

Whichever way you choose to pay, including paying by Standing Order, I would be most grateful if you would complete the form below and return it with your subscription to me by 31st October 2021.

We are very grateful for your continued support and hope you will renew your membership.

Thank you.

**Karen Mathieson
Membership Secretary
Email: red.kites2020@gmail.com**

**To: Karen Mathieson, FoRK Membership Secretary, 17 The Meadows,
Pickering Nook, Burnopfield, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE16 6QW**

Name:

Address:

Post code Email Address

Paid by Cheque/Cash/Standing Order (Please circle how you have paid)

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A PRINTER PLEASE JUST WRITE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS & EMAIL ADDRESS ON A PIECE OF PAPER AND INCLUDE IT WITH YOUR PAYMENT.