



Newsletter, Autumn 2024



Red Kite Breeding and Wing-Tagging – Ken Sanderson & John Barrett

(Last year's figures given in brackets)

The number of known breeding pairs at 22 (27) is down on recent years. Wet and cold weather in the spring and early summer significantly affected both kite breeding and monitoring opportunities. Some pairs did not achieve breeding condition and others delayed egg-laying. The number of chicks known to have fledged was 36 (39). This figure is slightly down from the previous year but not as bad as expected as monitoring, after fledging, boosted the figures with juveniles seen either perched or flying at several locations where nests had not been found. In some nests, it was not possible to ascertain an accurate brood count and these have been credited with just one chick. There were only 3 nests known to have failed, compared with 7 last year, and this also helped boost the number of chicks.

As in previous years the majority of pairs nested in Gateshead MBC and Co. Durham but records from Northumberland remain encouraging with evidence that at least 10 chicks (8) have fledged from 5 nests in the west of the county. A further 4 (3) territories have been confirmed in the county but no evidence of breeding found. The west of Northumberland is such a vast area to survey and the confirmed kite territories range over a broad area from just south of Haltwhistle down to the border with the Durham Moors.

Ringing and wing-tagging of red kite chicks took place on Tuesday 11th June when four nest sites were visited. This was probably the coldest day that we have carried out this work. Eight chicks were ringed and winged-tagged and another two chicks were ringed only; they being too small to fit tags. All in all, it was quite a successful day.



Time to Renew your Membership – Jennifer Adams

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.

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 kites adorning our skies.

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

FoRK look forward to having you as a member in 2024 – 2025.

Please find the membership form sent out as a separate document along with this newsletter.

Annual General Meeting – Harold Dobson

We held our Annual General Meeting at Little Grandma's Café at Little Ollie's Garden Centre, Bridgefields, Newburn Bridge Road on Wednesday 26th June and were welcomed by one of our members, Kathy Palmer, who played the Northumbrian pipes. 23 members attended the meeting and we actually got through the business of the meeting in a record 17 minutes.

We were then treated to a lovely buffet meal which provided an ideal opportunity for members to mix and have a chat. There was so much food left over that we were given "doggy bags" to take some it home with us.

20th Anniversary Celebrations

Red Kite Family Fun Day (7th July) – Sylvia Jones

There was a very happy family atmosphere at Gibside on Sunday 7th July.

National Trust staff and FoRK volunteers were in the Market Place at 9.30 a.m. to help us get ready.

The Go North East double decker Red Kite bus was driven by Jordan Eddy – a supervisor who volunteered to spend the day there. After manoeuvring the bus several times it was finally parked. The face painter, Julie Charlton, was set up on the terrace and offered a huge choice of images. She had a queue all day. Paul, the bubbologist, was like the Pied Piper; he walked round and gathered children to watch his show. He started with small bubbles which children tried to catch. Then, as the bubbles grew bigger, the children became more excited.



Julie and Paul were provided by Go North East's Marketing Team, Laura & Olivia, who were there to support the event all day.

Ken Sanderson organised the placing of the 150-tile red kite mosaic in front of the Chapel on the Avenue. He was supported by his wife, Ann, and friends, Ray & Susan, as well as Karen and members of the public.

Jackey, with the help of her husband, Steve, and Fiona & Jon Clapham organised the tombola stall. Judi Postle, Lori Smith and Jenny Peace staffed the stall and raised £128 on the day.

My husband, David, and I were on the Information Stall on the morning and Harold & Lori covered the afternoon. Tyne Tees Television News interviewed Harold which appeared as a two-minute slot on the evening news.

The Gibside Sewing Group embroidered a series of 8 large banners depicting a year in the life of the red kite. These were displayed along the main path in the Walled Garden.

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who supported this event.



Red Kite Trail Walk (14th July) – Jackey Lockwood
Alas, we had no walkers turn up for the walk.

Children's Outdoor Events (15th & 29th August) – Jackey Lockwood
Sadly, the Children's Outdoor Event at Thornley Woodlands Centre, on 15th August, was cancelled due to the rain.



However, the morning event at the Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre, at Winlaton Mill, went ahead on 29th August. It was really successful and enjoyable. We had a couple of gazebos based in the Courtyard and were busy throughout.

The face painter, Julie Charlton, was popular (see photos below - taken with parents' permission). The other activities offered were colouring in & mask-making, making a red kite bookmark, badge-making and a "Name the Red Kite" quiz. The Heritage Centre provided an ice-cream vendor and, in the afternoon, a story-teller, street band and a some self-led craft activities (journey stick).



For the future – Harold Dobson

We are planning a linear Red Kite Walk on the afternoon of Sunday 22nd September along part of the Derwent Walk Railway Path (from Stirling Lane car park to Pontburn Viaduct).

The walk is free but places are limited to 30 people so if you'd like to participate then you will need to register via the "Contact us" page on the FoRK website (www.friendsofredkites.org.uk)

Red Kite Festival at the Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre – Harold Dobson

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of red kites returning to northern skies, Groundwork (NE) partnered with Gateshead Arts Team to host a weekend of fun activities and live music at the Heritage Centre, in Winlaton Mill, on Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th July.

Across the weekend, children could build a nest, craft cardboard wings, learn to fly, become a Red Kite Ranger and learn the "Bird Boogie"!

They could also take part in a parade with a giant red kite puppet (photo below) and that of a heron and kingfisher.

Jackey (Lockwood) and I attended on the Saturday and staffed a FoRK Information Table near to the rear Courtyard. It was an interesting day engaging with the public but, alas, rain stopped play just after lunch as, without a gazebo, we had to pack our goods away.

