



Newsletter, Autumn 2025

Red Kite breeding, ringing and wing-tagging – Ken Sanderson & John Barrett

After a very poor breeding season last year when only 36 chicks were known to have fledged, the kites have “bounced back” this year with a record number of 46 youngsters fledging from 24 nests. In all, our monitoring confirmed 40 occupied territories, 12 of which were in Northumberland. From the 12 territories in Northumberland we located 7 nests and these nests fledged 15 youngsters, making it the best ever breeding season for the county, an indication that the birds are continuing to spread out from the core area of Gateshead’s Derwent Valley. On the downside there were 8 nests which failed, which is a higher number than expected.

Two ringing and wing-tagging sessions took place on the 6th and 16th June. A total of 8 nests were visited over the two days. A total of 15 youngsters were ringed of which 12 were wing-tagged, making it our best season for ringing and wing-tagging for several years. The 8 chicks that were ringed and wing-tagged on the second day were all from nests in Northumberland. The right wing tag colour for 2025 is purple.



Photo by Vic Lawson

Two well grown youngsters from a nest near Horsley, Northumberland.

Annual General Meeting – Harold Dobson

Our Annual General Meeting was held at Little Grandma's Café, Bridgefields, Newburn Bridge Road on Wednesday, 25th June. Kathy Palmer welcomed us by playing the Northumbrian pipes.



Photos by Vic Lawson

Twenty-two members arrived before 7:00 p.m., allowing us to start early and finish the agenda in 15 minutes. Members then enjoyed a buffet and conversation. The raffle raised £54.

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 looks forward to having you as a member in 2025 – 2026.

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

Party in the Pines – Sylvia Jones

Together FoRK, Forestry England, the Friends of Chopwell Wood and Go North East hosted the joint event, “Party in the Pines”, in Chopwell Wood on Sunday 6th July.

This was a huge event with three planning meetings and lots of activities to set up.

Friends of Red Kites volunteers organised the tombola which was very successful. It sold out by early afternoon and raised £103. The FoRK information table attracted many local people who knew about the red kites, witnessed locals feeding them and reported regular sightings.

Go North East’s “Spin the Wheel” and the face painter were very popular. The bubbleologist was very successful and amazed many children & adults with repeat performances. Their bus driver helped anywhere he was needed e.g. the erection of the parachute.

The Chopwell Wood teams had held their events many times before. They set up the gazebos, tables & chairs in the Pines clearing. There were portaloos, 5 food vans and a popular Children’s activities area. The parachute sheltered the choir, flamenco guitarist and many others. Also present were the Men’s Shed, RSPB, crafts and Friends of Chopwell Wood stalls plus archery.



Photos by Vic Lawson

The friendly family atmosphere was relaxed and welcoming. The morning session went well but, by 2.30, there was a huge rainstorm. Many people and equipment were soaked so we “called it a day”.

Thank you to everyone who took part in this hugely successful event.

Land of Oak and Iron Children's Play Park – Vic Lawson

ForK enjoys a good relationship with the Land of Oak and Iron Heritage Centre at Winlaton Mill. They have just built a children's play area at the site and offered us the opportunity to have a red kite information stand at the opening celebrations. The last Friday in July (25th) proved to be an ideal day for the occasion: the weather was fine and as the school holidays were in full swing, it was well attended.

Harold and I manned an information stall which was kitted out with various leaflets on the red kites and our organisation.



We also had a 'Name the Red Kite' quiz (based on the television programme 'Catch Phrase'): as part of the red kite reintroduction programme schools were invited to adopt and name a kite. Visitors were shown a card with images representing some of the names and were asked to guess what they were. This proved quite popular with such names as Jammy Dodger, Whisper, Lightning and Poppy.

Photo by Neil Stephenson

Many of the visitors were locals and were familiar with the red kites. We also spoke to one of Gateshead's Councillors who showed an interest in the birds. All in all, it was an enjoyable and interesting morning.

Join our Management Committee – Ken Sanderson (Chairman)

- Do you live reasonably local to Rowlands Gill, in Gateshead's Derwent Valley, and have a bit of spare time on your hands ?
- Are you interested in learning more about the "behind the scenes" work of ForK ?
- Can you work as part of a team ?

If so, we are currently seeking a member who would be interested in joining the ForK Management Committee.

We currently have nine Committee Members most of whom have specific portfolios e.g. admin, events, finance, health walks, kite welfare, kite monitoring, membership, merchandise, newsletter (quarterly), presentations and public relations.

Our Committee meets seven times each year (January, February, April, May, July, August & November) usually at 16.00 on the second Monday of the month at Thornley Woodlands Centre. Each meeting lasts no more than an hour and discusses issues relating to the red kites and all the activities and topics listed above.

If you are interested and would like to know more then please email me:

kenandann.sanderson@talktalk.net

Banned toxic lead ammunition – Harold Dobson

On 10th July, the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) announced that red kites and white-tailed eagles will receive greater protection thanks to new restrictions on the use of lead in ammunition

To protect iconic British wildlife and clean up the nation's waterways, new measures will ban shot containing more than 1% lead and bullets with a lead content of more than 3%. Beyond limited exemptions, these types of ammunition will no longer be sold to the public.

The ban will prevent the release of an estimated 7,000 tonnes of the toxic metal into fields, forests and wetlands each year. Up to 100,000 wildfowl, including ducks, swans and waders, die from lead poisoning annually, with birds often confusing the scattered shot for grit and consuming it.

Evidence from the Health and Safety Executive shows lead poses a risk to, at least, 1 million birds over the coming decades if usage continues at its current rate, while around 40,000 birds of prey, such as red kites and white-tailed eagles, are at risk from ingesting lead through carrion.

Introducing restrictions will also stop lead from contaminating soil and leaching into rivers when guns are discharged and spread the harmful metal, ensuring ecosystems thrive for both wildlife and people alike.

Following extensive public engagement, a three-year transition period will support the shooting and hunting sectors to shift to more environmentally-friendly alternatives. There will also be a two-year period for outdoor shooting ranges where lead is used to implement measures that prevent pollution from entering the environment. The government will continue to engage with the shooting industry to support the transition to alternative ammunition types.



An interesting and unusual photo....

.... of a pair of red kites on a bird table (taken in Hexham)!!