



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter, Spring 2017

Winter Roost - Paul Danielson



In preparation for the National and European co-ordinated roost watch to be held in January (report shown below) a roost watch was held on the 19th December 2016 by members of the monitoring team.

This covered the three sites which were known to hold roosts. The purpose of this was to check that all of the roosts were being used and to provide a more accurate figure of the numbers of kites using the roosts.

Surprisingly the Hamsterley Hall roost produced the highest numbers of kites present: a total of 30 birds. The Gibside bowl viewed from the Nine Arches Viaduct held 19 kites and the Victoria Garesfield site had 15 birds either in or around the roost.

This gave a grand total of 64 kites - an encouraging figure.

On the evening of Saturday 7th January, for the formal co-ordinated roost watch, the Friends of Red Kites' Monitoring Team checked the three known roost sites in Gateshead's Derwent Valley with the aim of counting the number of red kites. 57 kites in total were counted with 52 of these being recorded at the main roost. This figure has been submitted to our National Red Kite Group which has forwarded it onto the European Red Kite group. Comparisons with previous year's figures will give an indication of total population trends. Last year, only 43 kites were counted at roost sites in the Derwent Valley.

Members of the public were invited to the main roost site, which was viewed from the Nine Arches Viaduct, to give them an opportunity to see large numbers of kites at fairly close quarters and to learn all about red kites and their conservation from our "experts". Eighteen people attended and they were not disappointed. Good views of up to five kites perched on a pylon were had, albeit through a telescope, and twenty-nine birds were seen together in the air at one time, soaring and circling in a pre-roost flight. Eventually 52 red kites flew into roost on the Gibside Estate.

The other two locations which were surveyed were at Hamsterley Hall and Victoria Garesfield. Both sites recorded birds at pre-roost, 17 and 9 respectively.

But, interestingly, the majority of birds left both sites just before dusk and drifted down the valley towards the Gibside roost.

Fourteen lifted from Hamsterley Hall, leaving three kites there, and seven left Victoria Garesfield, leaving just two kites.

Overall National and European numbers have now been received which are available to view on our website.



Winners of the Health Walkers Festive Attire Competition - Jackey Lockwood

As has become traditional the Friends of Red Kites Health Walkers donned seasonal extras during the month of December. The theme was "Festive Attire". As always there was plenty of participation and quite a few Walkers were inventive in their interpretation! The lucky winner of the trophy, unanimously chosen by the judges, was Lynda who entered wholeheartedly in to the event. Congratulations to the winner and thank you to all those who took part. Thanks also to Austin and Kevin for arranging the singing of Carols at the Skiff Inn. It was all very enjoyable and a good way to end our year of walks (54 walks in total). There were three Health Walks in December with good attendance at each (34, 45, 39 walkers), and the January walks have got off to a great start too.



The regular Monday afternoon Health Walks have gone ahead at each of our walking locations along the course of the River Derwent during 2016. Friends of Red Kites have 12 trained Health Walk Leaders who volunteer on a rota basis to lead the walks. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued commitment and enthusiasm. Their knowledge of the wildlife and the area adds to the enjoyment of the walks. I would also like to thank the regular Health Walkers themselves who help make the walks a pleasure to organise and who do so much to support our activities. Thank you and enjoy the walking in the rest of 2017.

Red Kite Presentations - Judy Summerson

The Friends of Red Kites give presentations to local community groups. Our 40 minute illustrated presentation relates the fascinating story of the re-introduction of the red kite in the north-east of England after an absence of 170 years. It includes the history & natural history of this magnificent bird of prey and outlines the work of the Friends as custodians of the red kites.

The cost of the presentation is £25.00. If the audience is in excess of 25 the cost will increase on a £1 per head basis (capped at £50.00). Cheques should be made payable please to "Friends of Red Kites". Concessions are available.

If you are a member of a local community group and would like us to give our talk then please contact me:

Email: Judith.summerson@blueyonder.co.uk

Phone: 0191 488 3597 or 07811 927330

Wanted: Binoculars

Do you have any binoculars which are no longer required, but still in good condition?

Would you be willing to donate them to FoRK?

After several years, most of our current binoculars are no longer fit for purpose. If you are able to help, please pass them on to a Committee Member, drop them off at the start of a Health Walk or leave them at Thornley Woodlands Centre.

They will be put to good use at Kite events or for our Monitoring Team to use.



I-Spy a Red Kite - Harold Dobson

We would like to appeal to members for help in observing red kites setting up their nesting territories this Spring. We have a band of monitoring volunteers who currently undertake this task but we fear that the number of kite territories is still seriously under-recorded.

Now is the time when the red kites are starting to pair up (circling/ displaying/calling) and are seen carrying twigs to make their nests. If you are aware of an active territory then do please let us know either via the "Contact us" page on our website: <http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk> or by mobile: 07790 085659.

Please remember that the red kite is fully protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) where it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb an "active" nest/territory.

We would warmly welcome any member to join our monitoring team.



Feeding Red Kites in your Garden - Allan Withrington

After studying last year's breeding results, we were puzzled by the fact that a number of red kite nests, close to villages and estates, failed to produce any young.

We know that a number of kind people put food out in their gardens especially for the red kites. FoRK has decided to survey as many of these people as possible living around Rowlands Gill village, in an effort to find out what they are currently feeding the kites and see if this is impacting upon the chicks from fledging.

In order to digest their food properly, the red kites need skin, bone, feather and/or fur. There aren't any of these on a chicken breast bought from a local supermarket!!

To feed red kites successfully the meat should be sourced from a butcher who obtains their meat with some, if not all, of the above vital elements included.

In addition, they must receive the meat fresh, i.e. not processed, so there have been no preservatives added which would also have a detrimental effect on our kites.

I have drafted a brief questionnaire and covering letter which, when completed by the feeding families, will assist us in drawing up some guidelines for safer feeding and, hopefully, an increase in chick numbers.

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