



# Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

[www.friendsofredkites.org.uk](http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk)



## Newsletter, Spring 2021



### 2020/21 Red Kite Winter Roosts - Ken Sanderson

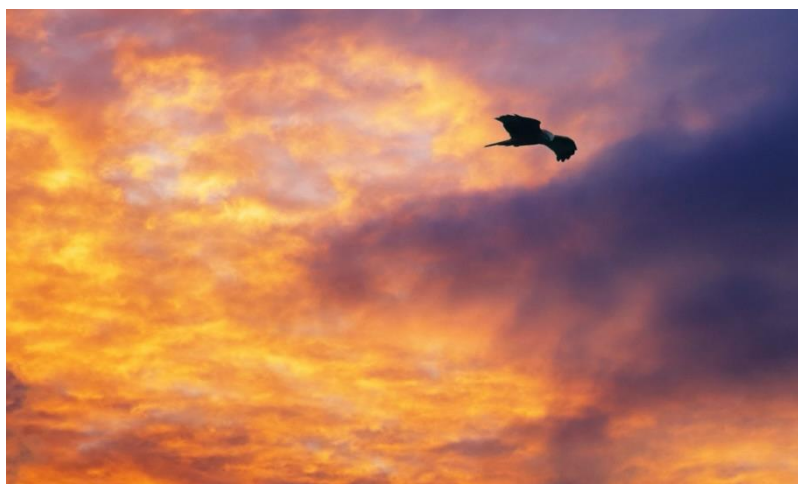
The Covid-19 pandemic continued to severely impact all of us into the autumn and winter with Government restrictions ranging from a multi-tier system of rules to a National Lockdown affecting all aspects of our lives.

However, during the period when restrictions were eased, our monitoring team was able to carry out some roost survey work. The first indication that a roost had formed was in the late afternoon of the 30<sup>th</sup> September when twelve kites were noted at the Rowlands Gill Viaduct. A few days later, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October, twenty-four kites were observed circling over the woodland near the Pontburn Viaduct, a spectacular sight to behold. They gradually drifted up the valley towards Hamsterley Hall and were seen dropping into roost near there. Around this date birds were also noted using the Gibside roost.

Numbers built up during October and early November and when both sites were visited on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> November a total of sixty-seven kites, forty-five at Gibside and twenty-two at Hamsterley Hall, were counted.

Numbers fluctuated at both sites during December with the maximum number of kites recorded at Gibside being thirty-eight whilst the highest total at Hamsterley Hall was twenty-nine kites.

The National Roost Count, which had been arranged for Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> January, was cancelled due to Government Covid-19 restrictions. However, the UK Co-ordinator accepted our roost counts which were carried out in December 2020, which was sixty-seven kites from two roost sites. This was down from the eighty-five in the previous year but there is no cause for concern as four roost sites were surveyed then and, also, it was carried out in January when roosting kite numbers are traditionally higher. A list of other regional outcomes will be uploaded onto the Roosting Summaries page of the FoRK website in the near future.



The last roost check of the winter was carried out on the 24<sup>th</sup> January, viewed from Lockhaugh Farm, overlooking Gibside and, with a stunning sunset providing the backdrop, the first kite drifted into view. In total, over 36 kites were counted dropping into a roost site in the wood between Lockhaugh meadow and the Derwent Walk. None were seen going onto the Gibside Estate, their usual roost site.

In more normal times the gathering of kites at pre-roost has afforded the opportunity to identify wing-tagged kites whilst perched, in particular the juvenile birds that were fitted with wing-tags the previous summer. But, with restrictions limiting our monitoring activities, this greatly reduced the number of sightings and only six out of the sixteen tagged birds were identified over the winter. More details of these birds can be found on the "Our Kite Histories" webpage: <https://friendsofredkites.org.uk/red-kite-histories-2020>

The Government's road map exit from Lockdown gives us some hope of "normality" later this year. Until then stay safe and well.

### **Resumption of Health Walks** - Jackey Lockwood

With the phased lifting of Covid-19 Lockdown restrictions over the coming months we are optimistic that our Monday health walks will resume in June or July. We will review the progress of the success of the roadmap in mid-May, consult with health Walk Leaders and then post definitive information about when & where our health walks will start on the Health Walk page of our website (and maybe on the Home page to start with).

### **A date for your diary** - Harold Dobson

If the lifting of the Covid-19 lockdown roadmap goes according to plan, we have provisionally arranged for our Annual General Meeting to be held on **Wednesday 21st July** at Swalwell Cricket Club. We will confirm this by emailing an official invitation to Members in early July.

### **New FoRK website**

To let you know that Ken Sanderson, Mick Render & Paul Danielson have carried out a lot of work, behind the scenes, on uploading and updating our new website which is now live. Do have a look at it and let us know what you think:

[www.friendsofredkites.org.uk](http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk)

### **Presentations** - Harold Dobson

As members may know, we offer a 40-minute PowerPoint-assisted talk called "*The Red Kite Returns*". It chronicles the fascinating story of the re-introduction of the red kite in the north-east after an absence of 170 years. It includes the history & annual natural history of this magnificent raptor and outlines the work done by the Friends of Red Kites to conserve the red kites.

We are willing to consider any request for the talk subject to availability of the presenter. We have a basic minimum charge of £25 on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the group. Travel expenses are requested as we are not funded by any external group.

**During the current Covid-19 restrictions, we are still happy to offer the presentation to groups via the on-line Zoom video-conference facility.**

Please get in touch for a booking form via the "Contact Us" page on our website

### **Member's photographs**

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, we are always happy to publish any Member's wildlife photographs. Below are some bird images kindly provided by Geoff Brown.



**Tawny Owl**



**Barn Owl**



**Female Goosander with chicks**

Don't forget to let us know if you see a red kite via the "[Contact us](#)" page on our website