



Newsletter, Spring 2023



Red Kites Roosting – Ken Sanderson

As expected, the number of roosting red kites increased as we got deeper into winter and, as in previous years, the Friends of Red Kites Monitoring Team took part in the National Red Kite Roost Survey. This year's count took place on Sunday 8th January.

At one point, in mid-afternoon, it looked as though the event might be a wash-out but it did clear through before dusk and conditions improved significantly.



Fifteen volunteers covered 6 locations, places known to be current roost sites or which had been used in the past. A total of 85 red kites were recorded with the majority coming from the two traditional sites at Hamsterley Mill and Gibside with the former roost holding 65 kites and the latter recording 20 birds. This number is down from the 94 red kites recorded last year but this could be due to the heavy rain earlier in the afternoon, with birds preferring to stay where they were instead of making the flight back home to roost. Many thanks to all the volunteers who took part in the survey.

Feedback from the UK Co-ordinator of the National Red Kite Roost Survey indicates an increase in numbers nationally from last year: with Scotland recording over 1000 for the first time ever. Numbers in England were 2257, up 28% from last year.

The UK national figures have been forwarded to be included in Europe's figures.

The kites are now in the process of establishing territories and will shortly be building/refurbishing nests in preparation for raising this year's broods. Let's hope for another good breeding season.

2024 - > 20th Anniversary of the Release of the First Red Kites – Sylvia Jones

It may surprise you to know that in 2024 we celebrate 20 years since the release of the first red kites in the Lower Derwent Valley.

To mark the occasion, we plan to enlarge some of our regular events: Members' Meal Nights, AGM and our Gibside Family Fun Day. We also have suggestions for other events but would warmly welcome any ideas from our members and, in particular, of any other venues for our social events.

Many of you may have photographs of red kites and we could hold either an exhibition or competition or produce a 2024 calendar. We would particularly welcome any photos of the first 20 birds released in 2004 (wing tag: yellow 1-20).

We shall keep you informed of any dates/further developments in future Newsletters but, in the meantime, please let us know of any ideas you may have via the "Contact us" page on our website: <https://friendsofredkites.org.uk/contact-us>

Presentation to groups to raise awareness of our red kites - Harold Dobson

After red kite conservation, raising public awareness about our magnificent birds of prey is arguably the next most important task for us. Currently, a lot of information about the red kites is on our website and Facebook pages.

We are happy to offer a 40-minute powerpoint-assisted talk called "The Red Kite Returns" to various groups e.g. WI's, Church/U3As/Photographic and Wildlife groups. The talk chronicles the fascinating story of the re-introduction of the red kite in the north-east of England between 2004-2006, after an absence of over 170 years. It includes the history and annual natural history of this raptor and outlines the work done by FoRK to conserve the red kite.

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



Please get in touch for a booking form via the "Contact Us" page on our website or by emailing me: hfdobson@btinternet.com

Time to say "Goodbye" – Harold Dobson

We're very sad to report the passing of two of our stalwart health walkers in recent months. Being in their 80's, both Alf Jamson and Jim Martin were regarded as "tail-enders" in that we went at a slower pace and took rest breaks as/when needed. It was fascinating finding out about each of their long and active lives and I'm sure that, in addition to the exercise, Alf & Jim enjoyed the chat and social aspects of our health walks too. We will miss them.

Dates for your Dairy

Monday 24th April – Members' Night
Wednesday 21st June – Annual General Meeting
Sunday 3rd September – Gibside Red Kite Family Fun Day



Informal Sunday Lunch

You are cordially invited to an informal, 3-course Sunday Lunch at one of our member's Whickham home on Sunday 26th March 2023.

The meal comprises:

- Quiche/salads
- Tudor pork (A vegetarian option is available)
- Dessert
- Cheese



The meal will cost £10.00 and run from 1.00 pm – 5.00 pm. All the proceeds will go towards part-funding the cost of the tree climbers' fee for the June ringing/wing-tagging of this year's fledgling red kites.

There are 20 places available which will be offered on a "first come, first served" basis. If you are interested then please complete and return the slip below. I will notify you if you have been successful and provide further details.

Many thanks
Harold Dobson (Secretary)



To: FoRK Secretary, 19 Milverton Court, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2RD

I would like to attend the informal Sunday lunch on Sunday 26th March 2023

Name(s) [Please print]:

Address:

..... Post code.....

Email address:

Telephone number:

Would you require a vegetarian meal: Yes / No (please delete as appropriate)