



Newsletter, Spring 2025



National Red Kite Roost Survey 2025 – Ken Sanderson

Friends of Red Kites volunteers took part in a winter survey of roosting red kites on Sunday 12th January. Our figures contribute to the National Survey which took place throughout the UK on the same weekend.

The afternoon was cool but fine and dry with a light to moderate north westerly wind blowing for the kites to enjoy.

Seventeen volunteers turned out to survey 9 selected sites which had either held roosting kites in the past or had the potential to be a roost location.

There was the usual build-up of kites at the pre-roost gathering, circa 35, on the Hamsterley Mill Estate in Gateshead's Derwent Valley. The birds gather there waiting to be fed by some of the residents just before dusk.

A total of 69 kites were recorded at roost that evening; the count being well down on last year's figure of 122. The reason for the fall in numbers could be because the kites are using different roost sites, which we hadn't picked up on, and/or more kites are staying on territory. It had also been noted that, on earlier visits to the pre-roost gathering, the red kites headed off in several directions when they dispersed to the final roosts.



Photo by Vic Lawson

The main roost in the Pontburn Valley, c 1km south west of Hamsterley Mill, held 35 kites. Gibside and the surrounding area, which in previous years was the main roost site, only held 12 kites. Other surveyed sites either had fewer numbers or were pairs roosting on territory. Of note amongst these was a roost site at the top of the Derwent Valley, near Carterway Heads, Northumberland, which held 7 red kites.

Thank you to all those who took part in the survey.

We now look forward to kites moving back onto territory and preparing for the forthcoming breeding season.

Did you know ?

that the collective noun for a group of red kites is a **wake** or **kettle** or **husk** or **soar**?

Coffee Morning - Sylvia Jones

Fellside Methodist Church, Whickham, holds a charity coffee morning at the end of every month in the Church Hall. On Saturday 25th January, the money raised was given to FoRK.

There was a good range of home-made cakes, biscuits and scones with three large jars on the main table for donations. A number of FoRK members helped to serve the tea/coffee. It was very well organised by Avril who explained how she likes things organised,

The morning was well supported by health walkers and members. Lots of church members also supported it. There was a very happy, busy atmosphere. The tables in the Hall were full as well as in the back of the Church.

The Coffee Morning raised £215.55 for FoRK. A big THANK YOU to everyone who made this such a success.



Presentation to groups to raise awareness about 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 and X 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, U3A, 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 (35p per mile) as we are not funded by any external group. Please ask any interested parties to get in touch for a booking form via the "Contact Us" page on our website or by emailing me:

hfdobson@btinternet.com

A Date for your Diary...

We are planning to hold our annual Red Kite Family Fun Day on Sunday 6th July from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. This year the location has changed and the event will be held in the Pines area of Chopwell Wood (just off the main car park).

As usual there will be a red kite bus, provided by Go North East, and their entertainments team of a face painter and bubblogist. In addition to our Red Kite Information & Tombola stalls, the Friends of Chopwell Wood and Chopwell Men's shed will each have a stall. Forestry England will provide archery practice and a band along with a few catering vans offering refreshments and food.

