



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter, Winter 2018



Roosting Red Kites: Autumn & early Winter - Ken Sanderson & Paul Danielson

With the breeding season over and juvenile kites dispersing from their natal sites the attention of our monitoring teams has turned to looking for kite roosts in the Derwent Valley. The traditional roosting sites were checked out first; on the 17th September ten birds were recorded flying into roost from the viewpoint at Lockhaugh Farm. Five dropped into trees at Lockhaugh Meadow and five into the West Wood on the Gibside Estate. On the same evening, higher up the valley, viewed from the Pontburn Viaduct, near Hamsterley Mill, eleven kites were seen soaring in the distance beyond Hamsterley Hall. Four of these birds broke off and headed down the valley towards Rowlands Gill. It is assumed that the remaining birds roosted in that area, south west of Hamsterley Hall. The following week fourteen kites were observed roosting in this area.

Numbers built up slowly over the next couple of weeks and, by the second week in October, there were twenty kites roosting around the Nine Arches Viaduct area and sixteen kites roosting in the Lintzford Garden Centre area (the roost had moved down from beyond Hamsterley Hall). A feature of the roosts at this time was that they were very "loose" in both locations i.e. birds would be spread out in small groups within the general roost area. Perhaps an indication that they were unsettled and didn't know where they wanted to be.

More uncharacteristic behaviour became evident after that: On some evenings there would be very few kites (or none at all) at one of the locations, but circa thirty at the other. Total counts of kites from both locations, when known roosts were used on the same evening, had been fifty to sixty. And at the end of October around sixty kites were noted at a pre-roost gathering over Chopwell Woods, opposite Lintzford Garden Centre; the most ever noted at a pre-roost gathering. So, during November, the search was on for an additional roost site. This met with limited success when, on November 26th, twelve kites roosted in Struthers Wood, half a mile south of Hamsterley Hall, returning to a site they had used in mid-September. The fact that it was a very still, misty, murky evening probably kept numbers low and the same could be said for the low count of eighteen in Gibside on the same evening.

Hopefully, by the time of the National Red Kite roost count in January (date to be confirmed), the kites will have settled and all roost sites will have been found. FoRK will be inviting members of the public to this event and details will appear on our website.

Autumn long health walk - Roz Cowan

Once again, thanks to Glenn Dawson's organising skills, the Red Kite Health walkers enjoyed an eight-mile walk from Whitburn to Tynemouth on September 28th this year.

The walk covered some of the most spectacular scenery of the north east coast. Blessed with blue skies, sunshine, good company and, not forgetting the obligatory fish and chips, it was a day to remember and here's looking forward to 2019. Thanks again Glenn.

Members' Night - Sylvia Jones

On Wednesday November, 14th 30 members attended a dinner at the Marquis of Granby which is closing for renovations at Christmas.

I welcomed the group. Then pre-ordered meals were served very efficiently by Karen and her team of staff. There was even extra custard for those who wanted more. Fiona and Jon organised the raffle which raised £41 and everyone had a good time. Judy sent out the initial email and orders were returned to Harold who collated all of the information and ensured the Marquis staff knew exactly what was needed. Marian and Jackey warmly welcomed everyone who attended and Harold took photographs of the evening. This was, therefore, a real team effort!

After the meal, Ken gave an update about the red kite roosts which are quite spectacular if you choose the right time and place. The displays seem to change from day to day. I requested suggestions for new venues for members' nights and any ideas for the FoRK tenth anniversary celebrations next year. I then organised a Bob, Bobby and Robert quiz with the top team scoring 18/20.

Thank you to everyone for the raffle donations. A big thank you to everyone who helped to organise this event and ensure that everyone enjoyed the evening. Many thanks to the staff at the Marquis of Granby; many are moving to the Fellsider in Whickham but we do not think there is a suitable room there for us to use.



Our 10th Anniversary Celebrations - Harold Dobson

2019 will mark 10 years since the Friends of Red Kites was established and also fifteen years since the first cohort of red kites were re-introduced in the Derwent Valley via the five-year funded Northern Kites Project.

We are considering ways of commemorating this. One event is the possibility of holding a creative work called "On Red Kites" next October. Funding permitting, the music will be inspired by the red kites, created and performed by the Royal Northern Sinfonia. The dance itself will be performed by the Eliot Smith Contemporary Dance Company.

Do you have any suggestions as to how we can celebrate our 10th year? If you do then please do email me: hfdobson@btinternet.com



Finally, we would like to wish you, our members and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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