



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Newsletter Issue 06 September 2010

Dear Friends,

Membership (Judy Summerson)

We now have 268 'Friends'. It would be good to reach 300 by Christmas. Perhaps you might think of giving a membership as a Birthday or Christmas present. Details of Corporate membership will be available soon.

Current News of our Red Kites (Ken Sanderson and Ian Kerr)



The following is a summary of the 2010 breeding season for red kites in the north-east of England. A more detailed report will be issued in the near future.

Despite early fears about the impact of the worst winter for three decades on our re-introduced Red Kite population, it proved to be a good breeding year with more occupied territories and a small increase in fledged young.

There were 27 known active territories, 19 known incubating females, 13 successful nests fledging 24 young, of which 14 were ringed and 13 wing-tagged, and 6 failed nests (5 at incubation and 1 at the chick stage).

4 infertile eggs, collected from 3 nests at the time of ringing and wing tagging, have been sent to Lancaster University for analysis. Here, Ken and Keith Bowey are recording and ringing the Causey Gill chick.



Following reports of the deaths of kites in the Hexham area and at Hindley, Sylvia Jones and Judy Summerson have both been interviewed for BBC Look North programmes. These are opportunities for Friends of Red Kites to raise awareness about our increasingly important conservation work. The Journal, Morpeth Herald, Hexham Courant and Pont News & Views have all been supportive in reporting our news.

FREE Health Walks (Jackey Lockwood)

Health Walks have taken place every Monday afternoon since September 2009, and this report goes up to July 2010. Five of the Friends of Red Kites Committee members trained as Health Walk Leaders and led walks, at first based in the Derwenthaugh Park (as Northern Kites had done before them) then decided to vary the locations, but remain within the Derwent Valley. There are now four distinctive walks, each between 2.5 and 3 miles, offering a variety of landscape, flora and fauna but always with the prospect of viewing Red Kites. The walks are; Derwenthaugh Park to Lockhaugh, Rowlands Gill to Lintzgreen, the Lower Derwent to the River Tyne, and now South Sherburn in Rowlands Gill replacing the Shibdon Pond walk.

There is a regular core of walkers who come out at least once a month, many more often than that, to participate in the range of locations. The terrain is level or with a gentle gradient so it is possible to talk as well as walk! New people regularly join the list of walkers which now stands at fifty-nine. Each week the number of participants can vary between six and nineteen but the average group size is twelve. The weather has been varied but people turn up prepared for whatever it may bring, and even in the depth of last winter the walks were enjoyed.



The feedback from walkers has been positive with some useful suggestions. Some walkers have now been trained as Leaders. Many people are aware of the benefits of regular exercise and these walks encourage people to be outside enjoying the fresh air, the countryside and companionship of other walkers, and a cup of tea at the end of their endeavour.

Health Walks Programme Please meet at 1.30pm at the following starting points:
Winlaton Mill car park, Derwenthaugh Park on September 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th;
Stirling Lane car park, Rowlands Gill on October 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th;
B&Q Car Park, Swalwell on November 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th;
Vale of Derwent car park, Rowlands Gill on December 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th.

All details are on our website <http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk/page11.htm>

All enquiries phone 07790 085659

Presentations and Events (Sylvia Jones and Judy Summerson)

The team continues to enjoy a variety of events and activities. We attended a wine tasting group with an interest in wildlife. The wine (some home made) was an extra attraction. **Future events include:**

September 2nd Longhorsley WI , 7th Whitley Bay Rotary, 15th Extra Coastal Walk and 18th Gibside Walk

October 20th Derwentside Residents

November 18th Tyneside Rotary and 24th Cullercoats Gentlemen.

We responded to a request from the Health Walkers to arrange a coastal walk from Newton to Craster. It was cloudy, but dry and the sea was spectacular.

The AGM was a great success with 42 members present. Once again the food at Chaplin's was excellent. We enjoyed a red kite game then socialised with friends old and new. Please come along and join us .

Dates for your diary: details in due course.

Social Evening - Wednesday, 10th November; **Red Kite Safari** - Saturday, 13th November and

Roost Watch - Saturday, 11th December at 2.30pm

Our New Banners

We have taken delivery of new Banners which are a valuable asset at Events and when giving Presentations.



On the left, Jackey Lockwood and Marian Williams are taking delivery of the Banner from Sign Sign Signs, of Swalwell.

On the right, members of the Friends Committee - June Atkinson, Sylvia Jones and Ken Sanderson, our Chairman, take delivery of our two Pop-up Banners from Chromazone. The photographic kite images were donated by Ian Curran. The Banner designs were created by our Graphics Team, Karen and Patrick Malone.



Here are the Pop-up banners in production. Our thanks go to the Staff of both firms for their co-operation.



CHROMAZONE KINGSWAY NORTH TEAM VALLEY GATESHEAD NE11 0JH
0191 487 1999 www.chromazone-imaging.co.uk info@chromazone-imaging.co.uk

Kitewatch Summer 2010 (Marian Williams)

Kitewatch came to a successful conclusion at the end of July after eight Sundays on Kite Hill in the Derwent Country Park. It was run with a Gateshead Ranger and a team of FoRK volunteers, and involved erecting a Gazebo, and setting up an information and viewing point for visitors. Kite-related Children's activities were also available, weather permitting.

We had a great response to our requests for help from our Members, both new and experienced Kitewatchers. There were 24 different volunteers involved, which in total equated to approximately 216 hours of volunteering, quite impressive. Visitor numbers were approximately 265, which considering the sometimes difficult weather conditions, and competing against sporting events such as the World Cup and Wimbledon, is pretty good. Many visitors were locals, but quite a few were from outside the immediate area, including a couple from Skipton who had come here for their holidays just to see Red Kites. We did have one wet day, and two or three very windy days where we could not use the Gazebo or provide Children's activities, but our volunteers stuck it out, and were invariably cheerful and welcoming to the visitors, and it was a lovely opportunity to socialise and get to know everyone better.



Although we did not have an active nest to view, with Flag and Red Philip having gone their separate ways this year (for no known reason), we still had plenty of good kite activity, and most visitors would have seen kites. It was interesting to see how well the kites coped in sometimes very strong winds, and Red Philip was still around, regularly perching near his nest site for long periods, so we got some good views of him through the telescopes. On one occasion we were treated to a spectacular flying display by two kites aggressively dive bombing each other and nearly locking talons, possibly a dispute over a territory, but such superb flying was interesting to watch. Without all our Volunteers, this event would not have been as successful as it was, so once again, a big Thank You to all of you who helped out.



Ziggy - A personal obituary by Alan Mould

I am particularly saddened by this latest piece of news, having been present at the release of Ziggy back in 2005, though she only flew a few yards into the trees above us, allowing me to take the attached photo.

Since then I've followed her fortunes as my own adopted kite, not too difficult as she was regularly spotted at either Barlow Fell or Sherburn Towers Farm where she would perch on the pylons allowing easy recognition, and I even ID'd her over my garden on a couple of occasions, which were cracking moments.

Local sightings obviously stopped after she paired up last year, indeed up until then I don't think anyone even knew what sex she was, but even though I was chuffed when she successfully became a parent, I have to add that even then I wished she had chosen somewhere a bit 'safer' to nest. RIP Ziggy and Ponteland Sunrise.



Contact details for Committee

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Treasurer
Events and Presentations
Health Walks

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Press & Publicity; Editor

Mr. Ken Sanderson
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Keep up-to-date by visiting our Website: www.friendsofredkites.org.uk

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has kindly reported sightings or given photographs and information. If you have any recent photographs which you would like to share with us, please send them via our website or to june.atkinson@virgin.net

A report by Claire Buchanan, Red Kite Community Officer, Highlands of Scotland, follows.

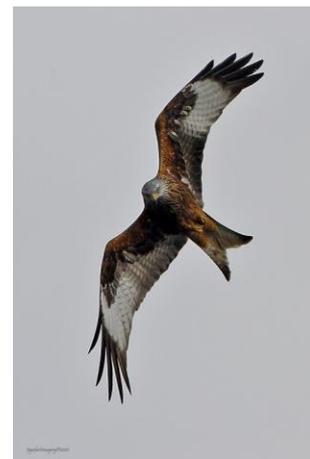
The Project that Claire is heading is the outcome from a manuscript put together by a team of red kite experts who have investigated the impact that illegal poisoning has had on the Scottish population of red kites.

Claire Buchanan, Red Kite Community Officer with RSPB Scotland

I've been working on the **Eyes to the Skies project** now since April 2009. This project's aim is to raise awareness, knowledge and understanding for the red kites which live on the Black Isle although the project area extends beyond this and covers the Inverness, Easter Ross and Cairngorms National Park areas. I'm sure you've heard of Brian Etheridge as the man responsible for monitoring this population – I am the face to face people engagement officer if you like for our kites up here. So, I guess the two of us are a fairly small team however we are building up a little army of volunteers who help us with the various aspects of our work...

Tollie red kite feeding station

Still in its early stages of development but we have a really good working relationship with the local Brahan Estate (a shooting/fishing/activity holiday type estate) on whose land we are creating 'Tollie red kites', the third feeding facility for feeding red kites in Scotland. We started feeding back in March and since then red kites have been fairly regular visitors to the feeding table however in nowhere near the numbers seen at other sites. We are going to be doing all we can to entice them in over this winter period. Ultimately we want to provide a destination for locals and tourists to get great close up views of these birds to then allow us to tell them the red kites story around these parts. We also want to promote the positive link we have created with a local estate – a relationship in itself built up around red kites.



Satellite tagging of red kites

In 2009 we satellite-tagged 14 young red kite chicks who all fledged on the Black Isle. The project website (www.eyestotheskies.org.uk) shows the latest travels of these juveniles. We have unfortunately lost some of these birds along the way – some accidental via road traffic accidents/wind turbine collisions and some not so accidental and under the subject of current police investigation. Not only is satellite tagging interesting from a research point of view (showing dispersal patterns of the juveniles at great detail) it may go some way towards preventing wildlife crime. There is a great awareness in the area that these birds have been tagged and are being monitored and the police investigation into the unusual disappearance of one of the birds was high profile at the time. It also goes some way to creating a community ownership of these birds especially since most of them have been adopted by local schools.



Education work with local schools

Adopt-a-kite – 15 schools in total have been involved in adopting a sat-tagged bird which they have named and are helping to track. These schools receive 2 classroom based lessons covering all aspects of the kite's life – a third visit involves a trip out to the feeding station. To roll out the red kite message to other schools in the project area we have developed a red kite assembly piece – a short 15 minute play followed by a short talk on red kites and a Question and Answer session.

Talks and Events

I aim to attend local events (inc. Farmers markets) with project news and updates as well as giving red kites talks in the area. We have also had special children's activity afternoons e.g. scavenger hunts. Guided walks will be running throughout the month of October.

Community hubs

I have developed some interpretation and am in contact with local businesses/establishments to set up red kite community hubs – much like the community clusters of the Northern kites project, drop in points where people may pick up more red kite info/receive project updates.

You will see then that we are attempting much of the same as was created as part of Northern Kites however, all within the context of our established population up here. Last year we had 49 breeding pairs of red kites – this year 53. (Brian found a couple of new sites!) Continuing to raise good numbers of chicks however, we are not seeing these same numbers breeding hence the reason we are still way behind the Chilterns population. I think we also have a long way to go – a lot of locals have no idea of the pressures which our kites have been facing and continue to face. We are also trying to get people to think of these birds as not belonging to the RSPB but to everyone in a sense. When the red kites were first introduced here back in 1989 there was some publicity but the whole reintroduction was still kept very secret – not at all like Northern kites where communities were involved every step of the way.