



# Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

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



## Newsletter, Spring 2016

### European Wintering Red Kite Census 2016 - Paul Danielson

As part of the European wintering red kite census 15 volunteers took part in roost checks within our area on the 8th and 9th of January. The main count was centered on Nine Arches viaduct/Gibside with two other areas covered, Victoria Garesfield and the Derwent Gorge.

From the viewpoint at Nine Arches, 3 volunteers, and from Lockhaugh Farm, 2 volunteers, counted 32 Kites going into three different roost areas; the main two being 9 into Hollinside Manor and 12 into various parts of Gibside woods. The remaining 9 were either dropping into other areas or were lost from sight when they flew in behind woods.

3 further volunteers had disappointing results watching from Derwent Gorge/ Muggleswick with no kites seen.

On the Friday evening 3 volunteers observed Victoria Garesfield and had 10 Kites going into roost.

A further volunteer watched from Lintzford and although he reported up to a possible 14 kites moving over the wood they may well have been the same birds ranging around the woods; 7 is more likely an accurate total. The most seen at one time in the air was 6. At 4.15 a very wet and bedraggled kite carrying food coming in from Hamsterley Mill headed straight for the wood.



Two further volunteers watched from Victoria Garesfield on the Saturday and reported eight kites going into roost although visibility was very poor.

Watched from Lintzford Garden Centre a volunteer noted kites were coming from the south and west; these seemed to use the area as a meeting place as they circled around in small groups (of 2 to 5) for a time before moving off. 14 kites in all passed through with only 3 drifting off east presumably towards the roost at Gibside. 11 drifted off north presumably heading towards the Victoria Garesfield roost.

Other birds seen were notably Buzzards a pair at Nine Arches and 4 at Lintzford.

At a recent monitoring team meeting a review of the winter roost checks took place. Concerns were expressed at the significant reduction in numbers of roosting kites in the Derwent Valley during the winter compared with last year. This after a promising build-up of numbers of circa 40+ in November. Apart from the main roost at the Nine Arches Viaduct and the smaller roost at Victoria Garesfield; no other roosts were found. Could the kites have been staying on territory because of a generally milder winter? As we move into the spring, territories are now being monitored for breeding activity and this will give a good indication of kite numbers.

## **Gibside's "Red Kite Ramble with a Ranger" - Harold Dobson & Judy Summerson**

As is usual in the National Trust Gibside calendar, the annual "Red Kite Ramble with a Ranger" took place on the afternoons of Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February.

We had a disappointing 5 and 4 people attending on each day respectively. After a brief welcome and introduction about the red kites, the ramble headed off to the Orangerie which afforded excellent views across the water meadow to Rowlands Gill. It then headed along to the west side of Gibside Hall to look over Lockhaugh and Ladyhaugh meadows.

The weather was excellent on the Thursday afternoon with clear blue skies and little wind. Superb low-level sightings were made of the kites gliding close around the Orangerie. However, the weather was dull and damp on the Sunday and only distant views were made of the kites through the gloom. However, on returning to the tea room, a number of red kites swooped down low over the walled garden providing excellent close-up views..... a happy ending !!

We offer our thanks to Marian Williams & Geoff Glendenning for their support on the Rambles.

## **EXCITEMENT AT ROWLANDS GILL PRIMARY SCHOOL - Judy Summerson**

Thanks to the PTA, Governors, parents and friends, Rowlands Gill Primary School now has a very smart red kite-shaped wooden table in their school grounds. The table was built by a former pupil of the school and will be well used to watch red kites and for outdoor lessons. The whole school attended the opening ceremony together with many parents, grandparents and the local Councillor, John Hamilton. The children sang songs, read poems and released balloons to celebrate the occasion. The children were asked to report any balloons that landed in their gardens. The sun shone and this was a very happy and exciting occasion.



The school are very committed to the red kites: they have a kite on their school badge, they adopted a kite with the Northern Kites Project and are now joining the 'Befriend a Kite' project organised by the Friends of Red Kites.



## **Sales of Calendars - Fiona Clapham**

Thank you all for your valued support in purchasing the calendars. We sold all but a handful of the 150 ordered from Print Point. Two were sold online!

Everyone seems to be impressed with the picture quality, in particular Nigel Vickers from Chromazone - a professional no less!

Quite a number were sold to Red Kite Health Walkers after my none-too-subtle hints on the Monday walks.

I hope all your calendars are being filled with important and exciting things!

The money raised will be put towards the tree climbing/wing-tagging costs.



## Members' Night Report - Sylvia Jones



On Wednesday February 24<sup>th</sup> 63 Friends of Red Kites members attended our Spring meeting at the Red Kite pub. Louise and her staff served a very good meal. Ken gave us updates about the red kites and gave out 'sightings sheets' so we can collect information about the kites. Sylvia provided details about future events. Ken had also provided a 'sit com' picture quiz to be completed during the meal. Fiona collected £85 from the sale of raffle tickets. Thank you to members who contributed raffle prizes and all those who bought tickets. This is a useful source of income for us.

Ken then introduced Colin Heath, the wildlife crime officer for Northumbria police. Colin is a very experienced and dedicated police officer who obviously loves his job. His powerpoint presentation gave us a huge amount of useful information. There are many wildlife laws which can affect us in our monitoring of red kites. His information covered all wildlife and some of it was very shocking but it provided facts we need to be aware of. Harold provided a vote of thanks and we all agreed it was an enjoyable and informative evening.

If anyone wishes to help out with future events please contact any member of the committee.



## Kite View Point Information Panels - Ken Sanderson



On February 29<sup>th</sup> the first of three new information panels was installed at a favourite red kite view point on the Derwent Walk between the Rowlands Gill Viaduct and Lintz Green station.

The information panel replaces a previous one which had been vandalised. Friends of Red Kites decided to update the displayed information at the same time.

There is also a panel at the Sherburn Towers bus terminal view point in Rowlands Gill which will be replaced in the near future with the updated information.

A brand new display board will be installed at the Nine Arches Viaduct on the Derwent Walk. The replacement panels have been kindly sponsored by Prism Financial Advice Ltd, one of our Corporate members.

The brand new installation on the Nine Arches Viaduct has been sponsored by Marian Williams, a FoRK committee member, in memory of her mother who loved all birds.

The work was carried out by Steve & Jackey Lockwood, Paul Danielson and Ken Sanderson who had great views of the kites during the installation.