



Friends of Red Kites

in the North East of England

www.friendsofredkites.org.uk



Celebration Newsletter Summer 2014

Membership Judy Summerson Membership Secretary

We now have 331 members. This is a record, so thank you all for joining and encouraging others to join us. Your support is much appreciated. A strong, active and enthusiastic membership is essential if we are to continue to raise awareness, monitor and record our red kites on a regular basis. Your help is needed to protect and maintain a sustainable population of these magnificent birds of prey in Gateshead's beautiful Derwent Valley.

2014 Red Kite Breeding Survey Report Ken Sanderson Chairman and Kite Officer

A record number of thirty-four red kite chicks has fledged in the north east of England this summer, nearly twice as many as last year. The extensive red kite survey in the spring and early summer (featured in the Spring Newsletter) discovered more territories and nests, thirty-one in all, and this is the main reason for the increase. The best spring weather for years meant fewer nest failures, contributing to the increase. From the thirty-one occupied territories twenty-six clutches were incubated of which six failed, three fewer than last year.

2014 has also been the best yet in the ringing and wing tagging of fledgling chicks with twenty-two being ringed and nineteen chicks wing tagged. Although



most nests contained two chicks, there were two nests which had broods of three. This year's colour on the tag fitted to the right wing is orange (see right photograph). All kites from the north east fitted with tags carry a pink one on the left wing. The wing tags this year have an 8mm underwing extension (see left photograph) to which the individual alpha numeric identification has been placed. This



will assist in monitoring the juveniles in the future. Any sightings of tagged birds would be greatly appreciated and can be reported via the website.

Despite good coverage with the Kite Survey there are still concerns that red kites are not spreading out from the core area as expected. There has been no confirmation of breeding in Northumberland and only five pairs bred in Durham outside of the core area in the Derwent Valley. A more comprehensive report of the Kite Survey and 2014 breeding season will be available in the next two months.

Many thanks to Keith Bowey for carrying out the ringing and assisting with the wing tagging, and to everyone else who helped at these sessions. Also, a big thank you to all those who took part in the Kite Survey and have supported the monitoring work. It is greatly appreciated.

A Fantastic Team Effort to get Injured Kite back into the Wild.

On the evening of Saturday, 24th May, one of our kites was discovered grounded and injured on the Hamsterley Hall Estate. The kite was wing tag A6, a male bird, one of a breeding pair with a nest and single chick very close to where he was found. Steven Spry, the landowner, and his partner Holly Brown gave initial care and later that evening took him up to the Prince Bishop Vets at Leadgate. Allan Withrington received a call from the Vet at 9.45pm and immediately went up to look at the kite and discuss treatment. A6, named Sedgefield Blaze by his adopted school, had suffered a severe head injury with some minor lacerations on the wings. It was agreed that the bird be kept overnight and checked out the following morning.



Sedgefield Blaze survived the night but was not very alert and hadn't eaten so the Vets kindly agreed to keep him until he showed signs of improvement. Meanwhile, back at the nest, the female was having to feed the youngster on her

own. To make it easier for her, supplementary feeding was carried out near the nest site. This meant that she didn't have to forage very far from the nest, so wouldn't have to leave the chick for long periods.

By Tuesday morning, Sedgefield Blaze was looking brighter and had attempted to eat something, so Allan took him to our rehabilitation pen at Lockhaugh to continue his care and administration of antibiotics. But by Thursday his health was deteriorating and Chris Bennett of Talon Falconry offered to take him down to his place at Lightwater Valley where he would receive expert treatment from his Vet, who immediately put him on a drip feed and 24 hours Intensive Care and prepared us for the worst. Fortunately the kite showed significant signs of improvement, and with a diet of quail, mice and day-old chickens over the next few weeks he became much stronger and was gaining weight rapidly. His head was healing nicely, too, with some of the feathering growing back in on his forehead. It will never be known what caused his injury but it is thought that he had hit a wire at speed, probably whilst being chased by crows.



On the 20th June, after four weeks in rehab., Sedgefield Blaze was released back into the wild. He flew strongly and perched on the top of a tree near the nest site. The female was aware of his presence and just showed a mild interest in him by circling round a few times, then she ignored him. Sedgefield Blaze has not been seen on territory since his release so the female has almost certainly "divorced" him. Perhaps we will see him in the roost this autumn. Ending on a happy note, the chick fledged at the end of June.

Our thanks go to everyone involved in getting Sedgefield Blaze released back into the wild:

- Steven Spry and Holly Brown for the initial care and continued support.
- Prince Bishop Vets, Leadgate, for looking after the kite in the early days after injury.
- Allan Withrington, for co-ordinating activities, and Harold Dobson & Eric Nicholson administering TLC whilst the bird was at Lockhaugh.
- Susan and Warren Butterworth, and Mike Harbinson for supplementary feeding at the nest.
- Paul Danielson for monitoring work at the nest site.
- Chris Bennett, Talon Falconry, and his Vet for their effort and resources in getting Sedgefield Blaze fully fit.

News of Wing Tag 18, Zeus



Yorkshire Kites have confirmed that Wing Tag 18 is near Pocklington, and has bred successfully.

His story can be found on Individual Histories here:
<http://www.friendsofredkites.org.uk/page13.htm>

He was adopted by Front Street Community Primary School, Whickham, Gateshead in 2004 and named Zeus.



<http://www.yorkshireredkites.net/>

News too, of Scarlet, Wing Tag 02. She has two chicks this year, and, since she joined the Yorkshire Kites, in 2005, she has had at least fifteen chicks. All of our kites which defected to Yorkshire have bred successfully!

Anniversary Event **ON RED KITE WINGS** at Sage Gateshead **June Atkinson Press & Publicity**

Members will have followed our major Event **On Red Kite Wings**, a collaboration involving FoRK, University of Newcastle and Sage Gateshead. Saturday 5 July was a huge success. The building



was buzzing with activity and the two concerts, presented by our Patron, Trai Anfield, were well received. Over forty volunteers manned the Concourse displays, Amble School sang their hearts out and the Stocksfield Stompers had the entire audience tapping their feet! The Red Kite mobiles created by Rowlands Gill Primary School enchanted everyone as they appeared to fly from the two Hall balconies. It was the culmination of a year's preparation - we raised public awareness of our Red Kites and we now have Music to celebrate the return of the kites to our northern skies.

The Red Kite mosaic was resplendent on Performance Square. Lifted for the last time, it will now go to a group in Scotland, to help in the fight against persecution in the most affected area in the UK - the Black Isle.

Tara Farley, Day Centre Officer Disability Services & Independent Living :

Our Rowlands Gill Guidepost group enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at the Red Kite event at the Sage. We met at the Sage Concourse and enjoyed looking at all the displays and a visit to the Red Kite bus to see the lovely photographs from the competition. The Concert was amazing! We all agreed it was one of the best events we have been to, with one gentleman saying he had never been invited to anything like it before. Once again, we would like to thank the Friends of Red Kites for their continuing support of Guidepost.



Our **Anniversary Photographic** competition was won by Mick Render, one of our long-standing members. His beautiful and striking portrait was printed to A3 by Chromazone of Gateshead, a firm which has given tremendous support over the years, especially in the magnificent creation of both the Flight of the Red Kite Exhibition images, taken by Kaleel Zibe and of the 150 tile mosaic, which was built in so many prestigious places in the north east by FoRK volunteers and intrigued visitors from all over the world.

Sage Gateshead General Director Anthony Sargent CBE wrote: "I am SO glad it went off so well. From the very start it seemed an idea with **so** much potential, and the result more than justified all the work everyone involved had invested in it. I was really thrilled with the result."

Health Walks in 2014 **Jackey Lockwood** **Co-ordinator**

The Health Walks, led by Friends of Red Kites volunteers, continue to be well attended in this, our fifth anniversary year. All four different walks are in the Derwent Valley. Each month we select one of these routes for our programme. It has been interesting to see how the flora and fauna have changed as the year has progressed.

In **January** the walks followed the River Derwent south past Swalwell Visitor Centre then north to its confluence with the River Tyne. With so few leaves on the trees it was possible to spot winter migrant birds such as redwing as well as resident birds such as goosander. The **February** walks were along the Derwent Walk Railway Path in Co. Durham. It goes past the old Lintzgreen station to the viaducts which give all-round views of the landscape. From the View Point on the Walk red kites were observed each week.



In **March** and **April** we started at Winlaton Mill. The first walk went north along the River Derwent, then on to the Derwent Walk and south to re-cross the river at the Butterfly Bridge. The dippers and red kites were calling and there was a haze of green on the trees. The second walk from Winlaton Mill went south through Derwenthaugh Park, around Kite Hill and on to the Nine Arches viaduct. Some weeks we went down on to the Meadows and were rewarded with spectacular views of blackthorn blossom as well as the song of migrant birds such as chiffchaff.



By **May** the walk was back to the Derwent Walk Railway Path in Co. Durham. What a difference a few months had made. The vegetation had many shades of green, May blossom and broom were stunning to see and the birdsong from blackbird, robin, great tit, blackcap and willow warbler was a treat to hear. In **June** the walks went along the multi-user route in Derwenthaugh Park again, past Clockburn Lake and on to the Derwent Walk. By this stage the Meadows were rich in wild flowers as well as insects and bird song.

We are very fortunate to be able to enjoy some of the best outdoor spaces there are in Gateshead. The walks continue each Monday from 1.30pm to 3pm. The start point in **July** is Winlaton Mill car park, and in **August** it will be Sands Road car park. For regular walkers the 3-mile free walks help maintain fitness. You will be welcome if you wish to join us; please register when you arrive.

Red Kite Trail Leaflet

For those who want a longer walk the Red Kite Trail is an 11 mile route which can easily be divided in to 4 mile and 7 mile sections. The waymarking has all been checked this year by FoRK. Both the Trail leaflet and the detailed guide on our website have been updated. Enjoy the walking.

Anniversary Kitewatch **Marian Williams** Co-ordinator

Our Anniversary Kitewatch on Sunday the 8th June was a brilliant success – the kites were wonderful, and our visitor numbers were very good. The weather was warm, a mixture of sun and cloud, at times quite breezy, but only one brief shower at lunchtime.



The kites performed excellently - WT43 Swift and her Untagged partner from the corner nest at Paddock Hill, were clearly visible a lot of the time, either perched, where we could get good views through the telescopes, or flying. There was also a dramatic display of an aerial combat between the male kite and a crow, with talon grappling, and some plunging down in to the tree canopy.

Ken Sanderson confirmed there were two chicks in the corner nest, and at least one in the Hollinside nest. We were also treated to a couple of low passes by a kite over and near Kite Hill, probably interested in what we were all doing on the hill. Sadly there was no Red Philip this time as he had moved on to pastures new.

We had a steady stream of visitors – new and old members, past and present volunteers, plus a regular number of the general public. Two cyclists stopped by and had their first ever view of kites, both perched and flying. Two of our members now living near Stratford, had come back to the North East for the weekend, particularly to come along to visit Kitewatch again. There was plenty of good chat, and many people spent the majority of the day with us; there was a lovely atmosphere, probably also helped by the weather. Caron Henderson RSPB also attended and supplied some children's activities – sadly there were not many children, but it was good to share the day with her.

My grateful thanks to the FoRK Committee, Volunteers and Gateshead Countryside Team for their invaluable support of this event, making it the great success that it was.

Greetings Cards

Fiona Clapham kindly organised a set of Greetings Cards using eight images from our Flight of the Red Kite Exhibition. Kaleel Zibe gave his permission for his photographs to be used. The cards first went on sale at our AGM in June and then at Sage Gateshead, where they offered a lasting reminder of the wonderful iconic venues which were used to build the red kite mosaic and the highly acclaimed Exhibition.



Red Kite Reverie **Eric Nicholson**

The success of our tenth Anniversary event, **On Red Kite Wings**, at Sage Gateshead is well behind us now. Everyone I talked to hugely enjoyed the concert, children's musical performances, the concourse displays, the kite mosaic, the kite bus and everything else about the day, which I named *Scintillating Saturday!*

I helped to organise the creative writing feature and would like to thank Fiona and Kathleen who helped to put up the display. Many thanks also to June and Sylvia who spent time choosing photos and collating submissions. The response to write something was enthusiastic and came from members of Fork and non-members alike. We had about twenty pieces on show including an acrostic poem, a concrete poem, a parody, prose and poetry. We were able to choose some striking photos to go with the written work to provide a varied visual experience. The work was positioned at eye level on both sides of blue background boards and looked great next to the school children's colourful display.

It is difficult to select just *one* piece from the range submitted, but, especially for the Newsletter, here's one of my favourites.

Return

"When the kite builds, look to your lesser linen"
Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale

I stretch to peg limp socks on the line
and see the bird float over the roof,
twice the size of anything else
in these skies. Wings light as balsa,
flight feathers stretched to tongue the air.

Once they drifted in smoke from beehive ovens,
scavenged the turnpike. Tidiness and poison
did for them. Nostalgia brought them back.

This one's scanning my garden for carrion,
circling my smalls. I catch a ginger flash
as it tilts its origami tail,
braces against the breeze,
rights itself to fit the sky.

Lesley Mountain



One of our 2014 chicks - H6 flying strongly in Causey Gill - Mick Render

Flight of the Red Kite Exhibition Durham World Heritage Centre 1st – 31st May 2014

A chance visit to the World Heritage Centre in Durham became an inspiration to **Allan Withrington**. He was so impressed by the gallery that he set about planning and organising using the Centre to stage our Flight of the Red Kite Photographic Exhibition. As you may recall the exhibition photographs depict the giant kite mosaic "flying" at several iconic locations in the north east.

With sixteen Friends of Red Kites (FoRK) volunteers briefed and ready to engage the public in one of our 10th Anniversary Celebrations, and fully prepared to raise awareness of red kites and their conservation, the exhibition opened on May 1st. An incredible number of 1572 visited the exhibition during the month which included people from Japan, New Zealand and America, as well as many parts of the UK. Feedback in the visitors book indicates that none went away disappointed. For those who attended on the Whitsuntide Saturday their experience was enhanced further when a "flight" of the giant kite mosaic took place on the Palace Green.



Unloading tiles from the car. Well everything has got to start somewhere!



Red Kite mosaic in the shelter of Durham Cathedral.

Friends of Red Kites would like to give *enormous* thanks to all those who helped launch this very successful exhibition. They include: Allan Withrington and his team of FoRK volunteers, staff and volunteers at the World Heritage Centre, Durham Cathedral, Castle, University and Durham Markets. A more comprehensive report will appear in our Celebration Brochure in September.

Report: Ken Sanderson

Thanks to all those whose contributions and photographs have been included. June Atkinson July 2014