

Wildlife Notes 35 1st February 2023

Well, I must start with some quite exciting wildlife news this month. Over the last couple of weeks a Red Kite has been living in our area, mostly around Downfield, Newhall and Cults. I've been lucky enough to have good views of it 4 times, including today, when the sunshine allowed me to see it's super colours as it slowly flapped and hung in the wind, searching for anything it could catch or scavenge to eat. A large bird, a bit bigger than a buzzard, the distinctive feature which makes it really easy to identify, is the "V" shape of it's tail. I've included photos, taken today by Margaret Ronaldson, which is a lovely record of our own rare bird of prey. The first shows the Kite being mobbed by a crow, and the second shows the "V" tail.



Red Kites used to be very common right across Britain, scavenging on our left overs, but persecution eventually drove it to near extinction until only a few were left in remote parts of Wales. However, over the last 30 years or so, there has been a programme of reintroductions, as well as a natural spread until today Red Kites are found almost everywhere in UK. However, they are still very unusual in our area, and this is the first one I have recorded in Burnturk/ Cults.

Also in the sky at the same time was a buzzard, and a kestrel, so it really was a bird of prey festival this afternoon!

Did you do the RSPB Big Garden birdwatch last weekend? I did, but I had lower numbers of birds than usual. All the same species as last year, but not as many. I suspect that many of them were having a bit of spring fever and were away checking out nest sites or beginning to establish territories as I have not noted a decline in numbers generally over the winter.

It's been nice to see a bit of sunshine over the last week, which has encouraged some of the flowers to open up a bit, and I now have a cheerful display of aconites and the snowdrops are beginning to open at last. It will soon be time to start looking for the tiny flowers on hazel trees, tiny red tufts at the end of the buds, which will turn into the hazel nuts later in the year.

Alison