

Red Kite

Milvus milvus

Bird · Resident · here all year



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A large, long-winged raptor with rusty-red body and wing linings, pale grey head and a deeply forked tail that it twists continuously as a rudder. Red kites were extinct across Scotland for over a century; the Galloway Kite Trail near Loch Ken stems from a reintroduction programme begun in 2001, and kites are now a regular sight in the skies north-west of Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

Kites are primarily scavengers, quartering low and slow over farmland and roadside for carrion, earthworms and scraps, and rarely killing anything larger than a small mammal. The forked tail flexes constantly, giving an unmistakably loose, buoyant flight. They are famously casual nest-builders, decorating the nest with anything portable — plastic bags, cloth, paper — a habit noted by Shakespeare.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Hawks, kites and eagles (Accipitridae)
SIZE	60–66 cm · wingspan up to 1.8 m
UK STATUS	Green-listed

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