

Welcome to the Galloway Kite Trail! This circular route takes you through some of the most impressive scenery in the south of Scotland, rich in birds, mammals and wild flowers. Whether you are somebody who loves the peace and tranquillity of the countryside or a keen wildlife watcher, there will be something of interest to you.



The trail is a suggested route which has been designed to give you the best chance to see red kites in the beautiful countryside of Galloway. In addition, there is a range of other wildlife and historical attractions to see around the trail, and a selection of places to eat and stay which offer good service and opportunities to find out more about red kites.

#### THE RED KITE STORY

Red kites are one of Britain's rarest and most beautiful birds of prey. They were once widespread and common throughout the country.

#### KITES AS STREET CLEANERS

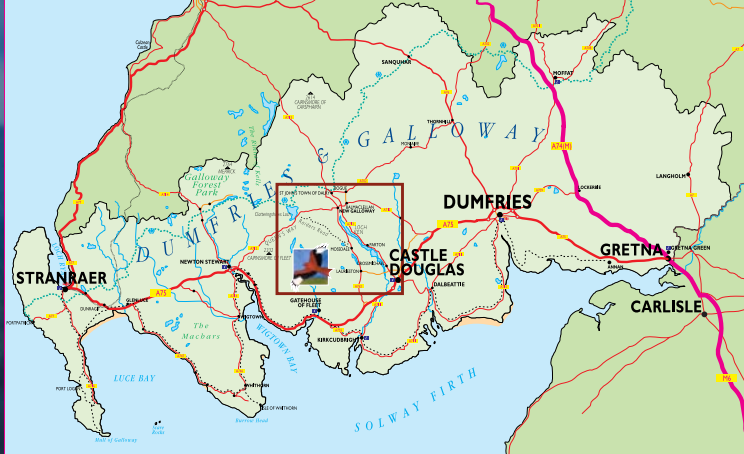
In medieval times, towns and villages had no dustmen like today, and townspeople welcomed kites as scavenging street cleaners! So, why did they disappear?

#### KITES AS VICTIMS

In common with other birds of prey, red kites became heavily persecuted from the 16th century. Wrongly accused of taking game, kites were shot, poisoned and trapped to near extinction. The last pair bred in Dumfries & Galloway around 1870.

#### KITES AS SURVIVORS

A small population of red kites hung on in mid Wales, its last refuge in the UK. However, with the spread of more enlightened attitudes and the huge growth of public interest in wildlife, the RSPB and government agencies, working in partnership with landowners, raptor workers and farmers, launched an exciting reintroduction programme. After more than one hundred years of absence, red kites can now be seen in several areas of the UK, including Galloway.



## GALLOWAY KITE TRAIL

### USEFUL CONTACTS AND GENERAL INFORMATION

**RSPB Scotland**, South and West Scotland Office,  
10 Park Quadrant, Glasgow, G3 6BS.  
Tel: 0141 331 0993, [www.rspb.org.uk/scotland](http://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland)

**Forestry Commission Scotland**, Galloway Forest District, Creebridge,  
Newton Stewart, DG8 6AJ. Tel: 01671 402420, [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)

**Scottish Natural Heritage**, Galloway Office, Holm Park Industrial Estate,  
New Galloway Road, Newton Stewart DG8 6BF.  
Tel: 01671 401075, [www.snh.gov.uk](http://www.snh.gov.uk)

**Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board** - call 01387 253862  
[www.visit-dumfries-and-galloway.co.uk](http://www.visit-dumfries-and-galloway.co.uk)  
[www.visitsouthernscotland.com](http://www.visitsouthernscotland.com)  
*for more information about red kites visit*  
[www.gallowaykitetrail.com](http://www.gallowaykitetrail.com)

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND CYCLING

Information on public transport in the area can be obtained from:  
Dumfries and Galloway Traveline - Call 0870 6082608  
If you wish to hire a bike contact:  
Loch Ken Holiday Park. Call 01644 470282.  
Ace Cycles, 11 Church Street, Castle Douglas. - Call 01556 504542.  
G & M Newton, Licensed Grocers, 17 Main St, St John's Town of Dalry, Call 01644 430225

When going to print, all the accommodation providers were members of the Tourist Board, and all the information in this leaflet was correct.  
The Galloway Kite Trail Partnership cannot be held responsible for any changes in the quality or nature of any of the facilities listed around the trail.



# GALLOWAY KITE TRAIL





## RED KITE ~ IS IT OR ISN'T IT?

### LOOK FOR

- Generally rusty-red plumage; white patches under wings
- Black wing-tips spread like fingers
- Distinctive, long, forked tail.
- Tail is a rich rust-red colour and is often twisted in flight

### WHY CHOOSE HERE TO RELEASE RED KITES?

The varied landscape of woodland, farmland, marsh and hill around Loch Ken makes it good kite habitat. The area supports many species that provide the kites with a source of carrion such as rabbits, brown hares, pheasants and deer. Magnificent oak and other fine woodlands provide excellent nest sites and communal roosts for the birds.

RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland joined forces with local landowners and raptor workers to release the kites into this area of Galloway - an ideal home for them.

### KITES MAKE A COME BACK

The first 33 young birds were brought to Galloway in 2001 and released at a secret location (the 'secret cages'). Another 57 birds have since been released in the area, and these birds are now establishing a new population, monitored by a Red Kite Project Officer and Dumfries & Galloway Raptor Study Group.

### SO IS IT ALL GOOD NEWS?

Like all birds of prey (raptors), kites are protected by law, but they are very vulnerable to illegal poison baits. At least five kites have been poisoned since the local releases began in 2001. However, many shooting estates have helped, for example by providing food, release sites and safeguarding nesting pairs.

### WHAT ELSE COULD I SEE ON THE GALLOWAY KITE TRAIL?

Ospreys are now breeding in the region and can be seen around local lochs in the summer. This is also a good time of year to see pied flycatchers and redstarts in the woodlands.

Greenland white-fronted geese overwinter at RSPB Ken-Dee Marshes Reserve, along with Icelandic greylag geese.

Throughout the year look out for otters around the water's edge, red squirrels, deer, willow tits and woodpeckers in the woodlands.



Compare with **buzzards** - similar in size but buzzards have rounded wings and tail, with faster wingbeats than the lazy flapping of the kite, and buzzards are far more common.



Immediately south of the kite trail, is Historic Scotland's magnificent Threave Castle, home to Archibald the Grim in the 14th Century. Dalry's tranquil churchyard, with its 16th Century aisle and nearby motte is worth a visit, as is Bruce's stone overlooking Clatteringshaws Loch. From the Raiders' Road you could also see the impressive Loch Stroan Viaduct, which carried the old railway celebrated in John Buchan's novel, *The 39 Steps*. Finally, for a unique insight into the toilet habits of our forebears, why not visit the listed (1902) privy at Parton!