

The Red Kite - Unmistakable

Red kites are magnificent birds of prey with a distinctive forked tail, russet plumage and a five to six foot wing span.

Magnificent birds



Russet body, grey / white head, red wings with white patches on underside, tail reddish above and grey / white below, tipped with black and deeply forked.

Seen flying over open country, above woods and over towns and villages.

Nests in tall trees within woods, sometimes on top of squirrel's dreys or using old crow's nests.

Scavenges mainly on dead animals (carrion), but also takes insects, earthworms, young birds, such as crows, and small mammals.

Once common across Great Britain, red kites suffered severe persecution between the 16th and 19th centuries. People mistakenly thought that they were a threat to game birds and livestock. By the end of the 19th century, just a handful of these birds remained in Wales.

Between 1989 and 1994 the RSPB and English Nature led a programme to re-introduce red kites to the Chilterns. There are now over 130 breeding pairs and kites are once again a common and much-loved feature of the area.



RSPB Images

For further information on the 8 best locations

- 1 Watlington Hill (Oxfordshire)**
Tel: 01494 528 051 (National Trust)
Web: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/regions/thameschilterns
- 2 Cowleaze Wood (Oxfordshire)**
Tel: 01296 625 825 (Forest Enterprise)
- 3 Stokenchurch (Buckinghamshire)**
Tel: 01494 485 129 (Parish Council Office limited hours)
- 4 Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (Oxfordshire)**
Tel: 01844 351 833 (English Nature Reserve Office)
- 5 Chinnor (Oxfordshire)**
Tel: 01844 351 443 (Mike Turton Chinnor Hill Nature Reserve)
Tel: 01844 353 267 (Parish Council Clerk mornings only)
- 6 West Wycombe Hill (Buckinghamshire)**
Tel: 01494 528 051 (National Trust)
Web: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/regions/thameschilterns
- 7 The Bradenham Estate (Buckinghamshire)**
Tel: 01494 528 051 (National Trust)
Web: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/regions/thameschilterns
- 8 The Warburg Reserve (Oxfordshire)**
Tel: 01491 642001 (BBOWT Reserve Office)
Email: bbowtwarburg@cix.co.uk
Web: www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/berksbucksaxon



Red Kites in the Chilterns is a project of the Chiltern Conservation Board. The project aims to raise awareness of red kites and the wildlife and landscape of the Chilterns AONB.

The Chilterns Conservation Board aims to increase awareness and understanding of the Chilterns, and to foster social and economic well being of local communities. web site: www.chilternsaonb.org



This leaflet has been produced in partnership with English Nature.



English Nature is the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England.

The Red Kites in the Chilterns project produces information sheets on different aspects of red kites and the Chilterns. A programme of walks, talks and events is also available.

For more information on Red Kites in the Chilterns, please contact: Cathy Rose, Red Kites in the Chilterns Officer, Chilterns AONB Office, 8 Summerleys Road, Princes Risborough, Bucks, HP27 9DT. tel: 01844 271 306 fax: 01844 271 301 e-mail: crose@chilternsaonb.org



Where to see Red Kites in the Chilterns



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Where to see Red Kites in the Chilterns



This leaflet highlights some of the best locations to see red kites, gives a brief description of the landscape and describes some of the plants and animals you are likely to see.

Open the leaflet for details of the locations.

Many of the sites are easy to reach by public transport. Call the National Public Transport Information Service (daily 7am - 8pm) on 0870 608 2 608 for more information.

Some of the car parks listed are quite remote. Be careful not to leave valuables on show in your car.

Please be considerate in the countryside keep to footpaths, especially through crops, and leave farm gates as you find them. Please keep dogs on leads or under close control. Be aware that footpaths may be muddy particularly during the winter.



RSPB Images

Visitors with mobility difficulties may wish to enjoy the red kites and the Chilterns, however, most of the sites mentioned in this leaflet do not offer level access. If you have a mobility difficulty, you are advised to visit the villages of Chinnor or Stokenchurch in order to see and hear red kites. For further information on the accessibility of sites, please contact Cathy Rose (details overleaf).



An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chiltern Hills were declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965 in recognition of their beautiful landscapes and rich wildlife. The AONB covers 833 square kilometres and stretches from Goring-on-Thames in Oxfordshire across Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

The area is characterised by a ridge of chalk running from south west to north east with wooded hills, ancient hedgerows, farmland and medieval villages. The Chilterns are famous for their beech woodlands and nationally rare chalk downland and chalk streams.

Chalk Downland

Chalk downland is the result of many years of grazing by livestock, such as sheep on the chalk hills. The grassland supports a wide diversity of plants and animals. Rare flowers such as the bee orchid and the Chilterns gentian can be found as well as the chalkhill blue and marbled white butterflies. Chalk downland is home to large populations of rabbits, which form a major part of the red kite's diet. In places scrub has invaded the grassland and this habitat is important for wildlife too. Many birds and insects find food and shelter



Marbled White butterfly - John Morris



Chalk downland - Steve Rodrick

among the bushes. You can visit examples of chalk grassland and scrub at Watlington Hill, Aston Rowant, Chinnor Hill and West Wycombe Hill.

Woodland

Woodland covers over one fifth of the Chilterns AONB and is important for red kites which nest high in the tree tops. Many of the woods are ancient (pre 1600AD) but the well-known beech woods were planted more recently in the eighteenth century to provide timber for furniture makers. Nowadays they are mainly managed for nature conservation and recreation.



Bluebell wood - Steve Rodrick

A large number of birds and animals such as woodpeckers, finches, badgers and roe deer live in the woods. Wildflowers like foxgloves and bluebells grow beneath the trees and butterflies can be seen in woodland clearings. All the sites listed in this leaflet contain woodland or are close to it.

Where to see Red Kites in the Chilterns

1 Watlington Hill (Oxfordshire)

Watlington Hill forms part of the Chilterns escarpment and is composed of a mosaic of chalk grassland, scrub and scrub-woodland habitats. The National Trust ownership covers an area of 44.5 hectares and with a height of 230m, the hill gives commanding views over much of Oxfordshire.

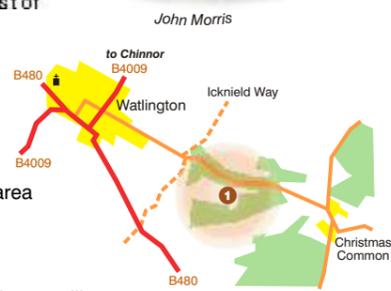
Location: 1 mile south east of Watlington, east of the B480

Grid reference: SU 702935

Access: Open (with the exception of a small private area near the car park)

Getting there:

Bus: buses run through Watlington village.
Car: small car park (grid reference SU 709936)



John Morris

2 Cowleaze Wood (Oxfordshire)

The mixed woodland of Cowleaze Wood covers 29 hectares and is mainly managed for recreation by Forest Enterprise. Footpaths lead through the woods, where you will find, hidden amongst the trees, a collection of sculptures by a variety of artists.

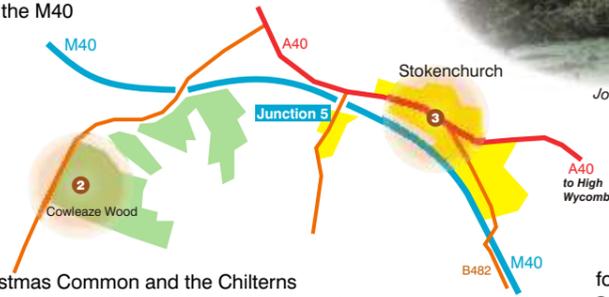
Location: Approx 3 miles west of Stokenchurch, south of the M40

Grid reference: SU 726 957

Access: Open

Getting there:

Car: from the A40, just west of Stokenchurch, follow the signs for Christmas Common and the Chilterns Sculpture Trail. Park in the Forestry Commission car park (grid reference SU 726957)



John Morris

3 Stokenchurch (Buckinghamshire)



The large village of Stokenchurch is handily situated for easy access to open spaces including commons, playing fields and public footpaths. Red kites are regularly seen flying over the village.

Location: ½ mile east of junction 5 of the M40 and 7 miles west of High Wycombe on the A40

Grid reference: Village centre SU 760963

Access: Open spaces / footpaths. A guide to the footpaths of Stokenchurch is available from the Parish Office or library

Getting there:

Train: nearest station is High Wycombe
Bus: frequent buses between High Wycombe and Oxford (including Sundays) stop outside the Kings Arms Hotel
Car: village car park at Kings Arms Hotel (grid reference SU 760963), or Longburrow Park (grid reference SU 761965) Studley Green Community Centre car park (grid reference SU 783954)

5 Chinnor (Oxfordshire)

The village of Chinnor lies at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment. There has been permanent occupation since the fourth century BC, and there is evidence of Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Location: 5 miles north-east of M40 junction 6 on the B4009

Grid reference: Village centre SU 755008

Access: Open spaces / footpaths.

Getting there:

Train: nearest station is Princes Risborough (4 miles)
Bus: Buses run from High Wycombe and Thame
Car: There is a small BBOWT car park at the end of Hill Top Lane (off the Bledlow to Chinnor road) with access to Chinnor Hill Nature Reserve (grid reference SU 767004)
There is a small area for parking on the Ridgeway / Upper Icknield Way, just off Hill Road, to the east (grid reference SU 761003)



John Morris



John Morris

4 Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve (Oxfordshire)

The Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve was established in 1958 and lies on the north-western scarp of the Chilterns, overlooking the Vale of Oxford. The reserve is bisected by the M40 motorway, which passes through a deep cutting, excavated in the 1970's.

Location: Approx 2 miles west of Stokenchurch, south of the A40

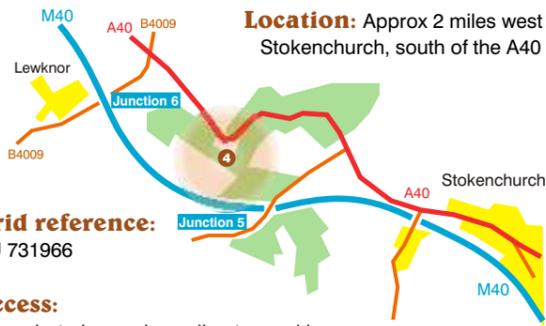
Grid reference: SU 731966

Access:

Open, but please close all gates and keep dogs under close control

Getting there: Car: the reserve is best

approached from the Christmas Common road (off the A40). For the northern section, the English Nature car park (grid reference SU 731966) is at the end of a quarter mile long lane leading off the western side of the road. For the southern section, park in the Forestry Commission car park at Cowleaze Wood (grid reference SU 726957)



English Nature



English Nature

6 West Wycombe Hill (Buckinghamshire)

West Wycombe Hill covers 22 hectares and was given to the National Trust in 1935 just after the acquisition of most of the village of West Wycombe a year earlier. It is part of the 18th century landscape of West Wycombe Park.

Location: 2 miles west of High Wycombe, north of A40

Grid reference: SU 827951

Access: Open

Getting there:

Train: nearest stations are High Wycombe and Saunderton, both 2 ¼ miles from West Wycombe Hill.
Bus: buses call regularly at West Wycombe.
Car: West Wycombe Garden Centre car park - grid reference SU 826947, West Wycombe Hill Top car park - grid reference SU 827951 (beside the church)



National Trust

7 The Bradenham Estate (Buckinghamshire)

This 445 hectare estate surrounds the village of Bradenham. The church and 17th century manor house (which is not open to the public) was once the home of Isaac Disraeli, father of Prime Minister, Benjamin.

Location: 4 miles north west of High Wycombe, 4 ½ miles south of Princes Risborough, east of the A4010

Grid reference: SU 825970

Access: Open access to main areas of woodland, network of paths over some of the farmland

Getting there:

Train: nearest station is Saunderton, 1 mile from Bradenham village along a foot/cycleway beside the A4010
Bus: on the High Wycombe Princes Risborough bus route
Car: Car parking on the village green (grid reference SU 827971) and at Small Dean Lane (grid reference SU 823989)
If leaving your car in a pub car park, please check with the pub staff and be considerate when using facilities

NB: A recently published National Trust circular walk leaflet (West Wycombe and Bradenham) takes in a wider area for walkers.



John Morris

8 The Warburg Reserve (Oxfordshire)



John Morris

The Warburg Reserve is owned by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and was bought in 1967. The 106 hectare reserve nestles in a quiet chalk valley in the southern Chilterns.

Location: Bix Bottom, 4 miles north-west of Henley on Thames

Grid reference: SU 720879 (car park)

Access: Open daily
Public rights of way cross the reserve nature trail and woodland walk. No access off paths

Getting there:

Train: nearest station, Henley on Thames
Bus: to Nettlebed then 1 ½ mile walk
Car: from B480 Henley-Watlington road turn off at Middle Assendon towards Bix Bottom. Bear right at small grass triangle, follow lane for 1 mile. Car park at end of lane on right. Difficult to find so phone first if in doubt



John Morris