

Red Kites and Common Buzzard following the hay harvest

Many bird species, particularly gulls but also Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, will follow ploughing operations, but on 6th June 2015 I was surprised to see that the latter also follow hay harvesting operations. On a sunny afternoon at Bramley, near Basingstoke in Hampshire, a tractor was cutting grass in a field. From 14.00 to 14.15 hrs, it was followed by three Red Kites, which occasionally swooped down in search of prey, presumably small rodents. At one stage the group was joined by a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* but this

bird, rather than following, took up positions above the mown crop and hovered before shifting to another vantage point.

Subsequently, I was interested to read the entry for Red Kite in the *Hampshire Bird Report* for 2014 (Clark 2015), which records that 'The largest count anywhere was 79 on June 11th at Stratfield Saye over a field where silage was being cut. Certainly birds do move in on silage operations in large numbers...'. Stratfield Saye is only about 5 km northeast of Bramley.

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The substantial population of reintroduced Red Kites in north Northamptonshire has

learnt to exploit the annual farming activity of haymaking. The process of cutting the