



NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS

www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

Issue 8 Winter 2011/2012

NORTHERN NEWS

Haydon Bridge Volunteer Wins RSPCA Young Photographer of the Year

Congratulations go to Will Nichols, member of Haydon Bridge Red Squirrels, who has just won 1st prize in the RSPCA's Young Photographer of the Year Awards with his fabulous picture of a red squirrel pausing in a ray of evening sunlight, taken in Kielder Forest, Northumberland.

More than 8,000 youngsters entered the competition, with pictures featuring various animals from terriers playing on a beach to lions snarling at each other.

Photographer Danny Green, one of the judges, said: "This is a very intimate portrait of an elusive creature - a truly deserving winner. The way the light is shining on the squirrel in this picture makes you feel as if it is you, the viewer, who has happened across it. It is very personal, giving you the impression that you are actually there. This is all the more powerful because the red squirrel is not doing too great at the moment - there has been a massive decline and it is now a very rare species."

Will won a three-day wildlife photography break and a camera kit.



Will Nichol's winning picture



Will Nicholls Photography
Wholesale red squirrel cards
Minimum order 50 cards @£20 (+ £5 p+p).
6 different designs to choose from (you can have a mix).
Contact Will on 07854 148817 or shutterbug@wrnicholls.com
www.willnicholls.co.uk



HLF GRANT SUCCESS FOR GRIZEDALE

The **Westmorland Red Squirrel Society** has been awarded a 'Your Heritage' grant for two years of red squirrel conservation in Grizedale Forest, the Lake District. This exciting project will include contributions and involvement from the Forestry Commission, Lake District National Park, RSNE, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Landowners and the surrounding communities. It is of strategic importance to Cumbria and will tie in with RSNE's work in the North Lakes stronghold. (For Further Information Contact: Jackie Foott, jfoott@btinternet.com)

Red Squirrels in the Glens of Antrim, Northern Ireland

The **Glens Red Squirrel Group** was formed at a meeting in Glenariff Forest Park, County Antrim on 13 January 2008.

An initial approach had been made to some local people by the Forest Service because of the native Red Squirrel population in the Forest. The Glens Group now consists of around 50 members and its stated aim is the "Protection and Conservation of the Red Squirrel in the Glens of Antrim" This does not mean that the Group is purely inward focused, its activities do extend beyond the geographical boundaries of the area.

The work the Group undertakes:-

1. Raising Public Awareness
2. Feeding Red Squirrels
3. Control of Grey Squirrels
4. Fund Raising

The Public are engaged by organizing "Red Squirrel Days" and Walks in local woods. The Group also attends various fairs and shows and provides information. A series of Public Talks in Libraries are being planned for 2012.

The work of augmenting the supply of food for the Red Squirrels is the most demanding of the tasks the Group undertakes. A mix of Corn, Maize, Peanuts and Sunflower seeds are used along with pieces of Carrot and Cuttlefish bone to provide calcium. There is sometimes debate about when to feed and what to feed and the benefits of providing artificial nourishment to any wild animal. The Glens Group do not engage in such discussions. We now know that after two seasons the feeders work and we have an increase of sightings of Reds throughout the area. As long as the feeders are cleaned and moved at regular intervals we have experienced no ill effects.

The control of Grey Squirrels can in some quarters be controversial. The Glens Group has no doubt that the survival of the Red Squirrel depends on the Grey being completely removed from any areas that the Reds inhabit. There can be no issue that the Grey out eats the Red and carries the Pox virus which can be deadly to our native species. The Grey is rightly described as "an invasive and foreign species" Mankind introduced them into this country and now has a responsibility to undo the damage so caused. The Group has trained members who trap Grey Squirrels and humanely dispose of them; no apologies are made for this activity it is necessary if the Red Squirrel is to flourish in our local areas.

The Group organise various Fund Raising events and sometimes these double as a Public Awareness session. Anything from Quizzes to Ballots and soliciting donations from the local Councils and other conservation bodies.

The Glens Group is working within the newly re-constituted Northern Ireland Red Squirrel Forum to encourage and promote positive support for activists working on the ground promoting and defending the Red Squirrel. There is an urgent need for additional resource to be injected into this campaign by all the statutory Agencies involved. The Group has concerns that any action being considered by the Forum may not be in place in time to make a real difference to the threat that exists to the Red Squirrel in this country. Without a definite action plan that produces measured results and has targets to achieve we face the possibility that within the next twenty to forty years the Red Squirrel will be a thing of the past and that children in the years to come will be denied the opportunity of seeing this native animal in its natural habitat.

The Glens Red Squirrel Group is determined to maintain the Red Squirrel in the North East corner of the island of Ireland.

Joe Dowdall

Chair, Glens Red Squirrel Group.

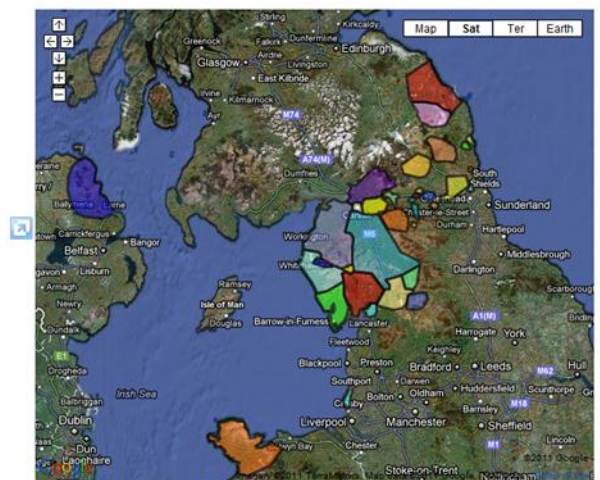
IMPROVED NRS MEMBERS MAP

The NRS Website has an improved 'Members Map' designed to show group boundaries and where they are willing to carry out their operations.

Check it out! www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

The new map is easy to use. Just click on a coloured area of the map to display group contact details for that area, or click on a name from the list below the map. Use the zoom-in facility (+/-) to see an area in more detail. Hold the left click button down to move the map around on the screen using your mouse.

Our thanks go to Steph and Ian McIvor, Westmoreland RSS for their hard work in producing the map and maintaining the website.



View NRS - member group boundaries in a larger map

*****HELP US TO HELP OUR RED SQUIRRELS*****

*****GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR LOCAL GROUP *****

*****REPORT ALL RED AND GREY SQUIRREL SIGHTINGS*****

FOR DETAILS OF YOUR NEAREST GROUP SEE OUR WEBSITE www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

For Further Info Phone: 07878 061880

‘Willow’, a mate for ‘Charles’



Willow

‘Willow’ is a limited edition sculpture, designed by Kirsty Kenny, Brampton RSG. She is ‘life-size’ and is produced in cold-cast copper. Willow has been sculpted to be one of a pair with ‘Charles’, an earlier sculpture by Kirsty, but she also works as a piece in her own right. She is a limited edition of 150 pieces, each produced to order. £5 of the profits from each sale goes to Red Squirrel conservation projects throughout the UK. The first 25 are at the introductory price of £100 thereafter the price is £130 (at the time of writing 22 have already been sold). P&P and in-transit insurance is an additional £10 if required.

Kirsty has approximately 30 limited edition ‘Charles’ squirrels remaining, he was inspired by ‘Charles’ an orphan red squirrel kitten who was hand reared and successfully released back into the wild by Sarah McNeil, from the Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group. Charles the orphan was named after Prince Charles, patron of The Red Squirrel Survival Trust (RSST) and keen red squirrel enthusiast.

Contact Kirsty for further details:

www.kirstyarmstronganimalsculpture.co.uk email aartducko@aol.com Tel. 016977 41012



Charles

Penrith Has Hopes Pinned On A New Grant

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group have, with the assistance of RSNE, recently submitted an application to the SITA Trust – Enriching Nature programme which if successful will provide three years funding for two red squirrel rangers to be engaged to cover the wider landscape areas of the upper Eden valley (Appleby, Brough, Kirkby Stephen & Tebay) and the Ullswater area. The SITA board will make a decision in February and the earliest the projects could start would be April 2012.

Both of these large areas of wider landscape fall outside of the Lakeland reserve/buffer and are therefore unable to receive grant aid but the result of securing them for red squirrels will not only dramatically reduce grey squirrel incursion into the strongholds but also establish a protected connection between the existing Lakeland stronghold and the Yorkshire Dales stronghold thereby allowing free movement and gene pool diversity amongst the two red squirrel populations. Our aim is to demonstrate that these areas should in fact be incorporated into the reserve and stronghold network.

The group is now actively seeking to raise funds, possibly by mail shot or press release, from the public, landowners and businesses in the areas local to the rangers project as a massive £12,500 is required to release the SITA funding plus £9,000 to fund the first three months of the project, as SITA make their payments quarterly in arrears. Should the SITA bid fail, any funds raised will simply be used to fund grey control work in those areas and continue the work of existing red squirrel ranger, Gary Murphy who has made such a major impact in the upper Eden valley.

Fingers Crossed!

By Richard Dyke, Penrith & District RSG

Ponteland Pox

Ponteland district’s red squirrels have been devastated by the squirrel pox virus recently and our populations of red squirrels have declined by more than 80%. This is on top of a squirrel pox outbreak which was contained in the Darras Hall area in autumn 2010.

All is not lost, though, as we have had recent sightings of healthy reds on Ponteland Golf Course, although fears are that the pox virus may still be active in that area as it is only 2 weeks since a poxed red was removed from the area.

The good news is that healthy reds are being sighted regularly on the outer edges of the Darras Hall Estate.

‘We need residents from not only Ponteland but the whole district to be vigilant and report grey squirrels, as well as any poorly reds as soon as possible so we can remove them.’ Reports Penny, Ponteland RS

By Sally Hardy, Ponteland RS

HOPE FOR HEXHAM

Hexham Red Squirrel Group are pleased to announce a small number of red squirrel sightings in the woodlands surrounding Hexham during 2011. This is very encouraging and is a significant increase on sightings during the previous two years. We are now on the threshold of encouraging the red squirrel into the gardens of Hexham. However, the situation is finely balanced with a large number of grey squirrels still being sighted in and around Hexham. It is therefore vitally important to promote ideal conditions for red squirrels to venture into the town by encouraging householders and particularly those backing onto woodland to report sightings of both red and grey squirrels.

It is crucial that red squirrels are given the opportunity to thrive in their natural habitat and if householders contact Hexham Red Squirrels we will provide a trapping and dispatching service totally free of charge. We are members of Northern Red Squirrels and support the work that is going on throughout the whole of Northumberland to try to protect the red squirrel. Sightings can also be registered on the NRS website or the new RSNE website www.rsne.org.uk and these, too, will be notified to Hexham Red Squirrels. Anyone wishing to get involved please contact us.

Contact Details: Email: hexhamredsquirrels@googlemail.com Tel: 07584468751

NRS Cumbria Report

Northern Red Squirrels continues to fulfil its purpose in Cumbria by providing a forum as well as a means of communication and representation for the groups. The county meeting in June was well attended, with an introduction to Nick Mason, Project Manager of the newly formed RSNE. In November, the business part of our AGM proceeded uneventfully and rapidly (!) to allow for plenty of discussion time with Nick and Simon during and after their presentation of the RSNE update. For years volunteers have been complaining that our work was not valued or recognised but that situation has completely changed. We are now being included in decision-making with RSNE and our work on the ground is most definitely a very important part of their strategy for the north of England.



Rain, rain go away!
By John Robertson at Middle Paradise, Garsdale

Another successful Squirrel Fest took place at the LDNPA Visitor Centre Brockhole on the shores of Lake Windermere in September. The event next year will be held on Sunday, 16 September and we are looking for new ideas and suggestions for making it an even more important occasion.

Cumbria groups are active with grey control and with fundraising which will enable us to spread our network even more thoroughly and efficiently. Westmorland, like Penrith before it, has now become a Charity and Westmorland has also been successful in securing an HLF 'Your Heritage' grant for a 2-year project in Grizedale Forest. All fingers and toes are crossed for Penrith's application for a 3-yr project in the Upper Eden Valley. Together with the WIGs being encouraged by RSNE, we are starting to have a solid strategy for filling the gaps in grey control across the county.

Jackie Foott, Chairman, NRS Cumbria

A BIG WELCOME TO TWO GROUPS

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our first Northern Ireland Group, **THE GLENS RED SQUIRRELS** www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com and also to **CORNWALL RED SQUIRRELS** www.cornwallredsquirrels.co.uk

Check out the new Red Squirrels Northern England Project website with its interactive sightings map and information about the new project. www.rsne.org.uk

Yorkshire Dales Red Squirrel Hide Opens

Professional Wildlife Photographer Simon Phillpotts has recently opened England's only purpose-built Red Squirrel Photography hide in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales. The hide is located in private pine woodland near Hawes which is being replanted and improved after being damaged by storms in recent years. Roe Deer, Stoats, Pheasants, Woodpeckers, Sparrow hawks and a variety of other woodland birds and mammals can also be seen along with the local population of very bold and reliable Squirrels. The hide can be hired by individuals or groups of up to four photographers.

"The hide is one of the only all-weather wildlife facilities in the area and also provides me with a great location to run photography training workshops. It's a fantastic secluded location and I'm learning a great deal about the Red Squirrel's habitat and behaviour from the on going management of the surrounding woodland".

Simon also offers three hour guided visits to the hide for non-photographers. Full details of the hide along with some of Simon's Red Squirrel images are available on his website: www.wilddales.co.uk



The Mighty Tweed

For the last two years we have been monitoring and culling grey colonies along both sides of the Tweed from Coldstream in the west to Chain Bridge in the east. Last year the project revealed seropositive greys at Tillmouth, Pallinsburn and Wark, but no positive greys on the Scottish side of the Tweed. In February this year The Hirsle started control and of the 20 blood samples taken 18 were positive. As we asked every estate on the Scottish side to control and take samples more positives were found. Monitoring at Chain Bridge in June we found squirrel evidence, we controlled and the bloods were positive. We alerted the estate where the red colony is and they started intensive control. Two weeks ago 2 reds were found with the pox and these have been confirmed. The fight goes on.

Monitoring, if you have not tried it, have a go. We use it before we control and afterwards to see how successful we have been. Monitoring gives us a picture of what is going on in woodlands.

We use sections of drain pipe, drilled so that wire can be used to attach the tube to a small branch at about head height. Double sided velcro pads, we favour white, are attached to each end of the tube. The tube is baited, we use 2 or 3 hazel nuts. The tubes need only to be monitored weekly. If hairs are caught on the pads the pad is renewed, paying special attention to covering the hair sample with the replacement velcro cover, shiny side down on the hairs. Otherwise you cannot ID the hairs later on. The paper cover will stick and you are stuck!

If the hairs are from a grey, the tube is replaced with a trap below. Easy, the bait is now in the trap not the tube. Tubes are disinfected regularly and all tubes are GPS's so we can plot the movements of squirrels on transects.

Elizabeth Bamford, Berwick SOS

Forthcoming Event: A cross border talk on the 11th April at the United Reform Church Spittal, when Nick Mason and Karen Ramoo will talk about red squirrel conservation. This talk is in conjunction with Berwick wildlife Group. The talk starts at 7.30 pm.

Red Squirrel Badges

The representative of the various groups attending the NRS Rothbury AGM on 23rd November may recall seeing the new 'Red Squirrel Badge' produced for the Berwick Group. A number of those present bought a badge or badges at the time and I hope you are pleased with your purchase(s). I mentioned at the time that the badges can be made available for sale by any group wishing to purchase them resale in aid of group funds. The cost of each badge to Berwick SOS Group taking into account the artwork and production on the die has been 92p. However, the Group is happy to supply them at a price of 80p each plus postage (subject to a minimum of twenty) as repeat orders from the produces should reduce the price. Any group interested is invited to contact the undersigned on 01289 331882 to discuss arrangements for purchase.

John Firth, Honorary Treasurer, SOS Berwick Group

Many of the NRS groups have a variety of merchandise for sale in order to raise much-needed funds to help them continue with their work. Check out the NRS Website 'Member Groups' section for group details.

Cornwall Red Squirrel Project

NRS are delighted to welcome a new red squirrel group to the fold – the Cornwall Red Squirrel Group.

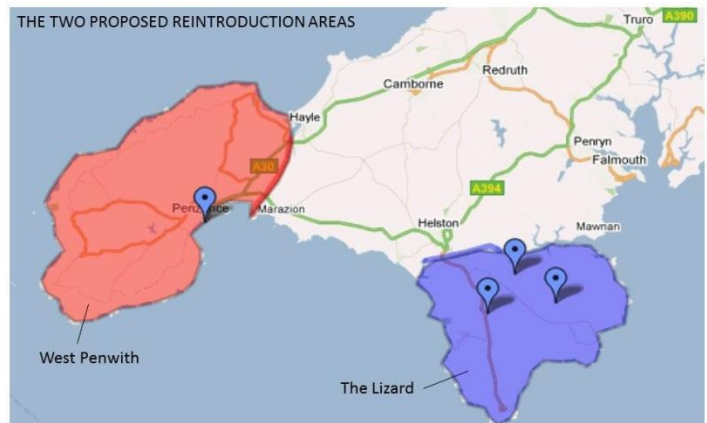
Red squirrels have been extinct in Cornwall since 1984, lost as a result of the influx of grey squirrels over the border with Devon. The aim of the Cornwall Red Squirrel Project is to reintroduce them to the county, starting with the most southerly and westerly peninsulas of The Lizard and West Penwith.

The aim is to clear the peninsulas of grey squirrels to allow the reintroduction of red squirrels. The habitat, on the Lizard in particular, is good for red squirrels, with plenty of well linked wooded valleys as well as some older stands of plantation woodland. The hope is that sea on three sides the peninsulas will be more easily defensible against grey squirrels trying to move back into the areas.

The project is in its early stages, and is currently gathering together groups of volunteers to help with the grey control work. Last year trial culls were run on a number of large estates, and this season a wider spread grey control effort will spread across the two areas, with the aim of reducing the grey population to reduce its breeding success.

Contact Details: www.cornwallredsquirrels.co.uk

Cornwall Red Squirrels will be having a stall at the Royal Cornwall Show 7th, 8th 9th June 2012



NORTHUMBERLAND REPORT

It's a brand new year and hopes are high for our red squirrels with the new Red Squirrels Northern England (RSNE) Project now underway. We still have red squirrels across much of Northumberland and are hoping that we can continue to maintain these populations and encourage red squirrels back to other areas.

2011 was a tough year for our red squirrels with squirrel pox outbreaks, along with reports of reds succumbing to the newly discovered Adenovirus, across many parts of the county. Greys squirrels have been busy multiplying and dispersing to even the most far-flung regions of Northumberland, such as Kielder Forest. However, volunteer efforts have been on going to keep on top of the onslaught with groups reporting record numbers of greys being despatched and some reports of reds beginning to make their presence known again. I am sure with the forthcoming help from the RSNE project Northumberland will soon be boasting new and stronger colonies of red squirrels in the near future.

The recent NRS Northumberland AGM and Get-together was well supported with representatives from eleven groups and RSNE. I would like to thank Rothbury Golf Club for the venue and also RSNE for the buffet lunch. I think everybody found the event informative and enjoyable.

By Sally Hardy, Chairman, NRS Northumberland

A New Group For Morpeth Area

In October 2011 Norris Athey, Chairman and founder of Morpeth Red Squirrels, decided to throw in the towel and close down the group. This was devastating news for the area as Norris was responsible for co-ordinating volunteer action in the area. Norris set up Ulgham RS in 2007 but soon realised the extent of the grey squirrel problem and the threat to the area's red squirrels was much more widespread than he had realised and soon changed the name to Morpeth RS. Since its inception Norris regarded his volunteering control work as a military operation and set about encouraging locals, landowners and even the council to get behind and support his efforts. With small grants from Banks, local Parish Councils and RSST, along with fund-raising by having a stall at the local Morpeth market Norris and his supporters managed to cull over 1000 greys over the past 5 years, making the area a safer place for red squirrels. Without volunteer effort Morpeth could be a much greyer place.

However, all is not lost. In December 2011 NRS organised a meeting to bring together former Morpeth RS volunteers and supporters in order to set up a bigger and even more effective red squirrel group to cover the whole Morpeth area. The meeting was well attended and a further meeting is due to take place at Longhirst Hall, 10am 21st January 2011. With continued enthusiasm from the Morpeth volunteers it looks like the area's grey squirrels had better watch out!

American Eastern Fox Squirrel In Northumberland?

A 'grey' squirrel caught in a trap recently could be a cause for concern. The squirrel, trapped in south Northumberland, looked very different in colour from a usual grey, so the trapper contacted NRS.

We believe the squirrel may be an Eastern Fox Squirrel, with its grey fur with a distinct orange tinge and orange under-belly. Since its capture there were reports of 'red' squirrels in the same area, which is predominantly a grey problem area with no reds seen for past 5 years. On inspection the trapper has reported that there are actually more of the same 'Eastern Fox Squirrels'. To date, no more have been caught. If you have seen a similar squirrel please email me: pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk



Daystate Continue Their Support for Red squirrel Conservation



Jerry Moss, right, with Tony Belas, Daystate

About two years ago Daystate produced a limited edition PCP air rifle called the Red Ranger. Jerry Moss, red squirrel ranger, had been in touch with Tony Belas regarding Daystate rifles and this led to the red ranger rifle. Now they have come up trumps again with a new rifle called the Grey Shadow. A limited edition of 150, each rifle comes with 1 year membership to Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group paid for by Daystate. This has netted the group £1800 to date which is a great boost to the funds. A big thank you to Tony Belas (Daystate) for his continued support.

For more information contact: www.daystate.com

DEVOTED RED SQUIRREL SUPPORTER, HUGH KEMP, PASSES AWAY

We have had the sad news from Snaizeholme in the Yorkshire Dales that High Kemp died soon after Christmas at the age of 84. For the last 35 years, Hugh had been carefully planting and managing the trees on his 50 acres of land to encourage all wildlife, especially red squirrels. He was an active member of the Sedbergh RSG for many years and more recently he was working with the Yorkshire Dales National Park (Hawes RSG), creating a red squirrel trail in the woodlands for all to enjoy. He will be buried in this woodland near his beloved red squirrels.

PLEASE PASS ON THIS NEWSLETTER TO EVERYONE INTERESTED IN RED SQUIRREL CONSERVATION!

Thank you to ALL our contributors. Our next NRS Northern News will be out July 2012

If you would like to contribute stories, information, events please send them to

The Editor: email pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk by 30th June 2012

NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS

www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk Telephone: 07878 061880