

# Morpeth and District Red Squirrels



**Welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of the MADRS Newsletter**

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**Welcome to the Summer edition of our Newsletter.**

The MADRS Newsletter comes out 3 times a year in Spring (around about March time), Summer (hopefully about July-ish) and then our Autumn/Winter edition which we aim to get to you in November. If you would like to contribute to any edition, then please email articles, photos etc prior to those months to us at [enquiries@madredsquirrels.com](mailto:enquiries@madredsquirrels.com) All contributions gratefully received.

2016 has proved to be quite interesting. The early months saw greatly reduced grey sightings and in fact all sightings both red and grey were down. This was being reported across the board by many local groups. We then had quite sudden surges of grey activity in areas, and our enormous thanks as usual go to our grey control team who dealt with these. In the Shadfen area, where we have had very little grey activity, we have suddenly experienced a grey invasion and 17 were removed in July alone. This grey control is as always absolutely essential as there are a colony of reds in this area who have to be protected. There have been a family of reds visiting feeders which was lovely to see, but 12 greys were also removed from these feeders too. We had a heart stopping moment when one of the juvenile reds appeared to be quite sluggish and was not eating well and we suspected squirrel pox. This little red was caught and taken to a local vets where sadly it had to be euthanised. Fingers crossed...so far this looks like the one and only case. Swift action to remove incoming greys and also sadly removing this poorly red quickly, hopefully has protected the others. As usual MADRS stresses that Grey control remains the unfortunate but necessary side of red conservation. Without this control work, our native reds would simply not survive.

Please keep your eyes peeled when you are out and about and report any sightings to us.

Many thanks.

Sue Mitchell  
MADRS joint co-ordinator

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## **MADRS 2016 CHRISTMAS CARDS.**

Following the enormous success of our cards in 2015, where over 1000 cards were sold, we will again be producing cards for Christmas 2016. All funds raised for the sale of our cards are used to help us continue with our vital conservation work.

We will have 2 card designs to choose from again this year and I would like to say a huge 'thank you' to Mr George A Charlton who is one of our supporters, for kindly allowing us to use his photos for our cards.

We will send out a pre-order email with the cards designs in September.



Recycling!

A wren recycles an old wasps nest.

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## **THE RIDLEY FAMILY CHARITY.**

MAD RS is grateful for all the money we receive, be it individual donations, grants for which we apply or cash dropped in one of our collecting tins. As a small voluntary group we are totally dependent upon this income to buy equipment such as feeders, supplies of squirrel food or promotional material for use in our talks to interested organisations. We also purchase traps and bait for use in our grey control programme and we are heavily dependent upon a small number of dedicated volunteers who give their time and their money, since they receive little in the way of mileage expenses, to undertake this work. Most grants we receive specify how the money is to be spent, by either stipulating it must be used to buy

equipment or by wishing it to be used in a specific location. Many refuse to fund “running costs” such as mileage. We are always scrupulous in respecting the wishes of our funders.

However, as we have become more experienced we realise that the single main factor in conserving native reds is the control of the grey squirrels. While our volunteer team do astonishing work they cannot devote as much time as is needed to establish a strategic programme of grey control using trapping (the preferred method in many woods) as this is very labour intensive...traps once set must be checked twice a day. We agreed that we must try to attract funding which would allow us to pay a ranger contracted hours to work on our behalf. A ranger previously employed by Red Squirrels Northern England to work in S&E Northumberland had proved the effectiveness of such an approach but the post was lost when funding ceased.

An application was made to the Ridley Family Charity for money to be spent on funding a ranger in 2015 and we were delighted to be awarded the maximum amount of £5,000. It is well known that the Ridley family have long supported red conservation but to see this support translated into such a direct contribution to the work was most welcome. We recruited a former volunteer who had the skills and local knowledge to undertake the work and he was contracted for a minimum of 20 hours per month. He worked in the woods in and around Morpeth, ensuring his grey control was coordinated with other such work being done by volunteers or local landowners. His success was such that sightings of greys reduced and we received reports of reds in areas where they had not previously been seen. Without the generosity of the Ridley Family Charity none of this would have been possible, in fact it is probable that the progress made by the RSNE ranger would have been undone as greys will continue to invade our area and, unless they are controlled the reds will vanish. This year we were again delighted to be awarded another maximum grant by the charity. This 2016 award has enabled us to continue funding the ranger allowing him to continue ensuring the brighter future of native red squirrels in and around Morpeth.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Ridley Family Charity.

Kate Weightman  
Joint co-ordinator MADRS

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Photos taken by Mark Legard at Stannington

We are always delighted to receive photos of 'your' reds. Please send any that you are happy for us to include in our Newsletters to [enquiries@madredsquirrels.com](mailto:enquiries@madredsquirrels.com)

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## **TALKS AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS.**

We were invited to the Cambo village fete again this year, courtesy of Chris Orton who kindly ensures we are included in the festivities. For the first time the weather failed us and, in common with most of the north east that day, we were treated to moments of hot sunshine quickly followed by heavy rain, not conducive to displaying our wares for sale. However, the event continued despite the down pours, the children seemingly oblivious to the rain and the grown ups making the best of things in true British spirit. My thanks to Jean Thompson who once again joined us to help on the stall, and to Glen who also stood in the rain and answered questions about the native reds, and the work we do to preserve them.

On the same rather wet day, two other members of our Core Group, Julia and Tommo, were at Ulgham Feast, promoting their sustainable woodland business. They had been given permission to have some MAD RS information and items for sale on their stall so the people attending that event also had the opportunity to find out more about red conservation.

A presentation was given to a group of the U3A in Morpeth at the beginning of July. It had been a commitment reluctantly abandoned by June Harris when her health made it necessary for her to reduce her workload. Sue and I were delighted when Peter, her husband, agreed to join us and provide “technical support” at the event. Our audience was attentive and interested and we were grateful for the opportunity to spread the news of the amazing success of our volunteers in their efforts to protect Morpeth’s red squirrels.

Kate Weightman

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## **MADRS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The MADRS AGM has been scheduled for September 8th at Hepscott Village Hall.

The meeting will commence at 6.15pm.

There will be the usual tea/coffee and biscuits and a chance to catch up after the formalities.

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### **WOODHORN MUSEUM**

Very many thanks to Woodhorn Museum at Ashington who kindly gave MADRS a donation for 3 feeders we provided for their Red Squirrels. Woodhorn visitors frequently see the red squirrels that live there and who visit various feeders at the site. MADRS also provides a rapid response grey controller who deals with any grey squirrel that turns up.

It's a great place to visit, not only to see the red squirrels....so why not make a date in your diary.

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### **HEDGEHOG HOUSES AND SQUIRREL FEEDERS.**

In the Spring edition I wrote about the great work of the Northumbria Hedgehog Rescue based at Longframlington.

The Northumbria Hedgehog Rescue like MADRS, is run entirely by volunteers who undertake a mixture of tasks. One of those MADRS tasks is the making of Squirrel feeders. I'd like to thank Brian Craske, one of our supporters from Ashington, who kindly makes all our squirrel feeders and feed hoppers. Brian has also now made beautiful wooden hedgehog houses for your garden that can be ordered from the rescue. As always, the money raised from the sale of these items helps our respective conservation efforts to continue.

[www.hedgehogs-northumbria.org.uk](http://www.hedgehogs-northumbria.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/hedgehogsnorthumbria](https://www.facebook.com/hedgehogsnorthumbria)

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### **MADRS LOGO AND EVENT RAFFLE.**

In the Spring newsletter we reported that John Kelly has kindly sourced a supplier who will stitch the MADRS logo to any item of your clothing for £4 per item. There are over 30,000 stitches in the logo and they look great. You can also purchase a polo shirt in any colour with embroidered logo for £14

Contact:- Cloud 9 Leisure, Unit 59F South Nelson Industrial Estate, Cramlington, NE23 1WF

Tel 01670 739370

John (whose own business Restormate is based in Cramlington) very kindly ran a name raffle at a trade show he was attending, donating a piece of trade equipment as a prize. The raffle raised £106 which John has kindly donated to MADRS

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### **FORESTRY GRANT.**

MADRS has been undertaking Grey Control as part of a 5 year English Woodland Grant Scheme for 2 years now near Scots Gap, Morpeth. Our contract



was actually changed mid contract and all sorts of new requirements came in. In order to not only continue to administer the grant work, but also to recoup the monies already paid for grey control work done, a great deal of very time consuming and specialist ground and paper work was required.

MADRS would like to thank Neil Dixon from the Coquetdale Red Squirrel Group for all his hard work in helping to put together all the necessary requirements including a full woodland management plan. Without the relentless efforts of Neil and all his experience, we would not have been able to continue to administer the grant work.

Thank You.

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## HAVANNAH NATURE RESERVE.

The Red Squirrels at the Havannah Nature Reserve, Newcastle are under threat.

"Newcastle City Council: Save Havannah Nature Reserve's Red Squirrels."

Will you sign the petition?

Click on the link below:

<https://www.change.org/p/newcastle-city-council-save-havannah-nature-reserve-s-red-squirrels>

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## WOODRUFF WOOD NEWS



wildlife, well-being, woodfuel, warmth

Since the last newsletter, our Red Squirrels have kept a low profile (see Squirrel Update below), so it seems to be a good opportunity to talk about some of our

other wildlife sightings at Woodruff Wood this summer. Highlights have included breeding birds, new butterfly species, spectacular moths and even a baby Roe Deer.

One of our favourite woodland birds is the Great Spotted Woodpecker and a pair was evident throughout May to July as they nested in a standing dead Silver Birch tree on the edge of Main Ride. Their nesting hole was en route to our squirrel feeder and although we always tiptoed past the birch tree as quietly as is possible in a wood (which is actually pretty difficult as it's almost inevitable that you will tread on a branch at some point), the adults always spotted us and would sound their alarm calls. However, their daily annoyance at our brief presence did not affect their parental duties and they successfully reared their brood of youngsters. Other fledglings to inhabit the wood included Wrens, Tits, Thrushes, Bullfinches and scruffy Robins moulting out of their juvenile plumage and growing their familiar red breasts.

We've also observed three new butterfly species in Woodruff Wood this year – Painted Lady, Wall and Large Skipper. Their arrival has coincided with the increase in sunlight along Main Ride now that we've widened it for the very purpose of encouraging more woodland flora and fauna. All three species are predominantly orange in colour but differ in their patterns, sizes and habits. Skippers, for example, are unique in holding their wings in an angled position whilst at rest ready for a rapid take-off (see photo) and in the blink of an eye they can quickly vanish from sight.



Summer evenings in the wood saw moths out and about in good numbers when the weather permitted. Monthly moth-trapping sessions identified an array of different species – all beautiful to look at and by no means deserving of their creepy reputation. Their names are almost as flamboyant as their appearance – for example, Beautiful Golden Y, Buff Ermine, Coxcomb Prominent and Map-winged Swift.



Finally, we had a very brief encounter with a Roe fawn one afternoon in June. We heard an unusual piercing bird-like call from the undergrowth and out popped a young deer that was just as startled at our presence as we were of it and it soon ran off into further cover. We wondered whether it was lost as fawns lie up normally, quietly waiting for their mother to return from foraging and don't tend to wander about on their own.

#### SQUIRREL UPDATE (JULY 2016)

Red Squirrels have been thin on the ground in Woodruff Wood this year (especially after an outbreak of squirrel pox in February). Our last sighting to date was of one individual in early June and a number of weeks have now passed with no further sightings. Grey Squirrels have continued to invade though, with a recent influx after the breeding season. We continue to pursue and control these Greys but it is taking a lot of time and effort.

Please remember, if you sight either a Red or Grey Squirrel in the Morpeth and surrounding area, report it to MAD RS at [www.madredsquirrels.com](http://www.madredsquirrels.com) or telephone 07570 897979 or email [sightings@madredsquirrels.com](mailto:sightings@madredsquirrels.com)

If you would like to keep up-to-date with squirrel news from Woodruff Wood (along with lots of other woodland news), please sign up to our free newsletter at [www.woodruffwood.co.uk](http://www.woodruffwood.co.uk)

If you would like further information (including details of our range of firewood), please feel free to contact us on:

T: 07525 841361

E: [info@woodruffwood.co.uk](mailto:info@woodruffwood.co.uk)

W: [www.woodruffwood.co.uk](http://www.woodruffwood.co.uk)

Julia Meldrum and Chris Tomlinson

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## **POSTER PUTTER UPPERERS NEEDED.**

Many of our sightings come from people who have seen one of our posters and get in touch. We would like to get more posters out and about so that people are aware of who to and how to report sightings. All our posters are printed on waterproof and tearproof 'paper'.

If you could help with putting some posters up in your local area, please get in touch at [enquiries@madredsquirrels.com](mailto:enquiries@madredsquirrels.com)

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Our final message as always.... a really big thank you from the MADRS core team to everyone who contributes in any way to the continuing work and success of MADRS. It is only through the collective efforts from our grey control team, poster distributors, squirrel feeders and feeder makers, squirrel spotters and reporters, our Twitter and Facebook page looker afterers that we continue to actively provide protection and real conservation for our Red Squirrels in the area.

**Morpeth and District Red Squirrels**

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