

Morpeth and District Red Squirrels



Welcome to the Winter 2016 edition of the MADRS Newsletter

Our contact details

Mobile 07570 897979

Email enquiries@madredsquirrels.com

You can also visit our website www.madredsquirrels.com

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Welcome to the Winter edition of our Newsletter.

This is the final MADRS Newsletter of 2016 and we really don't know where the time has gone. As always, If you would like to contribute to any edition of the newsletter, then please email articles, photos etc to us at enquiries@madredsquirrels.com All contributions are gratefully received and help to make an informative and interesting newsletter.

By the end of October the MADRS grey control team had passed the 600 mark of grey squirrels removed from our patch. It is this essential work that is the greatest contributing factor to helping to safeguard our endangered native reds. However,

without the support of the public who report sightings and also from private households who monitor traps in their gardens, we would not be able to achieve these results. As always it is the 'many a mickle meks a muckle' approach that collectively produces these outstanding results.

('Many a small makes a big' for those who are struggling with my grannies old saying).

To everyone who contributes in any way to the work of MADRS we would like to express our thanks for another very successful year. Again as always, any help in any way is always most welcome.

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

Many thanks.

Sue Mitchell
MADRS joint co-ordinator

NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS (NRS).

NRS is the umbrella organisation for volunteer Red Squirrel Conservation groups in the region. Sally Hardy from Ponteland Red Squirrels has co-ordinated NRS for a considerable number of years but has now stepped down following her move from Northumberland to Cumbria. We'd like to thank Sally for all her hard work and wish her well in her new county.

We would also like to thank Nick Leeming who has stepped in to take up the reins of NRS. Nick also co-ordinates the Squirrel Action Greenhead and Gilsland group (SAGG). At present the role of secretary is vacant and Nick would love to hear from anyone who might be interested in helping.

If anyone would like to be more involved with NRS or like to receive minutes from NRS meetings and the AGM, then please email Nick at nickleeming65@gmail.com



One

NORTH EAST RED SQUIRRELS.

NErS is a charity set up to assist in obtaining funding. Many donors will only give to a registered charity (on the assumption that a registered charity is more accountable than an unregistered group). NErS is willing to assist other RSG in applying for funding. Anyone interested should contact Sally Hardy (Ponteland RS).

pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk

Kate Weightman
Joint co-ordinator MADRS



plus one.... makes two.

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

MADRS 'TRAPPERS BEER'.

In October the Core Group hosted an evening at The Plough at Ellington to thank our grey control team, all of whom are volunteers and give a great deal of time and effort to undertake grey control. Their efforts are very much appreciated and proving effective as grey sightings are down from last year. It was an opportunity for individuals who mostly work alone to share experiences and information. It was a very enjoyable evening and we look forward to another 'get together' in the New Year.

Kate Weightman

MADRS WELCOMES NEW 'CORE' GROUP MEMBERS

We're pleased to announce that John Kelly and Mark Legard have agreed to join the core group of MADRS. It is really important that we have a diverse core membership so that we get a range of views and ideas and expertise that help us make balanced and informed decisions.

SAD NEWS

We were sad to hear that Muriel Brown passed away on 9th October. Muriel had been a supporter of MADRS from our early days. Our sincere condolences go to her family and friends.

ALL THINGS HEDGEHOG.

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

I'd like to thank Brian Craske again, (one of our supporters from Ashington), who kindly makes all our squirrel feeders and feed hoppers. Brian has been busy making some beautiful wooden hedgehog houses that can be ordered from the Hedgehog rescue. The money raised from the sale of the feeders and the houses helps our respective conservation efforts to continue.

As per usual, I have now got my winter collection of Hedgehogs! At the moment I have 11 in residence but will be getting another 4 or 5 shortly. These are hogs that have arrived at the rescue and are too small to have made it through the winter without help. They are in 'free range' enclosures in my barn and have gone from little tackers into quite chubby critters over the weeks. Having nearly eaten me out of house and home, I'm relieved that some have now decided to hibernate. At least if they wake up, there will be an ample supply of food that they can tuck into before returning to their nest boxes to continue with their winter sleep.

Sue Mitchell

www.hedgehogs-northumbria.org.uk

www.facebook.com/hedgehogsnorthumbria



MADRS CHRISTMAS CARDS.

Following the success of last year when we sold over 1000 Christmas cards,

MADRS has produced 2 new cards for this year.

The delightful photographs taken by Mr G A Charlton are again proving very popular and we were extremely pleased when a Morpeth based company chose one of the cards as their corporate greeting.

Kate will be at the Longhirst Christmas coffee morning on December 3rd to deliver the cards ordered by villagers there and we are most grateful to Jill Elphick for once again acting as our “agent” in Longhirst.

There are 2 designs:- Winter Hazelnut Heaven and Winter Walnut Wonder.

The cards are priced at a minimum donation of £3.50 per pack of 10 or £1.75 per pack of 5

All proceeds from the sale of our cards go towards funding our vital conservation work.

If you would like to order any cards please get in touch

at:- enquiries@madredsquirrels.com

WE WISH EVERYONE A VERY HEALTHY AND HAPPY CHRISTMAS

RED CONSERVATION AND MADRS MEMBERS IN THE MEDIA.

Morpeth residents will have received the latest copy of Inside Morpeth recently. Ian Leech has written an interesting and informative article about Woodruff Wood titled “Woodland wildlife haven”. He describes the painstaking work of two of our Core Group members, Chris “Tommo” Tomlinson and Julia Meldrum, who bought the wood two years ago and have since been caring for the previously unmanaged woodland in order to restore it to the most favourable conditions to achieve maximum biodiversity in accordance with their ten year plan. Already they have three under threat species living in the wood, one of which is the red squirrel. Having been fortunate enough to have a personal conducted tour of Woodruff Wood, I can confirm the amount of sheer hard work which has gone

into clearing rhododendrons, thinning out trees, draining ditches and creating drives to provide access to the wood. The article highlights the commercial business aimed at making the wood a sustainable source of wood products, - it has to allow Tommo and Julia to make a living. However, running through the piece is the parallel aim of creating an environment in which native species of flora and fauna may flourish not just for now but for future generations.

On a more national scene, Glen Graham , another Core Group Member, featured prominently in a recent Country File Diary television programme. The presentation team visited Wallington where Glen works as wildlife ranger, specifically to discuss his work protecting the red squirrels now back and flourishing in the grounds of Wallington Hall. Grey control is a controversial subject but without it the reds would not be at Wallington. Glen's pragmatic, reasoned and sensitive explanation of why it is necessary to cull one animal to protect another will hopefully have reassured viewers who had doubts about such work. The footage of a red scampering around, totally oblivious to the interest being shown in it, must have convinced anyone watching of the importance of protecting these delightful animals. Glen has had many positive responses to the programme including some interest from America, so red conservation was given a welcome boost by his appearance on the programme.

MADRS is a small and entirely voluntary group but it's wonderful that these three of our members are able to make such a valuable contribution to red conservation in their "day jobs", as well as in their work with us.

Kate Weightman

MADRS CHARITY TINS.

A special thanks to Lynne Metcalfe, podiatrist in Bedlington, who has not only had one of our collecting tins in her practice which her patients have generously filled (£85), but has also offered to display a selection of our cards to tempt her patients to buy them. Bedlington sightings of red squirrels have been increasing

recently and we know how protective the town's people are of the native animals.
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WOODRUFF WOOD NEWS



Rhododendron Bashing!

We thought that we'd take this opportunity to talk about our woodland management work – or at least one task in particular which is set to dominate our work schedule for the next twelve months or so. This is the removal of invasive Rhododendron from Woodruff Wood which is also known by the rather more catchy title of Rhododendron bashing!

This shrub has spread extensively throughout the wood over many years and covers roughly six acres of our land. The way it twists and tangles along with its great ability to root and send up shoots means that it is no easy task when it comes to removing it. We have landed ourselves with a daunting and time consuming project to say the least but we are prepared to bash away with vengeance!

The reason that rhododendron is a major problem in our wood (and indeed in many woodlands across the UK) is that it spreads rapidly and smothers out all the ground flora and woodland understorey. In simple terms, wherever Rhododendron exists, no other flowers, plants, shrubs and young tree saplings can survive. In turn, this leads to a lack of food and habitat for our wildlife which can result in species decline. Our aim is for Woodruff Wood to thrive for many years to come and therefore it is essential that trees and flowers can set seed to provide this longevity.

We have just cut down our first large patch and the difference in appearance is staggering. A massive bare area of ground is now exposed which we hope will become colonised by native plants and trees as the years go by. Take a look at the images below which show the same area both before and after the removal of Rhododendron:





Squirrel Update (November 2016)

Red Squirrels continue to be thin on the ground in Woodruff Wood with just the occasional sighting. Our feeder hasn't been touched so far this autumn but we think that this is probably due to the abundance of natural food available at this time of year. We've found lots of nibbled pine cones lying underneath the trees suggesting that the Reds are feasting high up out of sight and therefore not needing any supplemented food from us.

However, a small but steady stream of Greys continues to appear both in the wood and neighbouring gardens which is always a worry. Their erratic behaviour means that it is extremely difficult to track their movements - so it's proving to be a bit of a challenge in attempting to remove them. By working in liaison with our neighbours though, we are gradually reducing numbers. Wildlife doesn't keep to the same boundaries that we all have and for Red Squirrel conservation to work at its best, the co-operation of neighbours is essential whether it be through

sharing observations, feeding the Reds or actively controlling the Greys. Every little bit of help adds up to make a big difference as we all collectively continue to care for 'our' Red Squirrels.

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 or telephone 07570 897979 or email sightings@madredsquirrels.com

Longhirst Christmas Coffee Morning

We will once again be attending this year's Christmas Coffee Morning being held on Saturday 3rd December at Longhirst Village Hall (10am to 12pm). Everyone is welcome and it's a lovely way to get into the mood for Christmas!

We will have a table displaying a selection of our products and also be on hand to take orders for firewood and our bespoke Woodruff Woodfuel Collection (which makes for a fantastic Christmas gift). Please do come and visit us to take a look and have a chat.

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

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

W: www.woodruffwood.co.uk

Julia Meldrum and Chris Tomlinson

FEED RED SQUIRRELS YEAR ROUND.

It's not just winter when red squirrels need feeding. They really could do with the extra help all year round and especially when feeding young. It's the same for birds too. A little extra when there are young mouths to feed always gives a bit of a helping hand.

In winter, please make sure there is water available but as always, ensure that water barrels and buckets have lids on or have a mesh ladder in them so that if anything falls in, it can get out.

If you would like to purchase a MADRS feeder then please get in touch at enquiries@madredsquirrels.com

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.

Please send this newsletter to anyone you think might be interested or circulate it round your group. If you would like to be added directly to our mailing list (our newsletter comes out 3 times a year) then please drop us a line at enquiries@madredsquirrels.com

WE WOULD LIKE TO WISH EVERYONE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A HEALTHY AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.

Morpeth and District Red Squirrels

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