

PENRITH & DISTRICT RED SQUIRREL GROUP

Sept 2019 Newsletter



www.penrithredsquirrels.org.uk



Welcome to our summer 2019 newsletter

As ever it has been a real roller coaster with a series of highs and lows. A good breeding season for red squirrels but unfortunately for greys too. Over the spring and early summer, this has resulted in an unprecedented number of squirrel pox outbreaks. This is the result of the deadly virus carried by greys being passed onto reds and this has devastated the red population in some localised areas and sadly, it seems, right down the River Lowther valley.

Exactly how it is passed on is still not clear but; all squirrels follow scent trails - this highlights the difficulty we have over feeding of reds. We encourage everyone to provide food but this needs to be done taking into account the following recommendations.

1. All feeders should be regularly cleaned and disinfected.
2. At times of pox outbreaks feeders should be taken down - this gives the squirrels time to disperse rather than concentrating on known feeding points and helps reduce the threat of infection.
3. We also recommend the replacement of old and particularly wooden feeders that are difficult to clean.
4. Immediately report a sighting of a grey to your local ranger and if on or near your feeders, please take them down.

Our team of 6 rangers are doing what they can to control greys and prevent the spread of pox but we as a group cover a huge area - 650 square miles in total. This is an enormous area and we rely heavily on local people acting as our eyes and ears.

Our guest speaker from Wallington will have fascinated those of you who came to our Annual Public Meeting in July. He is tasked by his employer (The National Trust) with ensuring there are reds on the estate there. His description of the difficulty for him as a single-handed employee covering 20 square miles puts our 650 and 6 rangers into context. Landscape grey control is key and the work of our neighbouring groups vital.

As ever fundraising is difficult and we need your help. I appeal to all reading this to join the group if you are not already a member, look at your membership if you are and consider, if you can possibly afford it, raising your payment. We have a number of members still on the old rate. There is a standing order form at the back of this newsletter.

Lastly; if every member could recruit one other it would make a massive difference to our finances and the work of this wonderful charity helping to secure the long-term future of our beloved red squirrels.

Robert Benson: P&DRSG Chairman



For General Enquiries Contact Julie Bailey

P&DRSG Administrator/Treasurer on 07788 264571 or info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group. Woodside, Armathwaite, Cumbria CA4 9SX
Registered Charity No: 1117418

UPDATES FROM THE RANGERS

Gary Murphy (P&DRSG Ranger) - Upper Eden Valley:

Red squirrels are still thriving in the upper Eden area despite two outbreaks of squirrel pox; sadly had to dispatch 8 in the Rutter Falls area of Appleby and 2 at Maulds Meaburn but despite that, more people are reporting reds with some for the first time.

If you have a red squirrel and are not a member, who would you call if there was a problem? Join today and help us save your red squirrel. Since the last newsletter 30 greys have been dispatched; to date (Jan through July 2019) 164 in area 1 so you can see we need funding.

Justin Grice (P&DRSG Ranger) - Ullswater:

The summer months have been fairly quiet in the Ullswater area with very few grey squirrels being found; the red population, however, is growing all the time as they have had a good breeding season this year. Greys are becoming a real challenge to find in the valley so public sightings are still very important in locating the odd greys that are still moving about.

I've been able to access some woods in the Hutton John area that I've previously not had permission to and I've had success in culling good numbers of greys so far; this is good for the resident red population and has stopped greys breeding here which would have moved out into other areas. A big thank you to all the landowners and public for their continued support.

Jerry Moss (Center Parcs Ranger & P&DRSG Trustee) - Whinfell Forest, Penrith:

A very busy time during May, June & July with numbers of grey squirrels being caught in some of the main hot spots in my area as well as other areas. Reds were doing well in the Lowther valley but unfortunately, an outbreak of the squirrel pox virus that started in late May has taken its toll in that area and a lot of time and effort has/is being undertaken into trying to contain the virus.

I am pleased to report in other areas like Whinfell Forest; the reds continue to be doing well and numbers are certainly on the up after the pox outbreak a few years back. Reds are appearing in areas I have been working and controlling the greys in, which is great to see.

Thank you to everyone who supports the P&DRSG.

John Lisle (P&DRSG Ranger) - Northern Eden Valley:

The summer months got off to a very busy start with grey squirrel sightings in the northern Eden valley. I have been extremely busy trapping greys with the help of a few volunteers which is very much appreciated. I am pleased to say that after a very hectic June; July has been a lot quieter and I have had a few more reds popping up in various places plus a few more locations that have a good number of reds feeding daily along with this year's young ones.

I am pleased to say that despite the recent outbreak of squirrel pox in the Penrith area; the northern Eden valley does not seem to have been affected so far, so fingers crossed. Once again I would like to thank all the landowners for allowing me to carry out work on their land; without their support, it would not be possible to do my job effectively and I would also like to thank all the volunteers for all their hard work.

David Cowen (P&DRSG Ranger) - Dalston/Caldbeck:

April, May and June are the main trapping months when squirrels find that natural food from the previous autumn has all but been depleted. At this time, they are most susceptible to trapping and inclined to use feeders with regularity.

It is, therefore, a busy time for rangers, setting traps and checking them at least twice a day. Where reds are present, I undertake three checks each 24hr, the last one occurring during the last hour before darkness. This can create a very unsociable and demanding schedule and it's a time when volunteers can help out by taking on a trap site to do the checking and release of any reds.

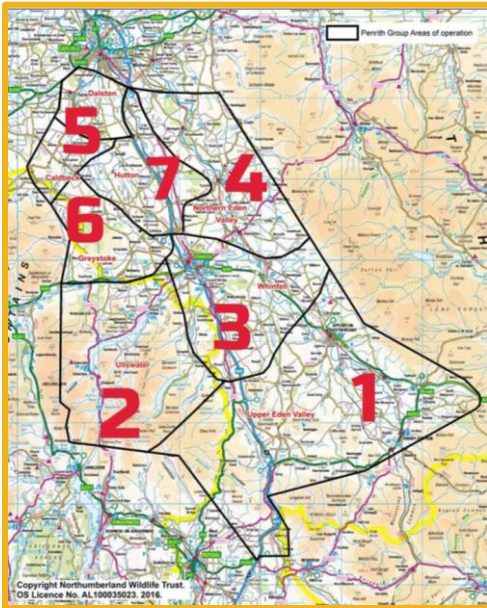
This year I've been blessed with a good team of helpers and this has enabled us to hit the grey population hard and take them out of the breeding pool.

Support and cooperation from landowners and tenants is essential to provide full control coverage and I'm fortunate to have both. Red sightings have increased steadily over the year and are no longer a rarity.

Shaun Edmondson (P&DRSG Ranger) - Hutton:

A very busy summer with greys moving in from all over however reds are doing well and quite a few new reds are turning up in places that have been void of reds for some time. Supplementary feeding has dropped off due to the amount of natural food around. Looking forward to autumn to see what it brings but overall looking good for red numbers. Thanks to the public for your support and reporting red/grey sightings.

WHO TO CONTACT



Jan - June 2019

2,025 red sightings reports

Approx. population = 353

For General Enquiries Contact Julie Bailey,
P&DRSG Administrator/Treasurer on:

07788 264571 | info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk



You can also contact us via our Facebook page
PENRITH & DISTRICT RED SQUIRREL GROUP.

**TO REPORT ANY SQUIRREL SIGHTINGS
PLEASE CONTACT THE FOLLOWING:**

1. GARY | 07974 788434 | garymurphy24red@gmail.com
2. JUSTIN | 07388 831150 |
3. JERRY | 07736 779965 | jmossjerry@aol.com
4. JOHN | 07841 449648 | john.lisle@btinternet.com
5. DAVID | 07542 191865 |
6. MATTHEW | 07949 366334 |
7. SHAUN | 07522 699265 | rosiese1990@icloud.com

**FOR ANY REPORTS OUTSIDE OF THE
P&DRSG AREA PLEASE CONTACT
NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS AT:**

www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk



VIEW FROM THE FEEDER – A VOLUNTEER’S STORY

Let me start by taking you back to 1976. David Wilkie had just won swimming gold for GB at the Montreal Olympics, the summer heatwave led to the appointment of Denis Howell as “Minister for Drought” and an eleven-year-old boy from north Derbyshire (yours truly) was taking his first-ever trip to Cumbria – a scout camp in the grounds of Rydal Hall near Ambleside. This week away from home not only provided the catalyst for a life-long love of the Lake District, but it was also the first (and, up to this year, the last) time I saw a red squirrel face to face.

Furnished with supplies our tent of six boys had been trusted to cook our breakfast unsupervised. Needless to say, our culinary efforts left much to be desired and leftovers were plentiful so our leaders suggested we combine the food scraps and lard to make food for the birds. Enough fat balls were duly prepared and placed in the neighbouring trees. Suddenly.... there it was. A small, rusty coloured, red squirrel sat on a branch, tucking gleefully into our leftovers as we stood and watched completely transfixed – probably the only time we were quiet and still all week.

Fast-forward to 2019 and, having fulfilled a lifelong ambition to relocate to Cumbria, I am standing alone in woodland near my new home in Caldbeck. I have agreed to help out our local squirrel ranger David Cowen by replenishing some feeding boxes and monitoring the resultant activity. Having just topped up the feeder for the very first time and taken a few steps backwards, almost immediately a red squirrel appeared. After a few moments of staring, it ran down the tree, settled on the box and started feeding. Then, for a joyous 15 minutes, I was transported back more than 40 years to my previous encounter with these wonderful and engaging animals.

My involvement as a volunteer began following a red squirrel group presentation at our village hall where I learnt more about the conservation efforts necessary to sustain and strengthen native red squirrel numbers, the devastating threats posed by the grey squirrel, how to distinguish between reds and greys and what could be done to provide much needed financial and practical support. I had a friendly chat with David about using surplus walnuts from the tree in our garden for bait and from there I have helped out with replenishing feeders, reviewing photos from the monitoring cameras, recording the patterns of activity in spreadsheet form and positioning & setting traps. I have learnt how to operate the monitoring cameras and have also assisted with repairing some feeders and traps. Looking over the camera photos is always interesting and a thrill to see close-up how these animals live day to day in their natural habitat.

My volunteering only takes up a few hours a week, which is very modest compared to the total time dedicated by the team of squirrel rangers themselves. However, it is very evident that even a small voluntary effort can make a significant difference given the size of the area that needs to be covered and the labour-intensive efforts involved in feeding, monitoring and trapping in a carefully considered and humane fashion. I would urge anyone who can find a few extra hours to offer your support.

Steve Kirk



MY FIRST RED IN 80 YEARS

I'm Joan and I donate my coppers for the red squirrels at my local shop.

Whilst at the shop one day I said that I had never seen a red squirrel in my lifetime and was offered the chance of seeing them in a garden. This was soon planned and I was so excited at the thought of perhaps seeing my first red ever!

My taxi arrived early and we set off to the house in the sticks - I was keeping everything crossed, even for just a glimpse.

When we arrived, I hadn't even got out of the car but was met with waving for our attention followed by one finger over lips and a point towards the house. Making as little noise as possible we got out of the car quietly and I was ushered into the house to a chair in the sitting room with a view of the garden.

The window was then opened and within seconds; to my absolute astonishment; there was a red squirrel sat on the windowsill (inside) right in front of me! The cheeky little thing was here for breakfast.

I was totally captivated and desperate to reach out and stroke him as he was within touching distance but I wasn't allowed. "Wild not tame", was said. "They are allowed in only for a treat and a chat but most importantly a visual M.O.T. We much prefer them to be in the trees in the vast woodland connected to the garden, as long as they are healthy".

The little red ate delicately for about 20 minutes, had his picture taken, then he was off with food to hide for later and I could not believe what I had just seen. Thank you for my special visit, it's certainly one I won't forget.

Seeing my first red in 80 years was absolutely delightful and well worth the long wait; I hope to see some more at a later date and I will go on saving my coppers until I reach the pearly gate.

Joan Graham



THANK YOU TO OUR REGULAR
SPONSORS WHO PROVIDE
PRODUCTS & SERVICES TO
THE GROUP FREE OF CHARGE!

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Alan McViey
www.doddaccountants.co.uk



Cumbria Open for Business
www.cumbriaopenforbusiness.co.uk



Center Parcs (Whinfell Forest)
www.centerparcs.co.uk



And a sincere thanks to all those
who provide help and
support to the group.

STUDENT FILM MAKER JOINS SOME OF THE P&DRSG TEAM

"It has been my pleasure to have followed the incredible work of some of the rangers and volunteers of Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group, who have dedicated their lives to our native British underdog in a valiant effort to secure its future as a species. It was a privilege as a student wildlife film-maker to be involved with such a warm and energetic organisation. I am lucky enough to come from the highlands of Scotland, where I have always embarrassingly taken my red squirrels for granted; however after seeing the long hours and tireless work of the team at Penrith and district, never again shall I look at a red squirrel again without being reminded of the sacrifices made by the active communities protecting the boundaries of our native red.

I had come to make my student film as I was interested to document the monumental effort that was being put in across the north of England, in creating a buffer zone to protect not only the reds of Cumbria but all the populations to the north that I have been lucky enough to grow up with.

Meeting the rangers, it is evident in the pride they took in showing me an abundance of red squirrels, their love of reds and all the flora and fauna native to the Lake District. However, my romantic idea of rangers roaming the woodlands of one of Britain's most pristine environments evaporated swiftly; the backbreaking work in the early hours of the morning is a testament to the group and the community it serves. I met the rangers outside various motorway service stations for a 5 am start. We disappeared through the dark on their morning patrols; using the latest thermal vision technology and with monitoring cameras we raced along the winding country roads aiming to cover as much of the rangers' vast individual territories before the squirrels would stop their morning feed, on the various feeders the rangers cleaned, refilled, moved and maintained. Only once every squirrels' feeder had been topped by an array of supplementary seeds and nuts did we return to feed ourselves. It was here that I finally got to chat to the rangers to find out what had drawn them to such a demanding role, but they all came up with the same deep-rooted motivations; a strong connection to the area, a love of being outdoors, but most of all an absolute passion for red squirrel conservation.

However, the rangers were quick to admit that their work would not be possible without the loyal support of the communities their areas covered. Each ranger knew his patch and its active members inside out and it was evident that this conservation effort was built on a resilient community spirit. I was lucky enough to be taken in by volunteers Phil and his family who had become proud members of the red squirrel and district community groups. They enjoy supporting the work of the rangers, keeping checks of the squirrels not only to track down invasive non-native greys, but to be able to calculate the health and movements of red squirrels in the local area, which is invaluable and especially when containing the deadly squirrel pox virus and other diseases spread to red's by the grey squirrel.

Everything seemed to happen like clockwork, the rangers moving swiftly and silently through woodlands, their volunteers recording data and maintaining supplementary feeding of the red squirrels in their gardens. Yet behind the curtain, I was lucky enough to have the time to be inspired by the commitment and sacrifice of Julie Bailey. The colossal work required to run such an impressive conservation effort on such a shoestring budget was beyond belief; replying to hundreds of emails, phone calls and social media comments daily; collecting data, organising the needs of the rangers, communicating with landowners and searching high and low for new creative avenues for funds; there was a flurry of work from the early mornings out in the woods to the late midnight hours preparing for shows, community presentations and carefully analysing thousands of squirrel sightings and recordings that had come in that day from trail camera footage. Truly a dedicated patron and guardian of the Red Squirrel.

Although my time with the group was short, I left with newfound appreciation for the work and the sacrifices made in the protection of one of our most endangered and beloved woodland species and restored hope for their future. I want to personally take this opportunity to thank all those who have supported the Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group and continue to do so. I will be reminded of the miraculous effort you've all put in every time I am lucky enough to get a fleeting glimpse of red dancing through the trees above me in the future."

Archie Wilson

We have our own eBay shop ([Penrithredsquirrel0](#)); if you have not already visited, why not take a look today. Items include P&DRSG merchandise as well as squirrel feeders hand made by our rangers and volunteers.



FOREIGN / OBSOLETE COINS & NOTES

Drop off your foreign and obsolete coins or notes to the following collection points:

C&W HERALD OFFICE, SHAP
POST OFFICE, LANGWATHBY
POST OFFICE, APPLEBY TRAVEL,
POOLEY BRIDGE POST OFFICE,
WORLDWIDE TRAVEL
CONNECTION (ANGEL SQUARE,
PENRITH) or any P&DRSG
COLLECTION BOX.

A big thank you to these locations for agreeing to help and implement this scheme!

IN OTHER NEWS

Thanks to Wendy Rheam and her team of helpers who have held 3 fund raising events this year donating the proceeds of each to P&DRSG. The first being an informative red squirrel conservation evening with a talk from local ranger David Cowen held in Caldbeck village hall. The second was a plant sale with afternoon teas at Sebergham village hall and last but not least was a very successful Open Garden Day. Owner of the beautiful garden at Deer Ridding, Caldbeck, Lynne Carruthers, generously gave all the proceeds to P&DRSG. Wendy and her team held a plant sale and served delicious food in the village hall.

PHOTO RIGHT: Left to Right – Jerry Moss, Sarah McNeil, Bill & Jill Pettigrew, Lynne Carruthers.



This summer P&DRSG volunteer Sarah McNeil and her partner, Center Parcs red squirrel ranger Jerry Moss have nursed another red kitten back to full health after it was found suffering from an injury to its nose and head at Whinfell forest. “Archie D” is due to be released back into the forest any day now. A huge thank you to the family who found him and alerted the rangers on site.



YOU CAN ALSO HELP US BY:

SPONSORING OUR CONTRACTOR TEAM

ORGANISING A FUND RAISING EVENT

SPONSORING OUR FEED COSTS

SPONSORING A FEEDER

HOSTING OUR MERCHANDISE FOR SALE

SPONSORING OUR NEWSLETTER

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS



This lovely picture and heart-warming message encourages us all. The picture was drawn by Maisy who is 7 years old and spends time with her family at Lowther Holiday Park. After the recent pox outbreak, Maisy's gran Nicola wanted to do something to help P&DRSG. Not only did Nicola become a member but also took a charity box and offered to sell our merchandise in her shop in the north east. Nicola has already returned a full charity box and come back for more merchandise. Thank you, Nicola and Maisy.

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group - Membership/Donation Form

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group - Registered Charity No. 1117418

All memberships are for the calendar year payable at any time - Minimum membership fees are £20 (individual), £30 (family) however please feel free to pay a higher amount. Monthly standing orders are ideal for us as this does away with sending renewal reminders.

Title _____ First name _____ Surname _____

Address _____
_____ Post Code _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

I will pay £_____ monthly / yearly / by standing order * Circle preference/s

Signature _____ Date _____

For standing orders please complete the Standing Order Instruction below. For cheques please make payable to P&DRSG.

Gift Aid?

* Yes / No

* Circle one

Want to increase your contribution by 25% at NO COST to you?

As a registered charity, Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group can reclaim 25% of the amount you donate from the tax you pay. For us to claim Gift Aid, you must agree we can, and your taxes must not exceed the Gift Aid amount. As a UK Tax Payer if you pay less Income Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed it is your responsibility to pay any difference.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group (P&DRSG) captures your details in a membership database that is shared with P&DRSG Trustees & Rangers for your area. To comply with GDPR we need your consent to hold your data so we can contact you and send newsletters and messages. * Please circle around your preference below

I would like P&DRSG to send me newsletters and messages * I would not like P&DRSG to send me newsletters and messages *

Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group - Standing Order Instruction

To _____ Bank / Building Society

Bank Address _____

_____ Post Code _____

Regarding Account Number - - - - - Sort Code - - / - - / - -
Eight Digits Six Digits

Account Name _____
The name of the account holder

Please pay HSBC Bank, Market Square, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 7SN Sort Code **40-36-10** for the credit of
Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group, Account Number **01310968**

the sum of £_____ beginning _____ of _____
day month year

and thereafter every month / year * on the same day until further notice,

*Circle one above

and debit my / our account accordingly, cancelling any previous standing orders to P&DRSG

Signature _____ Date _____
The signature of the account holder

Please return this form to P&DRSG, Woodside, Armthwaite, Cumbria CA4 9SX or info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk