



NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS

www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

Issue 7 Winter/Spring 2011

NORTHERN NEWS

NRS Constituted!

After three years of being an informal umbrella group to bring together volunteer red squirrel groups, Northern Red Squirrels (NRS) has become fully constituted, with two County Committees in Northumberland and Cumbria.

NRS currently has 32 group members with an additional 20 sub-groups and another three new groups who will soon be up and running. Each group remains totally independent, but being a member group means that we can all work together to communicate, work collaboratively, help our network grow by encouraging new groups to set up, keep up the momentum, motivate and above to HAVE A VOICE in today's complicated world of Red Squirrel Conservation.

Charles Immortalised

Local Cumbrian Sculptor, Kirsty Armstrong, who has many years experience and is also the Chairman of Brampton Red Squirrel Group, has recently finished her latest piece 'Charles'.



'Charles' is based on '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. Last year, Sarah and 'Charles the squirrel' received lots of publicity in the national press and also a letter of support from Prince Charles himself!



Charles the Orphan, Photo S McNeil

'Charles' is a limited edition design of 100 pieces. Each piece is made to order and numbered. Cast by Lakeland Mouldings, Cumbria, they have a ground copper finish, which is waxed and polished by hand. 'Charles' is Approx.11.5" (290mm) in height, and Approx.5.5" wide (145mm) and at the time of writing the first 25 have already been sold. Each 'Charles' is available at £125 plus p&p. Postage and packing is £9.95 which includes insurance. Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.

Kirsty is donating £5 to Brampton RSG and £5 to RSST for every squirrel sold.

For further information please contact Kirsty, email: aartducko@aol.com

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 Phone: 07878 061880

Squirrel Fest Fun 2010 – More Planned For 2011

Squirrel Fest 2010 (September 26) was kindly hosted by the Lake District National Park Authority at Brockhole, Windermere. Marquee plans had to be cancelled at the last minute due to torrential rain the day before but the LDNPA personnel were wonderful in accommodating the last minute changes. All the stalls were erected on the entry walkway to the visitor centre which turned out to be an excellent place to hold the event. Bob Cartwright (LDNPA) gave an initial welcome with introductions for special guest, Sir Chris Bonington and our own Dr Craig Shuttleworth. There was plenty of fun for all the family with juggling, face-painting and badge-making and, of course, lots of squirrel information and goodies on the stalls. It is always fun meeting other volunteers and involved squirrel-holics so a good day was enjoyed by all.



Squirrel Fest 2011: Brockhole, Windermere, 18th September 2011

By Jackie Foott, Sedbergh RSG Photo supplied by Susan Southworth, Allerdale RSG

Slaley Red Squirrels

Slaley Red Squirrel Group are delighted to hear of the SITA funding received by NWT. This is good news for Red Squirrel Conservation in our area. The project will be led by Jamie Stewart, working with the new RSNE project, local Volunteer groups, and land owners. We look forward to working with Jamie, and thank Mark Wilkinson for all his help and support over the past three years, and wish him well in his new role.

In December, our group was approached, for a volunteer to take part in a television programme being made about game, (including grey squirrel) local markets, and cooking. A film crew from London required a location and a trapper at work. The weather at that time was at its most appalling. Our volunteer, Richard managed to get the film crew to a location, and the snowy scenes were shot. He was able to explain the reasons for the trapping, and the plight of our native Red Squirrels. Richard had obviously made a good impression, as he was subsequently invited to London to take part in the cooking programme. along with David Ridley, Fish and Game Merchant, Acomb, Hexham, and the owners of The Feathers Inn, Hedley on the Hill.

The programme will be on Sky around the 14th February, and is called Market Kitchen Great Adventure.

By Margaret Bates, SRS

News From Snaizeholme

My wife and I own woodlands in Snaizeholme, an off shoot of Widdale which in turn links up with Wensleydale near Hawes four miles away. We have had Red Squirrels in our woods since 1997. In November 2009 I heard what I thought was a pine marten screaming near the house late one night. The following day I contacted UK Safari in Scotland and I was sent some recordings of pine Marten calls. We then notified the Dales National Park Authority who kindly set up hair tubes on trees to determine whether there were any signs of pine martens in our valley, but to-date there have been no confirmations. However our neighbours in Widdale; Roy & Margaret Hill have had a sighting. Margaret Hill was exercising their two dogs when she saw a pine marten up a tree. Readers may ask, what have pine martens to do with Red Squirrels? Apparently, recent studies in Ireland have shown that grey squirrel numbers drop rapidly when pine martens are present. This can happen even in a woodland where both red squirrels and grey squirrels are present along with pine martens, it is thought that this may be because greys are not as agile as reds. We ourselves noted that, although we have not had any greys in Snaizeholme for nearly two years, in the spring of 2010 the number of reds dropped off for a number of months. More recently, my wife Jane heard a commotion amongst our semi-tame pheasants that come to the house to be fed. This was late at night and the only significant point I can make is two days later a certain cock pheasant turned up to be fed but this fellow had lost all his tail feathers!!!! The question I would like to ask: Was the culprit a Pine Marten which I believe do hunt at night? We understand stoats (and we have several in our woods) do not hunt at night.

By Hugh Kemp , Mirk Pot , Snaizeholme. Hawes Tel 01969667510

RSPCA drop drowning case

The RSPCA have dropped the legal case against Norris Atthey, Chairman of Morpeth Red Squirrels, claiming that he has wasted their time and money.

Mr Atthey claimed that he had drowned a grey squirrel to challenge the RSPCA that it was not an illegal method of despatch after it had prosecuted a Burton-on-Trent man for the same offence.

In September 2010, the RSPCA issued proceedings against Mr Atthey for causing unnecessary suffering through the drowning of a squirrel under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. He was arrested and interviewed by the police and his house was searched. Five greys were removed from his freezer to be examined. All were found to have been shot.

In a press release (Jan 2011) the RSPCA claimed that Mr Atthey advised the court that he withdrew his claim that he drowned the squirrel and therefore they had no choice but to drop the case as they didn't have any further evidence. Mr Atthey has stated that he '**never withdrew from my original statement**' and claims that the RSPCA were under pressure to withdraw from all proceeding as there was never a case to answer. He also claims that the RSPCA should be condemned for wasting everybody's time and money. Money which could have been spent on saving our red squirrels.

WELCOME TO NEW GROUPS

We would like to give a very warm welcome to four new groups. Haydon Bridge RS and Whittingham Vale RS are both located in Northumberland and Arnside and Silverdale AONB Red Squirrel Group, Cumbria and Hawes Area Red Squirrel Group, North Yorkshire are joining the Cumbria Committee. Great news for the North's red squirrels!

WESTMORLAND RED SQUIRREL SOCIETY (WRSS)

The Westmorland red Squirrel Society (WRSS) has been trapping grey squirrels across its whole area for many years, but this activity has been limited by available resources. In February 2010 WRSS received £2,500 in funding from the Natural England/Forestry Commission/ Red Squirrel Survival Trust Grey Squirrel Control Fund to carry out intensive control work (and other associated activities) within 3 identified grey squirrel eradication zones. These zones had been identified as having existing red squirrel populations under threat from greys, and the funding enabled WRSS to focus in a strategic manner for the first time, as well as intensifying their control effort by providing bait and reimbursing the travel costs incurred by volunteer trappers.

The new WRSS website gives a 2010 red sightings map showing details of grid reference and date for each red sighting recorded – see www.westmorlandredsquirrels.org.uk . It is possible to zoom in on the online map to see precise locations for each sighting, and with the map in earth/satellite view it is possible easily to relate the sightings to specific areas of woodland. Grey sightings are not included on the online map as there were only 6 live grey sightings formally recorded in the period to August, and yet we know that greys are present right across our area. One reason for the low reporting level for live greys could be that people see no reason to report the commonplace, whereas a red sighting is considered something noteworthy. A new 2011 sightings map has just been added to the WRSS website, and the red sightings recorded near Staveley already show the benefits of last year's trapping effort in the Kentmere valley.

If in 2011 WRSS reverts to previous years' lower levels of trapping, then greys will simply move back in to the voids created by 2010's intensive trapping effort and the grant money spent will have been wasted and the momentum lost. It is therefore essential that WRSS obtains at least the same level of funding for 2011 in order to consolidate the work of 2010 by carrying on with the trapping effort at the same higher level, and in accordance with the priorities identified in each of the three zonal reports. Here's hoping!

Allen Valley Red Squirrels

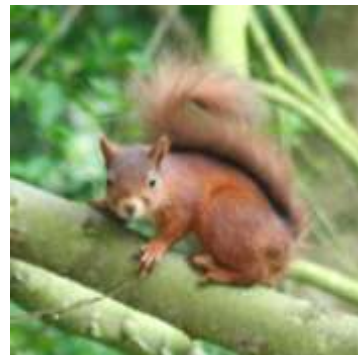
AVRS - Only one event has been held in 2010, this being the Allendale Fair which raised £38.30. Donations of £21.20 have also been received. Poor weather cancelled further events planned for 2010. Hopefully 2011 will allow us to hold more events. Grey control is still continuing and happily reports of red sightings are still being received.

J Watts. AVRS

NORTHUMBERLAND REPORT

Northumberland volunteers are looking forward to the new **Red Squirrel Northern England Project** to get underway and hope that it will prove to be successful in supporting the many squirrel groups that have sprung up in communities across the County over the past few years.

With the very cold spell over Northumberland's Red Squirrel Groups have begun conservation efforts in earnest. These include a variety of tasks from raising funds through Farmers' Markets, Fetes and Fairs, surveying and monitoring woodlands and of the most important of all – removing any influx of grey squirrels. Grey squirrels are still abundant in many areas in the south of the County and Hexham Reds are still hoping their efforts will result in reds once again being sighted in gardens. Ponteland suffered an outbreak of pox in October 2010, which was not surprising as it coincided with our largest influx of greys (32 were caught between May to October). The good news is that at the time of writing we have had no further reports of poorly squirrels and have been lucky enough to have been receiving lots of red sighting in the area.



Populations of red squirrels continue to thrive across the length and breadth of the County, but these are being constantly threatened by increased numbers of greys. Volunteers are key to encouraging communities to save their red squirrels and all are doing a marvellous job. But we need HELP and are pinning our hopes on RSNE to help us by developing an effective grey control strategy for Northumberland – without delay!

By Sally Hardy, Chairman, NRS Northumberland

CUMBRIA REPORT

With all the exciting developments taking place in the Greater Red Squirrel World, it is often easy to forget that the most important work on the ground is continually being carried out by the volunteers. Autumn of 2010 produced an abundant crop of natural foods making any grey control very difficult, especially while the leaves and food were still on the trees. For a while this winter, trapping had to stop in Cumbria when the temperatures were so cold that any creature caught in a trap risked being frozen to death. In some places, floods have also put a temporary stop to trapping but usually there is ongoing grey control, in gardens, woodlands, farmland, caravan parks, hotel grounds, etc. Most volunteers have jobs, families, other interests and hobbies and yet still donate huge amounts of spare time and often money to help with Red Squirrel conservation in whatever way they can. Some volunteers prefer to do fundraising, administrative or other support work for their RSG rather than active grey control. Many are quietly working on their 'patch' taking personal satisfaction in keeping the grey numbers low enough for the reds to thrive. Sometimes there is a feeling of being treated as unpaid pest-control contractors when homeowners contact the RSG to deal with the greys which are destroying bird feeders in gardens. At these times, the trapper might have to become a fundraiser, suggesting that a donation could be given to the group to cover some expenses.

It is hoped that now all volunteers understand the importance of their individual and joint contribution to the 'bigger picture' and that without their efforts there would be no red squirrels to protect. RSNE is certainly trying to show their respect and appreciation for NRS volunteers and I wonder how we could show it for ourselves and each other? Our annual Squirrel Fest provides a fun family day with opportunities to socialise with each other, but beyond that, maybe we just have to give ourselves a silent pat on the back and realise that we are doing something very special. We have decided not to allow a UK mammal to become extinct in England during our lifetime - there is something we can do about it and we are doing it!

By Jackie Foott, Chairman, NRS Cumbria

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

Thank you to ALL our contributors. Our next NRS Northern News will be out at the end June 2011

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

The Editor: email pontelandredsquirrels@yahoo.co.uk by 20th June 2011

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