



Member of
Northern Red Squirrels
www.northernredsquirrels.co.uk
Hotline: 07732 644694

Red Squirrel Watch!

Safeguarding Ponteland's Red Squirrels For Future Generations
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New Woodland Area on the SSSI

Volunteers have worked very hard over past few weeks to clear an area of over-grown hawthorn and willow scrub to plant a small woodland, which should provide an ideal habitat for a range of wildlife in the future.

Ponteland Red Squirrels would like to extend a big THANK YOU to the Volunteers, Scouts and neighbours who gave up their time to help carry out the clearance, along with those who made generous donations. The new woodland area comprises of a range of trees and bushes. It was hard work and took several week-ends to complete. In time, as the trees begin to grow, the area should become a haven for a wide range of wildlife and birds.

Red Squirrel Survival Trust to support NRS efforts

The Red Squirrel Survival Trust is a UK charity established to ensure the conservation and protection of the red squirrel in the UK. Its Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales.

RSST is committed to partnering with dedicated and knowledgeable local groups around the country. Their aims are not to reinvent the wheel, but instead listen to local groups and work with them to protect red squirrels in the UK.

The RSST aims to protect red squirrels by keeping reds and greys apart, stabilising new and existing populations, funding research into a squirrel pox vaccine and raising awareness of the plight of the red squirrel. The charity favours the use of volunteers wherever possible to support its aims. As well as ensuring strong community involvement in the cause, this also keeps administration and overheads costs to a minimum. They believe it is crucial that money is spent efficiently and wisely – either through targeted research, or practical projects that make a difference where it counts: on the ground.



Photo by Alan Heeley

The good news is that the RSST is in the process of developing a partnership with Northern Red Squirrels to assist local volunteer groups continue their ongoing efforts to save our native red squirrel in the north. They have already provided funds for 200 traps for use across the region!

Road-Kill Claims Two Red Squirrels

Two red squirrels have been run-over already this year on Darras Hall. A total of 14 reds were reported killed on the roads in the Ponteland area in 2008, mainly in Darras Hall.

It seems such a shame that Ponteland can boast a healthy population of red squirrels, only to have them run-over by 'careless drivers'. As vans and cars race around the estate, often exceeding speeds of up to 60mph, it is little wonder that our wildlife suffers. The once rural aspect of Darras Hall and Ponteland is being eroded, bringing with it urban problems, such as speeding vehicles and heavy traffic. When you are in a hurry, please spare a thought for the wildlife, especially our endangered red squirrels. Keep to the speed limit and keep your eyes open – especially on roads where red squirrel signs are displayed.

PLEASE REPORT ALL SQUIRREL SIGHTINGS TO PONTELAND RED SQUIRRELS YOU CAN USE THE FORM ON OUR WEBSITE, EMAIL US OR TELEPHONE. CONTACT DETAILS ABOVE.
WE RELY ON RESIDENTS TO HELP US! THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

PONTELAND RED SQUIRRELS MEETING

Would you like to get involved? We need more help.

Please come to our meeting:

United Reformed Church, Broadway, Darras Hall

Tuesday 21st April 2009 7pm

ALL WELCOME!

Northern **Red** Squirrels - 55 Groups and Rising

NORTHERN **RED** SQUIRRELS, created by Volunteers, for Volunteers, with aims to promote collaboration, cooperation and openness in order to save our red squirrels in the North, is proving to be a great success. A massive 55 voluntary groups have joined forces to encourage coordinated action and communication, not only with each other but also with the funded groups.

If you would like further information about **NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS** or know anyone who would become the member contact for their area, please visit the NRS website. **NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS** also produces a quarterly newsletter, **Northern News**. If you would like to receive a regular copy either by email or post please visit the NEW NRS website: www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

Spring is almost upon us and after the cold, snowy winter, our red squirrels are beginning to be more active. We have had several reports of mating-chases, where two or more squirrels spiral up and down tree-trunks. It is a wonderful sight to see and we're hoping that soon we will be hearing reports of squirrel kittens following Mum to learn about the world.

We have had increased sightings around the estate, including a return of at least one red squirrel around the SSSI, off Middle Drive and Woodlands. We are constantly worried about the fragmentation of wildlife corridors running through the estate as developers clear these to build new houses. What a relief it is to see sympathetic building, where the developers keep as much mature habitat, trees and bushes as possible when developing a new house – the finished product also looks so much more in keeping with the area, too.

Developers don't have to clear the whole plot of every tree and bush – it is often just a lazy way of building. We need to encourage builders to keep the mature plants! You can help to do this by contacting the Planning Officers or commenting on the Planning Application (on the CMBC Website) – asking them to ensure that as many trees and bushes on the site in question are kept. Or have a word with the developers if a plot near to you is due for development. It is our neighbourhood and up to us as locals to help to retain its rural nature.

WHAT A SHAME IF DARRAS HALL BECAME A BLAND HOUSING ESTATE!

Did You Know?

May – September is a lean period and it is especially important for us to keep feeders topped up at this time of year.

Did You Know?

Grey squirrels can consume up to 8 times more food than a red squirrel! They also eat almost anything including scraps from bins!

Grey Squirrel – an ethical food?

A recent edition of BBC's 'Inside Out' programme reports that 'Foodies' in the South of England have hailed grey squirrel as an 'ethical food' and an excellent ingredient for a range of recipes. Several restaurants, including Taste Restaurant and Deli, in Bristol, are including grey squirrels on their menus. Taste's owner reported that he expects to sell in excess of 5000 squirrels in his Deli this year. He is not alone, celebrity chef, Hugh Fearnley-Whitingstall, caught and prepared squirrel on one of his programmes recently and believes it is an excellent 'freely-available, environmentally friendly' ingredient which should not be ignored. Several restaurants have squirrel on the menu in the North, including on occasion, Matfen Hall. **Ridley's Fish and Game** prepare and supply grey squirrels and have recently reported that they can't keep up with demand!

Let's hope the trend continues. If you would like to try grey squirrel visit Ridley's Fish and Game, Acomb, 01434 609246.

Five-a-day for Red Squirrels, too!

Red Squirrels love fruit! From apples to yew berries, natural fruits found in our gardens and woods provide much needed vitamins and nutrients for our red squirrels. Try putting a piece of apple or pear near your feeder – you could wedge it in a fork of the tree. Red squirrels seem to be like most mammals – their favourite foods vary from squirrel to squirrel. We have noticed that some love apples and pears, others won't touch these, but love blackberries, raspberries and yew berries and even plums, damsons and melon. PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR SQUIRREL'S PREFERENCE!