



Member of  
Northern Red Squirrels  
[www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk](http://www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk)

# Red Squirrel Watch!

Safeguarding Ponteland District's Red Squirrels For Future Generations

[www.pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk](http://www.pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk)

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Issue No. 14  
Spring 2012

## UP THE REDS!

Recent sightings of red squirrels around the south eastern part of Darras Hall have given us new hope for the survival of our red squirrel population.

Fears that the double outbreak of Squirrel Pox Virus (SQPV) in both Ponteland Village and Darras Hall, last autumn 2011, would wipe out our remaining populations of red squirrels has been unfounded. Since the first outbreak of SQPV in Darras Hall October 2010, when our squirrel numbers plummeted to an all-time low, we saw an increase in the remaining numbers in the spring 2011 and our long-standing population of red squirrels on and around the golf course were unaffected by the Disease. However, we were devastated to learn that Ponteland Village had succumbed to the deadly virus in September 2011 quickly followed by another outbreak of the virus in the south western part of Darras Hall. Several 'poorly' reds were removed from the area and a few more were found dead. **Since then no red squirrels have been sighted in Ponteland Village.**

We are hoping that young maturing adult red squirrels will begin to migrate back to the village from the Blagdon and other outlying areas and hopefully the golfers will once again be able to share the course with these delightful creatures!

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- **PLEASE BE VERY VIGILANT.** If you have reds visiting your garden please keep a close eye on them and report any suspected changes to their behaviour or suspected symptoms to us immediately.
- **We need to know about the health of our populations of reds in the Ponteland District.** Please report ALL sightings of red squirrels to us (via our website, email or telephone). Let us know numbers, health, behaviour. Please also report absence (if you are no longer seeing reds).
- **Please also report any sightings of GREY SQUIRRELS. We need to remove any influxing greys from the area as soon as possible.**
- **DISINFECT YOUR SQUIRREL AND BIRD FEEDERS** (Use cittedox or arklens). Mouldy feeders can cause enteritis-type diseases in reds as well as being a possible contact point for red-to-red squirrel pox virus transmission.
- **PLEASE DO NOT TAKE YOUR FEEDERS DOWN IF YOU SEE A GREY SQUIRREL** – monitored feeders can be an excellent early warning sign to let us know when a grey has come into the area. It can also help us to catch the grey.

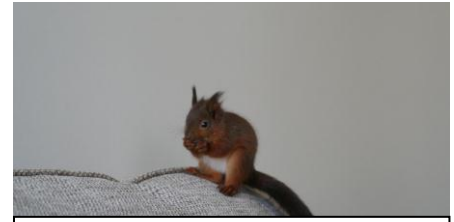
### GREY SQUIRRELS CONTINUE TO INVADE

We would like to THANK all residents who have reported grey sightings and monitored traps helping us to keep our Ponteland Area RED. Last year, in Ponteland, Darras Hall, Woolsington and Medburn, Milbourne areas we removed 67 grey squirrels. We are hoping that the numbers of greys making their way into our area will decrease as the RED SQUIRRELS NORTHERN ENGLAND Project gets underway. Although their strategy does not currently include our area, Rangers will be covering adjacent areas and this should have a very positive impact on us.

**TRAP AMNESTY.** If you have a trap you are no longer using please contact us and we will arrange to collect it. Thank you.

# SQUIRREL KITTENS

Spring is the time of year when many animals give birth to their young. Squirrel babies are called kittens and, as with most mammals, they are born blind and without any fur. Weighing only 15g the tiny kittens are completely defenceless depending entirely on their mothers. Within 7 weeks the kittens will look just like miniature squirrels and by 10 weeks they are ready to explore the outside world, following mum around and learning the ropes. The kittens will leave their mothers at about 14-16 weeks and venture into the big outside world to look for a new home.



Cheeky, an abandoned kitten, aged around 8 weeks

Red squirrels will breed at least twice a year, perhaps even more if the food and habitat conditions are good. Mating chases begin in late winter and often again in summer. Female reds need to weigh at least 275g to breed and produce healthy young. The gestation period is approximately 38-40 days and most females will produce between 3-6 young. About 50% of these will survive past their first winter. Please be on the lookout for red squirrel kittens and report any sightings to us.

## THANK YOU WAITROSE!

Another big **THANK YOU** to Waitrose for choosing our group to benefit from the **Community Matters** scheme again. The additional funds raised will really help us! Thank you to all the Waitrose customers who put their green discs in our box.



Penny, PRS, with Eileen, Waitrose

## WE NEED YOU!

We need more Volunteers to join our group and help us to raise awareness, help organise events, deliver and put up leaflets, survey and monitor in the area. For details of our next meeting or for more information please contact Sally on: 07878 061880

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

**OPEN MORNING Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April**

**PARTY IN THE PARK Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> June**

Squirrel Cards available from £1.00 Squirrel Note Books £1.50 Hazelnuts from £2.50  
Soft Squirrel Toys from £1.50

Free local delivery or collection.

Call Sally on 07878 061880 or Penny on 01661 825052.

## ROAD KILL AGAIN!

A red squirrel has been run over during the busy school run on Middle Drive, Darras Hall. It seems such a shame that as our reds begin to breed and expand their numbers they then get run over.

**WE APPEAL TO YOU TO PLEASE** drive at the speed limit in the Ponteland and Darras Hall area and **keep your eyes open** for reds on the verges or pavements. Unfortunately, red squirrels don't have any road sense, so it is up to us to watch out for them! If you see a red on the pavement or verge, please slow down as they may hop into the road without looking.

**PLEASE KEEP EYES PEELED FOR REDS CROSSING THE ROAD!**

**PLEASE REPORT ALL RED AND GREY SQUIRREL SIGHTINGS TO PONTELAND RED SQUIRRELS**

**YOU CAN USE THE FORM ON OUR WEBSITE, EMAIL US OR TELEPHONE. CONTACT DETAILS OVERLEAF.**

**WE RELY ON RESIDENTS TO HELP US KEEP OUR REDS!**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**