



Member of
Northern Red Squirrels
www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk

Red Squirrel Red Watch!

Safeguarding Ponteland District's Red Squirrels For Future Generations

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Reds Still Around!

We hope spring is here after the sun came out for a few days recently! It has been a long autumn and winter and we are not the only ones to feel it! Our wildlife has suffered too, with a lack of natural food and the freezing cold.

We are very pleased to report that despite the extended cold spell we are still getting regular reports of red squirrels both in Ponteland and the district area. Over the past six months we have seen a marked increase in the number of red squirrels sightings reported and reds have also been seen again in Ponteland Village. We have even had a recent report of an obviously pregnant female red, so we are keeping our fingers crossed that numbers will increase further this year.

GREY SQUIRREL NUMBER HIGH IN 2012

Although we now have a growing population of red squirrels in the area we still have the continued threat of incoming grey squirrels. Our volunteers have been working hard to remove any greys and have been able to cover a much wider area, thanks to a private donation, which allowed us to pay expenses for a short period over the autumn and Winter to Glen, our Squirrel Ranger, who has carried out systematic control work in the wider district.

In 2012 we caught and removed a combined total of **220** grey squirrels from our area. A massive **76** of these were caught in Ponteland and Darras Hall, mostly between August and November.

We had a VERY BUSY few months and would like to THANK all the residents who reported greys in their gardens! Without your vigilance we would not have any red squirrels!

We must say that we were astounded by the number of greys caught in our area in 2012! Our theory is that because of the awful weather there was lack of natural food during late summer and autumn. This resulted in an increase of grey squirrels migrating from uncontrolled areas to the south and south-east of Ponteland in search of food. These greys would have probably stayed in the woodlands around Throckley, Walbottle and Westerhope, and thus continued to survive and breed.

We are quietly hoping that because this unusually large number migrated into our area and were subsequently caught there will be fewer greys breeding and moving north this year. Time will tell!

KIRKLEY HALL ZOO ON BOARD!

We are delighted that Kirkley Hall Zoo is strongly supporting our efforts to save our local red squirrels. The Zoo team have been working hard to remove any grey squirrels in Kirkley Hall woodlands and are pleased to report that they have red squirrels back! Kirkley Zoo is currently developing a Red Squirrel and Wildlife Woodland Trail which should allow even more people to experience seeing red squirrels and a range of other British animals in the wild.

GLEN'S WORK

Our area benefitted enormously from having Glen, our Squirrel Ranger, for six months from October 2012 to March 2013. Glen worked part-time for 2 to 3 hours a day working systemically through woodlands in our outer district area. During this period Glen removed a total of **112** grey squirrels. **43** between October-December 2012 (included in our combined total for 2012) and **59** between January – March 2013. We believe this additional work, made possible by a donation, has been very beneficial for our red squirrels, allowing them to survive the harsh winter and hopefully increase numbers this year. **We would like to thank our donor, Glen and the woodland owners who have allowed us to work in their woods.**

Glen has now taken up the post of **RSNE Squirrel Ranger** for South East Northumberland. He will be working east of the A1 and is initially working closely with Blagdon Estates and Plessey Woods Country Park. The **RSNE South East Northumberland Project** has been made possible through a funding campaign by the Red Squirrel Survival Trust Charity, whose patron is Prince Charles. This is great news for South East Northumberland and we are confident that the project will be a success and gain momentum to allow the whole of South East Northumberland to be covered.

The South East Northumberland Project complements the 'Red Squirrels Northern England (RSNE) Project' which was launched last year and covers the Strongholds and buffer zones (such as Kielder and Harwood Forests) across Northumberland, Cumbria, Sefton Coast and part of North Yorkshire. The five year project is already making headway with red squirrels returning to many areas that have been covered in 2012. The project has also encouraged and supported other project ideas, such as South East Northumberland, The Eden Valley and Grizedale Forest, all of which are not in the Stronghold or Buffer Zone areas, but where we still have good populations of red squirrels in or close by. **It's early days but the signs are that WORKING TOGETHER WORKS!**

GET INVOLVED!

We need more volunteers to join our group. Are you passionate about saving our red squirrels? Would you like to help our group? If so, please contact us to find out more!

FUNDING APPEAL – WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We would like to continue and expand the work we started with Glen, but to do this we need to raise more funds! We have gratefully received a small grant from RSNE but we need to build on this to enable us to expand our area and cover the woodlands south and east to ensure the continued safety of our red squirrels.

You can make a donation to 'Ponteland Red Squirrels' by:

- **Bank Debit/Cheque: HSBC A/c name: Ponteland Red Squirrels, Sort Code: 40-37-37, A/c Number: 11421530**
- **By Cash Please phone for details**

EVERY LITTLE HELPS! ALL DONATIONS WELCOME!

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO HELP OUR RED SQUIRRELS?

- **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, and 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.

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