



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

Red Squirrel Watch!

Safeguarding Ponteland District's Red Squirrels For Future Generations

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A BUSY AUTUMN FOR OUR REDS

Autumn is a very busy time for many animals including our red squirrels. It is a time when nature has produced a whole host of natural food such as fruit, berries and nuts.

During the autumn months red squirrels are particularly busy gathering food to store for the winter. Red squirrels eat a range of food from fungi to fruit, but tree seeds, such as hazelnuts, beech nuts and pine nuts are their most important food, providing them with the right amount of nutrients to allow them to survive.

This year, there has been a bumper crop of natural foods for our reds and many people have reported watching these delightful creatures eating and burying nuts in their garden, flower beds and pots!

Unlike many native mammals, red squirrels don't hibernate during the cold winter months. This is because they aren't able to store enough body fat to allow them to sleep through the winter. Instead they need to forage throughout the cold months, although they do cuddle up inside their dreys when it is particularly cold. Red squirrels will often make their food stores close to their dreys during the winter so that it is easily accessible even on the snowiest days.

Please remember to continue to fill your feeders during the winter months.



GREY SQUIRRELS CONTINUE TO INVAD

We would like to THANK all residents who have reported grey sightings and monitored traps this year, helping us to keep our Ponteland Area RED. At the present time very little is being done to remove greys to the south of our area. The denes leading down to the Tyne are ideal breeding grounds for grey squirrels, and at the moment they are full of greys. We would love to see action in that area as it would have a very positive effect on our area, but until the nearby communities are engaged then we will have to carry on 'fire-fighting' as the greys continue to migrate our way.

WOOLSINGTON RED SQUIRREL GROUP

The good news is that a new group, Woolsington Red Squirrels, has set up to cover the Woolsington area to our east. This year they have been lucky enough to have had an RSNE Ranger to support their efforts by covering Woolsington Hall woods. This has resulted in the removal of over 140 grey squirrels. As a result a red squirrel has been sighted in the village! This very active new group is continuing their efforts to make Woolsington safe haven for reds once more.

****SQUIRREL CALENDARS NOW AVAILABLE: MINIMUM DONATION £6 (RRP £8)****

Also available: **Squirrel Cards (blank inside) £1 each** Squirrel Note Books £1.50
Hazelnuts from £3 (500g) **Soft Squirrel Toys; small £2; medium £3**
Soap in a squirrel bag £1
Free local delivery if required

ROAD KILL AGAIN!

A red squirrel has been run over during the busy school run on Runnymede Road, Darras Hall. This is the 5th red to be killed on the roads in our area in 2014. 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!

Where have **reds** been spotted?

We are lucky to have red squirrels living in the Ponteland area, although their numbers are still low after we experienced two bouts of squirrel pox virus in winter 2010 and winter 2011 respectively. Our reds are mainly on the fringes of Darras Hall and we are also pleased to have received sighting of a number of reds recolonising Ponteland Golf Club woods and surrounding gardens. Reds are being seen regularly in Havannah Nature reserve and also Prestwick Carr Volunteers, are monitoring both these areas. Kirkley Hall has regular sightings, too, and have a trapping regime in place. As reported overleaf, a red has been reported in Woolsington and we are hoping that more will follow.

Further afield, there are reds in the woods at Blagdon, Cramlington and several places in the Morpeth area. Ashington also boasts a good colony of reds. Wallington Hall has reported a growing colony, after losing their reds to pox several years ago.

Working together to save our reds is key to their survival! There are many voluntary groups across the North of England, all doing their best to help to keep their areas red. They are working with local landowners, who are giving lots of help and support, along with RSNE who are supporting our efforts with Rangers in key areas surrounding the Stronghold Reserves, such as Kielder and Harwood forests.

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 ciltrox 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.

OUR CONTACT DETAILS: www.pontelandredsquirrels.co.uk *Telephone: Sally on: 07878061880

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! We are desperate for more people to get involved. If you have a little spare time please email or ring for a chat and to find out how you can help.