

Northern Red Squirrels

Northern England's Independent Red Squirrel Conservation Group



www.northernredsquirrels.co.uk

Email: contact@northernredsquirrels.co.uk

Telephone: 07846 900924

Issue 1
Summer 2008

NORTHERN NEWS

United For Our Reds

Since our launch in March, Northern Red Squirrels has attracted over forty independent voluntary groups to join forces under the umbrella. Our numbers are rising still, as several new groups have become involved and will be added to our map shortly.

This is great news for our red squirrels as united effort, communication and cooperation is the only way to save them from extinction. However, we still have a way to go as sightings of grey squirrels continue to be reported across Northern England. With pox outbreaks at a record high in Northumberland and grey squirrels being seen close to Kielder (reputed to contain the largest population of reds in England) we need to continue to spread the word and 'close the gaps'.

'Working together' is the best way to do this and this means not only with other voluntary groups, but also with the funded groups. The Save our Squirrels arm of Red Alert and the Red Squirrel Protection Partnership are the two main funded Red Squirrel Conservation Groups in the north of England. They rely on volunteer involvement and **Northern Red Squirrels** is committed to cooperating, communicating and working with these groups to achieve our goal.

*Poxed Red at Wallington
Photo by J Bell*



Red Alert Steering Group

Northern Red Squirrels has been invited onto the Red Alert Steering Group to join SOS, FC and Natural England, to name but a few organisations who make up the steering group. Jackie Foot, Sedbergh RS and Sally Hardy, Ponteland RS attended the last meeting in March. It is hoped that NRS representation on this steering group will make a real impact on decisions made. Watch this space for further information!

Red Squirrel Review

Jackie Foot, NRS Rep for Cumbria and member of Sedbergh RS, has been invited to represent NRS and local groups on the Red Squirrel Review Steering Group. The review hopes to assess red squirrel conservation efforts in the north of England over the last few years and suggest the best way forward in the future. It is great news that local groups will have the chance to air their views and be a part of making decisions on the future of effective red squirrel conservation.

Without the inception of Northern Red Squirrels voluntary representation on these steering groups would not have been possible. Now it is up to all local groups to contribute and make sure that our united voice is heard. Let's hope the review is able to identify and pull together effective action and encourage cooperation between the funded groups and recognise the how important voluntary action is to the survival of our native red squirrel.

Pine Martens lend a hand?!

Several studies, including one in an Irish Woodland recently, have shown that Pine Martens are more likely to predate on grey squirrels than red. This is attributed to the fact that greys are less nimble than reds! It may also be that greys offer a much more substantial meal, too! These reports seem to back up anecdotal evidence in Snaizholme, where pine martens have been spotted over the past few years and red squirrels appear to be on the increase. Let's hope this trend continues.

NRS Northumberland Report

It seems a long time since we first set up NRS and since that time we have been incredibly busy. The good news is that we are successfully 'spreading the word' and several new groups have joined or are in the process of doing so, including groups at Langley, Wark and Bardon Mill. Unfortunately, the bad news is that there has been a marked increase in outbreaks of Squirrel Pox across the County and continued sightings of grey squirrels, some of which have been in new, previously grey free areas, such as Warkworth, where thankfully there is now a new network of volunteers successfully keeping the greys at bay!

We are really pleased that new SOS trapper, Jamie, has been able to work with Jan Kippax, SAGG and has also provided trap training for volunteers in the west of the County. Attending a trapping workshop is very useful, even for those experienced volunteers, as it's great to share ideas and tips and to try new methods. Dates for further trap training with Jamie are being finalised at the moment, so watch this space!

Talks are an excellent way of getting people interested in red squirrel conservation and can prompt people to set up groups in their villages. We have given several successful talks over the past three months and have more in the pipeline. Stands at Farmers Markets and Fairs are also an excellent way of spreading the word. Joint stands with two or more individual groups can be very effective, too. If you want to join in please contact me.

The Local Groups Workshop with SOS, at Kielder Castle, was well attended and proved to be an informative, interesting and enjoyable day. It was a great chance for volunteers to share ideas, make suggestions and also find out how we can work more effectively with SOS and each other.

Finally, my message is **DON'T WAIT, OR IT MAY BE TOO LATE!** Unfortunately, without continuous intervention, grey squirrels will persistently push into all of Northumberland, and if we want to keep our red squirrels then we need to have effective local action in every area. It has been proved, more than once, that if the greys are kept out of an area the reds thrive! Let's work together to save our red squirrels. (and that means the funded groups cooperating and communicating together, and with us, too!)

Sally Hardy.



Bernard's baby released
Released in Heads Nook

A Helping Hand

Abandoned red squirrels need careful and skilful care to ensure that they mature into young adults and make a successful transition back into the wild. Several passionate volunteers have been lucky enough to be surrogate parents to these beautiful creatures and help them to become healthy wild red squirrels!



Cheeky, released in
Ponteland in June

Brampton Open Garden Day Success!

By Bernard Widdowson

Two Hoots, house and garden, grew on infill land in a former sandstone quarry in the village of Heads Nook. Now more than twelve years on, Jo and I had one thing in mind: the garden should be firmly in the hands of Nature, with the occasional tweak from me, so that wildlife might find a haven; it has – especially red squirrels – they join us for breakfast every morning! In this setting, Brampton Red Squirrel Group held an 'Open Garden' to raise much needed funds (still counting but over £800) on Sunday 29th June. From 10am to 4pm people came and shared their experiences and enthusiasm for red squirrels; clearly they gave generously. The organizing, initiative and energy of the younger members of the group, who bore the brunt of the work, is something to be treasured. The impressive list of raffle prizes marshalled, no doubt dragooned from businesses and well-wishers alike, is memorable. Our Movement is in good heart when one reflects on the amity of a worthwhile day – even the menace of bad weather was restrained. Only the red squirrels were missing (sensible little beasts!) but they were back again in time for breakfast on Monday morning.

NRS Cumbria Report

Cumbria volunteers are continuing to work hard to keep our red squirrels in the County. The recent NRS Cumbria meeting at Tebay on the 3rd July was well attended. The general feeling was that there are fewer greys appearing in Cumbria than there were last year. There is more widespread control and yet still the culling numbers are down. Even better news is that once the greys are controlled, the reds are returning to areas where they have not been seen for years. Populations also appear to recover after a bout of SQPV.

In one particular woodland, near Brough, nearly 100 greys have been 'removed' over the last eighteen months and reds had not been seen there for years. The trapper/shooter had stopped working in there a few months ago because there was no sign of greys. Just to make sure, he tried again last week and trapped two greys at one end of the wood and a young red at the other! This proves two points: (1) it is essential to keep re-checking areas which appear to be clear of greys and (2) the reds can come back - thank goodness! *Jackie Foott*

Report from Formby & Southport Red Alert

Since mid-November 2007, at least 30 red squirrels have died from Squirrel Pox Virus, within the Formby reserve and surrounding buffer zone. More may have died in their dreys or have been predated.

Since the first recorded squirrel pox (SQPV) out break within the Sefton SoS Reserve back in autumn 2006, we have continued to lose our Red Squirrels to the virus.

We have many local volunteers who, together with the trained staff of the various conservation bodies, search the woodlands daily for sick or dying red squirrels and report any sightings of grey squirrels. Any sick squirrels caught are taken to a local vet for diagnose and treatment. The dead ones found are dispatched to Liverpool University for post-mortem examination to confirm whether or not they died from SQPV.

The Red Squirrel Monitoring Report Spring 2008, shows that the number of red squirrels in the area are down to less than 40% of the numbers when the Monitoring started in 2002. Monitoring showed no Reds in Ainsdale NNR but an active drey, with kittens, has been identified there since, which is good news.

There were nine cases of SQPV in February 2008, the worst month, then numbers fell during March and April. There were three further cases of SQPV during May which makes us aware that the problem has not gone away. However the good news is that no further sightings of grey squirrels have been reported, the intruders having been caught and there have been many sightings of healthy red adults with very active young kittens. Although a grey has been seen recently in the woodlands close to Lifeboat Road and grey has been shot close to Victoria Road.

Unfortunately while preparing this report, which I hoped would end on an up-beat, I received details of our latest searches which show a sudden increase in the number of squirrels reported as suffering with SQPV. A total of six, three of which are dead, all in garden areas, not in the pine woods. It is obvious these squirrels were feeding in gardens.

Therefore we are being asked to be extra vigilant and **clean and disinfect** or **remove** all feeding equipment. We are all hoping to eventually defeat this Squirrel Pox Virus and that the Red Squirrels will continue to live and thrive in Formby. *David Rawlins*

Falstone Frolicks!

Don Clegg's red squirrels at Yarrow Corner, Falstone are on the increase again. After only having one red visiting during the winter there are now seven visiting Don for 'breakfast'. Amazingly, three of these will take hazelnuts from the hand! Don attributes his success to 'providing a red-friendly environment, constant vigilance and effective action to keep any greys at bay!'



Enjoying breakfast at Yarrow Corner!
Photo by Don Clegg.

Berwick SOS

Berwick SOS Red Squirrel Group is going from strength to strength and has recently been supported by Journalist Adam Drummond, who wrote a very supportive article about the effects of Squirrel Pox Virus, which helped the group gain a host of additional contacts in the area to help combat the influx of grey squirrels. Elizabeth Bamford reports that plans are a-foot for a cross border meeting between Berwick SOS, SOS and Richard Wales, RSSS, which should strengthen links and hopefully encourage cooperative efforts in the Border areas. 'Our local map is getting more red dots than greys just at present. Hooray for the reds!' says Elizabeth.

Fawside Foundation Encouraged to Take Action!

Report : Meeting called by the Fawside Foundation concerning the control of grey squirrels on Deneholme land in Allendale 9th July 2008

This was a well attended meeting in the Golden Lion on Wednesday evening. Fawside director, Margaret Stonehouse, was concerned about funding and that the management of any control would be met with difficulties. However, Jan Kippax of Greehead/Gilsland red Squirrels spoke up very positively about what had been achieved in the area she covers and the vital role of volunteers. Mark Wilkinson of SOS offered help and the loan of traps to be used at Deneholme and Wendy Nicholson of Sinderhope Red Squirrels explained how local people in Allendale were already helping. When volunteers were called for many hands was raised and Carol Davison, assisted by Anne Howard, offered to be a new contact for NRS in Allendale. So the meeting closed on a very positive note with arrangements being made for traps to be placed on Deneholme land. A second meeting has been arranged at the Golden Lion on 23rd July, 8pm. All welcome.

Website News

The NRS website is making progress and will soon take on a new face. The key to our website is the map which indicates where each group is located. Improvements to the website are ongoing. Any suggestions or ideas are welcome as we are committed to providing a website that is useful, informative and easy to use, please contact sally@northernredsquirrels.co.uk.

Forthcoming Events

Squirrel Action Greenhead and Gilsland (SAGG) and Brampton RS are at the The Cumberland show, Saturday 19th July at Rickerby Park, Carlisle. www.cumberlandshow.co.uk
SAGG also always attend the Greenhead Farmers Market
Ponteland Red Squirrels are attending the Dyke Neuk Show, 24th August, 2008
They are always at Ponteland Farmers Market (2nd to last Saturday morning of each month).

Berwick SOS have a stand at Berwick Animal Rescue Kennels Pet Show, 20th July 11am -4pm.
Berwick SOS are supporting SOS at East Ord Caravan Park, Red Squirrel Family Fun Day, 30th July 1:30 – 3pm
Berwick SOS are supporting a Squirrel Walk in Kylvoe Woods with Ian Robinson, Estate Manager and Mark Wilkinson, SOS meeting at 2pm.
For further information regarding Berwick SOS events email: Elizabeth.bamford@aol.com

And finally..... for now!

If you live in the North East you may have seen the Newcastle Journal Article about ‘Cyril the Red Squirrel’, who lives in a garden in Darlington. It was accompanied by a picture showing the squirrel jumping onto a birdfeeder. The article declared that ‘reds are rarely seen as far south as Darlington’. Well, that was *almost* correct. Unfortunately, due to the unchecked invasion of grey squirrels several years ago, our native reds are *never* seen in the Darlington region, and this rather large squirrel was actually GREY! We were dismayed that the Journal, who have frequently championed our native red squirrels couldn’t tell the difference! The Journal’s News Desk was inundated by calls from outraged and disappointed readers keen to point out the obvious! As a result a tiny apology was printed the following day.

*The beauty about Northern Red Squirrels is that each volunteer group under our umbrella remains totally independent. This enables volunteers in each area to make their own decisions and run their group how it suits them, but still have the back-up, if required, from NRS and local groups. Groups can become as involved as they wish in the running of NRS. Some just like to have a ‘flag on the map’ whereas others prefer to work more closely together – the choice is yours! Please spread the word and encourage new groups to join! **The next edition of Northern News will be in the Autumn, so if you want anything included please send it in by October 20th, which seems a long way off – happy squirreling!***

Current Groups:

Allerdale(Borrowdale,Cockmouth,Keswick,Maryport,Workington):Alston:Ashington:Berwick:Brampton:Carlisle:Castle Carrock:Copeland:Dalston:Falstone:Formby:Gosforth:HeadsNook:KingsfieldEstate:KirkbyStephen:Langley:Longhirst:Mallerstang:Muirhead:NicholForest:Penrith:PlesseyWoods:Penrith(Penrith,Greystoke,Shap, Tebay,Ullswater)Ponteland:Rainford:Sedbergh:Sinderhope:Snaiholme:SAGG:Stamfordham:Westmorland(Main, Grassmere,Rydal):Widdale (New groups on their way - Watch this space!)

NORTHERN RED SQUIRRELS

www.northernredsquirrels.co.uk Email: contact@northernredsquirrels.co.uk

