



# Newsletter

## Spring 2012

### Welcome to the Friends of the Red Squirrel

As spring really gets going, red squirrel conservation across northern England is taking a new direction. Since the turn of the year, a new team of staff and contractors has begun work, supported by local volunteer groups and land managers. This team includes 16 people undertaking grey squirrel control in areas important for red squirrels. The essential nature of this conservation measure has been highlighted by several scientific studies and reviews in recent years. In addition, the largest ever English squirrel monitoring programme has been established, using human eyes and remote cameras to search for squirrels in 270 woodlands and gardens across northern England.

These changes have been implemented to boost the enormous conservation efforts already being made by land managers and organised volunteer groups across the region, hopefully providing all those passionate about red squirrel conservation with better support and a chance to showcase the positive impact of their work. Together, we will conserve the red squirrel in England for all to enjoy.

Our Red Squirrels Northern England project will run to at least 2015, a commitment made possible by the essential support of our Friends of the Red Squirrel. I hope that you, our Friends, will support the new action described in this newsletter and can continue to support red squirrels in the future.



If you would like your red squirrel photo here in the next issue please email it to Christine Westerback



Nick Mason & Katy Cook from RSNE

Our Friends of the Red Squirrel membership pricing is changing. There are now just two categories: Individual (£20 per year or £2 per month) and Joint/Group (£30 per year or £3 per month). New members will pay this upon joining, but these charges will apply to existing Friends from 2013.

We will ensure you are updated twice a year about our work through this newsletter and would be delighted to hear from you at any other time. Our contact details are at the back of the newsletter. If you want to keep up to date with our project in the meantime, please visit our website or facebook page.

Thank you again for being a Friend of the Red Squirrel.

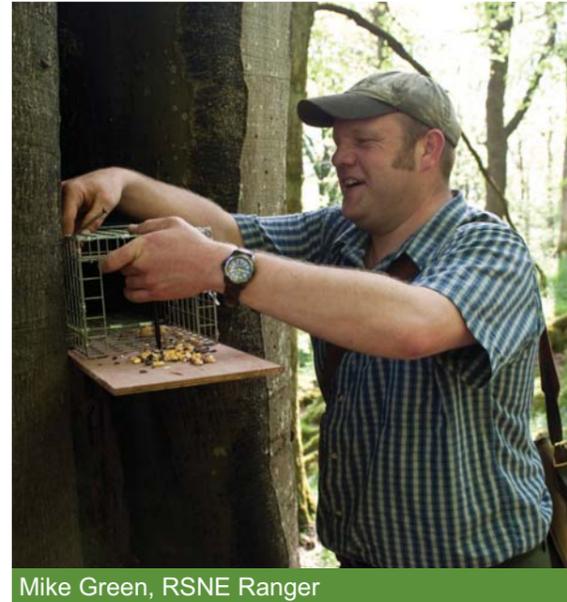
Nick Mason  
RSNE Project Manager

## RSNE Ranger Team

After a string of assessment days in early spring, RSNE's Ranger team is now at full strength. 12 Rangers and 4 contractors are undertaking grey squirrel control in areas important for red squirrels. This team is deployed around the edges of the 17 red squirrel reserves, trapping in patterns designed to protect the reserves and help retain red squirrels in the wider landscape.

This new deployment adds to the excellent work already being undertaken by land managers and local voluntary groups. In most cases, our Rangers will be working closely alongside other trappers, helping to assemble the landscape-scale coverage of grey squirrel control needed for effective red squirrel conservation. An example of this approach is the work of Mike Green, our new Ranger for Rydal and Ambleside in the Lake District. Mike is working hand in glove with staff and volunteers from both Westmorland Red Squirrel Society and Grasmere Red Squirrel Group. Together they are striving to reclaim and protect red squirrel woodlands from Grizedale Forest to Thirlmere, a woodland corridor 20 miles long. Our monitoring programme will help to chart their success from this spring onwards.

Building these conservation partnerships in all our Ranger areas will be one of our key themes for the summer. We look forward to involving many of you in this process.



Mike Green, RSNE Ranger

## Surveying for Squirrels

This spring we launched the first ever large-scale study of red and grey squirrel distribution. Over 270 woodlands in Northumberland, Cumbria, Lancashire, Durham and North Yorkshire were surveyed between March and May to establish which species of squirrels are living in them.

Three different techniques are being used in this survey: observing squirrel feeders, visual counts while walking a 1km route and remote trail cameras. The cameras have been used in approximately 70% of the sites and have provided us with some stunning images such as this leaping red squirrel! As a back up we are also placing sticky pads at each survey site to collect squirrel hairs which can then be analysed under a microscope to determine the species.

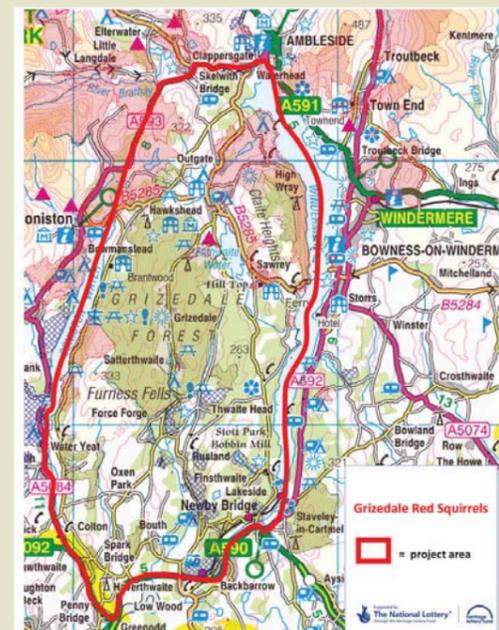


Leaping Squirrel, captured by remote camera

We couldn't undertake a survey of this magnitude without the assistance of over 100 volunteers and we would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped us! The surveys will be carried out twice a year and it is hoped that repeated monitoring will show the maintenance and expansion of red squirrel range in northern England over time.

The monitoring work generated a huge amount of public interest in our project and led to appearances on BBC Look North, local radio and wide publication in the press. The story even reached as far as the USA and the United Arab Emirates. We'll be publishing the results in late June so keep your eyes open for mention of our work in the media.

## From our Partners... Northern Red Squirrels



Map of Grizedale project area

As the 'umbrella' for all the volunteer red squirrel groups and their members, Northern Red Squirrels can report that the future for our native red squirrels is looking very encouraging.

The Westmorland Red Squirrel Society has received a Heritage Lottery grant for a two-year project in the Lake District. This is the first time that a red squirrel project led by volunteers from the local community includes a working partnership between the Forestry Commission, the Lake District National Park, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, National Trust, RSNE, RSST, landowners and members of the general public. The aims of the project are to conserve the heritage of our native red squirrel populations in the Grizedale Forest area, and also to enable more people to see these wonderful 'Squirrel Nutkins.' After only two months of active work, the results are very encouraging.

Jackie Foott - Cumbria Chairman



Not a real squirrel!

A brand new red squirrel group has been established in the Morpeth area and they have really hit the ground running! Morpeth and District Red Squirrels (MAD RS), headed up by Sue Mitchell and Kate Weightman, have really taken the bull by the horns and enthused locals in the Morpeth and district area to get involved with in any way they can. This has already resulted in a growing band of volunteers, support from the Council along with many landowners, farmers and keepers in the area. Colin, MAD RS IT volunteer, is keeping records of their sightings and trapping results and is, of course, like all groups sharing these with RSNE.

To see if you have a red squirrel group in your area please visit: [www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk](http://www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk)

Sally Hardy - Northumberland Chairman

## Volunteer Awards

The Red Squirrel Survival Trust has announced the winners of this year's Volunteer Awards.

<b>Lifetime Achievement Award:</b>	David Stapleford, Norfolk
<b>Special Award:</b>	Helen Butler, Isle of Wight
<b>Leading Light:</b>	Jackie Foott, Cumbria and Sally Hardy, Northumberland
<b>Red Squirrel Champions:</b>	The Moss family, Cumbria
<b>Unsung Heroes:</b>	Julie Bailey, Cumbria, Elizabeth Bamford, Northumberland, Gillian Hill, Lancashire, James Sim, Argyll.

These awards will be handed out at a ceremony in June at Alnwick Castle. We would like to extend our congratulations to all of the winners and nominees. The hard work of the many volunteers is not only greatly appreciated by us but is vital to the continued survival of the red squirrel.

The Red Squirrel Survival Trust, one of RSNE's partner organisations, is a national charity established to ensure the protection and conservation of the red squirrel in the UK. You can find out more at [www.rsst.org.uk](http://www.rsst.org.uk)



David Stapleford receiving his award

## Impact of Grey Squirrel Control

New research commissioned by the European Squirrel Initiative has given insight into the effects of grey squirrel control for red squirrel conservation. During a 13 year period of trapping on the Island of Anglesey it was seen that grey squirrel populations declined significantly. Interestingly, the proportion of grey squirrels carrying squirrelpox virus (SQPV) decreased from 75% in 2002 down to only 4% in 2010.

This information shows that not only does culling reduce competition between red and grey squirrels, but also reduces the risk of red squirrels being infected with SQPV. Anglesey has changed from being dominated by grey squirrels to a red squirrel haven due to control efforts. This is great news for the survival of red squirrels. Visit their website at [www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

## More Support for Scottish Squirrels

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels, now incorporating Red Squirrels in South Scotland, has entered a new phase. SSRS is a two-year partnership project which aims to halt the decline of red squirrel populations in key areas of north Scotland and slow down or contain the spread of the deadly squirrelpox disease in South Scotland. For more information see [www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk](http://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk).



If you have any queries about your membership or would like any more information, please contact **Christine Westerback** on **0191 284 6884** or [christine.westerback@rsne.org.uk](mailto:christine.westerback@rsne.org.uk).

We'd love to hear from you!



[www.rsne.org.uk](http://www.rsne.org.uk)

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