



# Newsletter

## Spring 2015



Pregnant red squirrel in Stannington, Northumberland

### Welcome to the Spring 2015 Newsletter!

As this issue shows, red squirrels continue to captivate people of all ages from across the UK. Across seven northern English counties, our collective conservation work looks stronger than ever and continues to expand, thanks largely to the ambitions of local communities to see their reds remain. As ever, your help is central to helping us keep reds safe. Huge thanks for all your support.

**Nick Mason**  
Project Manager

### Countryfile Magazine Award

Now in its fourth year, the BBC Countryfile Magazine Awards 2014-15 are a celebration of our countryside and its people – from great heritage attractions and our favourite holiday destinations, to the best nature reserves and the finest rural pubs.

We are thrilled to have won the Wildlife Success Story of the Year award! Of course, the award also belongs to all the volunteers, landowners and managers and others who are part of the red squirrel conservation community- that means you! Many thanks to all of our Friends for your continued support.



Members of the RSNE Project Advisory Group holding the award



Greenfield panorama © UPM Tilhill

## Red squirrels in the Yorkshire Dales

Many people do not associate red squirrels with Yorkshire. However, in the north of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, in Garsdale, Dentdale, Mallerstang and Wensleydale red squirrels are thriving. A spate of sightings during 2014 also showed that reds are still present in Swaledale, and further east as far as Arkengarthdale.

The red squirrels of Widdale and Garsdale/Mallerstang lead a pretty charmed life. Grey squirrel incursion in these areas is still fairly limited, mainly due to the work of volunteer groups in surrounding areas, reducing the rate of immigration from the west via Kendal and Sedbergh, and from the north, where Penrith group employ a ranger in the upper Eden valley. Community action groups in Mallerstang valley and in Dentdale are quick to respond to any sightings.

To the east, the Wensleydale red squirrel group are helping to conserve red squirrel populations around Hawes. These populations are afforded further protection because of grey squirrel control in eastern Wensleydale. Since 2012, we have contracted Swinithwaite Estate, based in Leyburn, to remove grey squirrels from woodlands around Bainbridge. In 2014, Swinithwaite also began a trapping programme in Raydale around Semer Water. For the first time in three years work, they caught and released their first red squirrel. Work will continue this year to continue to free up woodland habitat to allow reds to move out of conifer woodlands into the surrounding landscapes.

Moving south over some high ground, you drop into Langstrothdale, the location of northern England's 17th designated red squirrel reserve at Greenfield. This 1200 hectare upland woodland, principally surrounded by moorland, is a haven for red squirrels. Since 2009 a programme of grey squirrel control has helped reds to thrive, with numbers of greys dropping from over 60 in 2010 to only two in 2014. Work was initially carried out by UPM Tilhill and funded by a Forestry Commission grant. Now under the guidance of new managers, the Cam Forest Trust, the work is set to continue to protect this strong red population. In 2014 monitoring work carried out by YDNPA volunteers as part of the RSNE annual spring monitoring programme showed that, for the first time, red squirrels were the only species present in the main forest, a testament to the conservation effort.

With the reserve virtually clear of greys, there will be a shift in emphasis, looking towards the south west and south east along Langstrothdale and Upper Wharfedale, where grey squirrels are present and represent a threat. The Cam Forest Trust is keen to begin work this year to remove greys from these woodlands. By doing so, further space will be created for red squirrels. The long term vision will be to maintain Greenfield as a grey free area, and to see reds dispersing and colonising new Dales, from where they have been absent for decades.



Greenfield panorama © UPM Tilhill

## A Royal Visit!

We were delighted to welcome Prince Harry to Northumberland in February to see red squirrel conservation work in action.

Prince Harry and Northumberland Wildlife Trust Patron Conrad Dickinson visited the home of Will Nicholls, a young photographer and writer from Haydon Bridge in an

attempt to see red squirrels from a small photographic hide Will has been using for many years. They also talked to Marion Craig, Will's mother, who leads the Haydon Bridge Red Squirrel Group which works to keep the local population of reds safe from the negative impacts of non-native grey squirrels which now live in the Tyne Valley.



Prince Harry with RSNE staff Russell Tait and Kevin Barber

In the second part of Prince Harry's search for the enigmatic animal, he visited Frankham Woods near Fourstones, where RSNE staff work alongside local residents to create space for red squirrels in woodlands recently colonised by grey squirrels. Using new thermal imaging technology coupled with traditional conservation techniques, the team are successfully helping red squirrels return to the wood.

This is a typical example of the local partnerships now established across the seven English counties in which red squirrels still live. Over 600 people and groups now work together to safeguard red squirrels on the English mainland.

## Our Wildlife 2015

On Sunday 27th September, Northumberland Wildlife Trust will be hosting 'Our Wildlife 2015' at Kirkley Hall in Ponteland. This day will bring together our staff, members, volunteers, supporters and the general public to celebrate our fantastic Northumbrian wildlife, the ongoing work we are doing together to conserve it and the legacy we are leaving for future generations.

Iolo Williams (BBC Springwatch, Countryfile and Iolo's Special Reserves) will be helping us to launch the day and there will be opportunity to meet him and ask your wildlife questions in a question and



Iolo Williams S4C filming © Katy Cook

answer session. But we won't just be talking about wildlife, we'll be meeting it too! After a barbecue lunch, you have the chance to get hands on with some up close wildlife experiences. Come along to workshops including small mammal trapping and release, bird netting and release, invertebrate sampling (both on land and in the water), wildlife drawing, photography and identification, wildlife gardening, build homes for wildlife, taxidermy, meet our living lawnmowers, and get your face painted. You get all of this for just £12 for an adult or £8 for a child. Please go to the website to book your ticket before they sell out! [www.nwt.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.nwt.org.uk/whats-on)

## Squirrels! The Musical

In late March week we were delighted to present the world premiere of Squirrels! The Musical by Caroline Hoile of Grumpy Sheep Music.

The musical was performed by the children of Stannington First School in Northumberland to over 100 family members and invited guests. The afternoon was finished off perfectly by the presence of a red squirrel in the churchyard as we were all leaving - magical!



Some of the cast

A huge thank you to Caroline, the staff and students of the school and Heritage Lottery Fund for making this all possible!



**Garfield Weston**  
FOUNDATION

## Garfield Weston Foundation

We're delighted to have received a generous grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation, that will help us with our work in 2015. A huge thank you for their support, which will enable us to continue to look after our threatened red squirrels in the north of England.

## Red Squirrel Rescue!

Whilst out surveying at Allen Banks, Northumberland in March, RSNE Engaging Communities Officer Katy Cook and Heather Cook from the National Trust came across this young red squirrel totally entangled in a wire fence. Thankfully, Heather had a multitool with her and was able to hold the squirrel while Katy cut it free. There were no visible injuries to the squirrel and it ran off up into the trees with a lot of 'chuck chuck' ing! A great result and definite proof of red squirrels in the area!



Heather holding the rescued red squirrel



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