



Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrels

Newsletter No 2 – September 2019

Welcome to our second newsletter! Any comments (positive or negative) are always welcome at the email address below.

What other organisations exist to help red squirrel conservation?:

Red Squirrels Northern England

RSNE is a red squirrel conservation partnership working right across Northern England., including Northumberland. Their partners include The Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, Red Squirrel Survival Trust and Forestry England (or Forestry Commission as was). For the past 11 years, RSNE have been conducting annual surveys across our region, to which we have contributed.

UK Squirrel Accord

UKSA is a partnership of 37 leading conservation and woodland organisations, including independent, government agencies and companies. UKSA works collaboratively to preserve the UK's wooded landscapes and associated biodiversity through a) securing and expanding the UK's red squirrel populations and b) ensuring woodlands flourish. It is committed to the effective and targeted management of grey squirrels and protection of red squirrels. They have a new website – www.squirrelaccord.uk Bob Cartwright is the volunteers advocate and we can pass on news or concerns voluntary groups such as ours may have.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels

SSRS project aims to protect the red squirrel in the last region of mainland UK where it remains the only resident squirrel species: Grampian, Argyll and the Highlands. They work to contain or significantly slow the spread of squirrel pox northwards from the English border. www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk

European Squirrel Initiative

Established in 2002, ESI's objectives are to restore the native red squirrel and protect the natural environment by removing the alien grey squirrel from Europe – www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org.



What is being done?

- The above groups have a significant contribution in research, monitoring, education, control (but all have limited funding). There are also many forestry organisations and large landowners with interest in grey squirrel control because of their extensive damage to woodlands. There are other smaller and local organisations, such as ourselves, Wildlife Trusts, Nature Reserves etc working in specific localities.
- Fertility control on grey squirrels – Research is ongoing but an effective solution is a few years away.
- Recent research on pine martens (and they are beginning to be seen in Northumberland) shows that their presence causes a decline in grey squirrels, but has yet to determine why. There is concern about the pine marten impact on other fauna and woodland nesting birds, and how to control populations should they get out of hand, since they are a protected species.

Local News

Here in our Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrel group, the sightings on our website are increasingly useful. This very valuable information enables us to see the overall pattern of red and grey squirrels, thus helping us to focus our limited resources for the best outcome. So from the beginning of this year until the end of July, 41 red squirrels have been sighted – in locations from Acklington Wood, Longhorsely, Swarland, Eshott, Guyzance, Newton Hall, Shilbottle and West Thirston. Our general feeling is that we are seeing more red squirrels now than in the last couple of years. So please do keep your recording coming of both greys and reds. If we do receive reports of greys regularly at a specific location within our area, it may be that we can arrange to take some action.

There does seem to be increasing awareness and publicity surrounding red squirrels. Recently an animal welfare officer from NCC spotted a small red squirrel in distress on Wooler Common. They took it to Blyth Wildlife Sanctuary (a haven for reds) where he is being fed and will be released as soon as he is strong enough.



Where can you see reds?

Wallington – after a drop in red numbers late last year due to a squirrel pox outbreak, reds are now increasing again and can be seen on the estate. They are fortunate to have their own dedicated red squirrel ranger.

Hauxley Nature Reserve – there was concern earlier in the year when greys were spotted close to the reserve with its resident red population. Northumberland Wildlife Trust (through RSNE) have taken remedial action to undertake grey control in the area. Reds are still being seen on this reserve.

What can you do?

It is vital that we keep up the good work here in Lower Coquetdale, as research has shown that reds can recover and return to an area, where grey populations are kept very low. We do have a great shortage of volunteers – so if you are keen on red squirrels and would like to get involved or help in any way (doing admin, delivering leaflets, helping on the ground) – we would love to hear from you – email us on info@lcredits.org.uk or contact me cherryhambrook@gmail.com We also have a Facebook page – Squirrels in Coquetdale. Do please like it and share!

Cherry (Secretary, Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrels)