



# Newsletter

## Autumn 2013

### Welcome to the Autumn 2013 Newsletter!

Like a woodland full of autumn fruits, this newsletter gives a sense of an exciting future. Monitoring results from this spring were really positive, albeit too short term for celebration yet. At a bigger scale, The Red Squirrel Survival Trust conference in Newcastle in September 28th really brought home how strong the UK red squirrel conservation community is becoming, grounded in unshakeable community desire to make sure red squirrels remain part of our living heritage. Thank you for being part of this community!

**Nick Mason**  
Project Manager



Red squirrel in County Durham by Steve Wrightson

### Red Squirrel Film Competition

You may remember that we recently held a film competition as part of the Red Squirrel Conservation Film Project in conjunction with David Green, a PhD student at Newcastle University. We are pleased to announce that Ernie Gordon won the competition with a clip of him playing the harmonica to



Runner up Gary Gallagher with a red squirrel in his garden

some red squirrels in an Alnwick woodland. You can see the clip on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) by searching for 'Serenading the Squirrel'. *"I'm absolutely delighted to have been judged the winner of the Red Squirrel Film competition", says Ernie. "Really chuffed sums it up nicely"*.

Ernie has won a photography workshop with Simon Phillpotts in his purpose built red squirrel hide in Wensleydale. Joint second place goes to Gary Gallagher and Peter Muldoon who win a trail camera each. Keep your eyes out for further opportunities to get involved with the film project on the website [redsquirrelfilms.wordpress.com](http://redsquirrelfilms.wordpress.com)

## Spring 2013 Monitoring Results



Two red squirrels visit a feeder during the spring 2013 monitoring round.  
Photo: Jerry Moss

This spring, 300 woodlands and gardens across northern England were surveyed again by 130 volunteers with results showing that red squirrels were found in 7% more sites and grey squirrel found in 18% fewer sites than in spring 2012.

This is the first time that large scale squirrel monitoring between years has been undertaken in England and the results provide huge encouragement for the hundreds of land managers, volunteers and others involved in red squirrel conservation efforts. Previous research shows squirrel numbers vary year to year due to

annual differences in food availability and weather severity so further monitoring activity will help us test these trends. The full report is available to download on our website.

We've been very pleased with the press coverage of our monitoring work, with several national newspapers celebrating the good news, including a full page feature in The Daily Telegraph.

The clearest positive changes were seen around Kyloe in north Northumberland and Rydal and Ambleside in south Cumbria. Both areas have strong community-based conservation networks now supplemented further by RSNE Rangers.



Northumbrian volunteers gathered together in Stannington Photo: Adam Seward



John Rae, SOS Berwick

John Rae from the Save our Squirrels Berwick Group, said *“Without this monitoring, we would not know what was happening in our most special red squirrel woodlands or how effective our conservation work is. The good news for 2013 is red squirrels moving back into woodland previously held by greys”.*



Trevor Cooper, Grasmere Red Squirrel Group

Trevor Cooper from Grasmere Red Squirrel Group said *“Setting out on an early morning walk to watch and record red squirrels scurrying about the Lake District woodlands is a very rewarding experience. At the same time it is gratifying to know that my survey information helps to show that the red squirrel’s territories may be slowly, but surely, recovering across the northern England due to the tireless efforts of many dedicated people.”*

60 of our monitoring volunteers celebrated their contribution at events in late August and early September in Cumbria, Lancashire and Northumberland. These volunteers are now out in the woods again repeating this cycle for the fourth time. Huge thanks to all involved.

Please do share any squirrel sightings with us this autumn – your information will be incorporated into our autumn monitoring programme. You can share your sightings at [www.rsne.org.uk/sightings](http://www.rsne.org.uk/sightings)



Cumbrian monitoring volunteers at our celebratory event at Lowther Castle. Photo: Adam Seward



Project Manager Nick Mason explaining the differences between red and grey squirrels

## British Science Fair

This month, RSNE hosted a stand at the British Science Festival in Newcastle. Over 4 days, we spoke to several hundred students aged between 5 and 18 years old from Northumberland, Durham, and Tyne and Wear. We were impressed by the knowledge about red squirrels that many young people shared, and asked students to take part in a vote as to whether it is right to cull grey squirrels to save the native red squirrel. 73% of students voted yes. Of those who voted 'no', we had some innovative alternatives. Many students asked about progress on the vaccine for squirrelpox virus, whereas others preferred the slightly less practical idea that we should use a rocket to send grey squirrels back to North America!

## RSST Landowner Levy

Our partners at the Red Squirrel Survival Trust have been building more support from the land management community in Northumberland. Following a launch event at Alnwick Castle in the spring, 38 land owners are now contributing to RSST's Northumberland Squirrel Levy. These donations are encouraged at roughly 80 pence/woodland acre and feed directly into RSNE's grey squirrel control costs. RSST are particularly grateful to Will Browne-Swinburne of Capheaton Estate who has been acting as a promotional Ambassador for the Levy.



Will Browne-Swinburne launching the RSST Levy at Alnwick Castle. Photo: Katy Cook



RSST Ambassador Eric Robson opening the conference. Photo: Adam Seward

## RSST Conference

The Red Squirrel Survival Trust held a national conference in Newcastle upon Tyne at the end of September, attended by 100 people. Several members of the RSNE team were present and Red Squirrel Officer Emma Wright was asked to deliver an update on our project. As well as hearing updates from other red squirrel and invasive species projects, there were talks about squirrelpox virus research and the ongoing vaccine development. It was clear that we are still number of years from having a vaccine as part of our toolkit. For further information, please visit the RSST website: [www.rsst.org.uk](http://www.rsst.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!



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