



Newsletter

Spring 2013

Welcome to the Spring 2013 newsletter!

Despite the cold spring, we hope 2013 will be a bumper year for our northern reds. Conservation efforts continue to intensify and I expect our science campaign to prove its value.

A warm welcome to our 70 new Friends so far in 2013 and big thanks to all of you for your continued support.

Nick Mason
Project Manager



Thanks to Gary Gallagher for this photo of a rather cold red in his garden



Paul Greener has joined us as a Ranger for the Slaley Stronghold

Ranger Recruitment

We are delighted to announce the appointment of two new Rangers. Paul Greener will be working in and around Slaley to the south of Hexham. Paul has hit the ground running, having already attended a meeting with Slaley Red Squirrels, the local volunteer group. He has been battling through blizzards to control grey squirrels in the southern end of the Slaley Stronghold, where there have been several sightings of red squirrels in the last six months.

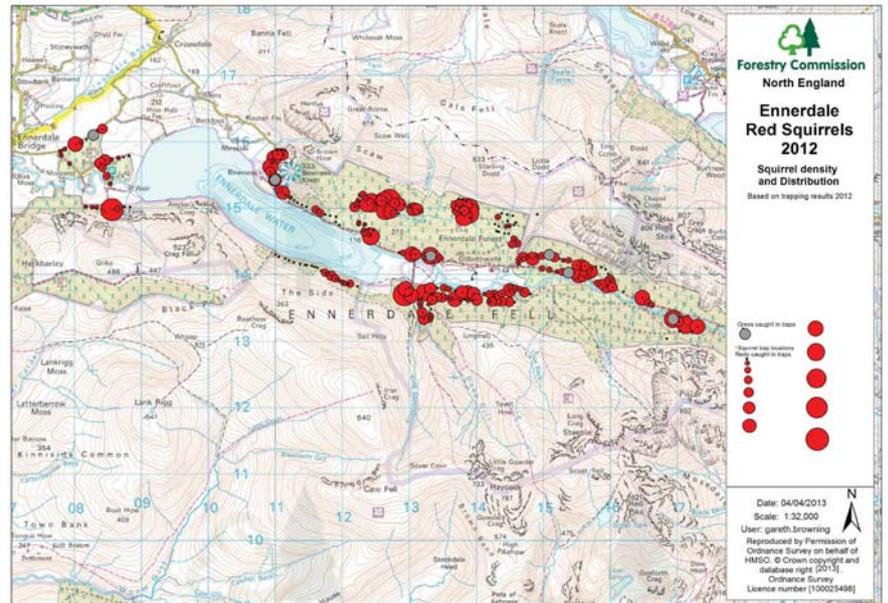
Glen Graham is a familiar face to many of you as he was a Ranger for us last year. Following a successful fundraising campaign by our partners the **Red Squirrel Survival Trust**, and a generous donation from **Northumberland County Council**, we have established a new ranger patch in south east Northumberland. Despite not being designated a 'Red Squirrel Stronghold', south east Northumberland is home to several populations of red squirrels. Glen is working alongside local volunteer groups in Morpeth and Ponteland to control grey squirrels and protect the red populations.

Wild Ennerdale

Lying on the north-western edge of the Lake District National Park, the Ennerdale valley is home to some of England's most vibrant natural environments and one of the longest running wild land restoration projects in the UK. Wild Ennerdale is a partnership between people and organisations led by The Forestry Commission, National Trust, United Utilities and Natural England.

In July 2011 working with the Ennerdale Community Squirrel Group and with funding from Original Buff, S.A. through the European Outdoor Conservation Association, Ennerdale initiated its Squirrel Woodlands project to establish a grey squirrel trapping network, red squirrel monitoring and expand native woodlands.

The first full year of trapping in 2012 showed a healthy population of red squirrels distributed across the whole valley with densities up to one red squirrel for every 4ha of suitable forest. The network of 250 traps is permanently out and available to respond to grey squirrel sightings. In November 2012 we were able to catch one grey squirrel the day after it was sighted by making a number of traps live around the location where it had been seen. The 2013 trapping programme will start in late April. For more information see www.wildennerdale.co.uk/squirrels



Ennerdale red squirrel project area

Group Development in Cumbria

The Solway Red Squirrel Group, formed in late 2012, is now up and running. This area of north Cumbria has long been an area of concern, with no known red squirrel conservation activity taking place. Mapping during 2012 by RSNE helped to emphasize the fact that no data was being recorded in this area. With help from members of NRS & RSNE, the group now has a committee in place, a supply of equipment and people out on the ground carrying out grey control and monitoring woodlands for red and grey squirrels. Data is now flooding in!



Reds have been seen at the Cumbria Wildlife Trust HQ in Kendal for the first time in many years. Credit: Michelle Waller.

RSNE, in partnership with Westmorland Red Squirrel Society (WRSS), held a public meeting in Ambleside in January. The evening was well attended, and people left with a clear picture of the scale of effort being put into the "front line" of red squirrel conservation in the central and southern Lakes. Momentum is really gathering, with the work of both RSNE and local squirrel groups starting to pay off with numerous reports of reds returning to places where they have long been absent.

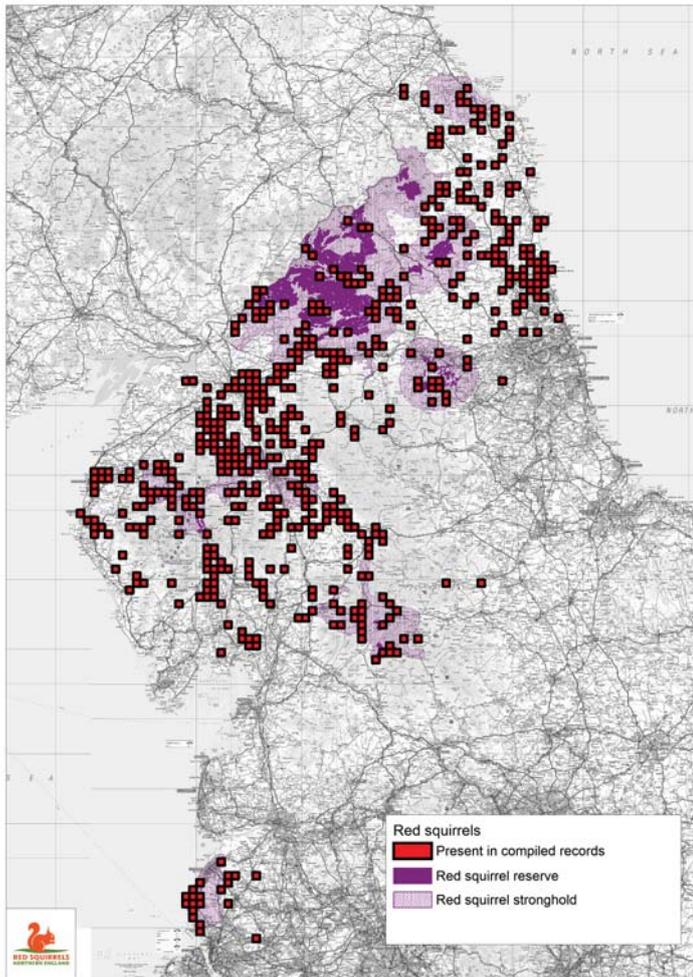
Science and Research

We are thrilled to announce the appointment of Katie Frith as a Research Assistant. Katie will be responsible for conducting the squirrel and habitat surveys at our Ambassador sites (detailed study sites). We will report more on her work in the next newsletter.

With support from Northumberland National Park's Sustainable Development Fund, we are now able to part fund a red squirrel PhD studentship hosted by Newcastle University that will start in autumn 2013. Details to follow in the next issue.



Volunteer Hannah McDonald setting up a monitoring station



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Autumn 2012 monitoring results

The autumn monitoring round saw a substantial increase in the number of tetrads being systematically monitored and in the amount of additional records of squirrels being received.

The autumn results confirm the strong distribution of red squirrels found last spring. Of the 241 sites monitored in both spring and autumn 2012, the number of red squirrel only sites remained the same (93), while the number of grey only sites dropped (from 61 to 52), with a corresponding rise in the number of sites with both squirrels present (from 24 to 34).

While this seems very encouraging, we will need another full year of monitoring to gather enough information on which to base scientifically significant conclusions. Our Spring 2013 work is now underway.

The RSNE team has been greatly assisted in this survey and recording effort by over 100 volunteers and other supporters across northern England, and we would like to say thank you for all of the help we have received.

The Red Squirrel Conservation Film Project

Do you take photos, films or audio recordings of red squirrels when you're out and about? If you do, you should enter the Red Squirrel Conservation Film Project competition! We are delighted to be working with Dave Green, a PhD student from Newcastle University on this film, and hope that as many people as possible who have an interest in red squirrels get involved! Please visit redsquirrelfilms.wordpress.com for further information.



Financial Support for Local Community Action

With the help of our main funders Biffa Award, we have been able to award another £10,000 in small grants to eleven voluntary red squirrel groups in Northumberland and Cumbria. These include brand new groups, like the Solway Red Squirrel Group and Wark Area Red Squirrels, in the Northern Red Squirrels network, formed after development work in 2012. Jeanne Casken, from 2013 grantees the Coquetdale Red Squirrel Group, said “This will go a long way to setting up our new monitoring and trapping project. Thank you very much!”

Red Squirrel Signs

Getting your Local Authority to erect official Red Squirrel road signs can be a difficult job and if you only have a few reds near your home or in your garden, it is very unlikely that they can do anything.

RSNE have been increasingly asked if they can help and have produced a ‘Slow Down Red Squirrels’ sign. The sign is approximately A4 and made from hardwearing laminated board. We are happy to supply them but please remember it is an offence to erect them on the highway, however a garden fence or gate for example would be fine. There is a cost involved in the production of these signs so we would be very grateful for a £1 donation per sign to RSNE to help cover this cost. Please contact Christine Westerback on **0191 284 6884** or email christine.westerback@rsne.org.uk for further information.



Christine with one of the signs

RSNE and Wildwatch

Head below the snowy moors in the North Pennines and into the wooded valleys, and you may be lucky enough to see red squirrels. Wildwatch North Pennines is an exciting project helping people record wildlife in and around the North Pennines, and we've been working with Wildwatch to find out more about red squirrel populations in the AONB. A group of Wildwatch volunteers braved a very cold February afternoon to find out how to look for red squirrels, and several people signed up to help RSNE with our monitoring programme this year. Thanks to these new volunteers, we are now monitoring in eight new sites in the South Tyne, which will help us to get a much clearer picture of red squirrel activity in this part of the North Pennines. For further information on Wildwatch, visit www.northpennines.org.uk.



We'd like to say thank you to Swift Ecology for their very kind donation of £250.
www.swiftecology.co.uk



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