



Trail camera monitoring picture taken during spring monitoring

## 2012 summary report



In addition to our partners, RSNE 2012 supporters included:



Our 650 [“Friends of the Red Squirrel”](#)



## Introduction

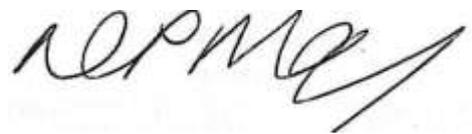
Our work on Red Squirrels Northern England began in earnest in January 2012, with the first members of the project team starting the establishment process. This included setting up a squirrel range monitoring system across 6 English counties and recruiting a Ranger team to deliver the conservation programme.

Red Squirrels Northern England's mission is to maintain red squirrel range in England, through grey squirrel control, sound science and partnership. It builds on a long history and mature conservation community fighting for persistence of red squirrels in the northern English landscape against all the odds. This initiative, in contrast to previous programmes, invests in a single conservation tool, grey squirrel control, and focuses hard on organising community participation in this activity and the measurement of its impact.

With enormous help and leadership from a large range of partners, the year ended with RSNE running on time and to budget. Two full rounds of range monitoring (across the biggest ever red squirrel monitoring network) had been completed and our 15-strong Ranger team has started to significantly add capacity and intensity to established conservation networks. Community participation continues to grow, with new red squirrel groups, virtual networks, young people and the media helping to build engagement and belief. This report seeks to give a brief summary of these achievements.

Many thanks to our partners, funders, Advisory Group, wider supporters and for all the positive contributions, however critical, that are helping to make this programme capable of helping red squirrels.

My team and I look forward to working with our partners to demonstrate the real impact of the red squirrel community's conservation effort in 2013.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NPM', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Nick Mason  
RSNE Project Manager

## Outcome 1 Grey Squirrel Control

The new Rangers and contractors joining our team began to establish their trapping networks from April onwards with our last new starter joining us in early June. They joined established staff in Merseyside and the Cumbrian Eden Valley to help consolidate conservation effort defending all of the stronghold complexes in northern England (see map 1). 9 Rangers stayed with us right through the winter focusing on grey squirrel shooting at feeders during the coldest months.

This work builds on the conservation work already being undertaken by private woodland managers and the network of Northern Red Squirrel volunteer groups across northern England. With the help of standardised recording, this collective effort is now being mapped monthly and summarized in thematic maps (as per Map 1 overleaf, which excludes Lancashire effort for the purposes of scale) This provides the most complete picture of red squirrel conservation effort ever assembled.

A total of 94,006 “trap days” of conservation effort were reported to us in 2012, along with 791 shoot days. The RSNE Ranger team was responsible for 53% of this recorded effort. Overall, the records document 10,402 grey squirrel kills in red squirrel range. We hope this picture will be more complete in future years as historically unrecorded conservation efforts begin to be documented and reported. We are working with partners (e.g. the National Gamekeepers Organisation, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the National Trust) to maximise recording.

8601 red squirrels were also seen and recorded by those involved in conservation efforts. This data adds extra context to the standardised range monitoring effort reported in Outcome 2.

Basic analysis of this information to date shows that grey squirrels were found and controlled:

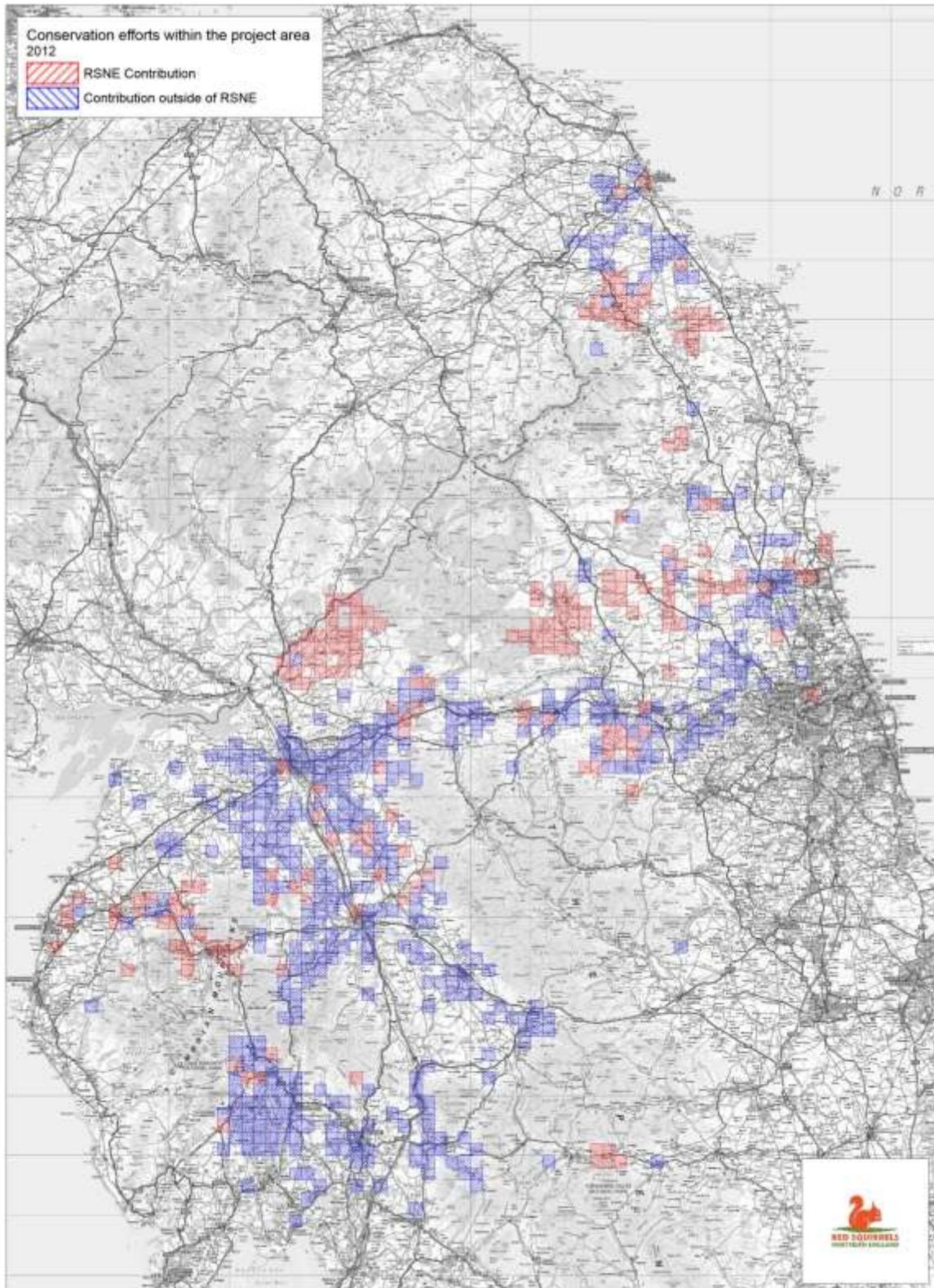
- Across the Slaley reserves and associated stronghold woodlands
- In the riparian approaches to the Kielder stronghold in both Cumbria and Northumberland
- In many Harwood and Kyloe stronghold woodlands, excluding the central reserve woodlands.
- Only thinly in the Lake District stronghold, with almost complete absence from all four reserves.
- In most parts of the Yorkshire Dales stronghold, including the Greenfield reserve but not other reserve woodlands.
- In most parts of the Sefton stronghold, excluding the reserve woodlands.

The reported effort also demonstrates:

- The strong contribution by [Northern Red Squirrel](#) volunteer groups and other parties across northern England, helping to conserve red squirrels well beyond the stronghold network.
- The value of the network Woodland Grant Scheme red squirrel conservation grants administered by the Forestry Commission, with agreements covering around 10,600 hectares of stronghold woodland.

This data provides some strong pointers for our 2013 control team work – our recommendations have been discussed and approved by our Project Management Group and Project Advisory Group. The RSNE Ranger team will grow slightly for 2013 to 10 full-time Rangers and 6 seasonal contractors.

Map 1 – Reported conservation effort during 2012, summarised at a tetrad (2x2km square) level across northern England.



## Outcome 2 Monitoring and Data Management

We have completed 2 rounds of detailed squirrel range monitoring in 2012 ([reports here](#)). The programme was established in the spring and repeated during the autumn, with 302 sites across northern England now being monitored. Half of these sites are now being monitored by 100 different volunteers.

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. Please see the published autumn 2012 red squirrel range map overleaf.

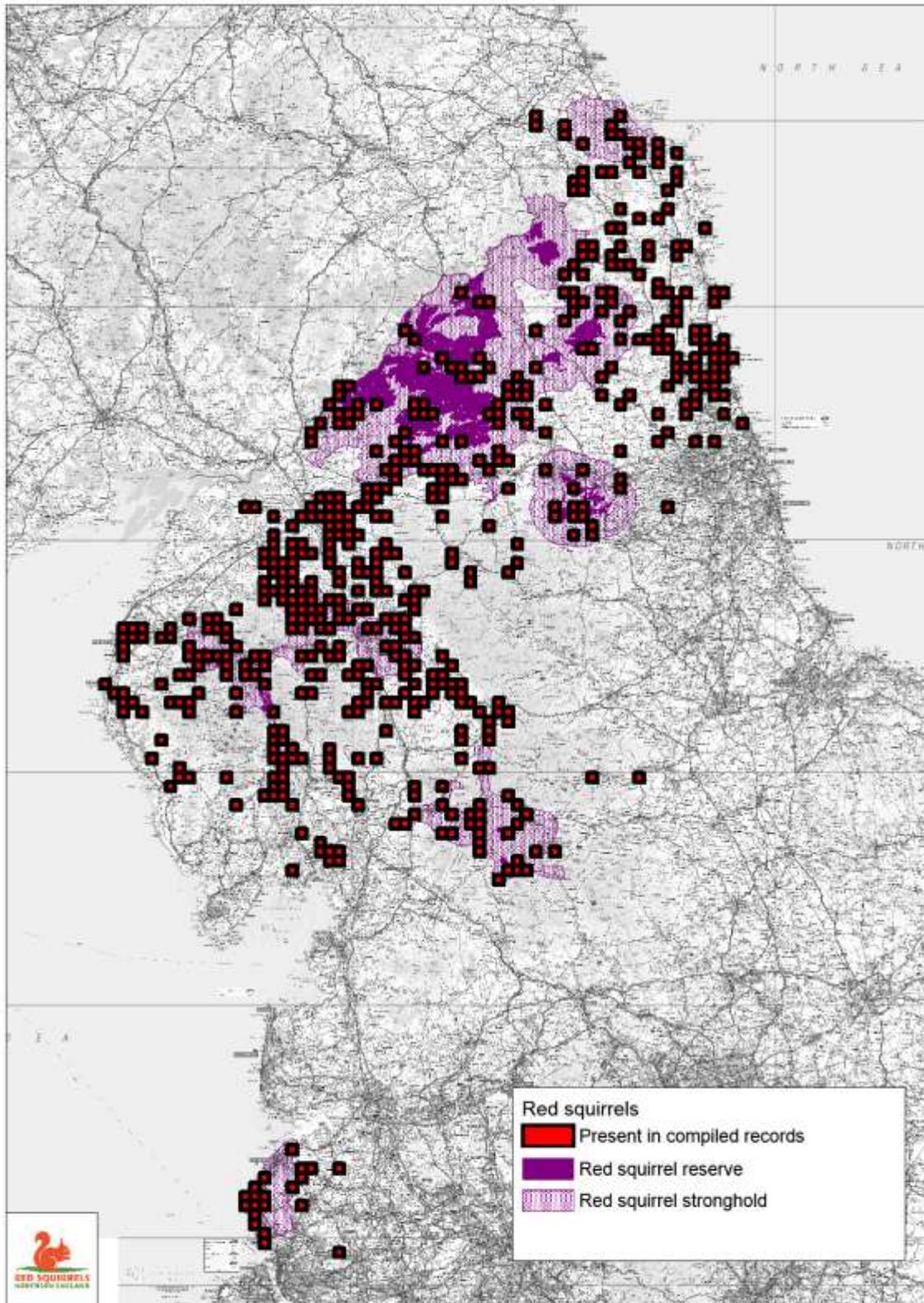
It has taken a long time to analyse all the information associated with this survey, another testament to the greatly increasing volume of both control records and sightings being submitted to us. Systems are now in place to speed up data analysis and survey publication during 2013.

2013 will be another challenging year. We will maintain the monitoring programme, with two further rounds of monitoring in the year. This programme will not be further grown but we hope to involve even more volunteers across the network.

Our research campaign begins in earnest this spring with the establishment of “Ambassador sites” where the impact of repeated sessions of grey squirrel control on both red and grey distribution is monitored in detail. This work is essential to ensure we fully understand the ecological impact of grey squirrel control.

We will also be supporting a Newcastle University PhD studentship titled “*The impact of grey squirrel control and timber harvesting on the red squirrel*” to commence by autumn 2013. This programme will help inform future red squirrel landscape management and design policy and is being partly funded by Northumberland National Park’s Sustainable Development Fund.

Map 2 – Autumn 2012 red squirrel range summary, based on the results of the standardised monitoring and all other records from the same time period. Presence is represented at a tetrad (2x2km square) level



### Outcome 3 Partnership working and sharing best practice.

Our team commitment to these values of partnership and sharing best practice continue bring benefits, with 2012 highlights:

- Supporting our [Northern Red Squirrels](#) partners to grow the local red squirrel group network, with new groups recently formed in Wark (Wark Area Red Squirrels), Wensleydale and the Cumbrian Solway. Group development work continues in north Cumbria, north Newcastle and mid-Northumberland.
- Extensive support to private woodland managers receiving Woodland Grant Scheme support from Forestry Commission, helping to maximise conservation delivery and further grow conservation networks.
- Recent trap training for several estates in central and north Northumberland, re-energising conservation efforts.
- Working with [Saving Scotlands Red Squirrels](#) in a partnership event for landowners at Paxton House on the Tweed on November 7<sup>th</sup> and supporting Red Squirrel Survival Trust at a Newcastle fundraiser on November 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Detailed work with National Trust's northern property managers to ensure the retention of their red squirrel populations.
- 8 RSNE- grant funded grey control projects were completed by NRS local groups. Total grant value = £10,000.
- Good media features on our work include the Morpeth Herald, Hexham Courant, northern Wildlife Trusts magazines, Natural World, BBC Countryfile, BBC regional news. We also worked alongside NRS in Ambleside and Grasmere to assist with BBC1 filming for a summer 2013 natural history series which will feature the encouraging red squirrel story in south Cumbria.
- Our Facebook/Twitter community continues to grow (2000 followers/friends), regularly providing new volunteers, supporters and sponsors.
- Our biannual *Friends* newsletter is being circulated to 1000 project supporters and our new e-newsletter *the Red Report* to over 1400 contacts.



Katy Cook working with local young people 23<sup>rd</sup> June event at Gosforth Park, Newcastle



Members of the south-east Northumberland red squirrel community at the RSST reception hosted by Lord Ridley at Blagdon on November 26th

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Unit 10  
Stocksfield Hall  
Stocksfield  
Northumberland  
NE43 7TN

Tel: 01661 844795

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