



# Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group

# Newsletter

## Winter 2009/10



Photo courtesy of Sarah McNeil

Welcome to our winter newsletter and what a hard winter it has been so far for our red squirrels, birds and wildlife. Sightings of reds reduced over the cold spell for, although they do not hibernate, they do become less active and hopefully just snuggled up together to keep warm.

Last autumn saw an explosion of grey squirrel sightings across the whole of our area and it unfortunately coincided with a particularly abundant natural harvest. With so much food around it was incredibly difficult to entice greys into the traps. Our volunteers have been run ragged but are pleased to report that despite this setback red squirrel numbers have remained remarkably steady.

The most significant and exciting development for us is that we have been successful in raising sufficient funds to employ the services of a **new Red Squirrel Ranger** for the Northern Eden Valley, based around the Armathwaite to Lazonby area. Full story inside

**Also  
in this  
issue**

**Successful Squirrel Fest at Hutton in the Forest  
Annual General Meeting Report  
Red Squirrel Safari and Photography Workshop**

### **CRAIG SHUTTLEWORTH MEETS THE VOLUNTEERS AT ASKHAM**

Dr Craig Shuttleworth, new Operations Director for the Red Squirrel Survival Trust, took time out from his busy schedule to meet the volunteers from many of the Northern Red Squirrels groups by attending a meeting at the Punch Bowl, Askham on Friday 23rd October 2009.

Craig was the Project Manager on Anglesey responsible for virtually eliminating grey squirrels and overseeing the rise of a healthy red squirrel population. He also talked about the positive challenges the volunteers face now that the government agencies are beginning to not only recognise the volunteer input but also provide significant grey control funding. He admitted, to our secretary's disappointment, in a lively Q & A session that paper work and squirrel data recording



will have to increase, not least to secure funding but how can you argue with such a 'hands on' scientist who has so successfully been there and done that!

**Thanks  
to our  
Sponsors**

We now Email the majority of newsletters but a significant number still need to be printed. The printing of this and both our previous issues has been most generously sponsored by Lowther Estates and we wish to publically record our most grateful thanks and appreciation.

# Raising Funds and Awareness

## Red Squirrel Safari & Wildlife Photography Workshop — Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April



Eight people are invited to spend a day with Les Wilson, the Mail on Sundays award winning photographer, escorted by Jerry Moss and Sarah McNeil deep in the forest around Lowther in the Whinfell Reserve, taking your own photographs from specially located hides and as you trail through usually off limits areas.

Les, who is generously donating his time and expertise, specialises in country portraits and will be happy to share his wealth of experience with you and will not only give guidance and advice in the field but also use his own computer and equipment to edit and print out the best of your pictures.

The cost per person is only **£50.00** with times and details to follow.

Members and volunteers are being offered this unique opportunity first before (and if) we go to press to advertise it, so please reserve your place as soon as possible by email to [info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](mailto:info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk) or in writing to the secretary.

## Charity Collecting Boxes - Can you help?

The Group began distributing charity collecting boxes to local businesses in the summer of 2008 and very quickly had 50 situated around the area. A sterling £500 was raised in that first year. During 2009 we seem to have stalled and only managed to add another 10 sites, however our income from the year rose to a marvellous £2,089.

So, now that we can see how successful it can be, please may we urge everyone to help us find more sites. Let 's see if we can really build on this great start and consolidate a really strong and regular source of income for the Group.

Please contact Richard Dyke on 017684 83100 or Marian Whitwham on 01931 712499 should you wish to have a collecting box at your business or know someone that would.



Our thanks and thoughts go out to the family of Katherine Deakin, who sadly passed away in October 2009, for their most generous donation of £125 to P&DRSG raised from the retiring collection at her service of thanksgiving.

Special thanks also go to Katherine 's daughter Melanie Davies for this charming picture of her late mother and the lovely shot of a very hungry and determined red squirrel.



We encourage you to raise funds for us and will support you in any way we can. If you'd like to hold a coffee morning, open garden, run a quiz or a raffle, jump out of an aeroplane, undertake a sponsored walk or anything else you can think of - please do get in touch and we'll help you plan it.

# Cumbria's First Ever "Squirrel Fest"

13th September 2009 - Hutton in the Forest



Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September saw the first ever "Squirrel Fest" at Hutton in the Forest, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Inglewood, organised by Northern Red Squirrels the umbrella organisation for volunteer red squirrel groups. The day was a celebration of Red Squirrels in Cumbria and a thank you to the volunteers, members and supporters who are working so hard to ensure that reds survive.

The event included musical entertainment by Blue Jam Cumbria, juggling, face painting, children's activities, food from Deer n Dexter plus displays from local groups across the area. Jackie Foott of NRS welcomed everyone, thanked them for their hard work, and said how marvellous it was that organisations such as Natural England and the Forestry Commission were now recognising and working with the volunteer groups.



Some very high profile speakers were introduced by TV and Radio personality Stuart Maconie. First on was Eric Robson who said that Cumbria Tourism would do all it could to promote red conservation. Joshua Perry of RSST spoke of their work and the practical and financial support that was available to volunteer groups. Finally Bob Cartwright of the Lake District National Park revealed that he was pushing for the red squirrel to be adopted as the Parks logo within the next two years.



Robin Page, the "Vocal Yokel" and good friend of red squirrels, also attended hot foot from the Lowther Sheep Dog Trials and was happy to sign books that he had generously donated for sale on our stand.

Pictures show, 1. A juggling Bob Cartwright. 2. Jackie Foott, Stuart Maconie and Joshua Perry drawing the raffle. 3. Richard Dyke gets his book signed by Robin Page and 4. Eric Robson receives his copy of the P&DRSG Newsletter from Sarah McNeil.



**Thank  
You**

Jerry Moss would like to publicly thank Chris and Sarah and all the National Trust staff at Acorn Bank for their prompt reporting of grey squirrel sightings. Their vigilance has been a key factor in helping him to keep on top of the situation.

# RSST Perceptions Survey

Early last year P&DRSG attempted to establish the state of our red squirrel populations throughout the 500 square miles of our operating area and asked volunteers and friends who feed red squirrels to fill in an emailed or paper survey and return it to the Secretary.

The form was probably a little too complicated but basically we were wanting to know where our red squirrels were concentrated, were numbers up or down and had squirrels been lost in or returned to specific areas.

We received sixty or so returns and were reasonably pleased to see that our reds seemed to be holding their ground despite losses at Greystoke Gill and Parkhead. We were hopeful of repeating the exercise on a regular basis but slightly unsure as to the best way of ensuring its acceptance and success.

Later in the year The Red Squirrel Survival Trust announced its intention to undertake a

squirrel 'Perceptions Survey' and asked for comments on their plans. I think it fair to say that we were delighted at the prospect, told them so and added our modest input.

The final survey was simplicity itself, it was available on line from RSST's website, only took a minute or two to complete and was conducted throughout December. In addition we printed out a paper version for those who did not have a computer and filed it for them.

75 responses were received from Cumbria and whilst not scientific it is very interesting to report that the 'perception' is that red 'a bundance' across the county has held stable whereas the perceived 'trend' was for an increase in greys in north Cumbria and a perceived decrease in the south.

There is clearly considerable concern amongst local people that grey squirrels are pushing further into our area.

RSST aim to repeat this survey on a bi-annual basis and we encourage everyone to support it. If we can double our returns next time, we will see some really meaningful results and useful information.

If anyone would like a copy of the full report please contact the Secretary who will be pleased to email it on to them.



## Successes & Challenges

We warmly welcome several new volunteers to the cause who are prepared to answer the call and respond to / deal with grey squirrel sightings in their area:-

John Lyle for Melmerby and Skirwith, Sid Hughes from Ousby and new co-ordinator Linda Robinson, Langwathby.

Also, Adam Wellings who is getting out and making himself known in the High Bridge area.



In Patterdale a very big thank you goes to Ian Mosley who took it upon himself to follow up an alarmingly high number of grey squirrel sightings and has now accounted for 24 greys since Christmas.

Where once lost, Red Squirrels have now returned to Parkhead near Kirkoswald and The Howk in Caldbeck .

**On a less positive note**, we have been distressed to hear that 2 or 3 red squirrels were sighted at Lowther Holiday Park showing classic pox symptoms. Jerry Moss very quickly got one to the vets and whilst we are still awaiting test results it seems certain to be pox.

Dalemain and Stainton suffered a pox outbreak last year and red numbers have suffered.

Our southern flanks, around Appleby, Brough and Tebay is an area currently being troubled by too many greys (it is also a major incursion route for the greys into the rest of the valley).

The group is concerned that there are not enough local volunteers available for us to call on for vital grey control. We are currently trying to get funding for a squirrel ranger for this area but until then, if you can help in any way or know of anyone who can please contact Jerry Moss or Gary Murphy (see back page).

# New Ranger for Northern Eden Valley

Acting in partnership with Save Our squirrels (SOS) we have been successful in securing a grant from the combined RSST, Forestry Commission and Natural England's grey control project fund which, when linked to the independent funding provided by landowners, is sufficient to put us in a position to appoint a Red Squirrel Ranger for the Northern Eden Valley.

This area is currently one of the main red squirrel strongholds in Britain. The biggest concentrations of red squirrels are in the river corridor from High Stand and Armathwaite in the north down through Kirkoswald, Lazonby and Salkeld to Eden Hall. However, despite the importance of the area, we have been frustrated that it is not officially recognised as such by government. No Forestry Commission grants for grey squirrel control are available here to landowners and to date it has only been left to a handful of volunteers to control the situation as best as they could. The area is unique in that it has several large shooting estates, all ably kept and managed and every one of them sympathetic to red squirrel conservation but historically acting in their own way without coordination.



Following increases in grey sightings, coupled with squirrel pox outbreaks in both 2008 and 2009 we organised a meeting of landowners last November at Low House Armathwaite by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Charles Ecroyd and sponsored by HSBC Bank, to highlight the threat of greys and seek support from them. We were delighted by the positive support and co-operation received for practical action. Offers of financial support were received on the day and more have followed.

The post will be for an initial six month contract on a full time self employed basis and we are optimistic that by the end of the initial period the Ranger will have not only confirmed the need for such a role but will also have demonstrated to the public bodies that such a role is so vital to the long term survival of red squirrels and that additional funding should be forthcoming from government sources. If this should not prove to be the case, we have contingency applications to work on.

Our picture shows Craig Shuttleworth (rear view) as he addresses the landowners meeting. He represented Red Squirrel Survival Trust and also vetted the fund applications. Readers will recall that RSST was officially launched in Cumbria last April by patron HRH the Prince of Wales with the clarion call to make the whole of Cumbria a red squirrel reserve in its own right.

**An unavoidable consequence of the success of this project means that Jerry Moss will cease to be our 'Lone Ranger'**  
**To date no applications have been received from anyone called Tonto!**

## AGM Report

At the height of our severe winter the Chairman took the sensible decision to rearrange the AGM to daylight hours and it was held on Monday 11th January 2010.

The officers and Committee were all re-appointed and the accounts were duly approved.

The Group's finances have grown significantly this year with income up to £12,660. £9,887 of expenditure left a healthy surplus for the year of £2,773 and our cash reserves stand at £6,102.

As against last years £3,852 income, £4,367 expenditure, £515 deficit and reserve of £3,327.

We have had some exceptional income this year - the grey control Forestry Commission grant for a local estate is a large straight in and out transaction and other donations towards the Squirrel Ranger will also come straight out.

However it is extremely pleasing to report that Donations have increased to £1,926 (from £766) Collecting box income £2089 (from £525) and gross taking from the sale of merchandise at shows and events at £2,777 (from £262). A marvellous £1,716 from Pat & Tim Cook from the sale of their book 'Stumpy' was surely the highlight for us.

The Chairman's report explained how public awareness of red squirrel conservation had moved forward this year at both a local and national level. We are still waiting to hear the conclusions of the RS Strategy Review and how it will affect us and our partners at SOS, their funding is due to run out in June this year. A difficult time for them.

Reserve buffer zones have increased in size lately bringing in more landowners available for grey control grants. This presents an opportunity for us to work with them and for example Hutton in the

Forest have already done so and work has begun.

The Secretary, whilst pleased that the group's income had risen so significantly was a little disappointed that the group's paid membership scheme seemed to have stalled somewhat this year. Income from membership was £1,130 as against £945 last year.

He urged everyone to make the most of new contacts and ensure leaflets were targeted effectively. The administration of memberships and their renewal has increased and he hoped to recruit a 'volunteer' to assist with this work.

It was agreed to abandon our plans for the public meeting scheduled for 10th February as the prospective celebrity speaker was unavailable and that a get together during the summer may prove to be more convivial and attract greater numbers.

# We Also Work With Other Organisations



**IN CUMBRIA**  
at

Gosling Sike Farm, Houghton Road,  
Houghton, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0LD  
**Tel: 01228 598799**  
[www.saveoursquirrels.org](http://www.saveoursquirrels.org)

**Save Our Squirrels** has the remit to deliver red squirrel conservation, information, and access projects in Northumberland, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and North Merseyside.

The project's headquarters are in Newcastle with regional offices hosted by The Wildlife Trusts in Cumbria and Lancashire. In Cumbria our contacts are **Simon O'Hare** - Conservation Officer and **Charlotte Widgery** - People and Wildlife Officer. Both have standing invitations and regularly attend our committee meetings for which we are extremely grateful.

## Northern Red Squirrels

Northern England's Independent Red Squirrel Conservation Group



[www.northernredsquirrels.co.uk](http://www.northernredsquirrels.co.uk)

**Northern Red Squirrels** is simply an umbrella group which brings together and coordinates all the independent voluntary groups and individuals who are interested in and work towards saving our red squirrels. It encourages united voluntary action and cooperative working relationships with all funded groups, organisations and government bodies.

Jackie Foott is the Cumbria representative and the "voluntary voice" promoting our and red squirrels best interests!

**Visit this website for details of volunteers to contact with grey squirrel sightings and enquiries outside the Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group area.**



**The Red Squirrel Survival Trust** is a national charity, set up under the patronage of HRH the Prince of Wales, for the conservation of the red squirrel in the UK. It actively supports the voluntary groups and can finance projects of merit.

P&DRSG are delighted to have received both practical and financial support from such a helpful partner

Email: [info@rsst.org.uk](mailto:info@rsst.org.uk) to contact

Joshua Perry - Director, Craig Shuttleworth - Operations Director, Elaine Karmy - Programme Administrator  
Red Squirrel Survival Trust, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BB Telephone 020 7554 8579



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## Ways to help P&DRSG

Members, Volunteers and Supporters may wish to help us achieve our priorities by:-

- ✓ Promoting the view that red squirrel conservation is predominately about grey squirrel control
- ✓ Promptly report sightings of grey squirrels to group contacts – list on last page
- ✓ Promptly report sighting of sickly red squirrels
- ✓ Report grey kills by you or others in or outside of the group with location
- ✓ Recruitment of new members
- ✓ Encourage donations
- ✓ Fund raising – coffee mornings, garden open days, selling raffle tickets etc. etc.
- ✓ Sponsorship – to help with cash or "in-kind" work
- ✓ Host or find a home for one of our charity collection boxes
- ✓ Raise awareness locally – schools, organisations, parish councils / magazines etc. & talks

# Sarah's new cards

**Red Squirrel Volunteer, Sarah McNeil of Thrimby near Penrith has just unveiled her latest red squirrel fundraising cards.**

**This is the third year running that she has released new red squirrel images for this worthy cause and we are delighted that her cards are proving to be so popular as all the money raised goes directly into helping Cumbrian reds squirrels. Sarah, with the assistance of her partner Jerry Moss, our red squirrel ranger for Center Parcs and the Whinell Forest reserve, most generously provides volunteers throughout our area with supplementary squirrel feed, flip lid feeders, awareness road signs, live cage traps and much more.**

**All the Photographs have been taken near her home on Lowther estate and have once again been admired by HRH the Prince of Wales who describes them as "Utterly Charming".**

**Cards cost £1.50 each and can be purchased from the following outlets:-**

**The Birds' Bistro, Penruddock  
Shap Post Office  
T W Relph, Yanwath  
The Watermill, Little Salkeld  
Bluebell Bookshop, Penrith  
Charles Sykes gun shop, Penrith  
The Strickland Arms, Great Strickland  
Tebay Post Office  
Orton Post Office  
Bramley's Garden Centre, Shap  
Crown & Mitre Hotel, Bampton  
Black Swan, Ravenstonedale  
Sam Scott, Penrith  
A W Jenkinsons - Forest Products, Penrith  
Appleby Tourist Information Centre  
Flower Shop, Kirkby Stephen  
The Barn Studio, Pooley Bridge  
Ullswater Steamers, Glenridding**



# Our Charlotte on the Telly - in Autumnwatch

**2009 was the year that the BBC's Autumnwatch programme chose to film red squirrels in Cumbria.**

**On Wednesday 4th November, our very own Charlotte Widgery from Save Our Squirrels joined presenters Kate Humble and Chris Packham and a film crew in the Whinlatter Reserve's buffer zone. The Osprey view point on Dodd Wood was chosen as a good place to go to see our furry friends as there is also a constantly manned red squirrel feeding station on site and the squirrels didn't let them down. After some initial reticence, (or perhaps they were star struck) the reds came down to feed and from then on at least one and up to three were there fairly consistently.**

**For the interview Charlotte and Kate sat on a cold plastic sheet a little way off from the tree stump which is always primed with Birds' Bistro red squirrel feed (Richard is delighted with the plug) and discussed a host of squirrel topics. Kate put it to Charlotte that there was a lot of confusion and misinformation about the problems associated with grey squirrels in the public mind and asked her to 'bust the myth'.**

**Charlotte very ably and concisely explained the situation exactly as it is. She did get her message across and I believe Kate Humble was certainly convinced. Chris Packham, well known for his scepticism, was gracious enough not to go against the message put out, although he did say something along the lines that grey control in the south of England would be pretty pointless!**

**When we heard that the cameras were heading to the Lakes there was quite a bit of twittering amongst the volunteer groups as to what position the show would take on the red grey issue and also who they'd be interviewing. I for one was very pleased to hear it was to be Charlotte and even more so after I'd watched the programme. Well done Charlotte (Ed)**





# Contact Us & Support Red Squirrels



If you see a grey squirrel or a sickly red ... Don't delay!

Please call one of the numbers below immediately

- Penrith East/Whinfell - Jerry Moss - 07736 779965
- Penrith North/Greystoke - Bernard Parker- 01768 484277
- Penrith South - Wendy Martin - 01931 713215
- Ullswater North - Charlie Watson - 017684 86266
- Ullswater South - Ken Ratcliffe - 017684 82238
- Shap - Stuart Lewis - 07528 255861
- Appleby - Sarah Banks - 017683 53759
- Armathwaite/Lazonby - Ian Clemmet 07799 793841
- Sebergham - Mal Hilton - 016974 76955
- Tebay - Gary Murphy - 01539 624788 (M) 07974 788434
- Dalston - David Main - 01228 711342
- Kirkby Stephen - Chris Metcalf Gibson - 015396 23336
- Ravenstonedale - Frank Chalmers - 01539 623638
- Caldbeck - Rosemary Bailey - 01697 4 78575

### For General Enquiries

Robert Benson, Chairman, Marian Whitwham, treasurer and Richard Dyke, secretary can be contacted via e-mail at [info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](mailto:info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk)

or write to us:

**Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group, The Estate Office, Lowther, Penrith, Cumbria. CA10 2HG**

And in the absence of a telephone our friends at the Birds' Bistro will take messages on 017684 83100



## Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group Standing Order Form



Instruction to your Bank / Building Society to pay by Standing Order

To the manager.....Bank/Building Soc    Sort code.....—.....—.....

Bank address.....    Account number.....

.....    Account Name.....

Please pay HSBC Bank , Market Square ,Penrith, Cumbria CA11 7SN, Sort Code 40-36-10 for the credit of Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group. Account Number. 01310968

**the sum of £ ..... ( Pounds and pence )**

commencing on the ..... /..... /..... and thereafter every month/annually\* on the same day until further notice in writing and debit my/our\* account accordingly. (\* delete as necessary)

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Please return the original completed form to the address above**

\*Please tick this box if you are a UK income tax/capital gains tax payer and wish PDRSG to claim GiftAid on your donation. The Government will increase your donation by 28p for every pound. Please note the reclaimed tax must not exceed the amount of tax you pay this year.



## Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group Membership Application/Donation Form (Please tick all that apply)



- I would like to become a member\*     Individual £10     Family £20
- and/or make a donation\*     £5     £10     £20     Other.....
- (cheques payable to "P&DRSG")
- Standing Order from my bank\*     £2     £5     £10     Other.....

Title:..... First name/s: ..... Surname/s: .....

Address:.....Postcode: .....

Phone:..... Email:.....

\* Please tick this box if you are a UK income tax/capital gains tax payer and wish P&DRSG to claim GiftAid on your donation. The Government will increase your donation by 28p for every pound. Please note the reclaimed tax must not exceed the amount of tax you pay this year.

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

Return this form to: **Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group, The Estate Office, Lowther, Penrith, Cumbria. CA10 2HG**