



# Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group Winter Newsletter 2016



## Going nuts about squirrels at **Aira Force**

The National Trust have a whole year of good stuff planned with Christian our Ullswater Ranger.

**The National Trust is a great supporter of our conservation work, the team at Aira Force have been working with our ranger Christian Bensaid for a number of years, they have over 30 feeders beside the footpaths to the falls and with Christian's help are starting to see an increase in numbers of reds.**

Audrey Riordan, the Manager at Aira Force said: "It's been so exciting this autumn, we have had more red sightings than we've seen in many years and we're putting up even more feeders to make sure they stay strong, healthy and survive the winter".

At Aira Force, 2017 is going to be all about red squirrel conservation with lots of activities planned to help raise the profile of our native reds with their visitors.

Kids will be able to tackle the squirrel trail with proceeds going directly towards buying more feed. They also plan to have a new squirrel station where they will ask visitors to help monitor red squirrel activity by marking their sightings on a map.

Audrey is keen to raise the profile of our work, she said: "Replacing our weather damaged camera equipment is a priority. We will be working with students studying Wildlife Media at the University of Cumbria to install a new camera and put up some monitors. This will enable visitors to see what our squirrels get up to in their natural habitat".

Christian is involved in spreading the word too with a programme of guided walks and talks to give visitors the chance to learn a little more about what red squirrel conservation really means. The first dates for the talks are Fridays 13<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> January and 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> February starting at 9 am. There will be a small charge of £5, £4 of which will come directly to the Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group.

For full details and to book, go to the Aira Force website: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/aira-force-and-ullswater](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/aira-force-and-ullswater)



### Aira Force by numbers

**6** Pairs of resident reds

**330** kilos of nuts and seeds that the reds eat each year

**1000** £s spent on squirrel food each year

**4000** £s donated to P&DRSG in 2016

## Maybelle is free again

**It gives us great pleasure to announce the safe release of Maybelle the red squirrel back into the wilds of Haweswater.**

Maybelle was rescued by Jerry & Sarah back in May after she was found wandering in the grounds of Haweswater Hotel.

After plenty of TLC, the tiny red squirrel kitten was strong enough to fend for herself and quickly learned how to use a squirrel feeder and enjoyed cosy nights in her own nesting box.



The aim was always to release Maybelle back into the wild so Jerry, Sarah and Christian prepared the sight prior to her release and on 20th September she finally made her exit from her carrier, stepped foot onto the lush green grassy banks of her idyllic woodland setting and off she went up a tree watching over the three.

**There were smiles all around with three minds thinking alike - a job well done and an honour at that!**



## Strong public awareness

**Awareness of the threat posed by grey squirrels to our native red squirrel remains high amongst the British public according to a recent ESI (European Squirrel Initiative) national survey.**

Over 71% of the population is aware that the grey squirrel is responsible for the decline to almost extinction of the native red squirrel.

The survey organised by ESI and conducted on their behalf by NEMS market research also showed that almost 63% of the population agreed that the invasive alien grey squirrel should be controlled in some way to protect the red squirrel population.

The omnibus survey which questioned 1,000 representative individuals across the United Kingdom revealed that over 63% would support the total removal of all grey squirrels using a non-lethal method linked to fertility control.

"These are very encouraging results", said Andy Wiseman, ESI chairman, "They show the high level of awareness across the population of the threat posed by the grey

squirrel and an understanding that grey control is the only viable solution to saving our native red squirrel".

The survey, which is the eighth to be conducted by ESI since 2004 showed a consistent level of awareness of the threat posed by the grey squirrel with the percentage ranging from 59% in 2004 to 74% in 2009.

The area where there was the greatest level of support for grey squirrel control was in parts of the country where the red squirrel is present such as the north of England and the Scottish borders where 80% were in favour of grey control to save the red squirrel although there was a strong showing of 76% in the south of England.

**"The message here is that those in government and its agencies responsible for grey control should listen to the people and be more confident in robustly dealing with the grey problem", added Mr Wiseman.**

## A special place for Sam

**A special event took place on November 19<sup>th</sup> in memory of Sam Bertram who was a long standing volunteer of P&DRSG.**

Sam monitored many sites and made hundreds of feeders for the group over the years. He also made walking sticks and would often be seen choosing a branch of hazel for his next one!

One of Sam's favourite places was the Beacon in Penrith and was the chosen spot for a legacy, **'Sam's Hazel Grove'** - a special place, in a perfect setting, in memory of Sam forever.

A few of us got together with Sam's wife Helen and their family - Stuart, Jack, Julie, Shaun, Lucy & Amy and we all had a very busy morning filling holes to plant Sam's saplings which will grow along with all our fond memories of him.

As Sam enjoyed a tippie or two, we felt it only fitting to raise a glass on site and a toast was given in his honour.

**Sam was one special person, missed by so many and left a much bigger hole to fill than those dug for his hazels. We hope our tribute to him gives some comfort to his family.**



## New management plan at Acorn Bank

**Jo Day is the new Area Ranger at the National Trust's Acorn Bank and she has big plans for nature conservation and engagement there.**

A new management plan includes new path networks, rebuilding a crumbling weir, boundary repairs and creating access for mobility trampers throughout the estate.

The red squirrel population at Acorn Bank has suffered an outbreak of squirrel pox this year but there have been a number of red squirrel sightings recently and Jo is keen to encourage their success, she said: "We are working with the squirrel ranger Jerry Moss who is doing a great job of controlling the greys and we are also putting plenty of feed out to encourage the reds into the area".

Acorn Bank will run a series of activities throughout 2017, celebrating nature conservation in the parkland and the gardens, you can find details on their website: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/acorn-bank](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/acorn-bank)

## Poltross Enterprises

**Poltross Enterprises are proud to be P&DRSG's new feed supplier!**

Established in 1994, we supply a comprehensive range of wildlife feeds and accessories to households and conservation bodies across North Cumbria and Northumberland and offer a free weekly delivery service with no minimum order.

**Call us on 01434 321111 or visit [www.poltross.com/birdfood](http://www.poltross.com/birdfood)**



# How are we doing?

## Andrew—Hutton Ranger

It's been a very busy few months around my patch with some extremely encouraging results. I've begun to see reds coming back to areas where they had been pushed out by greys around Broadfield Estate and at Lazonby Fell and have seen an increase in red numbers around Middlesceugh. The greys seemed to retract over the latter summer months with very few sightings and kill counts going down but; that has all changed towards the end of October with a resurgence of greys in areas where they haven't been seen for months! I have also been busy getting to know more of the local landowners and farmers and hunting out places where the greys have been hiding. We at P&DRSG couldn't do our job without the support of the landowners and local public and we would like to say a big thank you to everyone who lets us work their land or gets in touch to report squirrels, your help and support is paramount to the survival of the reds in our area and we all appreciate it.



## Christian—Ullswater Ranger

The summer saw quite a bit of activity which I'm glad to report has mainly been on the red squirrel side of things. Although the numbers still feel thin on the ground, I have seen more activity this year than in previous and once again seeing reds back consistently in woods they had been absent from. I have also seen and had reports of kittens which are not only always a joy to see, but very promising indeed. I have still been finding the odd grey squirrel but gladly not in the numbers or colonies they had established when I first started. Autumn brings the annual 'surge' where squirrels are very much on the move, and reports are coming in of both being seen - the work continues to track down the invasive variety and remove as quickly as possible. Thanks as always for all your reports, trapping endeavours and support to this great cause.



## Gary—Upper Eden Valley Ranger

All well in the Upper Eden valley for the red squirrels with grey culls well down, same with grey sightings from members of the public. I have been in the Milburn area for the first time and found a good colony of reds. It is important to let me know when you see grey squirrels and also red squirrels as this helps the Red Squirrels Northern England project to map out the red population all over the country. Help protect the reds, join P&DRSG - if the rangers are not out and about the greys will reappear and all our good work will be undone.



## David—Dalston Ranger

As we finally enter Winter, we can reflect on a long and very productive Autumn which has seen huge fruit and seed crops, in particular this year, acorns. Part of a Rangers job is to constantly make a mental note of where the best wild crops are developing within his territory. Hazel, Beech and Oak stands in particular can provide a focus for Squirrels as their fruits come on stream. Grey control efficiency can be improved considerably by checking these out methodically when the time is right. Mature conifer stands (Norway Spruce and Scots Pine sometimes spectacularly), can also be most productive during good coning years. A single, 'especially attractive' tree can hold several Squirrels of both colours at the same time. No News Report is complete without extending sincere thanks to those landowners who grant permission and hospitality to those of us requiring access to woodland. Mine is no exception..... MANY THANKS



## John—Northern Eden Valley Ranger

Overall things have been pretty quiet over the summer with fewer grey sightings than there was in the spring months. Trapping has become very difficult this year - with all the natural food around they have avoided the traps which has been frustrating. Since all the leaves have stayed on the trees so late in the year this has also made shooting difficult because they have been so difficult to spot. On a plus side I haven't had any reports of squirrel pox in the area for some time. Things started to 'hotten' up at the beginning of October with reports of grey sightings coming in, particularly around the Kirkoswald area but I am also seeing reds in the area. Overall I am happy - there seems to be more reds around which I find very encouraging.



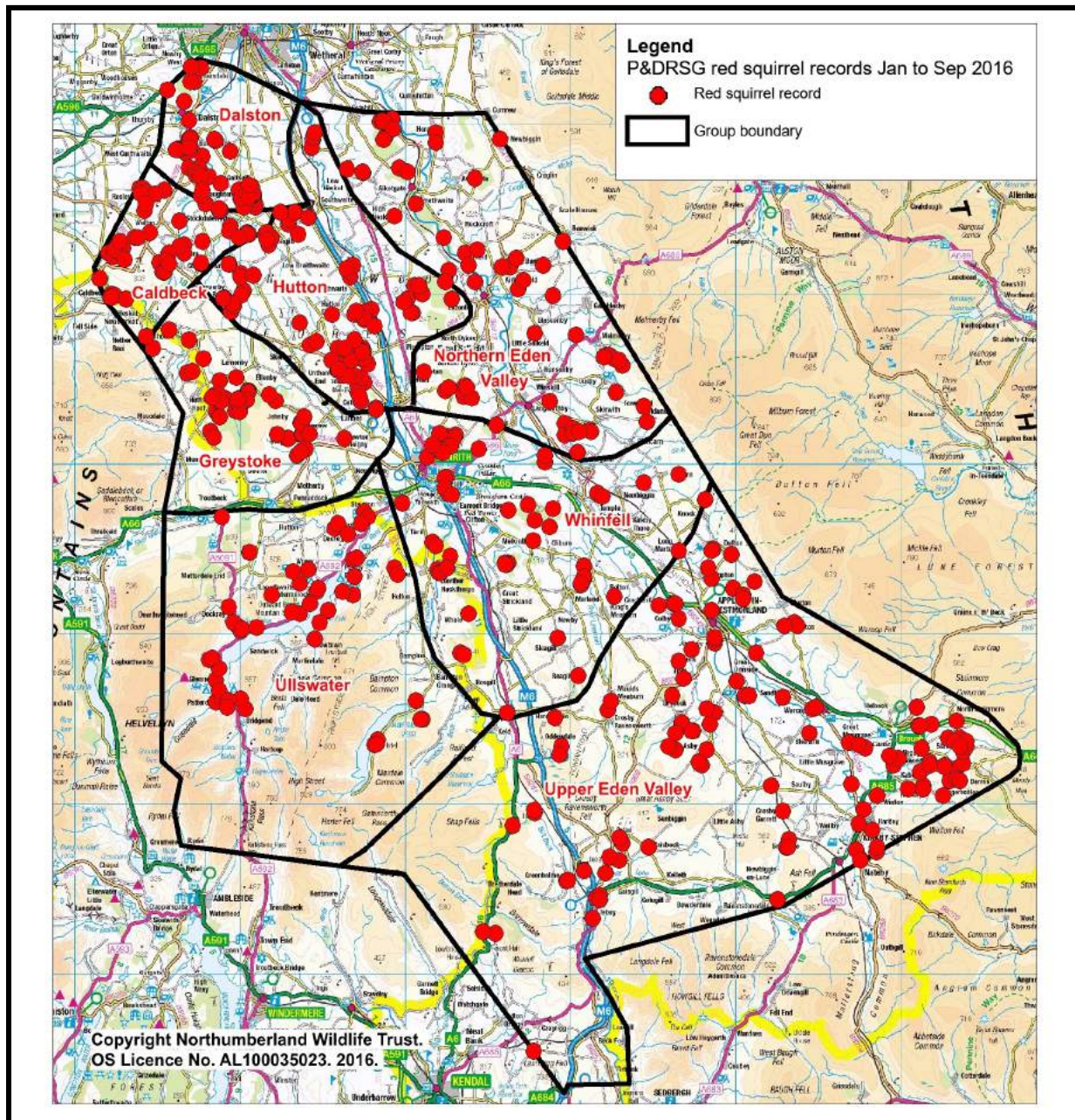
## Jerry—Whinfell Ranger

Whinfell has seen a significant loss of a number of reds due to the squirrel pox virus however no reports of sick reds for a few months. There are still reds about and at time of writing, reds are being seen down by the rangers lodge and bird hide plus in other areas of the holiday village. I have also seen them in other areas of the forest. Summer months seemed slow for catching up with Grey squirrels but the same old story came along in September with many sightings of greys being reported around my area which has carried on into October. Now the leaves and the natural food are finding their way to the woodland floor, I am finally catching up with the greys. Also seeing good numbers of Reds in other forests and woodlands I work in.



**This years figures to date (September 2016) compared with the same period last year shows an outstanding 32% increase in red squirrel sightings, a 24% decrease in grey sightings and a 34% decrease in greys culled demonstrating that what we do works!**

# How are we doing?



**If you see any squirrels don't delay, contact your area Ranger/Coordinator today!**

<b>Andrew</b>	<b>07983 459918</b>	<b>silverhodge@hotmail.com</b>
<b>Christian</b>	<b>07815 784381</b>	<b>cjb06@hotmail.com</b>
<b>Gary</b>	<b>07974 788434</b>	<b>garymurphy2408@btinternet.com</b>
<b>David</b>	<b>07542 191865</b>	<b>dec@davidcowen.co.uk</b>
<b>John</b>	<b>07841 449648</b>	<b>john.lisle@btinternet.com</b>
<b>Jerry</b>	<b>07736 779965</b>	<b>jmossjerry@aol.com</b>
<b>Matthew (Greystoke)</b>	<b>07949 366334</b>	
<b>Rosemary (Caldbeck)</b>	<b>016974 47875</b>	

To report any squirrel sightings outside the P&DRSG's area, please report to [www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk](http://www.northernredsquirrels.org.uk)

**Could you Sponsor a Ranger?**

Our group continues to work tirelessly at extending the existence of red squirrels in our areas with every penny raised going directly to their conservation and protection from extinction.

As with many other charities we rely on external funding and to continue our vital work in its present form with Red Squirrel Ranger contractors, additional, sustainable, financial assistance is required.

**If you could Sponsor a Ranger please contact Julie on 07788 264571 or at [info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](mailto:info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk)**

**Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group. Woodside, Armathwaite, Cumbria CA4 9SX. Registered charity number 1117418.**

The Administrator can be contacted on 07788 264571 e-mail: [info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](mailto:info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk)

[www.penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](http://www.penrithredsquirrels.org.uk) [facebook.com/Penrith-and-District-Red-Squirrel-Group-487229667979369/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/Penrith-and-District-Red-Squirrel-Group-487229667979369/?fref=ts)

# Raising awareness & funds

## A gift with benefits

Our Red Squirrel themed merchandise is available to purchase all year round from the Birds Bistro, Penrith who have been great supporters of our group for many years.

They make great gifts! and not only will you bring a smile to someone's face, you will also be helping to raise funds for our group.



We also stock a Gift Pack which is available to order at £30 and includes 4 Pens, 4 Badges, 4 Car Stickers, 4 Cards, a Key Ring, Fridge magnet, Tea towel and a Fluffy squirrel ! >P&P to be applied at approx. £3.50 per Gift Pack<

To place your order, contact Julie at [info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk](mailto:info@penrithredsquirrels.org.uk) or 07788 264571

## Other ways you can help

### You can help us by

- Making a donation and/or becoming a member (see back page)
- Giving a gift of membership subscription (see back page)
- Organising a fund raising event
- Hosting a charity collection box
- Promptly reporting all squirrel sightings
- Sponsoring rangers
- Sponsoring feed costs
- Recruiting new members
- Inviting us to give a talk to your organisation
- Volunteering to assist the rangers
- Hosting our merchandise for sale in your premises
- Leaving a legacy in your will
- Sending us your 'Red' pictures and stories



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# Members page

## Margaret's story

Early last year, I first noticed a squirrel here at Flakebridge showing signs of pox and Gary & Johnny (the keeper) brought traps down so I could try and catch it. The minute the keeper had put his trap up and turned round after putting his things away, there was already a squirrel sitting on the end happily eating away! There were about four coming at the time and they were really tame. Two of these were youngsters and went everywhere together so when I asked the keeper how many squirrels you'd get in a trap and he answered "one", I thought Hmmm??!

These two were a joy to watch and were obviously part of a family of four as I saw one trying to suckle from an adult female (while she was hanging upside down on a peanut feeder) and the other was sitting alongside 'Dad' on the platform of the nut box.

As I thought, the morning after the trap was put up, there were the two of them inside!! It became a daily ritual often two or three times a day releasing these two who had become resigned to waiting patiently until I let them out. After a while I was horrified to see one of them just showing signs of pox and was trying to work out how I could keep that one in the trap whilst releasing the other one but the following morning there was only one inside. I saw that it was the sick one and it was so hard to leave it there while I decided what to do.

I went back inside and still find it hard to believe what happened next. Its sibling ran down the tree onto a branch which was over the trap, looked in and then ran over to the window I was standing at, up onto the window sill and then started running round and round the outside of the window frame and ended up standing on its hind legs scratching at the glass frantically. I can't think of any other explanation but that it was asking for help and I couldn't do anything as I didn't want to let the sick one out. I really felt I had let it down.

Sadly, after that several more got pox - I think about twelve - seventeen altogether but after a break some more started to come and these were soon very tame. They all liked monkey nuts - were a treat from the peanuts and then near Christmas, I bought a bag of mixed nuts to see which they preferred. The almonds weren't given a second glance, some hazel nuts were eaten and often buried too but the walnut halves, they just couldn't resist! They NEVER got buried and four would come together to get to the nut box for these. As soon as I went out, one would immediately lean out from a branch, front two legs waving in the air in its impatience to take a walnut from my fingers. They were quite gentle and would often put a front foot on my wrist before taking one. Quite often I'd be left with one sitting in the box I was holding wondering what to do with it! The first one would take its nut further up the branch and then the second one would come and so on, in the end all four were sitting in a line all tucking in. This continued for a while but then at the beginning of this year they all got pox too.

They gave me an enormous amount of pleasure and left me feeling really sad which is why **we must continue to help them**. A grey was only seen once here on two consecutive days.

There was a long period when no reds came at all but a few months ago two very nervous ones came for a while, both healthy but then disappeared so I'm hoping they're finding plenty to eat at the moment and will be back!



## In your backyard

Some of our members have kindly sent in pictures of their Red Squirrel Friends with some featuring in this newsletter. Thank you all. Please send us your pics too and you never know, they may feature in our next one!



## Last but by no means least

**P&DRSG give huge thanks to all of our volunteers for their hard work and vigilance, our members for their support and all other individuals, businesses and landowners who continue to support our group and we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**

## Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group **Membership Form**

**Membership is for the calendar year, payable at any time - Please feel free to enter a higher amount should you wish to increase your subscription by including a donation**

**Standard Individual Membership is £20**  By **Cash/Cheque** or £..... including donation  
 By **Annual** Standing Order or £..... including donation  
 By **Quarterly** Standing Order at **£5** or £..... including donation

**Standard Family Membership is £30**  By **Cash/Cheque** or £..... including donation  
 By **Annual** Standing Order or £..... including donation  
 By **Monthly** Standing Order at **£2.50** or £..... including donation

**— For those who wish to give a bit more, please join one of the tiers below —**



**Bronze £50**  **Silver £100**  **Gold £250**  **Diamond £500**

By **Cash/Cheque**  By **Monthly** Standing Order  By **Annual** Standing Order



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

Company Name: (if applicable) .....

Address: .....

..... Postcode: .....

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

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

Please tick this box if you wish P&DRSG to claim **GiftAid** on your donation.

If you are a UK income or capital gains tax payer **GiftAid** allows us to claim back the tax (currently 25p for every £1) on all of your donations. Please note the total reclaimed tax (on this or any other donations to charities or CASC's) must not exceed the amount of tax you pay in the current tax year.

Please return this form to: **Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group, Woodside, Armathwaite, Cumbria CA4 9SX**

## Penrith & District Red Squirrel Group **Standing Order Form**

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

Bank/Building Society address..... Account number .....

..... Account name .....

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

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 ..... /..... /20..... 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 tick this box if you wish P&DRSG to claim **GiftAid** on your donation.

If you are a UK income or capital gains tax payer **GiftAid** allows us to claim back the tax (currently 25p for every £1) on all of your donations. Please note the total reclaimed tax (on this or any other donations to charities or CASC's) must not exceed the amount of tax you pay in the current tax year.



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