



# Westmorland Red Squirrels

making the future safe for our red squirrels

## Newsletter

Issue 10, Spring 2015

I'd like to give a very warm welcome to the new members who joined us in 2014 and since - your support is much appreciated. If any of you can find a little time to volunteer, we'd welcome help with running our group - please get in touch to find out more.

What is increasingly making a real difference on the ground is where residents and red squirrel enthusiasts are joining together to ensure an effective campaign of grey control in their own locality. Recently formed sub branches include Windermere, Troutbeck, Grange, Arnside & Silverdale and the villages of Brigsteer and Crosthwaite - we hope to add more to the list soon. Local knowledge and vigilance are invaluable if we are to cover an area as big as ours, and I would like to thank you all for the excellent work you are putting in.

After my appeal in the last newsletter, we'd had many suggestions for raising funds and were delighted to receive two very large donations and many smaller ones. Thanks to you all, our plans for 2015 are now assured, but future funding remains a problem. The government funding described overleaf by Bob may eventually ease the situation, but in the meantime we are asking local businesses for their sponsorship to help conserve our precious red squirrels. There can be little doubt that red squirrels are a significant tourist attraction and a boost to the local economy.

**Geoff Hetherington, Chairman**

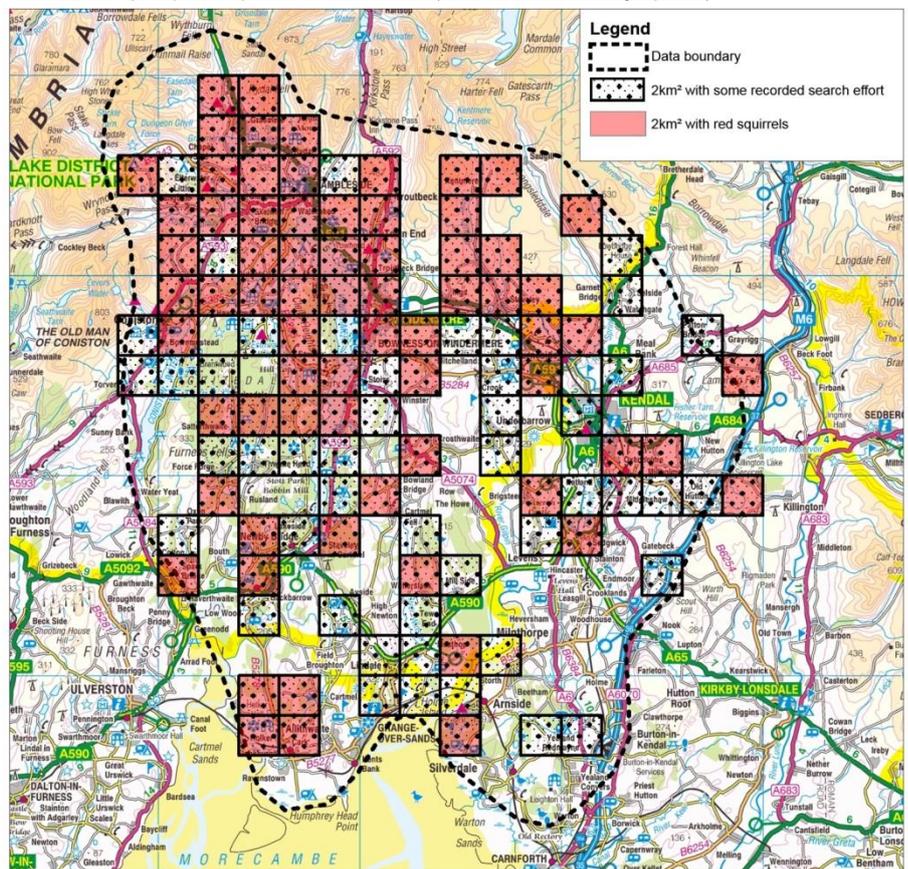
### Red Squirrels seen in South East Cumbria in 2014

The 2km squares marked in red show where red squirrels were seen in **2014** using Red Squirrels Northern England's own data combined with data supplied by Westmorland Red Squirrels and the Grasmere Red Squirrel Group.

The map demonstrates just how tantalisingly close we are to a continuity of known red squirrel range from Grasmere down to the coast - and by more than one route.

The 2km squares with dots show monitoring and grey control activity. Many thanks go to all of you who worked so hard to provide the data, and to RSNE for producing the map for us.

Recorded red squirrel presence per 2km<sup>2</sup> from all data 2014 (Westmorland & Grasmere group areas)





## Encouraging signs in the fight for Westmorland's red squirrels

Few would argue that red squirrels aren't just as important to the Lake District as lakes, fells and Herdwicks. Yet it sometimes feels like the dice have been loaded against their survival. The invading greys are larger, breed more frequently, produce larger litters and spread the squirrel pox virus that is lethal to our reds. Now, recent outbreaks of *phytophthora ramorum*, a disease that kills larch trees, means large areas have been or are being felled, not least around Claife Heights. The impact on our surviving red squirrel populations is, quite literally, disturbing.

Fortunately, the Government, in the form of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Forestry Commission, has recognised the need for urgent action – nationally and locally. A year-long review of England's grey squirrel policy, to which Westmorland Red Squirrels submitted evidence, has now culminated in a promising new policy statement and action plan. It states: *"Efforts to control grey squirrels in England's woodlands need to be more effective, making greater use of best practice; better coordinated and sustained in order to protect and enhance our vulnerable red squirrel population and to reduce impacts on woodlands so that they can thrive for biodiversity and economic interests"*.

Part of the action plan is a commitment to offer *"advice and incentives for land managers, promoting and supporting better collaboration and partnership, funding research and taking appropriate action on its land holding. The success of this approach relies on these activities being supported and added to by all stakeholders. Where grey squirrels are causing problems land owners and managers are critical to the success of policy implementation by taking responsibility for controlling grey squirrels on*

*their land."*

Part of the incentive for land managers could be access to woodland improvement grants within the new Countryside Stewardship programme. Potentially offering £100 a hectare for delivering agreed woodland management plans, let's hope the needs of our red squirrels will feature prominently in those plans. Scheme details and how to apply can be found at [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/countryside\\_stewardship](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/countryside_stewardship).

Locally, the Forestry Commission has already made additional funds available to Westmorland Red Squirrels and Red Squirrels Northern England for increased monitoring and grey control in a substantial swathe of the Windermere catchment.

The Lake District National Park Authority has also licensed us to control squirrels in their woodlands in the Rusland Valley as well as in Witherslack, Staveley and Longsleddale, and at the National Park Visitor Centre at Brockhole near Ambleside. And they've given us a generous grant from their Communities Fund to buy thermal imaging cameras, wildlife cameras and global positioning system devices to place and monitor feeders and fixed equipment accurately.

We're now working with landowners on the practical actions needed. Support of this kind is extremely heartening. It's good to know that the tenacious efforts of volunteers and contractors alike over many years to stem the grey tide is now officially acknowledged and appreciated. It encourages us to re-double our efforts to protect our red squirrels.

**Bob Cartwright**  
**Secretary, Westmorland Red Squirrels**

## A training session held on 16<sup>th</sup> January at Great Tower, Windermere

In order to facilitate a number of requests for trap training, a session was held on the snowy morning of 16<sup>th</sup> January.

The biggest thanks of the day go to Mike Green for actually getting there on time, when the road and weather conditions conspired against him. Even his efforts to communicate his possible 'no show' were complicated by others not being near a phone or in a 'no signal spot'.

Last year, after introducing ourselves to the Scouts at Great Tower, Mike started trapping there. It soon became evident that in order to make an impression on the grey squirrel population of the 260 acre estate a different approach was needed.

With interest from the staff and the positive response from the users of the site we suggested that we train some of the staff to do their own trapping and despatching. In exchange the Scouts offered us the use of their ecology centre and to provide refreshments. What more could we ask for!

On the day, six members of staff from Great Tower were joined by five members of the Garsdale group, and six members of Westmorland Red Squirrels. Although the Garsdale group mainly shoot they also need to use other methods of despatch from time to time.

Due to the inclement weather conditions a practical outdoor session was curtailed but all the necessary topics were covered in the warmth of the ecology centre.

The examination of the frozen carcasses of three squirrels provided differing reactions and much discussion. The appearance of a grey squirrel outside the window behind Mike Green, while he was speaking, provided much mirth and comment.



*Looking northwest across Windermere from near Great Tower - how many grey squirrels?*

A big thank you to the Scouts for the use of Great Tower and also to Mike Green for leading the session. Thanks also to Mike and Ian Hackett for their additional contributions and help.

Training sessions are held from time to time as required. Anyone interested in learning how to trap and dispatch please let Bob Cartwright know.

**John Phillips**  
**Windermere Coordinator**



## Seeing Red in Rydal

This is the new squirrel hide at Rydal Hall built with Mike Green's guidance - a lovely place to visit.

Overlooking a dell in the wood, ropes, perches and feeders have been well positioned to attract different birds as well as squirrels. The entrance is opposite the car park for Rydal Hall.

## Ambleside, Hawkshead, Coniston Area Overview

A sudden cessation of activity saw us stop trapping last July when normally we go well into September, but the new fruit on the trees made it impossible to attract the squirrels into the traps so it was not cost effective to carry on.

Since July I have experienced little or no success with traps but others have achieved some good results shooting.

RSNE Ranger Mike Green is hoping to expand his area and RSNE are considering taking on an additional ranger to help, so Ed Watson has been very busy over the winter months making feeders - he has

done a wonderful job throughout the year and made hundreds, which are much appreciated by so many over a wide area.

The start of 2014 gave us our first case of Squirrel Pox Virus but we are hopeful it was contained with minimal damage. It highlights why we do what we do and gives us inspiration to carry on - with fewer greys about, the potential contact with reds is reduced.

**Mike**  
**Area Coordinator**

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## Windermere and Bowness

There is a continuous programme of grey squirrel control in Windermere and Bowness but there is still much work to be done and we often receive news of grey sightings. However it isn't woodland sightings we hear about most often but the greys that are being spotted in neighbours' gardens; usually because the neighbours enjoy feeding them. In these instances we are unlikely to be made welcome by the neighbours concerned but if people living nearby could attract those greys into their own gardens then we could remove them from there.

Attracting greys to garden bird feeders is not a good idea unless you plan to have them removed. Increasing numbers of greys will arrive for the food, they will breed and so our work becomes never ending. If you've been feeding greys and would like them removed then we can arrange for a volunteer to visit you and discuss the positioning of a cage trap near the feeder. You would be asked to let us know when the trap door closes and the volunteer would return to remove the trap containing the live squirrel and another trap would be set.

**Please contact us if you'd like us to remove greys that regularly visit your garden feeder.**



This feeding station was stocked with food to attract greys in order to trap them. Only birds will be able to eat food from the squirrel proof feeder but the greys will eat the peanuts in the unprotected feeder and take hazelnuts from the dish. Hazelnuts will always attract squirrels and are well worth offering.

## Onward and upward into the Beech!



*A Troutbeck red*

### Keep Guarding Troutbeck's Red Squirrels

Hopefully with the help of the local residents, visitors and remote *KEEP GUARD* cameras we can repeat our success in the Troutbeck Valley in 2015.

All the greys were first 'caught' by using the remote cameras. They were photographed just as they moved in to take up a new residence in areas that had already been cleared and were grey free.

When it came to actual trapping, some were cleverer than the average squirrel!

We have continued to monitor the known grey routes with feeding stations throughout the winter resulting in some grey culls and a healthy population of woodpeckers!

#### Jayne & Mike

*Note: At time of going to press Keep Guard cameras were no longer available from UK suppliers, only from China.*



*Eating out in Troutbeck – caught on the Keep Guard cameras*

### Many hands make light work!

A problem shared is often a problem halved and partnerships can be the only way to ensure effective action. That's why we've joined the Rusland Horizons Scheme between Windermere and Coniston Water, and initiated another in the Arnside and Silverdale area.

'Rusland's Reds', our element of Rusland Horizons, seeks to protect red squirrels, while other partners plan to restore native woodlands and woodland crafts, create trails and conserve rare Duke of Burgundy

Fritillary and Netted Carpet Moth populations. Project plans are advancing fast, ready for Heritage Lottery-funded action in 2016.

Meanwhile, in Arnside and Silverdale and surrounding areas, we're working with the Natural History Society and a host of major landowners and agencies. Our strategy is to coordinate grey control and create corridors for reds to re-populate the area from neighbouring strongholds around Dent to the north east and from across the Kent Estuary around Witherslack and Brigsteer.

## News from the newly formed Garsdale Red Squirrel Group

Garsdale is a quiet valley in the north west corner of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, running from Sedbergh to Garsdale Head. The A684 road and Clough river follow the dale. The valley floor is pasture and meadow land, whilst up the steep hillsides are high peat moorland, with the large bulk of Baugh Fell to the north, and Rise Hill to the south.

The river corridor contains broadleaf trees in abundance, but the close proximity to the road, and the fact that grey squirrels prosper in deciduous woodland mean that the areas of coniferous forest are the prime red squirrel habitat.

Well - things have been quite busy since we set up the new group in August 2014 and I don't really know where time has gone!

We've now got 37 members and still growing so not bad really for 6 months work, but I have to say the support we've received from Westmorland Red Squirrels both before and after our inception has been amazing, so thanks from all of us in the dale (red furry friends and humans alike).



We're a bit different here in that we are lucky enough to have a thriving population of reds scattered about the dale with two litters of kits per year (mainly around the conifer plantations).

Our main efforts are focused on grey control which is currently causing us a bit of a problem, but we also have the added factor of attempting to conserve as much conifer habitat as possible for the red squirrels.

Most of the conifers have either been clear felled already or are scheduled to



*View across Garsdale*

be felled in the next 5 years.

It's been a long slog but I think some of the authorities are now starting to listen and do something to protect the trees which the red squirrels call their homes.

Due to objections from residents in the dale, a clear felling application for the last plantation in has been deferred until expert advice has been obtained (including from red squirrel experts) so hopefully things will be managed in a more squirrel friendly way!

We have a meeting with Red Squirrels Northern England and the Yorkshire Dales National Park in mid February 2015 to discuss conservation initiatives so there's some movement there too!

The group has been quite active and a number of us attended a Westmorland Red Squirrels grey squirrel trapping session in January 2015 which provided some invaluable advice, so thanks to your group for the invitation and I'm sure we'll put information gained to good use.



*One of our Garsdale red squirrels*

We've also been to the local primary school to give them a talk on red squirrels accompanied by Cyril our pet puppet

squirrel. The school will be coming up to Garsdale for squirrel spotting visits and setting up a webcam for live film to be relayed back to the school in the Spring. It's good to start people caring about wildlife when they're young!

Next for us is an initiative to engage with landowners and promote red squirrel conservation so watch this space and wish us luck.....

Oh before I forget... have a look at our new website too, if you get a mo.

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

**Sue Ryall**  
**Garsdale Red Squirrel Group**

## Kentmere

The felling in Kentmere started at the beginning of Christmas week in driving rain – not the ideal time to be made homeless.

Now in mid-February, the felling looks to be nearing completion. On the brighter side, we understand that some trees from the plantation will be retained until the new planting has grown up. We're very grateful for this, and hope it means we can keep our population of Kentmere reds.

As an experiment to provide emergency accommodation for the displaced red squirrels, we put up man-made dreys, together with nearby feeders to attract the reds to the drey sites.

One feeder had definitely caught their attention, so we've recently placed a



*The drey being investigated*

camera high up in the tree opposite the associated drey – thank you to Richard for his mountaineering skills!

A week later and we have the evidence that the drey has been discovered – time will tell whether anyone moves in.

## Spot the difference!

Have you noticed anything different about this Newsletter, our website, our Facebook page or Twitter account? Yes, we have a new logo and a new brand! This is about more than simply refreshing our image. It's about creating a clear and distinctive identity for Westmorland Red Squirrels – we don't even call ourselves 'Society'

anymore, except on official documents.

With a clear identity we hope to attract more members and more sponsors, particularly from the business community, for the important work we do. And what are we doing? As our strapline says, we're "Making the future safe for our red squirrels".

## Ways to help our reds

### Collecting boxes

If you live locally and within our area, could you arrange for a Westmorland Red Squirrels' collecting box to be placed in one of your nearby shops, pubs or businesses? You won't have to count the money yourself.

If you can help, please contact James Blacow for details.



**James Blacow** Tel: 01539 725065  
Email: [jdcblacow@talktalk.net](mailto:jdcblacow@talktalk.net)

### Removing greys

Of course no one could single-handedly eradicate all the greys in their area but it would be possible to remove larger numbers if people could work together with neighbours. Our volunteers are always happy to visit groups and explain more about grey squirrel control and the ways we might help. We can also lend traps to people who need them.

**Forming a local grey squirrel control branch of Westmorland Red Squirrels can be very successful so we'd love to hear from anyone who could set one up in their area.**

### Do you shop online?

If you do, you could raise money for Westmorland Red Squirrels by signing up to support us on **Give As You Live** – and it won't cost you a penny!

One member has raised over £8 for us since the Autumn, so if enough people join in, it could become quite a substantial sum. Each shopping transaction typically only raises a few pence, but it's money we wouldn't otherwise have had.

Retailers pay a commission to **Give As you Live** every time you buy – a full explanation is given before you sign up. There is a time lag before money appears in our total, but you can see it in your own account details.

Most large retailers participate, including travel companies. Holiday bookings can raise large amounts, but we haven't managed to buy a car through it – yet!

There are bonuses when you introduce others, so please consider joining and then encourage your friends and family, too.

**To find out more, visit our page on Give As You Live:**

[www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/wrs](http://www.giveasyoulive.com/charity/wrs)



## Westmorland Red Squirrels

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