



Save our Squirrels Berwick Group

Squirrel Times

May 2012

Hi All,

Time for another edition of our Group's newsletter. A lot has been happening since the last one so here goes.

First we would like to congratulate Elizabeth Bamford for gaining the Red Squirrel Survival Trust's Volunteer of the Year award. Since before starting our Group she has worked tirelessly in the cause of red squirrel conservation and it is good to see her get some recognition for all her efforts.

The second piece of good news is that there have been sightings of red squirrels at Paxton Hall. As you know the reds at Paxton had been devastated by an outbreak of squirrelpox and staff there had feared that all of their reds had died. It is early days but the sightings by a RSSS Ranger is promising.

We have been very busy working in the Kylee Reserve. Since the outbreak of the virus at the end of February we have been trapping throughout Shiellow, Detchant, Kettleburn and Kylee woods which make up the reserve. As you can imagine this was a huge logistical exercise but it was essential that this was undertaken immediately, both to eradicate any greys within Shiellow and also to remove any infected reds from the area to try to contain the infection.

It has been proved in other parts of the country that if you remove all greys from the infected area the red population has a good chance of recovering. Sefton that has suffered three outbreaks of the pox in recent years is back up to 80% of the original red population.

As it was we only caught 3 greys throughout the whole reserve and they were in the Kettleburn/Detchant area. The good news is that 4 red squirrels have been sighted recently in Kylee and 1 in Fenwick Woods.

Over March and April we have also been taking part in a RSNE Population Survey. RSNE have been sampling squirrel populations in 250 2k tetrads in Northumbria, Cumbria and N. Yorkshire. This will be an ongoing survey, taking place in the spring and autumn and the data will help demonstrate the impact of red squirrel conservation measures.

Together with the Wooler Group we have surveyed 22 tetrads by setting up feeder boxes, followed a week later by installing a wildlife camera to see who has been visiting. As well as both red and grey squirrels we have photos of lots of birds, roe deer, brown hares and some very cheeky wood mice who have been pinching the bait from the feeders.

In addition Terry and Chris Pawson have been keeping records of two red squirrels who visit a feeder in their garden. A big thank you and I'm very jealous!



Red Squirrels Northern England have filled the post of full time Ranger (controller) for north Northumberland. Iain Hardie starts on the 28th May and we look forward to working with him.

Unfortunately because of the essential work we have been doing in the Reserve and catching up on control elsewhere our organised woodland surveys have had to be postponed. However we propose to begin survey/monitoring work again starting with a survey in Fenton Woods on Tuesday 22nd May at 10:00. Meet at the Routin Lynn crossroads.NT984366.

We will also be starting the survey/monitoring work in the Kylee/Shiellow/Detchant Reserve. We plan to undertake a monthly survey along established transects throughout the reserve to identify any squirrel activity. This is a vital part of the Groups work to protect the reds in the reserve and it would be good to build up a core of members interested in surveying to be trained to undertake this task. Eventually the aim would be to have members "adopt" a transect(s) to walk and survey once a month at a time of their choosing.

Can anyone who would be interested in helping with this monitoring please contact me for further details, either by phone 01289 381218 or email john_rae@dsl.pipex.com.

Since the last newsletter, as well as working in the reserve, our Group have been doing control at –



LICKAR DEAN
LONGRIDGE TOWERS
LINDISFARNE COTTAGE, LOWICK HIGH STEADS
KETTLEBURN
KYLOE DEAN
COMMON PLANTATION
TIPTOE
NEW HAGGERSTON FARM
GLEN ORD, BERWICK UPON TWEED
SANSON SEAL
TIPTOE
BARTEYSHILL PLANTATION (Berrington)
LOWICK MILL
GRASSY WOODS

If you would like to see a Google map of the work our Group have been doing so far this year, plotting all the surveys, monitoring and control goto :-

<http://g.co/maps/wt27r>

As is usual with google Maps you can zoom in and if you click on a symbol you will get more details of the activity undertaken there.

When plotting some of our sightings we appear to have squirrels swimming across to Norway ☺, so just a reminder.

The 6-figure grid reference is very useful to locate a particular place on a map.

It consists of a Sheet number,3 number easting,3 number northing. By estimating the eastings and northings to one tenth of the grid interval, you can specify a full 6-figure grid reference, accurate to within 100 metres on the ground.

All you do is estimate how many tenths away from the grid your point falls.

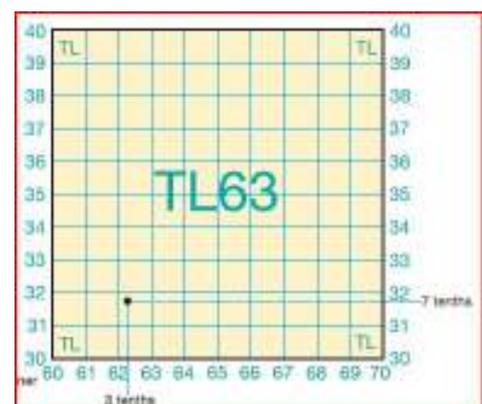
For instance, the point in this diagram is 3 tenths east of grid 62 and 7 tenths north of grid 31.

So reading from the southwest corner, quote all the eastings first, then the northings. The 100-metre grid reference of the point in the diagram is shown like this: TL 623317.

10-figure grid reference from a GPS is the same but Sheet number,5 number easting,5 number northing.

Hope that this helps.

For a full description of the Ordnance Survey grid see the sheet attached with the newsletter.



Some red squirrel facts

- Their scientific name is *Sciurus vulgaris*.
- Red squirrels eat seeds, buds, flowers, shoots, nuts, berries and fruit from many trees and shrubs. They also eat fungi and insects, and occasionally birds' eggs.
- They store nuts in the ground in the autumn.
- They can be right- or left-handed when they eat a pine cone!
- They will occasionally strip bark from trees (usually conifers).
- Squirrels moult their coat twice a year, once after winter and then in the late summer before the weather gets colder again.
- They moult their ear tufts only once a year, in late autumn.
- They can live to six years of age.
- They have four fingers and five toes.
- They are not always red in colour but can also be brown, almost black or quite grey!
- They weigh 275-300g, the same as four Mars Bars or a packet of biscuits.
- Their body is 18-22cm long and their tail is 14-19cm in length.
- Squirrels live high in trees in a nest made from twigs, leaves and moss. This is called a drey. (See photo)
- The drey may be in a hole in the tree or set against the trunk and branches.
- Pregnancy lasts 36-42 days and their young are called kittens.
- Kittens are born with their eyes closed, without teeth and with no hair. After about seven weeks they look just like small versions of their parents and are ready to leave the drey.
- There can be two litters a year, with 3-4 kittens in each litter.
- Average densities in conifer and broadleaf areas are 0.5-1.5 red squirrels per hectare.
- They do not hibernate over winter, but may be less active when weather conditions are bad.
- They can hang upside down!
- They can swim

