



## Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrels

### Newsletter No 1 – February 2019

Welcome to our very first newsletter! We hope you enjoy it and find it interesting. Any comments (positive or negative) are always welcome at the email address below.

#### Website

We have what we think is a very good website ([lcreds.org.uk](http://lcreds.org.uk)). As you may know there is a sightings page on this, where the general public is encouraged to report any sightings of reds or greys and their condition, so that we can keep an overall idea of what is happening in our area – Lower Coquetdale. Data is passed on to Red Squirrels Northern England.(RSNE).

#### Sightings

Looking back over our figures between June and November 2018, there were 67 sightings of red squirrels, and 270 sightings of greys. However, 113 of these greys were despatched (either by our volunteers or the informed public). So we can conclude from this that our group is certainly doing good work in increasing the odds of the survival of reds in Lower Coquetdale. Please do keep reporting any sightings. As you may have seen on a recent BBC Countryfile programme, it is illegal to let a grey squirrel back into the wild, once it has been trapped. So our group is carrying out the law of the land.

#### Telling the differences between reds and greys (from Northern Red Squirrels)

“It can sometimes be hard to distinguish between red and grey, as often colour is not a reliable indicator. Greys can often have very red fur and red squirrels’ coats can vary from a bright, rusty red to quite a dark colour, sometimes grey or almost black!

There are three marked differences:

- a) **Ear Tufts** – greys never have ear tufts. If you spot one with ear tufts – it is definitely a red. If no ear tufts, it could still be a red – as ear tufts on reds are moulted in the summer and become more prominent in winter.
- b) **Size** – Greys are generally much bigger and stockier than reds. However there are individual variations and young greys will reach a similar size to adult reds on their way to becoming fully grown. Greys can carry on breeding well into the winter months, so young greys are not just seen in the spring.
- c) **Tails** – Hairs on greys’ tails all have a white tip – so the cumulative effect is a distinctive white ‘halo’ effect around the tail. Reds have no halo.<sup>2</sup>

#### Overall numbers

RSNE have been collating surveys over the past eleven years, and our group has taken part last year and this year. 2018 results show that red squirrels are still widely distributed across six Northern England counties (including Northumberland). Reds are bouncing back around Cramlington, Morpeth and Ashington – where volunteers are putting in the effort to look after them. This is indeed good news!

It is vital that we keep up the good work here in Lower Coquetdale. We do have a shortage of volunteers – so if you are keen on red squirrels and would like to get involved or help in any way (doing admin, delivering leaflets, helping on the ground) – we would love to hear from you – email us on [info@lcreds.org.uk](mailto:info@lcreds.org.uk) or contact me [cherryhambrook@gmail.com](mailto:cherryhambrook@gmail.com) We also have a Facebook page – Squirrels in Coquetdale. Do please like it and share!

Cherry (Secretary, Lower Coquetdale Red Squirrels)