

Grasmere Red Squirrels Update 16/8/19

Key Points

Reds: Our reds are doing well this year with kits from second litters appearing regularly. There have been very few sightings from the central village, also none from the Helmside/Town Head area.

We carry out the annual population census in August/September so do tell us how many reds you see in a specific location both the number seen simultaneously and additional individuals you can identify.

We must all continue to be vigilant and look for signs of lesions on eyes and lips and general lethargy.

Greys: To the end of July 2019 we have culled 61 greys – this is a relatively high number.

A new full time Squirrel Ranger has been appointed to work in the Westmorland RS area to the South of Grasmere down to Grizedale Forest, as part of a new red squirrel project called 'Grasmere to Grizedale' - see below for details.

Funding: Thank you to everyone who has donated in 2019. If the reds are to be preserved the only way this can be achieved is to have sustainable funding from the businesses in the village. The hotels benefit from the red squirrels as their customers love seeing them – so please enable us to continue by making a financial contribution!

IF YOU SEE A GREY ANYWHERE AROUND GRASMERE (or a sickly looking red) PLEASE TELL US IMMEDIATELY with an exact description of the location and the time it was seen – Don't leave it till tomorrow!

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News of the reds

Our reds are doing well this year with kits from second litters appearing in most areas. So far this year there have been very few sightings from the central village, also none from the Helmside/Town Head area.

We carry out the annual population census in August/September so do tell us how many reds you see in a specific location both the number seen simultaneously and additional individuals you can identify.

We must all continue to be vigilant and look for signs of lesions on eyes and lips and general lethargy.

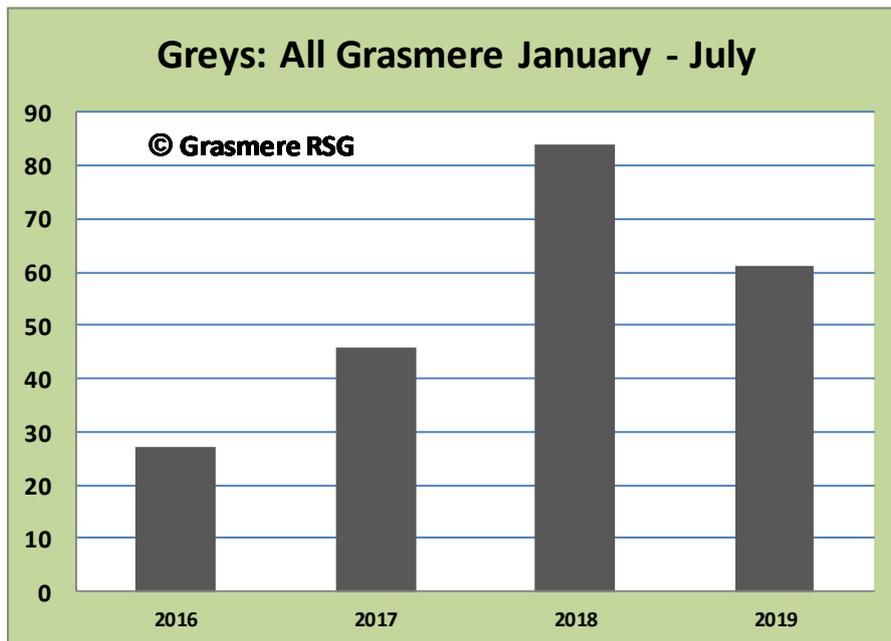
The Allan Bank NT property continues to be a very popular place for the public to see reds and GRSG continues to work very closely with them. Elaine Taylor, the manager of Allan Bank, is swimming across 10 tarns in the Lake District to raise money to cover the cost of bird and squirrel food and contribute to grey squirrel control. Her target is £1000. If you'd like to donate to her Just Giving page, you can do so here <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/allanbank...>

Greys

Up to the end of July 2019 we have culled 61 greys in Grasmere. Though this is less than in 2018, it is the 3rd highest year since 2012.

44% of greys were on the East side from the Rydal direction and 56% were on the West side from the Elterwater/Skelwith direction over Red Bank.

The chart below shows what has happened in the first 7 months in the last 4 years, the increasing number of greys since 2016 is of great concern.



To understand the figures in these graphs and charts, one needs to be aware that up to 2008 grey control was primarily reactive and there would have been greys breeding here. In 2009 we implemented a clearance strategy to eliminate greys starting at the north of our area and working south. From 2010 onwards, all years are based on our 'Zero tolerance' strategy in Grasmere and are directly comparable because they represent the number of greys entering Grasmere. From 2010 we started pre-emptive trapping on our frontiers and at the end of 2012 we installed cameras sending near real-time photos from the frontier areas. Our objective is to eliminate all greys entering our area as soon as possible to prevent them passing pox to our reds. The numbers coming to Grasmere fluctuate depending on the amount of grey control carried out outside our

borders to the South (Skelwith/Elterwater and Rydal), the harshness of winters and availability of natural food. The area adjacent to us to our South East and West is Westmorland RS where volunteers carry out grey control. There was a Loughrigg RSG throughout 2007-9. Mike Green was a full time RSNE ranger working to our South from Jan 2012 to Aug 2016. Our full time RSNE Ranger and has carried out several man weeks work to our South between Oct 2016 and Sep 2017, full time Oct & Nov 2017, about 6 weeks in 2018, and 3 weeks in Spring 2019. I believe Rydal Hall have done some grey control on their land, but I haven't seen any statistics.

Grasmere to Grizedale Project (G2G)

The key outcome of this project is to restore the predominance of the native red squirrel by reducing competition and disease risk posed by grey squirrels within the G2G project area. Through collaborative effort, the project will result in far fewer greys entering Grasmere, enabling red squirrels in this stronghold to thrive. It will also allow reds to recolonise woodlands to the south where they are currently either absent or present in very low numbers. This will help move the red squirrel line south as the project progresses.

A project steering group has been established to oversee the direct management of the project, consisting of members of WRS, GRS and RSNE. There will be wider consultation with other partners from the South Cumbria Squirrel Management Forum, including National Trust, LDNPA, Forestry England, and local private landowners and managers.

The partnership will work closely together to ensure that the project is properly resourced, with buy-in from local communities including local landowners and businesses, and that the aims and resulting outcomes are well communicated. It will be vital that local landowners are encouraged to participate, and WRS are already engaged with a number of these, including Skelwith Fold Caravan Park, Bryerswood estate, Colthouse, Broomriggs and Matson Ground.

The main focus of the project will be practical action on the ground. This will include the following:

- 1) targeted grey squirrel management
- 2) a standardised red and grey squirrel monitoring programme
- 3) data collection, analysis and dissemination.

This action will be delivered by a combination of staff, contractors and volunteers who will work in close collaboration to ensure maximum coverage and effect. In addition, a campaign to raise the profile of the project will be delivered, helping to inspire longer-term support from local communities, landowners and businesses.

The project is being managed by RSNE. Initial funding is from the NT who have been successful in obtaining a grant for 5 years from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme covering the woodlands to the Southern part of the area. Further funds need to be raised.

Note that the Grasmere area will continue to be operated as it is now by GRS who will continue to fund and manage grey control in the area.

Funding

The National Trust continue to be our main funder, but we do need more money to continue to pay for our ranger.

If you would like to donate to the conservation of the red squirrels in Grasmere, please send me a cheque or use a collection box. There are collection boxes at: Heaton Cooper, Regatta, Post Office, Mountain Warehouse, Trespass, Tweedies, the Garden Centre and the Daffodil Hotel.

Many thanks to everyone who has donated.

GRSG and the NT have made great efforts to get Grasmere businesses involved, so far we haven't received any funds from them. If the reds are to be preserved the only way this can be achieved is to have sustainable funding from the businesses in the village.

The hotels benefit from the red squirrels as their customers love seeing them – so please enable us to continue by making a financial contribution!

How you can help us

We are pleased to hear from anyone who wants to sponsor the group, offer help, purchase their own equipment or are willing to have a collecting box in your hotel or business. By contributing to the group, you are helping the red squirrels to survive. All contributions are most welcome – thank you.

We would welcome anyone who is willing to share the effort involved in monitoring traps in local woodlands (mainly White Moss and Red Bank) – this just involves walking round, morning or evening when you are available, and phoning someone if action is needed. We'd also like people to walk through woodlands from time to time looking for squirrels. Please do get in contact with me if you can help with these activities.

Many thanks to everyone who has contacted us with local sightings – especially greys! – they are really helpful.