



The IOW Red Squirrel Trust

Charity No: 1112374

Isle of Wight Woodland Walks



Booklet FREE
but donations are welcome



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Foreword

The Isle of Wight Red Squirrel Trust are committed to 'educate the public about red squirrels, their habitat and the flora and fauna they share it with'. To further this aim we give talks and provide books and DVDs, including this booklet. This is our mission statement and we hope you enjoy exploring the Island's wonderful woodland and it's inhabitants.



Introduction

'Where can we go to see red squirrels' is the most often asked question from the general public, particularly visitors to the Isle of Wight who do not have red squirrels where they live. With help from the The Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust, The IOW Red Squirrel Trust are addressing this by producing a free guide.

The routes featured in this booklet have been walked and found clear of obstructions or detours at the time of writing. All areas have red squirrel populations. Use a map and website map wightpaths.co.uk if you are unsure of the route.

The Isle of Wight is a beautiful county - much of it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and all the island is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Some of the woods are classed as ancient, that is, they have been there for 400 years or more. Look for some of the indicator species such as bluebells, Butcher's broom, Moschatel, moss or Dog's mercury.



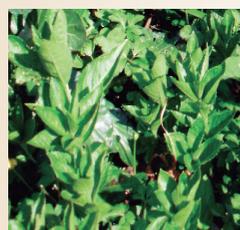
Moschatel



Moss



Butcher's broom



Dog's mercury

Early spring is an especially good time to visit the woods as the early flowers such as snowdrops, primroses, wood anemones and daffodils are in bloom.



Snowdrops

Where there are glades, watch for butterflies, bees and other insects. Woodland is also a rich habitat for fungi in the autumn. If you are still out as dusk approaches watch out for barn owls, bats and hedgehogs.

Please take an Ordnance Survey map with you. Directions and path references are given but to reduce the risk of getting lost, it's worth carrying a map. If you have a smart phone, you can probably work out the route on that.

Please observe the Countryside Code by taking your litter home with you, closing gates and keeping your dog on a lead where there is livestock.

Make sure you stay on the right of way paths. Don't forget to wear sensible footwear! Enjoy your walks.



Hedgehog



Blue tit



Wood anemones

Keep your eyes open

Monitoring is important so that changes can be recorded and, where ecologically sound to do so, help a species of flora or fauna that is struggling. Over the years, records show how a site has changed and the impact management - or lack of management - has had on the flora and fauna.

It's important to know where you saw the species, so give a grid reference if you can. Failing that, using public path numbers or landmarks will help pinpoint the place. By reporting species of flora and fauna you will be making a valuable contribution to conservation. The next page gives details of how to report your sightings.

The interaction between plants and animals, plus weather and human influence is complex so it's only by observing and recording as many species as possible that we can see and begin to understand the natural world. Your records will be kept for future generations to reference as well.

Take identification books with you so that you know which species of flora or fauna you are looking at. Also take a notebook and pen so you can record them. Be as sure as you can that your identification of a species is correct before sending it in. If you are unsure, take a photograph if possible. This isn't always easy if it's an animal, so write down or draw the best description you are able to.

Signs to look out for

Red squirrels live in all the woods mentioned in this guide along with many other species of flora and fauna. If you don't actually see a squirrel or other small mammals, look for these signs of their presence:



Squirrels notch the top of a hazelnut and then split it in half.

Squirrels strip fir cones of their scales to extract the seeds.



Bankvoles take the top off of the hazel shell.



Dormice nibble a neat round hole.



Woodmice make an untidy hole.



Watch out for stripped honeysuckle bark, as squirrels and dormice use it for their nest.



Squirrel nests are called dreys and built high up in the trees. They are about 30cm in diameter and look more solid than a bird's nest.

The Countryside Code

Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs. Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go. For example, your rights to go onto some areas of open land may be restricted while work is carried out, for safety reasons, or during breeding seasons. Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves. Protect plants and animals and take your litter home. Leave gates and property as you find them.



We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.

Keep dogs under close control. The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make

sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people.

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone - at home, at work and at leisure.

Monitoring and recording red squirrels

Monitoring is a very important task as it gives the knowledge to help the squirrels when the need arises, eg. road crossing points in accident blackspots. It's also vital to have information on decreasing populations so we can look for the reason.

We monitor without using invasive techniques such as trapping or using radio collars, which are stressful for the squirrels and unnecessary unless there is a specific problem where no other method would help the animals. Woodland monitors and the general public reporting sightings and are vital to help us keep a watch on our Island squirrels.

Citizen Science is the catchy name given to information gathered by the general public. Please become a 'citizen scientist' by reporting squirrel sightings on the Isle of Wight. Monitoring is carried out by partner group, Wight Squirrel Project:

Email: wightsquirrels@hotmail.com

Ring 01983 611003

Or download our app from the website-
www.wightsquirrels.co.uk

For other flora and fauna please contact
the IW Natural History and
Archaeological Society -
Email: iwnhas@iwnhas.org:



TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL RED SQUIRREL SPOTTING

Learn as much as you can about red squirrel behaviour.

Watch and listen for movement in the trees.

Listen for the 'chukking' sound a squirrel makes if it sees you.

Take binoculars.

Leave the dog at home and avoid peak dog walking times.

Peak squirrel activity times are dawn and dusk all year with a third peak in summer around late afternoon.

Squirrels react to sound and movement, so walk slowly and quietly.

Squirrels feed on different things over the year:

In the spring they can be seen nibbling shoots and buds, so look up into the trees.

Scots pine and Corsican pine cones ripen in early summer, therefore look high up in the trees, this is where the squirrels will be.



Around the end of July the hazelnuts ripen, so find a good hazel coppice with plenty of light, often on the edge of rides. Hazel will not fruit if there is not enough light.

In the autumn, beech and sweet chestnut ripen, so look for these trees at peak activity times. Squirrels also like fungi.

Winter is when the nut caches buried in the autumn are being dug up and eaten. Caching is usually in the ground but sometimes in trees as well.

Where gardens back onto woods, squirrels are often fed and can be spotted as they travel to and from the garden. Take care not to upset the garden owner!

Red squirrels can also be found in some parks and cemeteries.

Briddlesford

Start at Lakeside in Wootton. Take bridlepath N1 that goes past Lakeside. You will see Hurst Copse on your left, follow the main path round until it joins the bridlepath again. Then follow the main bridlepath N1 until it meets N13 on your right.



Branch right towards Littletown. There are fields to cross and at the time of my walk there were cows and sheep in the fields. Please keep your dog on a lead.

There are 'corridors' of trees the squirrels use to travel between the main woodland along this part of the walk. Squirrels feed in the few gardens you will pass. There are also viewpoints along the way.

Go through Littletown, then turn right along N7 to Fernhill. You come out onto Station Road. Turn right and a short distance on your right, you will pick up the public path back to Lakeside. Squirrels are in the woods and feed in the adjoining gardens.



Combley Greatwood

Approximately a mile out of the village of Havenstreet on the Main Road towards Newport is the main gate to Combley Greatwood. Take the main path to the top of the track. The left path goes to Combley Lane but to do a circuit in the wood, turn right.

As you near the end you will see a rickety fence with a Forestry notice pinned to it (can only be read from the other side). For the botanists, there is some very nice flora on the left just before you get here. Before you get to the gate, turn up a dirt track on your right. In the spring this is the place to see the bluebells. It will be very muddy in winter.

Follow the winding dirt path through all sorts of interesting trees until you meet the gravel track. Fork left to meet main track and get back to the start.

This is a Forestry Commission wood and you can wander through the many paths in the woods, other than the suggested walk.

Red squirrel feeding 'table'. Note the chewed cones and split nuts



Firestone Copse

This copse is owned by the Forestry Commission and you can wander where you like. However, there are hotspots for squirrels - and also very muddy or rough tracks not everyone will want to follow.

Start in the car park, follow the main gravel path to the right until you come to a wide dirt track on your left. Follow this until you meet a wide track on your right.

At the end, turn right back to the main gravel track. Turn right on the main gravel track and then left when you meet a wide track going uphill.

At the top, turn right and keep going until you are nearly to the top. There are a number of easily negotiable dirt paths back to the main gravel track. Turn left back to the car park



Wootton

Park in Station Road in Wootton and find the track between Glen Close and Park View. Walk through Quarrels Copse to Park Road, cross to cycle track N214.

Walk along to Fattingspark Copse public path N111 on the left and into the woods. Half way along you can join N112.

When you reach the farmyard, look for a track on the right shortly after passing the house you are still on N112. Stop to admire the views from here.

Turn right and follow track until meets N214 on the right. This leads you back onto the old railway track.



Follow route back to Station Road through Quarrels Copse.

View from N112

Binstead and the Millennium Green

Start at Pell Lane entrance to the recreation ground, next to Ryde Academy. In the right hand corner is The Red Squirrel Dell, where squirrels pass through daily. Have a quick peek and then cross recreation ground to Play Lane.

Turn right and proceed down bridlepath R38. Look for the Millennium Green on your right about threequarters of the way down.



Follow main path and admire the 'mother oak' that gave rise to the wood.

Over boardwalk taking care as it can be slippery. Go down steps and over bridge. Turn right – it's very muddy in winter. Path bears left to join main path where you will see the sign 'Binstead Wood'. Take right fork and follow to top, then turn right to R113.

At the end, turn left to Dame Anthony's Common and walk to the bottom. Follow lane back to Play Lane and then back over recreation ground to where you started.

Newchurch

There is a car park in School Lane. Go out the back of the car park and into the field that leads to Martins Wood.



Follow the main path that bears left and leads past the cemetery.

Turn right down the hill. Bear right at the bottom, then left across the bridge into the wood.

Turn left into the wood and follow the path. Plenty of birdsong here! Follow path until it bears right and doubles back on itself, you are now at the top of the wood.

At the junction turn right along NC11c and back to Martins Wood. Explore woods and paths as you wend your way back to the start.



Shanklin

Start on old railway track next to Landguard Holiday Park, on Languard Road (SS17). Follow red squirrel trail along track until you meet 'crossroads with NC39. Turn right onto main Shanklin to Godshill Road and carefully cross over.

On the left is bridleway NC37. Go down shallow steps into woodland. Follow main path until you are near to a fairly open glade with fallen trees. Turn right up the hill.. At the top is a post with way markers.

You will come to a field with trees on the left, follow the path and admire the views, downs and woodland to the right and Culver to the left.

Turn right down SS19 and then left into the by-way and back onto the old railway track. Make your way back to the start.



America Wood

Shanklin town, easy walk

Start at the entrance to Tower Park on the corner of Alexander Road and Chine Avenue. Walk through park and exit park by car park. Straight on to Church Road and turn left for 200 mtrs to paved footpath between Crab Inn and Pencil Cottage where you turn left.



Follow path through to the top and then turn left and left again into Rylstone Gardens. Follow the path around the gardens until you come back to Popham Road. Follow Popham road to Priory Road and then onto church Road.

Turn left onto Church Road following the road until you meet Manor Road where you turn right onto Manor Road and St Blazius Church. Continue on Manor Road as it bears right through an avenue of trees.

Follow to the end of the road then take first right onto Rectory Lane. Follow Rectory Lane until you reach church Road. Turn left back into Old Village, then right back into Chine Avenue and Tower Gardens back to the start.

Thank you to Jon Fishman for suggesting this walk.

Other places to look for red squirrels on the Isle of Wight

Please use your OS map to locate these woods, they are all marked on the map, just look at the SZ grid reference. The grid reference is not necessarily the place to park, it just shows where the wood is.

You may choose to just incorporate a woodland into a longer walk or park elsewhere. Some woods have a bus stop nearby, others do not. Check Southern Vectis website - www.islandbuses.info/services - if you want to use a bus.

The list is not exhaustive but these venues are easier to find than some. For the more adventurous, have a look at the OS map to see where there are public paths through woodland. Some are rather remote and there is no parking but well worth a visit if you are really energetic.

For those who have mobility problems, then places such as the Garlic Farm, Ventnor Botanical Gardens, Rylstone Gardens, Shanklin Chine and Osborne House are the best options.

For detailed walks in West Wight, there is a downloadable leaflet on the website: www.iowredsquirreltrust.co.uk. This is a previous booklet focusing on West Wight so the walks have not been repeated here.

There is no guarantee you will see a red squirrel of course!

West Wight:

Fort Victoria, Yarmouth SZ339 897

Car park Yes

Footpath

Bouldnor Forest SZ376 897

Car park Yes, very small

Forestry Commission wood

Mill copse SZ357 890

Car park Yes, pay and display in Yarmouth

Footpath

Brighstone Forest SZ419 849

Car park Yes

Forestry Commission wood

North East

Quarr Abbey SZ568 925

Car park Yes and cafe

Appley Park, Ryde SZ603 922

Car park Yes, pay and display

Isle of Wight Council

South Wight

Ventnor Botanic Gardens SZ55 77

Car park Yes and entrance fee

Privately owned



North Wight

Osborne House SZ515 947
Car park, yes and entrance fee
English Heritage

Newport to Cowes cycletrack SZ49 95 Cowes
Car park No
Footpath

Central Wight

Parkhurst Forest SZ477 903
Car park Yes
Forestry Commission

Beech Copse, Godshill SZ525 815
Car park Yes
Footpath

East Wight

The Garlic Farm, Newchurch SZ559 869
Car park Yes and cafe

Borthwood SZ568 843
Car park Yes, very small
National Trust wood

Nunwell Copse and Kelly Copse SZ596 872
Car park Yes on Brading Downs Road
Footpath B28

Flora and fauna to watch out for

Small tortoiseshell



Starling



Teazle



Fox



Pheasant



Spindleberry



Chaffinch



Fungi



Red admiral



Long-tailed tit



Comma



Painted lady





The IOW Red Squirrel Trust

Charity No: 1112374

Founded in 2005

Trustees

Chair: Miss Helen Butler MBE

Treasurer: Mrs Dorothy Hughes

Legal Advisors: Mr John Gurney-Champion
and Jonathan Bacon

Secretary: Mr Simon Craddock

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Report sightings to: wightsquirrels@hotmail.com

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The Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust

This booklet was compiled by Helen Butler MBE

Thanks go to volunteers who either suggested walks
or tried them out.

Photographs courtesy of Helen Butler MBE



There are 8 suggested walks and 14 likely places to see red squirrels on the Isle of Wight in this booklet. Tips on your best chances of spotting a red squirrels and signs to look for are also included. If you see a red squirrel, contact details are given so you can report it and become a 'Citizen Scientist'.

**The IOW Red Squirrel Trust
and
The Hatcher Animal Welfare Trust
hope you enjoy your walks**