



WIGHT SQUIRREL PROJECT

THE ISLE OF WIGHT RED SQUIRREL
CONSERVATION GROUP

Established 1993

A guide to identifying red squirrels in your garden

Red squirrels come in a variety of colours, anything from silver through to virtually black as well as any shade of ginger or brown. This is just genetic variation and nothing to do with age or gender.

They may have light or dark tips to their tails or even racoon like rings. They may have a dark line down their back or light 'bleaching' which is the guard (top layer) hairs.

Some have wispy eartufts and others magnificent ones. Most lose tufts altogether in the summer.

Occasionally you will see a squirrel with a missing digit or other physical difference which makes it easy to identify. There are 'stumpy tail' squirrels in the island population which is a genetic anomaly and passed on to young. Some may have shortish tails whilst others have unusually long tails.

Their personalities are as different as ours. Some are very dominant whilst others timid. They are also right or left handed. They also have different ways of accessing food.

If you manage to get a glimpse of their underside, then it's pretty clear whether they are male or female during the breeding season – look for the obvious! Young squirrels are harder to determine from a distance.

Look carefully at the shape of the head, it does vary slightly between animals. Even in fully grown adults there is a size difference, just as in humans.

Have fun and don't forget to give them all a name!