

### Social media

Please keep in touch with us via Facebook and the website—[www.wightsquirrels.co.uk](http://www.wightsquirrels.co.uk). A big thank you to Karena and Julia for organising the online Christmas auction via Facebook which raised £575 towards camera traps, hairtubes, food hoppers plus squirrel food. This study will be on private land as camera traps get stolen—as I know to my cost.

Thank you to Debbie and her neighbour Shirley for a sterling job making items for the auction. They donated material as well as spending hours on their sewing machines. Debbie's photobook 'Lockdown Kits' was very popular and made £42 in the auction. Who doesn't like cute pictures and witty comments!

### Woodland monitoring 2021

Using trail cameras, food hoppers and hairtubes, the plan is to cover areas of the Island that are missed by 'citizen scientists'. The areas to cover are Shorwell, Brighstone, Chillerton, Gatcombe, Bowcombe Calbourne and Rowridge.

If you have squirrels in your garden in any of these areas and would like to participate please contact me, the details are at the bottom of the page.

### Genetic project with Bournemouth University

This has produced some interesting results but there are gaps. We need hair or tissue samples from the places mentioned above. As our reds are doing OK I don't think there can be major issues to address. However, it may be expedient to have as much information available in case of problems in the future, such as global warming. The paper published last year showed lower genetic diversity in West Wight squirrels. I can't say that I've picked up a problem from the post mortems examinations I've done, so it appears at this stage, there is nothing to worry about.

### Squirrel sightings update

Sightings from the general public reached in excess of 1000, which is amazing as we haven't been to shows this year. Thank you to everyone who sent in sightings via the app, online form or rang in—please keep it up! The results of your citizen science input will be in the spring newsletter.

### Red squirrel Publication

It looked as though this publication would be around 1000 pages of A4, so I'm finding ways of cutting this down. The

price of a 1000 page publication to buy must be prohibitive, even if it is digital. The aim is to have it written up by spring and published as soon as possible afterwards. As it is science driven it will not be everyone's bedtime reading, so I'll publish a book of red squirrel facts for those who want to learn but not spend hours reading and scrutinising charts and tables.

### Development and tree felling

Sadly, I've recently had a number of worried people contacting me re development and disruption to red squirrel corridors and habitat. I have no authority and can only write in pointing out red squirrels are present and protected by law. Habitat unfortunately is not protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act. If an application threatens trees protected by a TPO, then please contact the IOW Council and ask for the tree officer.

### Welcome 2021!

Nobody will be sad to see the end of 2020 and here's looking forward to meeting up again at Wolverton Show - and a few other shows in 2021.

Keep well everyone and hope to catch up with you soon.

*Helen*

