

Reserved for reds

Hugh Kemp and his family first came to Mirk Pot farm 40 years ago with a plan to grow Christmas trees on what was then a treeless windswept hillside in the Snaizeholme valley.

After planting the conifers, Hugh fenced them off from sheep and cattle, and, unexpectedly, the ground which had been nibbled away for years by livestock began to return to nature, with rowan, ash and bird cherry starting to grow.

Bird and animal life soon began to appear, and one day a red squirrel was spotted. Numbers have increased steadily, attracted by the abundant food supply and suitable habitats.

Working alongside the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Hugh has now set up a special viewing area on his land for the public to catch sight of these charismatic little creatures. The squirrels are provided each day with a mixture of nuts dispensed from special feeders - plus a sheep skull to chew on for calcium when the females are pregnant.

If you would like to find out more about red squirrels in the Yorkshire Dales, please visit the 'Nature in the Dales' section of our website www.yorkshiredales.org.uk

The patchwork of woodland blocks in Widdale - which include Snaizeholme - are part of a special red squirrel reserve, one of 16 designated in the UK. A defensive buffer zone surrounds each reserve, protecting against grey squirrel incursion.

Save our Squirrels - part of the Red Alert North England partnership - helps the landowners with management and conservation. To find out more, visit the website www.saveoursquirrels.org.uk where you can also report red squirrel sightings or volunteer to help with the project.

Snaizeholme Red Squirrel Trail The route



Turn on your MP3 player to hear the introduction to this trail. Further audio stopping points are marked below and on the map.

Look out for these red squirrel waymarkers (see right) along the route which will help guide you.



Exit the Dales Countryside Museum car park, cross the main road and turn right, heading back into Hawes town centre and passing the Post Office on your left.

Pass the parish church (St Margaret's) and, after the first shop, immediately turn left down the covered passageway signposted 'FP Gayle Lane and Creamery 1/4ml'.

Continue along the cobbled path, through a metal kissing gate and passing to the right of the church. **Stopping point 1.**

Go through the wooden gate ahead of you and continue on the paved path across fields to Gayle. **Stopping point 2**

Reaching the road, cross over and turn left. Just before the bus shelter, turn right through a squeeze stile onto a walled path signposted 'Pennine Way'.

Follow this path which crosses the next road and continues ahead to a gate into a field.

Go through the gate and head diagonally left across the field on a paved path to a gate in a wall. Go through and again walk diagonally left across the next field to a second gate in another wall, leading on to a metalled road.

Turn right and follow the road, eventually arriving at a T-junction with a small barn on the left. Turn right.

At the next T-junction turn left (onto Mossy Lane) and then first right. This road rises to become Bands Lane, passing a number of houses (including High Bands) and agricultural buildings.

At the next T-junction turn left onto Cam Road. You should continue to follow this track for approximately one mile (1.5km) but stop a short way up to look back across the valley for a superb view of Wensleydale. **Stopping point 3.**

Continue on until you eventually reach a shut gate across the road in front of you, marked with the Open Access symbol—go through the gate.

Continue ahead until the dry stone wall on your right drops away. Just ahead, cross a small stream that runs across the road and then turn right, striking out across open moorland. **Stopping point 4**

After some distance, cross a crumbling wall and continue walking downhill crossing a stile over another wall. **Stopping point 5**

Continue downhill, go over a stile next to a gate and onto the road. Turn left, following the road over a cattle grid, through the conifer plantation and out the other side. **Stopping point 6**

The track continues on past High Houses and then turns downhill, becoming a rough path before petering out as you reach rough pasture.

Continue diagonally left downhill, eventually reaching the riverbank (Snaizeholme Beck).

Continue left along the riverbank - stepping over a trickle running into the beck - until you reach the footbridge. Go over the footbridge and then over the stile on the other side.

Stopping point 7

Turn left, following the riverbank a short way, then climbing a grassy bank to a fingerpost marked 'FP'. Pass to the right of the dry-stone wall towards the woodland. Climb over the wooden stile into the woods, joining a track. **Stopping point 8**

Turn left and after a short distance turn right off the track at a signpost marked 'Footpath'. Follow the path, crossing the stone stile straight ahead onto a boardwalk, bypassing a house to the left and then rejoining the main track at another 'Footpath' signpost.

Continue along the track to a metal gate. Go through and then turn immediately left through a wooden gate marked with the yellow public footpath arrow and signposted 'Footpath'. Continue along this faint grassy track just below West Cottage across the edge of an open field. Walk towards the woodland ahead, keeping the wire fence on your right.

Cross over a small beck using the wire-covered wooden railway sleeper and turn right, heading to a wooden gate at the edge of the woodland marked with a yellow public footpath symbol.

Go through the gate and follow the bark path to a wooden kissing gate on the right marked Red Squirrel Viewpoint. You have reached your destination. **Stopping point 9**

Return to Hawes by retracing your steps.