

Cumbria
Wildlife Trust



Great places to see

Red Squirrels

in Cumbria



▲ Photo: Mark Hamblin / 2020VISION



③ Alston Youth Hostel

Alston Youth Hostel has a regular family group of four or five red squirrels visiting daily to feed in the food boxes on the trees opposite the dining room window. There is a 95% chance of seeing them during the day, with favourite visiting times being breakfast time and early evening. Donations to the squirrel food fund are invited!

Where is it?

By car: From the west take the A686 from Penrith or the A689 from Carlisle. From the east take the A686 from Hexham (A69 from Newcastle).

By bicycle: Alston is on National Route 68 Pennine Cycleway (North Pennines).

By public transport: Buses run from Carlisle, Brampton, Hexham and Haltwhistle.

④ Dodd Wood, Keswick

Forestry Commission

Dodd Wood is a fantastic place to view red squirrels. A feeding station, located at the osprey viewpoint, attracts these native squirrels throughout the year. Good numbers can be found at Dodd Wood, and the Forestry Commission is one of a number of organisations working to conserve them.

Where is it?

By car: Sat Nav Postcode: CA124QE. From Keswick take the A591 towards Bothel. The forest entrance and car park are on the right, opposite Mirehouse.

By bicycle: Dodd Wood is on Regional Route 38.

By public transport: From Easter to October, bus service 73/73A from Keswick calls at Dodd Wood.



⑤ Ennerdale National Trust

Surrounded by high mountains and with a lake at the western end, the valley is a haven for red squirrels and is home to between 100 and 150. They can be seen across Ennerdale's woodlands, especially towards the western end of the valley. The squirrels are more active in spring when looking for a mate, and in autumn when they can be seen gathering nuts and burying them across the forest floor.

Where is it?

By car: From the A595 near Gosforth or Holmrook, head to Nether Wasdale. Drive through the village towards the lake for 2 miles and park in a layby near a stone hiker's shelter.

By bicycle: C2C Cycle Route (NCN 71) comes to Cauda Brow (2½ miles from Bowness Knott car park).

⑥ Eskdale Green Woodland Trust

From Eskdale Green head north on foot to Miterdale Forest, a coniferous woodland. The seed of conifer trees is a favourite food of red squirrels and so they can be found here foraging in reasonable numbers.

Where is it?

By car: The nearest main road to Eskdale Green is the A595 which runs along the west coast of Cumbria. You can also catch the La'al Ratty train from Ravenglass, or head over Wrynose Pass from Skelwith Bridge.

By bicycle: Route 72 (Hadrian's Cycleway) starts at Ravenglass and runs along the west coast of Cumbria.

By public transport: Buses run from Workington to Eskdale Green or catch the La'al Ratty railway from Ravenglass.

Photo: Peter Cairns



7 Lowther Castle and Gardens, Penrith

The gardens at Lowther Castle are mix of the old and new. Formal gardens closer to the house change merge into woodlands where the conifers are home to red squirrels. There is a red squirrel hide where you can sit and watch squirrels. There is a fee to enter the grounds.

Where is it?

By car: From the north, M6 exit at J40. Follow A66 east to next roundabout, then take the A6 south for 3 miles. Follow the signs for Lowther Castle. From the south, M6 exit at J39. Follow A6 north for 8 miles. Follow the signs for Lowther Castle.

By bicycle: Lowther Castle and Gardens is close to National Cycle Route 71.

By public transport: Buses running from Penrith to Kendal stop in Lowther village.

Photo: Philip Precey



9 Smardale Nature Reserve, Kirkby Stephen Cumbria Wildlife Trust

Stunning scenery provides a backdrop to this wonderfully varied nature reserve that stretches from Newbiggin-on-Lune almost as far as Kirkby Stephen. Red squirrels like to spend time in the tree canopy, so autumn and winter is the best time to spot one, as the trees are bare. They are well-known for their love of nuts, so keep an eye on the feeders and get your camera ready!

Where is it?

By car: From the A685 between Ravenstonedale and Kirkby Stephen, take the Smardale turning. Cross over the railway and turn left at the T-junction. Bear right over the disused railway and turn immediately right. The car park is 200m on your right.

By bicycle: The nature reserve is 3 miles from National Route 70 Walney to Wear (W2W).

By public transport: There is a limited bus service from Kendal, Sedbergh and Brough to Kirkby Stephen.

Photo: John Bridges



8 Shap Wells Hotel, Shap

With 30 acres of wooded grounds surrounded by moorland, Shap Wells Hotel is a great location to see red squirrels. The hotel offers written guides for short and medium walks within the grounds and outlying areas. Finish off your red squirrel search with a bar or restaurant meal.

Where is it?

By car: Postcode CA10 3QU. Leave the M6 at junction 39, then turn right to cross the motorway. At the T junction turn left towards Kendal and the hotel entrance can be found on the left.

By bicycle: The nearest cycle route is Route 68.

By public transport: Buses run from Kendal to Shap.

Photo: John Bridges



10 Squirrels Pantry Tea Room, Cockermouth Oakhurst Garden Centre

Established over 40 years ago, Oakhurst Garden Centre is a family business on the outskirts of Cockermouth, set in a woodland surrounding. Head to the Squirrels Pantry Tea Room and enjoy a delicious breakfast, light lunch or afternoon tea whilst watching the red squirrels. If you have reds in your local area, squirrel food can be bought from the garden centre for use in your own garden.

Where is it?

By car: From the A66 head north towards Cockermouth from the Lamplugh roundabout up the Lamplugh road. The garden centre is on the right opposite the petrol station. CA13 0QP.

By bicycle: The closest cycle route is Route 71.

By public transport: Buses run from Ambleside to Keswick.