

PRESS RELEASE

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New Red Squirrel viewing opportunities at Blair Castle Caravan Park



Atholl Estates are now offering visitors an unprecedented opportunity to see Red Squirrels in their natural environment with the introduction of new squirrel feeders among the conifer trees at the Blair Castle Caravan Park and on the estates' Red Squirrel Trail. A webcam has also been installed at one of the feeding sites and is streaming live footage onto their website www.athollestatesrangersonline.co.uk/wildlife/conservation.asp

Scotland is home to over 75% of Britain's endangered red squirrels with the country representing one of the last strongholds for the species in the UK. Atholl Estates aim to maintain central Scotland as a stronghold of the native red squirrel and to protect its red squirrels from the deadly Squirrelepox virus carried by grey squirrels from the south. The Squirrelepox virus is harmless to greys but is lethal to the native reds.

Appropriate habitat management, carried out by Atholl Estates, is the key to help the long-term survival of red squirrels in Scotland. Red squirrels depend heavily on areas dominated by conifers, which includes approximately 80% of the woodland on Atholl Estates, in contrast to grey squirrels which, to survive, require a high proportion of broadleaved trees. Consequently, habitat management to favour red squirrels aims for a high proportion of conifers, and should exclude the large-seeded broadleaf species which favour grey squirrels.

Atholl Estates' large proportion of conifers is the perfect place for a Red Squirrel Trail. A mile long, starting at the Glen Tilt Car Park (5 minutes walk from the Blair Castle Caravan Park), the trail is the perfect place to have the rare pleasure of sighting red squirrels who have become quite used to seeing people amongst the trees. Following the red arrows, as quietly as possible, visitors might be lucky enough not only to see the red squirrels, but also feed them using special feeders and food, available to buy at Blair Castle Caravan Park. They may also be lucky enough to attract woodpeckers and other woodland birds.

The Red Squirrel Trail is one of 6 trails that start in Blair Atholl village. Atholl Estates have a 40 mile network of way-marked trails that visitors can explore many of which are featured in the "Waymarked Trails from Blair Atholl" map on sale in Blair Castle Caravan Park's shop and the nearby Ranger Information

Centre. In addition to this there are 163 miles of paths and tracks on an estate of over 145,000 acres and the estate boasts to have the 2nd tallest tree in the UK.

For further information about staying at Blair Castle Caravan Park please telephone 01796 481 263 or visit www.blaircastlecaravanpark.co.uk. To find out more about red squirrels and the wildlife activities available on Atholl Estates please contact the Ranger Service on 01796 481646 or visit www.athollestaterangerservice.co.uk

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