



Archie quickly found his feet in the trees

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Adorable footage shows baby red squirrel taking first steps back into the wild

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Center Parcs has shared video footage of a red squirrel kitten taking his first steps into the wild after being rescued and hand reared by Center Parcs' Red Squirrel Ranger. The footage comes during Red Squirrel Awareness Week 2019 (21-29 September), where Red Squirrels United work to celebrate the native species and raise awareness of the challenges they face.

Back in June, a guest at Center Parcs Whinfell Forest found a red squirrel that appeared to be injured. After contacting the Conservation Rangers, the kitten was taken to a local vet to be checked over. The young squirrel was given antibiotics and pain relief, then placed in the care of Jerry Moss, Red Squirrel Ranger at Center Parcs Whinfell Forest.

"We think the squirrel was around six or seven weeks old when he was found. It seemed from his injuries that the kitten had fallen from his drey [nest] or a branch and hit his head and nose. My partner Sarah and I have hand reared more than 20 red squirrel kittens over the years, so we took him in and named him Archie," said Jerry. Sarah is a volunteer for Penrith and District Red Squirrel Group, making her and Jerry the perfect team to look after Archie.

Jerry hand-fed Archie replacement milk formula through a plastic syringe and, for the first few days, Jerry and Sarah kept him warm using heat pads and a fleece hat in a hamster cage. Once he became more mobile they moved him to a larger cage and, a week later, Jerry felt comfortable to move Archie outside into a large pen in the garden. Fitted with feeders, nest boxes, branches, moss and woodland materials, it was the perfect place for the young squirrel to gain confidence and learn to explore.

After a total of seven weeks in the care of Jerry and Sarah, Archie was ready for his return to the woodland. They found an area where there are a good number of red squirrels and let Archie go outside in his own time. He may have taken a few tentative steps at first, but once he had found his feet (or paws!), there was no stopping him from exploring. Since his reintroduction into the forest, Jerry and Sarah have monitored their trail cameras and can see that Archie is doing well and mixing with fellow red squirrels. Center Parcs have also kept the family who first found Archie updated on his progress with pictures and thanked them for acting so quickly.

Center Parcs Whinfell Forest is in Cumbria, one of the most highly populated areas for red squirrels in the UK and is one of a few remaining red squirrel strongholds, providing a haven for the native species. Jerry has worked at Center Parcs Whinfell Forest as the Red Squirrel Ranger for 16 years, where his unique role requires him to work on the village and in a 5km buffer zone around Whinfell Forest, monitoring and caring for the endangered species. Only one other Center Parcs village is home to red squirrels: Longford Forest in Ireland, where there are up to 15 red squirrels and sightings have increased over recent weeks, as the kittens

have begun to forage on their own.

Jerry said “Hand rearing kittens is a very demanding job, as they need to be fed little and often - every two to three hours. However, it is the most rewarding job when, having looked after them, we get to watch as they are returned to the forest. It’s a privilege to help the red squirrels and educate others about the species, which is why my role is so important at Center Parcs and beyond. We encourage guests to let us know if they see any red squirrels in trouble and to report if they spot any grey squirrels in the area, as they pose a risk of squirrel pox, which can be deadly to the red squirrels.”

Glen Franklin, General Manager at Center Parcs Whinfell Forest, said: “Thanks to the care and attention of Jerry and Sarah, little Archie’s story had a happy ending. Our red squirrels are firm favourites with our guests and I want to thank the family who found Archie for their swift actions. Archie has captured the hearts of everyone who has seen him and it was such a special moment to see him returning to his natural habitat. I’m sure he’ll now be exploring the forest with his new friends, but he’s always welcome at Whinfell Forest!”

Notes to Editors

- Please caption images and videos as named and credit Jerry Moss
- To find out more about Red Squirrels United and the work they do please visit www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk
- Center Parcs UK has been a separate company to Center Parcs Europe since 2001; the two organisations only share a brand name and the core concept of family short breaks in the forest.
- Center Parcs UK has five villages across the UK; Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, Elveden Forest in Suffolk, Longleat Forest in Wiltshire, Whinfell Forest in Cumbria and Woburn Forest in Bedfordshire. Each village is nestled within 350-400 acres of woodland with a variety of activities to choose from, restaurants and cafes. There is also a Subtropical Swimming Paradise and award-winning spa called Aqua Sana.
- Center Parcs UK offers weekend, (Friday to Monday) or midweek (Monday to Friday) breaks and welcomes more than 2.1 million guests each year, with 96% of guests expressing an intention to return. Visit England recently awarded the company five stars for all sites (scoring each village between 90% and 98%), making comments about the friendly nature and efficiency of the staff and the quality and cleanliness of the facilities.
- As the leader in the UK short break holiday market, Center Parcs UK achieves average annual occupancy in excess of 97%.

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