

## Country Notes for April 2026

A couple of weeks ago I was walking with my two spaniels through one of the woods in our villages. As I walked through a gap in the trees I was slightly annoyed to see that someone had dumped some white rubbish beside the path on the route ahead of me. Whilst I was feeling somewhat cross at such a discovery, I suddenly noticed that Tilly had stopped in her tracks and was definitely interested, at which the pile of 'rubbish' walked across the path in front of me flicking a white fluffy tail! What I was looking at was a completely albino grey squirrel. I even managed to get a photograph, albeit rather distant and blurred!

Since this discovery I have heard of other albino squirrels in our villages. Apparently albino grey squirrels only occur once in 100,000 births which makes them very rare indeed. If both parents are albino they can then produce white offspring but if only one parent is albino the other one must be carrying the albino gene for albino young to be born. The things I see and learn whilst walking my spaniels!

Grey squirrels were introduced to Britain about 100 years ago and are so dominant that they have ousted red squirrels in much of the country. There are still reasonable numbers in Scotland but elsewhere they are very few and far between. Grey squirrels also carry a disease called squirrel pox which causes severe legions, lethargy and death to which they are immune but which can quickly kill red squirrels.

Altogether this is not terribly good news, although I must say I was quite excited by discovering there were albino grey squirrels in our villages!

Andrew G Snowdon