

GLENS **RED** SQUIRREL GROUP

ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016



www.glensred squirrelgroup.com

Chairman's Report.

Dear Members,

As we come to the end of this year and as I look over the work that the group has achieved I am amazed, humbled and grateful for being part of this small but dedicated group.

Last year I made the plea for more members to become active within the group, from helping out at events or by just attending walks throughout the Glens, I echo this again to all members to try and attend events and walks that the group run. They are all very enjoyable and we have found that those that do, learn and see somethings they wouldn't normally see.

This year we have seen the same members contributing and sadly some members stepping back from aspects of work. I have to thank those on the committee this year that have assisted me, and also those who have been willing to take on work, looking into funding or projects that benefit the group or have taken on roles to document and record activities.

From this, the task of documenting group equipment was taken on by Gerard Mc Caughan. It was no small task and something that the group badly needed. It also highlighted that the group over the years has lost valuable equipment because of poor recording, with the distribution of traps being the main problem. This won't be the case in future, as we now have documents for the loan of any equipment within the group or to assist other groups who may need the loan of our equipment.

We also had a small number of traps stolen this year, but with the new tagging and labelling that Gerard has put in place, we may have a means of getting them back. Luckily, we had no group cameras stolen as they have been vital in our action against grey squirrels.

Like most years, it hasn't been all plain sailing, with a few problems and issues being addressed or having to be verified such as the groups' stance on shooting as a form of control. It is now established that any GRSG member shooting, are doing so under their own firearm insurance and they also need the landowner's permission to carry out this form of control. GRSG insurance, as always, does not cover shooting.

2015 to 2016 has been a very proactive, successful and productive year for the Glens Red Squirrel Group. We have engaged with 1000s of people across Northern Ireland by attending events, fairs, talks, vintage rallies etc. The work of the group also appeared in "Lesser Spotted Journeys" with UTV and UTV Ireland, showing that we are thinking of the present and the future of Red Squirrels.

Our work has also been part of a BBC Radio Ulster program with other squirrel groups across N.Ireland. With these programs, our action on grey squirrels, our website, live webcam and Facebook page, we have managed to reach 1000s across the world, taking the Glens Red Squirrels Group far and wide beyond the Glens.

The Group has worked alongside, and in partnership with, many local groups and companies in the Glens. We have also worked with larger governmental organisations and some well-known charities to help us carry out our work in Protecting and Maintaining our local red squirrels and also red squirrels in other parts of Northern Ireland.

This year has seen many changes, from new councils, new developments (Glenariff Caravan Park), new projects, new equipment, new members, new roles within committee, new populations of Red Squirrels discovered, new populations of Red Squirrels established, new interests sparked in Red Squirrel conservation and new groups formed from some of

our GRSG members.

We have also been able to secure the use of two stores for feeder changeover and the storage of tools and equipment. This has been of great benefit to the group as we can have our equipment in one place thus taking the pressure of volunteers for both the storage and the responsibility of it.

Within the Glens, we have had an alarming increase in grey squirrel numbers which may have been linked to the poor summer, resulting in low nut and seed numbers, forcing greys to go out searching for other food supplies. This led to sightings of greys in areas where they would not normally be seen. Throughout the year, when volunteers' time would permit, we stepped up our grey squirrel control.

We had a grey spotted in the heart of Cushendall and after a number of weeks thankfully it was tracked down and was successfully removed. A large number were removed from Carnfunnock Country Park between February and September, this was part of our Protecting Our Native Species (PONS) project, which was continued for an additional year by ourselves after funding had ended. Some of our members in Ballygally have now formed a Biodiversity group in the area.

Glendun was inundated with grey squirrels and our Rangers spent considerable time controlling them. A grey squirrel was even found to be at Murlough Bay. It was the first one dispatched in 2016. It was the first to be recorded in the area and raised questions from locals as to how it got there, as there are few natural corridors. But the group tries to look into all reports and it just depends on the time that our volunteers have available.

The highlight of the year for me has been the implementation of the long-time planned Craigagh Wood Hide becoming a reality. This was only made possible with the support of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council by funding the project.

Seeing the Project come together from paper to structure has worked out better than planned and as it progresses over the future, it can only get better for the Group and other groups who will be able to book and use it. There are a few minor works still to carry out and the 5 official feeders will be installed over the next few weeks.

I must repeat that I am amazed, humbled and grateful for being part of this small and dedicated group. I would like to thank everyone for all the work they have carried out and are still carrying out. Without you and the time and effort that you all put in, the group would not have achieved what it has this year. We can all look at the squirrels in the Glens, in our gardens, woods; forestry's and parks, as a true reflection of all our hard work.

Thanks everyone.

Daniel McAfee
Chair, Glens Red Squirrel Group.

Grey squirrel control record for 27th of May 2015 to 7th April 2016

Total greys 152

This total is compiled from the total dispatches over projects such as the PONS, Cushendun trapping, Rangers and members carrying out control at feed sites and gardens.

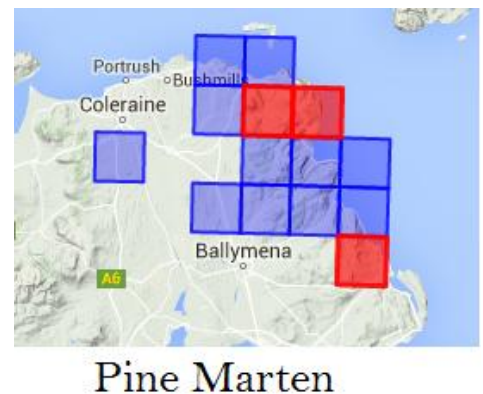
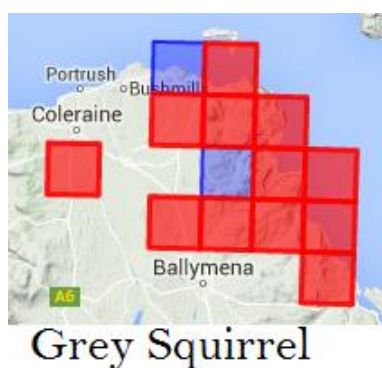
CEDaR online Recording.

We have been officially recording with CEDaR now for 1 year, 6 months.

In this time we have recorded:

Pine Marten 12
Grey Squirrel 177
Red Squirrel 304

These are records not of individual animals, but of sightings, some of which may have been of several animals in a sighting.



GRSG Equipment Report 2015/2016

92 traps
4 Bushnell Python Locks
2 Infra-red Camera
28 Wildlife Cameras.
2 laptops, 1 monitor, 1 projector and 1 screen.
4 telescopic ladders
4 Spades
4 Garden Forks
2 Stuffed Red Squirrels and 2 Stuffed Grey Squirrels
Fold away tables and a number of Banners plus other miscellaneous items

During the year, we replaced 3 of our cameras that became faulty within warranty. We also replaced 5 faulty, out of warranty cameras, 4 of these were through a Micro Grant from the North Antrim Community Network. As part of this grant we also replaced a number of old banners.

With a grant from the Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership Schemes we purchased a large number of tool, drills, hammers, etc. for feeder workshops and for members to maintain our stock of Feeders.

We lost a number of traps from a trapping site. Both the PSNI and the NIEA were informed. This prompted us to recall as many of our traps as we could, so we could mark and number them all individually. We also have produced an ID label which we attach to all our cameras, traps and feeding sites. This informs the reader that the equipment is owned by the GRSG and is used to monitor Red Squirrels.

We now have the use of 2 stores where we keep equipment that is not used.

If any member wishes to borrow a camera to record or help locate Red Squirrels, Please contact me at gerard@glensredsquirrelgroup.com as we have a loan scheme for GRSG members in operation.

Gerard Mc Caughan
Ranger and Equipment Caretaker.

May.

2nd May- Pictured below is Chair, Daniel McAfee and the Ballintoy and Dunseavrick Scouts and Leaders on a Saturday morning. Daniel told them about the squirrels in the forest and the work GRSG do to conserve the Reds in the Glens, followed by a short walk. The Scouts had braved the night in Ballycastle forest in a hut they had made from natural materials they found in the wood. Great bunch!



4th May- Portglenone Forest Bluebell Festival - the group had our information stall alongside the forestry open sided education trailer. There was a lot of interest in Reds but sadly no sightings. There are many grey sightings in Portglenone and the wider Ballymena area. Daniel manned the table with help from Liz O'Connor.

24th May- Glenariff Forest Walk with Cloud Nine N.I. Yoga & Relaxation. Ranger Liz O'Connor took the walk. This was a joint event and the group received a donation from Cloud Nine N.I. Yoga & Relaxation.

26th May Daniel McAfee and Kelly Watterson did the groups info table at Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival at Ballycastle sea front. Was a great day bit damp but lots of interest.

June.

Jun 1st - The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) in partnership with Glens Red Squirrel Group is appealing to motorists to "slow your speed, save our red squirrels," with new warning signs now available for home owners to display on their bins to highlight the danger of speeding traffic.

The bin stickers were produced with funding support from the NGO Challenge Fund and are available to home owners who live in parts of Northern Ireland where Red Squirrels are present. The project was offered to the Forum by Daniel and taken on by the FRSG.



Jun 13th - Mount Druid Vintage Rally. A well-attended day, the group had the information table with newsletters and business cards given out. The day was dry but windy. Kelly Watterson and Daniel McAfee attended.

Jun 14th - Open Farm Weekend at Broughgammon. A fun filled day with people of all ages, the group had our info table and gave out newsletters and business cards. There was much interest in the Bushnell Cameras and Grey Squirrel control. Daniel McAfee, Liz Weir, Vince, Mandy, Casey, and one of the Ballyeamon Barn minders, attended.



Jun 15th - Rangers Daniel McAfee, Gerard McCaughan and John McKillop worked in Ballycastle forestry store clearing and cleaning an area that the forestry has permitted the group to use for the storage of feed, feeders and traps. The area was brushed and cleared. Rats were in the area, so action was taken to reduce their numbers. This is ongoing and will be an issue on the site. A number of plastic barrels were donated by Gerard for the storage of feed.

Jun 19th - NISF Meeting.

Jun 20th - White Park Bay BioBlitz 2015.

GRSG had loaned the National Trust Rangers one of the groups' thermal sights for night time monitoring of nocturnal mammals. It was a very busy day with lots of very willing people taking part, looking for birds, bees, butterflies, fish and mammals. No squirrels were spotted but it was a worthwhile event to take part in.

Jun - First Aid training for GRSG members



Jun 27th - Ballypatrick Forest walk. The walk was well attended, we didn't see any squirrels but in the sunshine we all got back to our youth and did some butterfly hunting. Liz our forest guide helped with identifying what we had got with everyone learning something new.



July.

July 18th - Native species and Red Squirrel fun days, Belfast Zoo. Like last year we were able to use the education house at the farm area. We were able to set up outside for a while and then had to move in because of the rain. Bat NI were with us, Kelly Watterson, Liz O'Connor and Daniel MacAfee manned the table. It was a great day.

July 20th - Big Lunch Waterfoot.

A great day and a big thank you to the residents' of Carneil for inviting us to their Big Lunch. Lots of sighting of reds the length of the Glen and a good understanding about the work we do. We were all given a big lunch, no one went home hungry.



July 22nd - Talk and feeder workshop with the Glens Youth Club Cushendall. A very eager bunch of children, all aware of the issues that grey squirrels cause in the Glens. 13 feeders were made to replace old feeders in Ballycastle forest.



July 25th- Cushendun walk with Cloud Nine N.I. Yoga & Relaxation.
Ranger Liz O'Connor took the walk. This was a joint event and the group again received a donation from Cloud Nine N.I. Yoga & Relaxation.



July 29th- Talk and Feeder Workshop with the Glens Youth Club, Cushendun.
The second talk to the other section of the Glens Youth Club. Some children had been at the talk the week before and were happy to make more feeders. Another 13 feeders were made for the 2nd change of feeders in Ballycastle forest.



August.

Aug 1st RLNI Red Bay Open Day.
A great day for all the family. Thanks to John McKillop and Liz Weir.

Aug 5th- 25th Anniversary of Heart of the Glens Festival, Lark in the Park.
This year the event was held in the Parish Centre because of bad weather. We had our information table and our craft table where Kelly helped children make Squirrel Badges. Daniel McAfee, Kelly Watterson, Tom Naughton and Joe McKavanagh manned the info table.

August 19th- A Grey Squirrel was spotted in a garden at Kilnadore Road, Cushendall.
This was an Adult Grey and is the first to be seen in the village (the grey was trapped a number of weeks later in Glenville by Vince.)

August 25th - Ongoing work in Glenariff Forest Park on the construction of the new Caravan Park prompted workmen on the site to get proactive in the fight against grey squirrels. They erected several notices like this while work was taking place.



September.

Sep 11th - UW and ASE talk/walk in Straidkilly. The Team had been working clearing the meadow area, upper and lower, and path ways, finishing about 12pm with lunch. The talk was delivered while they were eating their sandwiches. Examples of different feeders were shown and their different uses. Two different traps were shown. The group was given pamphlet material and extra copies for their staff canteen.

Sep 18th - Adrian Vaas from UK Squirrel Accord visited N. Ireland that week. He was meeting The Ulster Wildlife Trust to discuss their bid for the Life+ grant. When he was here, he was determined to meet with our group, to find out about the work we do in Red Squirrel Conservation. Our Secretary, Vince, met with Adrian and also a party from Ulster Wildlife Trust including Jenny Fulton CEO, Conor McKinney and Jackie in Glenariff Forest Park where they enjoyed the hospitality of Kathleen Murray at the Glenariff Tea House.



They discussed all of our projects, from the PONS in Larne to The Curragh in Glenshesk, the playground in Glenmona to working with schools and youth groups. Adrian listened intently to how we engage with the general public and he was particularly interested in our live web cameras as he had watched it before and wanted to see our set-up.

Adrian followed up his visit with an e mail expressing, "Your groups' work is very professional and impressive. I will make sure I include you in all Accord linkages".

We are also very pleased to have engaged with Ulster Wildlife Trust and are looking forward to getting involved with some great projects with them in the near future.

Sep 19th Translocation of 3 red squirrels from the Glens area to the Mourne Park.
Full Report to follow.

Sep 20th Glenariff Forest Park Walk. The day was very damp with a small turnout, but for those who did, we all had an enjoyable walk. Guides Daniel MacAfee and Liz O'Connor

Sep 21st NIEL in association with the NI Assembly Environment Committee held the first Northern Ireland Environment Week from the 21st – 25th September 2015. The intention was that this would become an annual event. The aim of the week is to raise awareness of environmental issues primarily among public representatives as well as civil servants and the general public. Vince and Mandy attended.

October.

3rd October- Walk taken by Ranger Liz O'Connor in Glenariff forest park for Erasmus Students from Coleraine University. The GRSG received a donation from the group.

11th October - Walk in Craigagh Wood. LPS were unable to provide a member to assist on the walk; Rachel Bane attended and assisted as a guide. The event unknowingly clashed with a cancer charity walk in the wood and a community bulb planting. The walk went well but unfortunately on the walk we saw a grey squirrel as it ran through the tree tops. This is the first time the group have seen a grey squirrel on any of its walks. Daniel, Kelly and Vince attended.

14th October - Ballycastle school walk.
Two classes of P5's.
A total of 30 pupils and 3 members of staff. We were all able to see a Red Squirrel at the Scots Pine feeders. All were very happy to see the Red; it took 10-15 min to see it at first, as it hid at the top of the tree before taking off along the tree line.



18th October - Glenariff Forest walk.
This was a good day attended by several of our members with Liz O'Connor as our guide. Before the walk started we were able to view the live forestry cameras though nothing was showing. Instead we looked at past footage of a Red Squirrel that morning. The group were able to see Reds at the feeder in the work yard; this was at the end of the walk. 5 non-members also attended the walk.

22nd October - PONS meeting / feeder workshop.
Group Members, Mid and East Antrim biodiversity officer, Maurice Turley attended a Feeder Workshop at Carnfunnock Country Park. These feeders will be used by the GRSG to try and locate



Red Squirrels in the Ballygally area to encourage and expand the range of Red Squirrel population as part of the PONS project.

25th October- Glenarm Forest walk.

The walk was guided by Liz O'Connor and assisted by Daniel and Kelly, 3 non-members attended. The forest was very busy as the walk started. We were able to see a Red Squirrel at the feeder near the river and the path that joins the top and lower road. On the way back a squirrel was seen at the same feeder it may have been the same squirrel which we were able to watch for 20min before we moved on.

28th October- This was the "wildlife in your garden" by Mid and East Antrim Council in Carrickfergus.

It was a great day with many activities and many groups in attendance. We had our information table and colouring and badge making. The table was very busy all day with no Reds sighted, greys were the main sighting and the feedback was positive on the group and grey control. Table manned by Daniel, Kelly, Nula, Vince and Nicholas.



28th October- Meeting with Conor McKinney UW about the Life+ bid and the up and coming project over the next few years. He also came to get feedback on the work taking place on the ground. He was very interested to hear about any hints and tips we, the GRSG, had picked up in our time working on grey squirrel control.

30th October - Email from ERG Grant, they were unable to fund the cameras to assist with recording in new areas.

November.

14 November - Glenmona store clean up. We are renting space from the National Trust for the storing of tools and equipment. The store was used for wood and the day was arranged to get everyone together and help clear out the store. Conor Mc Kinney contacted the group the day before the event and it was agreed to link this event with Conor attending, to consult us on the Life + Project and also for the GRSG to advise him on the practicalities of running the Life plus + Project. Conor thought as the event was open to all GRSG members he would have had a larger input. Rangers, Daniel and Gerard with Vince, Tom and Nuala attended the day. On arriving it was found that the National Trust volunteers had moved the wood, this was great news because of the poor turn out from members. The tools and equipment was then moved in on the same day as it was thought this would have to be done

at a later date. Conor came and those attending, talked about the various considerations of the project. It was felt that the Glens may not be the biggest and best site for catching high numbers of grey squirrel. The Ballymena and Larne areas were proposed as more productive areas to consider.

18 November- Feeder Workshop in Ballyeamon Barn.

20 feeders were made. Brian Gaynor from the LPS attended to mark the handover of equipment for the GRSG to carry on workshops. The LPS funded the group with tools to assist in the making of squirrel feeder flat packs and for the aftercare of feeders.



27th November- Quiz night and Live Music in the Laragh Lodge. A big thanks to Gary at the Laragh Lodge for letting us hold the night there and thanks to Fern and Brendan Major for running a very entering quiz. Thanks to the Good Old Boys for the music. All enjoyed the quiz and raised £280.00

December.

No activities carried out for the month of December. Rangers and Volunteers continued to carry out feeding in their feed sites throughout the Glens.

January.

6 January 2016 - Fireside Quiz was drawn and the winners were announced at the committee meeting.

13 January 2016 – Ulster Wildlife Watch Group visit.

Twenty Children and six adults met in Knockmore Primary School in Lisburn. Talk delivered about red and grey squirrels. 4 Feeders were made. Talk given by Joe Dowdall

15January 2016 - Walk with the Ulster Wildlife and Bio group, cancelled because of snow in Glenariff (Rearranged for March).

21January 2016 - Talk delivered on Red and Grey Squirrels in Partnership with Mid & East Antrim Borough Council in Glenlough Community Centre.

15 feeders were made. Talk given by Maurice Turley, Biodiversity Officer and Daniel McAfee

22January 2016 - NISF meeting attended by Daniel McAfee

24 January 2016 - Walk in Glenariff Forest Park. Total of 7 people attended. No squirrels seen on the day but all had an enjoyable walk, even with the weather. Walk guided by forestry guides and Daniel.

27 January 2016 - LPS meeting in Glenmona, Cushendun. This is the second meeting about the community and landowners working to improve Glendun. Well attended, there may be a change in structure for the next meeting to form separate groups.

February

7 February 2016 - Glenariff Forest Park feeder move.

The group had been contacted by the forestry to inform us that a large section of the forestry along the exit road was set to be felled and would we, the group move any feeders in these plantings and add additional feeders around the felling area to encourage reds out of those trees and to provide the Reds with additional feeding.

Two feeders on the exit road were removed from the felling area, 8 additional feeders added to the top path, 2 cameras put in place to provide monitoring at these sites, 2 additional feeders put in place along the entry road to the Forest park, placed in the large chained off lay-by. On the day we were accompanied by Visual artists, Effi and Amir, who were staying in the Curfew Tower for 2 weeks in Cushendall and were interested in the work that GRSG were doing in the area.



9th February 2016 - Traps and Cameras in the Ballygally area were logged and tagged at Norman Lindsay's house by Gerard and Daniel.

A number of traps, cameras and SD cards were loaned to the newly formed BBG group.

10th February 2016 - BBC Radio Ulster's Jenny Witt, came to Glenariff Forest Park to hear about the work that GRSG do in the Glens and to talk to Conor McKinney from the Ulster Wildlife about Red Squirrel Conservation and the new Grey Squirrel Control funding. Jenny has visited several of the squirrel groups across N. Ireland. Vince attended on behalf of the Group.

12th February 2016 - Friends of Glenariff (FOG) made a request for a letter of support to Council for the proposed development of the facilities at Oisins. A letter was sent to Fern Major, Director of Friends of Glenariff (FOG).

12th February 2016 - Visual artists, Effi and Amir from Belgium, who were staying in the Tower in Cushendall were taken on a tour of the Glens by Daniel. They were taken to the cottage wood and saw a squirrel at the top feeder and went for a walk around the wood. Next stop was Glenmona House, Cushendun to the Squirrel playground. No squirrels spotted, then round to the Hide at Cregagh wood. When we arrived we saw 3 reds happily playing and feeding. We went into the hide and waited for the squirrels to come back and within 15 minutes, one returned. We stayed for 45 minutes watching the squirrel feeding. We then moved on to look at two of our observation sites and then to Murlough Bay where traps were put in place. They were shown how we trap.

We moved to Ballycastle for a cup of coffee and then carried on to Ballycastle forest to see our feeders there. Three squirrels were spotted while going through Ballycastle. We then

returned to Cushendall following the same way but no squirrels sighted. They asked for the footage from the SD cards that were picked up on the way, this was sent to them as they went home that Friday.

15th February 2016 - Conor and Catherine from the Ulster Wildlife came to meet Daniel to see first-hand the work that GRSG are doing on the ground for Red Squirrel conservation. They arrived at 10:00am and were taken on a tour of the area. First visit was Ballycastle Forest where they were shown the store, our feed sites and feeders. Also how we would set up an observation site. We saw 5 squirrels in the forest. We then went to Murlough bay where traps had been put in place on the 12-2-16 but only set on the 14-2-16. We had got a grey squirrel that had been reported and then picked up on camera at a feeder that was in place. They witnessed a successful dispatch. This was of interest to them because of the new "Red Squirrels United" program the UT will be heading. This was the first dispatch of a grey for both of them and they wanted to see it at all stages. Trap > sack > dispatch > what it looks like > recording. The first for 2016. They wanted to know what they will be expecting someone to do as Rangers/Wardens. Next on the visit was the Craigagh Wood Hide and on to Glenmona House, then to observation sites and again how to set them up and monitor with cameras, both Bushnell and the lower priced Acorn cameras. We then moved on to the Cottage Wood site and around the wood. Conor had been in Glenariff that week so it was decided to make our way back to Ballycastle. We went to Glenshesk, to the Curragh site, to show the long term projects that need to be considered, then up to Breen Oak Wood to show them the NIEA site. After a short lunch and some questions and thoughts on what would be needed (cameras, traps even sick cover if trapping and safety when trapping) Conor and Catherine headed off at 5.30pm.

19th February 2016- LPS trees for Glenariff tree planting arrived. 3000 trees were picked up from their site and removed. It took 5 runs in the Volkswagen Polo.

21st February 2016- Ballycastle Forest Walk. Sadly heavy rain caused no one to brave the walk, thanks to Liz O'Connor and Petra the forestry guides for coming.

23rd February 2016- LPS progress meeting in Armoy. LPS gave a breakdown on their projects and new projects that have been taken on. Daniel attended.



24-2-16: NACN morning attended by Liz Wear and Nuala Connolly. They were able to meet local councillors and DARD Minister, Michelle O'Neill.

27-2-16: Ballynure "Ballyn"AT"ure Day" a very well attended and organised day with many wildlife and conservation groups, RSPB, Butterfly conservation, Bat NI etc. Also well attended by the people of



Ballynure. There was good feedback on grey squirrel control with a high number of people in the area carrying out grey squirrel control, but not recording it with CEDaR. We encouraged them to do so. This was also the first run out for our pop up banners. Thanks to Liz O'Connor and Liz Weir for attending the day.

March

12th March- 3000 Trees Planting Day.

The GRSG in partnership with the LPS and the forestry the group take part in the largest two day planting project it has ever ran with 3000 trees to be planted. On the day 25 volunteers appeared a number of members and a large number of the public with LPS member Brian Gaynor. Everyone there worked so well that all the trees were planted in the one day. A great achievement for all those who took part.

16th March Habitat Workshop.

As part of the groups NGO Challenge Fund we got funding for a number of squirrel feeders,



bat boxes and birds boxes. These boxes were in flat pack and to encourage members to have "A hands on" part in the project we had a feeder workshop so that they could be put together. Rachel Bain, the Biodiversity Officer of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council hosted the evening. All those who attended enjoyed the night. The bird boxes, bat boxes and squirrel feeders will be installed in Craigagh Wood over the next weeks and these squirrel feeders will be the official feeders

for around the Hide.

20th March Cottage Wood Walk.

A great morning for the walk, led by Rachel Bain, the Biodiversity Officer of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council and group members Daniel MacAfee, Kelly Watterson and Liz O'Connor. We did the walk of the Cottage Wood and spotted a number of birds and bees at the end of the loop walk. We were all talking at the car park when a squirrel came to the feeder and we watched it for about 20min before it took off into the trees. By the look of the squirrel she was feeding young.

24th March AES Walk.

This walk had been cancelled earlier in the year because of snow so was rearranged to when there would be better weather. The AES Green Team with Ulster Wildlife came to Glenariff and were taken on a walk of the forest and the water falls. There were 8 members of the Green Team, one of the U.W. team and 3 guides. The day was damp and the walk went well we were lucky to see a short sighting of a Red Squirrel that everyone saw. At the end of the walk the Green Team presented the group with 9 squirrel feeders they had made.

Monthly meetings, weekly or fortnightly feeding, grey squirrel control was not covered in the list above. The above events had been recorded through the Chair and or Secretary. Meetings or talks outside of this are not recorded as they were not reported.

6 Talks	averaging 1-1.5 hours	Average total 9 hours
11 info tables	averaging 3-4 hours	Average total 36 hours
13 walks	averaging 2-2.5 hours	Average total 32.5hours
11 meetings	averaging 1-3 hours	Average total 33 hours
10 activities	averaging 1-2.5 hours	Average total 25 hours

Total 141.5 hours

Projects

Translocation

A 1st for Red Squirrel conservation in N. Ireland. The translocation of Red Squirrels to establish a new population of Reds. This was part of a joint project with several squirrel groups across N. Ireland. The two groups that were able to successfully move squirrels were the Tollymore Red Squirrel Group and we the Glens Red Squirrel Group.

We had successfully completed the work relating to the translocation of what was originally 3 Reds but due to other issues, 4 animals were required. 3 licences were issued to the Glens Red Squirrel Group for the live trapping and the transporting of Red Squirrels to the Mourne Park Silent Valley area.

The Glens Red Squirrel Group worked closely with the Mourne Heritage Trust on selecting the best times and weather conditions for the trapping and moving of the Red Squirrels to provide the best possible conditions for the Reds to be trapped and released.

Squirrels came from:

Breen Forest -1 female
Ballypatrick Forest - 1 Male
Clare Forest – 1 female.

On the 19th of September the squirrels were transported to the release site. The Mourne Heritage Trust Team were there and the release took place.

Breen Wood. This area belongs to the forest service and is next to Breen Oak Wood. The trees in the area are Larch, Oak, Hazel and Scots Pine mainly. This area was chosen as the most suitable area because the release site in Mourne Park was a large mixed planting, with large Larch and Scots Pine planting nearby.

Ballypatrick Forest. This area belongs to the forest service. The trees in the area are Larch, Hazel, Scots Pine and Thorn. This again was chosen as the most suitable area because the release site in Mourne Park was a large mixed planting with large Larch and Scots Pine planting nearby.

Clare Forest.

This area belongs to the forest service and is next to open farm land with very rich hedgerows. The trees in the area are Oak, Hazel, thorn and Scots Pine mainly. This area again was chosen as the most suitable area because the release site in Mourne Park was a large mixed planting with large Larch and Scots Pine planting nearby.

The red squirrel populations were selected because they were well known for having a strong and healthy population with a high number of Reds.

On the 18th of September we got a call from the Mourne Heritage Trust asking if we could carry out the trapping and moving of the reds on the 19th of September as the weather in the Mournes was set to be good for that date and the week after. This would offer the squirrel's

time to get settled in. Weather in the Glens was patchy and this could affect the success of trapping. The Mourne team were informed of this and it was agreed to let them know if we had been successful in trapping the animals needed.

On the 18th of September at 7.30pm the traps on site were set and feed removed from the main feeder on site.

Early the next morning all the traps were checked and we had trapped the numbers of squirrels that were needed and had been requested by the NIEA.

Each Red was placed in a small animal carrying box and taken to Mourne Park. Daniel met with the Mourne Heritage Trust team and the release took place with the owner of Mourne Park there to witness the Red Squirrels back again.



Daniel gets regular updates from John on the Mourne team and to date all the feedback about the squirrels have been positive.

At this stage the project has been very successful and the team are working hard to make sure it carries on.



RURAL MICRO CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAMME 2015

This grant assisted the group in getting new 4 pop up banners, 2 small banners, new Bushnell cameras, and locks for the cameras, and SD cards. The grant the group was awarded was £977.50 for a total spend of £1,150.00.



Challenge Fund

GRSG received confirmation on the 28-7-15 that they had been unsuccessful in their application for a fixed hide in Craigagh Wood Cushendun. Only to get a letter on the 26-10-15 with a letter of offer to provide funding. This was unexpected as we along with the CCG council were looking into other forms of funding. The CCG council are funding and supporting the group with the delivery of the project.

Through this project we have created a low impact education focused viewing hide, and a multi species feeding station, which can be viewed from the hide. This will help engage schools, wider community and interest groups, who will enjoy and learn about the rich biodiversity of this recently, designated Local Nature Reserve. There are interpretation panels inside the hide highlighting the varied biodiversity of the woodland; including trees, mammals, plants and of course the Red Squirrels.

We have made this hide as accessible as possible with a boardwalk access ramp and wheelchair accessible viewing areas. The feeding station along the front of the hide is to allow for 'an up close and personal' wildlife experience.

In addition 3 sections of the trail through the woodland had become churned up and very muddy, making them undesirable to walk through, causing people to find new routes. This was addressed by laying 'Hexapath' in these sections. This will enable better access and allow the natural vegetation to grow through.

This project was led by Daniel and the GRSG committee in partnership with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. There were over 15 volunteer days, from approximately 7 volunteers, in various roles from the GRSG in project management, hide design and delivery of this project, along with coordinating the interpretations panels, sourcing goods and materials, and construction

of the various boxes and feeders. We were able to make some saving which allowed us to purchase, with NIEA approval, some addition items for the project including a Bushnell Camera, some grey squirrel traps, etc. The only expenditure which was slightly more than budgeted for was the footpath works, however we felt the Hexapath was the best and most



sensitive for the site, instead of the cheaper stone option. Fortunately we had made some savings from the hide and the interpretation signs which covered this additional expense.



Glendun Grey Squirrel Control.

The Group have been working in Glendun from May 2008 from 2010 grey squirrel started appearing at our feed site. From 2010, grey squirrel were removed as they appeared and year on year it was found that the number of greys were on the rise. In the summer of 2015, the Rangers in the group took on a trapping project along the river in Glendun from Cushendun along the Glendun road to just below Slieveanorra Forest. Trapping took place at the weekends with traps being sent on a Friday evening, being looked at on Saturday morning, Saturday evening, Sunday morning and Sunday evening with the traps being locked off and the feeders in the sites, filled to keep any grey squirrels that hadn't been trapped happy to stay and feed until the next weekend. The sites were also monitored by cameras and when it was found that the sites had not been visited by any greys, the feeders, traps and cameras were moved. The project stopped at the start of September because of food supply and squirrels lack of interest in the feed sites. One site in Craigagh Wood is still being monitored and the sites are still randomly checked for squirrel activity.

PONS

This Project was to involve local people and encourage people to take positive steps to protect our native species with the removal of Grey Squirrels to help the wildlife that is in the area such as song birds and to enable the return of Red Squirrels back to Carnfunnock Country Park and the local coastal area. The project delivered, in that 88 grey squirrels were dispatched up to 23rd of September.

This was only achieved with the work of very dedicated members in the area of Ballygally and Carnfunnock Park.

From this project a biodiversity group was formed as it was local deemed that due to the geographical distance the members in the area couldn't full contribute to the work of GRSG. This led to the formation of the Ballygally Bio Diversity Group, BBG.

The GRSG wish the BBG a fruitful future in all aspects of the work they carry out and thank those who took part in the PONS project under GRSG membership. A big thanks to Su Topping, Nicholas Davis and Norman Lindsay for feedback on the project and the BBG.

Squirrel Week "a month of walks."

This year for squirrel week the group ran 4 walks over the month of October. We advertised them on our web page, face book and local press. Form the local press we were contacted by a local school requesting a walk for their two P4 classes. Giving us a total of 5 walks over the month.

The walks took place in a mix of forestry ground and council woods. Walks were in Ballycastle Forest, Glenariff Forest, Glenarm Forest and Craigagh Wood, Cushendun. In all we were able to engage with a total of 68 people not including GRSG members. We were able to see a red squirrel in all our walks, unfortunately in Craigagh wood the squirrel we seen was a grey squirrel sadly. This was the 1st ever on any of the group walks taken that a grey squirrel was seen.





3000 trees Planting Day.

Liz O'Connor had proposed that the group could contact the Forestry Service about carrying out some community planting around the new development of the caravan park in Glenariff Forest. Chair, Daniel contacted the LPS to find out if the LPS would be able to assist the group with this project, if the forestry would agree to the project.

The forest were contacted and agreed to a meeting on site to see what would be possible, those who attend were Daniel McAfee, Vince Segerdal from the GRSG, Jim Marshall N.I. Forest Service and Brain Gaynor, LPS. Jim was happy with the proposed planting project and showed the areas where planting should take place. Brain estimated that 3000 trees would be suitable for the area planed.

The LPS then worked with the Wood Land Trust to secure the trees for the project along with several other sites across the Glens area. The trees were got and picked up from the LPS and then transported to Glenariff Forest Park.

Due to the numbers of trees the planting day was planned for over two days 12-13 of March from 2-4. There was a second meeting with Jim to confirm the location of the trees. There

was a slight change because of some works that had to be done on a stand of Beech trees.



On the 12th Daniel, Brain and Petra a forestry guide got set up. In total we had 25 volunteers who came to take part in the planting day. Everyone worked hard and they had an enjoyable day. We were able to plant all the trees in the one day. Meaning that on the 13th we did not have to run a second day. We assisted Brian with Planting in Waterfoot as part of a community project the LPS are running there.



Group Feed sites and observation sites.

Throughout the Glens we have a large number of observation and feeder sites. The feeder sites are normally in areas that the general public have access to and can see and observe the Red Squirrels as they visit the feeders. We also have a large number of observation sites that the public would not normally have access too. These sites may be used continuously or may only be used intermittently as required. These observation sites are used to locate and find Red and Grey Squirrels. Most of the observation sites are situated along squirrel corridors or choke points and generally have a camera recording all activity. The feeders in all of these sites are cleaned and changed regularly. Feeder Hygiene and Squirrel health are important part of our work. In all of our sites we only provide supplementary feeding. This guarantees that the reds have a reliable supply of food when they most need it. We have found that when food is plentiful they much prefer their natural food. The following reports are from some of our members and Rangers who maintain our sites throughout the last year. Of the below sites, two, are supplied with feed from the Forestry Service -Glenariff and Glenarm. Private sites are maintained by the house hold or ground owner.

Cottage Wood, Cushendall. Public, Council managed. Report by GRSG Ranger John McKillop

Craigagh Wood, Glendun. Public /Observation, Council Managed. Report by GRSG Ranger Joe Dowdall

Glenmona House, Cushendun. Public, National Trust managed. Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

Craigagh Wood, Glendun. Public / Observation, Council Managed. Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

St.Killians College, Garron Point. Private, Report by GRSG Ranger Joe Dowdall

Ballycastle Forest, Public, N.I. Forest Service managed. Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

Ballypartick Forest, Public, N.I. Forest Service managed. Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

Hanging wood, Observation, Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

Joe Kelly's Wood, Observation, Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

Breen Oak Wood and Nature Reserve Observation, NIEA/ N.I. Forest service managed. GRSG Group Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan

Glenshesk, Observation, GRSG Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan

Glenmakeeran/Ballypatrick, Observation, GRSG Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan

Carey, Observation, GRSG Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan

Glenariff Forest, Public, N.I. Forest Service managed. – Report by Vince Segerdahl

Glenarm, Public, N.I. Forest Service managed – Denis McBride
Ballyeamon Barn. Private, managed by Liz Weir

ParkMore. Private, managed by the Crawford Family

Barrahooley Glenariff. Private, managed by Fern and Brendan Major.

Cottage Wood

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger John McKillop.



Cottage Wood is a 10 acre site of planted broadleaf woodland opened by Moyle District Council on June 13th 2007. It has 2 active feeding stations which have operated since 2008 with addition feeders added in 2013 as part a challenge fund grant. Originally maintained by Daniel McAfee, I took over the task in October 2014.

Cottage Wood includes a children's play park. There is a car park and roughly 3 km of woodland trails. It's popular with locals for outdoor activities such as dog walking and picnics as well as providing learning facilities for children and caring for people suffering mental or physical disability through the Northern Health and Social care trust who operate the resource centre. Despite this nearby activity and disturbance from children and dogs, Red Squirrels are still regularly seen close to the recreational areas though are not completely habituated. They often produce alarm calls and retreat from feeding stations to safety in the upper limbs of trees and vegetation when visitors get too close.

This flighty behaviour is a positive sign that despite living close to Cushendall and Cottage Wood, the squirrels remain a wild population, unlike some populations of Greys we observe in country/town parks such as Carnfunnock.

The car park area includes an information board, containing GRSG produced trail leaflets. Recently we encouraged the public to report Grey sightings and have put up signage in the park to raise awareness to the risk of Grey invasion.

Additionally Cushendall also has a river walk trail feeding site with 3 feeding stations, one of which is active and has been monitored by trail camera in the past year,



During Winter 2015/16 season GRSG recorded an expansion of Grey Squirrels within the Glens of Antrim. This included sightings of a Grey Squirrel at Cushendall Hurling Pitch. As a result of this public feedback, GRSG monitored the feeders at Cottage Wood and the River walk with a trail camera and manned watches for signs of Grey Squirrel activity to see if there were more individuals and if they were setting up a permanent territory.

No further sightings of Grey Squirrels were reported by the public or recorded on camera in Cushendall Village since then, the squirrel was found to be visiting a garden in Layde Rd and was promptly removed by trained members.

Craigagh Wood, Glendun

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger Joe Dowdall

In August 2015 the old Feeders at the Observation site at the parking spot on the lane running up to the main Ballycastle road were removed and a single Feeder with a Camera monitor was installed because of the threat of Greys in the area.

GRSG Rangers carried out a cull in the area with the last Grey being shot in Craigagh Wood in September. There has been an occasional Grey spotted over the past few weeks but no regular sightings to date.

The Camera Lock Box was broken into and the Camera stolen at the Observation Site and was not replaced. Two additional Feeders were then placed located so they could be observed from the Hide that is now on site. There are at least two Reds actively using this site.

There is a single Feeder placed down at a lower site accessed by the bottom gate on the Glendun Road. This location is less public and the monitoring Camera has been recording at least three Reds two of which have very Grey colouring. A Grey has been seen along this bottom road but does not have a routine to date.



The Feeders are changed and cleaned every two to three weeks depending on usage and following recommended good practice they are allowed to "Empty out" occasionally to encourage the Reds to range out and look at other sources of Food. There are plans for a second Feeder at the bottom site as local Food stocks decline in the next month and to alleviate pressure on this single Feeder when at times three Reds vie for possession.

Glenmona House Red Squirrel Playground site.

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

The Red Squirrel playground was set up to show case the Red Squirrels in and around Glenmona House, Cushendun. The playground consists of ropes, a climbing frame, rope ladder and 3 feeders. Due to the local rooks and jackdaws in the area two feeders had been removed and an anti-crow cage placed around it, this allowed the squirrels to use the feeders and stopped the birds.

The feeder is well used having to be topped up twice to three times a week.

The site gets a lot of attention from locals and visitors alike. It has in recent months received some negative feedback from visiting National Trust management, saying it is out of keeping with the property and it should be removed, but thanks to Kevin, the National Trust Ranger in the area, he informed them that it wouldn't be coming down because of the visitors it does attract on the chance of seeing squirrels.



Over recent week there have been a number of squirrels at the feed site and the lack of feeders is causing fighting so the 2 feeders that had been taken down were put back in place and 2 additional cages will be erected in the next month.

The National Trust Ranger has also carved a large squirrel in the Grounds of Glenmona over recent months.



Craigagh Wood, Glendun, Observation,

Report by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee

This is a site that I have been a feeding for monitoring since I first set the site up in 2008 it is now well known with locals as a site to come and see reds . The mixed site has a wide range of tree ages. It has a variety for wild life and plant life. With the increase of greys in Glendun last year I have continued to put out feeders in Craigagh Wood its role was more for monitoring greys. Any grey appearing on the camera are trapped and removed by setting up additional feeders in areas off the main site that the greys come to before the reds with a change of a lower feed like maize and wheat the reds have less interest in. This site has always had a strong population of Red Squirrels. With the New hide in place this site has taken no more than just a red squirrel site and the other wildlife birds, badgers and squirrels becoming a welcome addition.

St. Killian's School, Garron Point

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger Joe Dowdall

Four Feeders have been on site at the Nature Reserve since the 2014 Challenge Fund project. The schools ECO had been involved with maintaining them during Term time.

In June 2015 because of an outbreak of Squirrel Pox the Feeders were removed and scatter feeding was undertaken. There were two confirmed Red fatalities on site. Fourteen Grey Squirrels were dispatched on site in 2015 and in February this year; Feeders were reintroduced and are monitored by camera.



There is now a healthy Red population on site with at least four Reds appearing on camera on a number of occasions. There have been no Greys observed at the Reserve Site but there have been reports of sightings at the Northern end of the College and along the wall at the back of the Chapel.

The Feeders are cleaned and changed every two weeks and are allowed to run empty to allow the Reds to forage amongst the local large Scots Pines on site.

The College grounds staff are very much on board and report any sightings of Greys and maintain the Feeder at the College Reception area.

There is Grey Control work being carried out in the adjacent Turnley Estate by a local Gamekeeper and this is contributing to the reduction in Grey sightings.

Glenarm Forest Red Squirrel Feeding Area.

Feeder Manager: Dennis McBride.

Currently a Mixed Broadleaf Forest with some surviving Conifers.

Long term it is the intention of the current managers to return it to its Ancient Woodland Status, depending solely on the current tree seed bank for renewal.

Ash, Beech, Oak, Rowan and Hazel will prevail as the mainstay of the rejuvenation interspersed with a reduced number of Conifers. No future commercial planting is intended. The head of the Glen will show evidence of how the lower sections of the Forest will renew itself.

Five feeders are placed within one of the established walking routes.

Sightings by the public are numerous. All feeders are replenished weekly on a Sunday, facilitating a healthy exchange between Forest recreational users and myself.

A daily inspection of the feeding area is made.

Notice has been taken of the recent serious and potential threat to our Squirrels...the Tollymore outbreak. Memories of 2011 are still fresh in my mind.

Ballycastle Forest.

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

Ballycastle Forest is a mix of mature conifer blocks and broad leaf planting between 15-20 years old. One of the 1st sites for a GRSG observation sites, It was marked out in 2008 with assistance from the CCGHT and was one of 3 squirrel trails in the glens alongside Ballypatrick and Glenariff.

The observation site is no longer in operation due to disturbances from motorbikes and an area of nearby building work these combined made the number of squirrels reduce to such levels that the site was only being used by two squirrels compared to 9-10 animals, so the group resources we best put into other parts of the forest.

The other 9 feeders within the forest as part of the Squirrel Trail are well used and situated on the main Ballycastle forest walk/ road way. This walk covers the low entry of Ballycastle forest part of the Ballycastle railway line and then into the forestry loop to the forestry yard and down what known locally as Donnelly's Lane back to the low entry point.

With the use of the Forestry shed and two feeder workshops with the GYC we now have the ability of changing over feeders regularly. The feeders are filled weekly and changed over fortnightly. The reason for the fortnightly change is because of the slow drying of feeders in the store this prevents food wastage in the damp feeders.

All the feeders are well used and well known by many of the walkers and users of the forest. Many people come to try and get photos of the squirrels at the feed sites, they have come from Portrush and Portstewart to see the reds and have sent their photos to the group on the face book page.

With the use of the onsite camera we have been able to keep an eye on the feeder at the "Big Bend", in the past this was the 1st site in Ballycastle forest to have a Grey Squirrel or grey squirrels at it (7) that were removed by members and with the assistance of the forestry staff. This year we had one Grey pay two visits to the feeder. The Grey came one evening and the following morning, between these visits the resident Pine Marten had come to the feeder. When the Grey came the next morning its behaviour was much stressed as it circled

the feeder and left. The Grey Squirrel was not seen at again at the feeder or any of the other feeders.

The feeders in Ballycastle experience fluxes in their usage but this corresponds with seasonal food abundances, with many of the feeders being used in the early morning some as early as 3:30am.

Grey Squirrel report signs were erected this year, we have had no Greys sightings reported but have found that people are using them to report Reds in the forest. They have highlighted the work the group is carrying out in the area and engaging those in the area to report sightings.

Ballypatrick forest.

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

Large blocks of conifer planting with a small number of broad leaf trees but there were all self-seeded in this section of the forest.

Originally part of the 1st Squirrel Trail but due to works within the planting of thinning from the forestry and illegal felling the squirrel population in the area vanished or moved on. Feed was being wasted and prompted feeding to stop in this site at the car park. There was a second site set up with 3 feeders for observations. This site was found to be very active and the activity slowly increased with more regular feeding needed.

The Group received a report of a Grey being seen crossing the road near the main entrance to the forest, a camera was set up on the observation site and two of the feeders stopped being filled to encourage any visiting squirrel to use the single feed with the camera focused on it giving it 24h cover.

The camera was able to show several Reds and no Greys were found to be using the site over the 6 months of monitoring. The camera also showed that there was also a Pine marten visiting the feed site, it visited 3 nights a week, Deer, Jays and a wide mix of small birds were also found on the site along with a wood mouse that lived about 3 feet from the base of the tree with the feeder. It could be found in the feeder on most of the visits to fill the feeder.

This site was one of the sites selected to trap a Red for the translocation project because of its strong population of Reds and the Reds knowledge of a Pine Marten as they were known to be in the release site.

Hanging Wood

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

A mix of Oak, Hazel, Ash and Holly, with no conifer trees. The mixed site has a wide range of tree ages. It has a variety for wild life and plant life .It set aside not to be grazed but from time to time live stock (sheep) will get into the site. The site has a large badger set with up to 8 badgers living in it.

This site was set up as a control site to reduce the number of Greys squirrels that were making their way into Ballycastle Forest. The sight had a number of greys when it was 1st set up and no Red Squirrel, after a number of Greys had been removed a set of Red Squirrels were found to visit the feeder.

Shortly after the Reds appeared a female Pine Marten was found to visit the site. No Greys have been seen since. The Pine Marten is not a regular visitor, it can come several times a week or may only appear once a month.

The Reds in the site would be daily visitors but over the last 6-8 months they have been less frequent. This corresponds to the setting up of a monitoring site in a nearby wooded glen.

This site has a camera on it, the feeder is now only half filled because the reds are coming less to the site.

Joe Kelly's Wood

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

The land owner spotted a Grey Squirrel on his ground and allowed a feeder and camera to be installed in a large wooded Glen between Ballycastle Forest and the Hanging Wood site. The Glen is a "Y" shape with a river cutting through it. The trees are a mix of Oak, Ash, Hazel and Holly. The trees are a mix of age with young trees coming up in the areas where the canopy is open to let in the light.

A feeder and camera were set up and within two days it was found by one Red Squirrel and then two Reds. The squirrels in the site had no problems with the feeder, they knowing how to use it from the onset. The use of this site links with the reduction in use in the Hanging Wood site.

The Grey Squirrel seen was not found but the feeder and camera are set to be moved to a new part of the Wooded Glen in case the Grey may not cover this part of the wood.

Murlough Bay

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Daniel McAfee

Mix planting in small blocks of Oak, Ash, Holly, Beech, Larch and Scot Pine. Most along rock faces and sheltered coves.

After a reported sighting of a Grey Squirrel from a Coleraine wildlife recorder and then a second report the following day from N.T. Ranger of having seen a Grey 3 weeks earlier, an observation site with feeder and camera was set up to try and attract any squirrels in the area to the one location. After 2 weeks the Grey Squirrel found the feeder and within 2 days had worked out how to use the feeder.



The Grey was trapped and dispatched on 25th February the camera and feeder was left in place in case of a second Grey on site. A second Grey was seen on camera on the 22nd of March trapped and dispatched on the 24th of March. Monitoring is still ongoing at this site and control will take place as and when needed.

Breen Oak Wood and Nature Reserve.

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan

There have always been Reds in this area. A few Greys are spotted and removed each year. This year in preparation for the translocation of some of our Reds to Mourne Park, Co Down, Daniel set up an observation site. We quickly realised that there was two Greys on site and they were removed promptly. We have a poster up, asking people to ring our help line number if they spot a Grey. A local photographer visits the wood regularly and he also keeps me informed if he sees any Greys. I work with the NIEA and also for the Forestry Service in keeping this area clear.



Pine Martin at the observation site in Breen,

Glenshesk

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan

I have 3 regular observation sites spread through the glen. I increase this number as I get reports from the locals. For the last 4 months I have had help from a new member and she has taken over a few of my temporary sites. She is enjoying the work and has been lucky to see a variety of wildlife passing in front of her camera. Throughout the last year I have removed a number of Greys at different sites. This year I have planted a large number of trees to improve the habitat for the future Red Squirrels in Glenshesk. These trees are mainly Scots Pine, but also include Willow, Damson, Sweet Chestnut, Hawthorn and an area of Raspberries Canes as a trial. This is in addition to "The Curragh" which I got planted last year. Next year I hope to plant more trees, but outside of Glenshesk. During the winter of 2015, I painted 2 large road signs which were displayed over the summer in Glenshesk. This was in response to the large number of squirrels that were killed on the roads. They will be out again this year.





Photo taken at observation site, Broughmore, Glenshesk.

Glenmakeeran/Ballypatrick

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan

We get reports from the locals in Glenmakeeran, any time a Grey appears. I believe they are coming from Ballypatrick, into Glenmakeeran and on down into Carey/Ballycastle. I have a number of observation sites that I set up as required and I have been able to remove any Grey that I find. The local Farmers here, like most of the Farmers in the area, give us access to their land as we require it.



Deer at the Ballypatrick Observation Site.

Carey

Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan

Again I have a number of observation sites along the Carey River. I think that any Greys that appear are using the river as a corridor/ highway down into Ballycastle and the lower end of Glenshesk. They tend not to stay in this area but pass through.

Glenariff Forest Park – *Forever evolving.*

Glenariff Forest Park covers over 1,000 hectares with planted woodland, lakes, outdoor recreation spaces and conservation areas. The Forest Service recently opened a new caravan site there from Friday 25 March through to Tuesday 29 March 2016 to provide an opportunity to trial the new facilities.

Unfortunately there is currently an outbreak of the Japanese Larch Tree Disease (P. ramorum) in Glenariff, which has led too much felling.

Within the Forest Park itself, we have a total of 22 feeders, all of which we are happy to report are being well used by a very healthy Red Squirrel population.

When entering the Forest Park, the first feeders to be seen are on the left hand side. There are now five feeders along this entry road and they are visited by our Reds daily. So keep your eyes peeled!

Last year heralded the introduction of a 'state of the art' CCTV Camera System within the Forest Park, thanks to the Glenariff Improvement Group and Kathleen Murray from the Tea House. Together they worked very hard to secure funding for this project which has proved to be a valuable asset to the work of our group.

One of their cameras points directly to one of our squirrel feeders at the back of the Tea House and the video is relayed to the visitors enjoying snacks there. The visitors are constantly entertained by the antics of our squirrels on a big screen TV. Personally I ask for my coffee black and my squirrels Red.

This facility is also used as an education tool by Forestry Guides who are able to take groups into the Exhibition Centre and relay footage, past and present, from the cameras. Liz O'Connor, a Forestry Guide who devotes many hours to our group, regularly reports watching Hares on the green in the early mornings. And on one occasion a Stoat hunting down a Rabbit.

Moving out of the Forest Park, there are quite a few local private sites that are doing fantastic work for our group. For example Ballyeamon Barn, Parkmore Farm, Barahooley Farm, Glenhaven Holidays, and these are just the tip of the iceberg. They feed, watch and love our Reds and it's thanks to them! On our part, we are keeping in regular contact with these sites and working closely with them.

Timber harvesting work started on 8 February 2016 and at last call was expected to last up to 12 weeks. As a result, vehicles on the main avenue are experiencing delays.

The Forest Service worked closely with us to protect our squirrels at this time. They sent their own wildlife officer with a heat seeking instrument on several occasions to detect any

Dreys, and when successful, marked the area and preserved it for some time to provide an opportunity for any potential young to be moved.

We also received funding from the Forest Service to provide 40 flat pack feeder kits. This was to assist with the movement of our Reds to other areas in the forest. Once the new sites were chosen, we set up the feeders and also installed 24/7 CCTV to monitor any activity. It's with great relief that, having viewed the footage, we can tell you that the squirrels are no dozers and were very quick to catch on to the forestry's plans.

The new sites are frequented by lots of Reds and require refilled every few days!

Live Feeder Camera

The Live feeder cam continues to go from strength to strength with currently 5 Squirrels feeding there regularly. And it's easy to see that we're well into the mating season going by their antics. You can watch the live footage daily now from 7am to 7pm.

Simply go to our website www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com and click on LIVE VIDEO.

Ballyeamon Barn

Ballyeamon Barn is a tourist hostel close to Glenariff Forest Park. We are lucky enough to have three Red Squirrels visiting the two feeders we already have. I hope to have a third feeder on a big beech tree directly opposite the window of our guest apartment so that our visitors can watch the Reds in action. This would lead to greater awareness of the Glens Red Squirrel Group's work. Red squirrels are such a draw for tourists these days.

The Barn is just two miles from Cargan where greys have been spotted so I know of the threat and I am very keen to encourage our reds.

I am proud that the Glens Red Squirrel Group meets here regularly and that our studio is also used as a workshop space for making feeders.

Liz Weir, Ballyeamon Barn

Parkmore Farm

Parkmore Farm, established in 1913 by John Crawford, has the oldest pedigree Blackfaced flock in Ireland, known as the 'Parkmore Blackface' and amongst them, are our native Reds. Harmony is as harmony does.

We think between 3 and 5 squirrels are feeding at their site. The farm is home to much wildlife and indeed the Stag that has been spotted in Glenariff Forest has also been spotted very close by.

We're very grateful to the extended Crawford family for their support as they're very active in the conservation of our Reds.

Barrahooley, Glenariff

We've been Members of the GRSG for the past 3 years but only got a squirrel feeder a year ago. We filled it with food but no luck at all until six months ago we moved it further back nearer the trees at the end of our garden and within a week or two we had a regular daily Red visitor. At Vince's suggestion we added a bird nut feeder and a homemade seed and nut fat ball and we now have lots of action going on at the end of the shed. Our first squirrel

was very fat so we were hoping to hear the patter of tiny feet soon but haven't seen anything yet but we do think our squirrel has invited a partner along to the daily feast as for the past 6 weeks we've had two visitors to our squirrel box and we are sure it's down to the increased activity from the beautiful blue tits, chaffinches and other small yellow birds feasting away under the squirrel feeder. We are on the lookout for more visitors but in the meantime love watching the breakfast, lunch and dinner activity going on down the end of the garden while we are also eating at our dining room table. We are delighted to have a squirrel feeder in our garden and to be playing a more active role in protecting our Reds.

Fern and Brendan Major, Barrahooley, Glenariff



A view of Glenariff from the Forest Park showing the new caravan site.



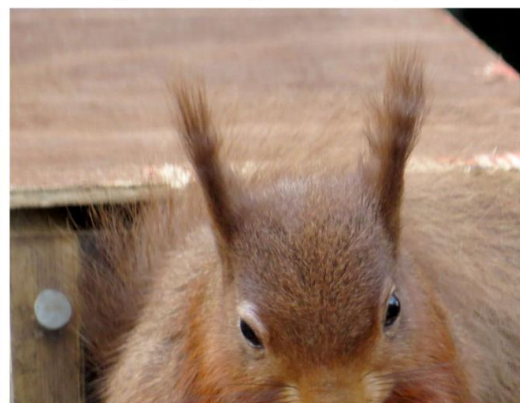
Live Feeder Camera, Glenariff.



Ballyeamon Barn, GRSG Headquarters



Parkmore Farm, a red squirrel haven



Barrahooley, Glenariff



MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST



Cloud Nine n.i.
yoga stretch & relaxation



Tollymore Forest Park
Red Squirrel Group



Thanks to Supporters

The Glens Red Squirrel Group wish to thank those groups and organisations who have worked with and have supported GRSG in our work this year:-

National Trust, Ulster Wildlife, Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership, Tollymore Red Squirrel Group, Mourns Heritage Trust, Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum, Northern Ireland Forest Service, The Wood Land Trust, Causeway Coast and Glens Council, Mid East and Antrim Council, Carnfunnock Country Park, St. Patricks and St. Bridget's P.S., Glens Youth Club, St.Killian's College, The Heart of the Glens Festival, Ballycastle Community Development Group, Ballycastle Market, Laragh Lodge Restaurant, Glenariff Forest Tea House, Glens Garden Furniture, Murray and Partners, Richmond's Feeds. Ballyeamon Barn, NACN, LCS Electrics and Carey Cleaning Machines

The Group would also like to thank those dedicated members who carry out feeding, trapping, attending information stalls, walks, talks, tree planting and events that the group are asked to attend. A big thanks to those members who worked and are working hard dealing with grants and funding applications for the group. The work that the Glens Red Squirrel Group does would not be possible if it wasn't for all the hard work of all these members.