

GLENS RED SQUIRREL GROUP



Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/8



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Liz Weir, Chair of "The Glens Red Squirrel Group", 2017 -2018

GRSG CHAIR'S REPORT

It has been my honour to serve as Chair of the Glens Red Squirrel Group during 2017 but I must admit I took over the role with some trepidation. I realised only too well the challenge of following in the footsteps of Daniel McAfee, who has vast knowledge about our native reds and who previously did such a good job as Chair. It was a learning curve for me but at the end of the year I must pay tribute to the unstinting support I received from Daniel as my Vice-Chair, and the assistance of the rest of the hardworking committee.

As the Glens Red Squirrel Group approached its 10th year in operation, the work to protect our native Red Squirrels continued to be as essential as ever. The challenge of preventing the encroachment of greys is still vital, and the hard work of a small number of volunteers stands between the reds and extinction in the Glens area.

It has once again been a very busy year as will be outlined here in the annual report. On-going grey control has been essential and as feedback from the various feeding and monitoring sites will show the reach of the group continues to extend. The addition of new members in Carnlough was most welcome. We continually try to recruit active members and our online membership facility through the website makes joining the group much simpler.

As the reports which follow will show Squirreltober was very successful but we have been active throughout the year holding very successful walks, talks and displays. We have also enjoyed social and fund-raising events such as the quizzes held in Glenariff and Carnlough. The Group continues to enjoy partnering with various groups and it was my pleasure to be guest speaker at the well-attended Hen Harrier Day held at Glenariff. We also had a stand at the Ballynature Day in Ballynure which was attended by over 1800 people.

While the provision of training for members on topics such as first aid and trapping is constantly under review, the GSSG Treasurer and I attended a seminar on Good Governance and Charity Reporting. This was vitally important as we were made aware of the implications of the Charity Commission's new guidance of fundraising and data protection as well as being reminded of the principles of good governance, essential for any organisation.

Our social media presence generates considerable interest and regular posting of photos, videos and events which are often shared by followers achieve a wide reach and keep our profile high in the general community. Press releases about events generate articles in the local press and Daniel McAfee did a very comprehensive interview on BBC Radio Ulster from the Hide in Cregagh Wood which itself has attracted visitors from far and wide. We work with other Red Squirrel Groups and were delighted to welcome Ulster Wildlife's Red Squirrel Officer Caroline Finlay and Ranger Ronald Surgenor to a committee meeting. Cooperation is the key as the more we can work together the more we can protect and preserve our native Red Squirrels.

I would like to thank everyone who helped in any way during the past year whether by serving on the committee, feeding or monitoring sites, attending events or simply giving their support to the important work done by the group. My hope for the future would be that we can attract more volunteers to

spread the workload which often falls on the same people who continue to give so willingly of their time. It has been a very successful year for the group but with additional volunteers we can do even more to ensure the sustained future of Red Squirrels in the Glens of Antrim.

LIZ WEIR

Chair, Glens Red Squirrel Group

Grey Squirrel control record for 20th April 2017 - 20th April 2018

A total of 31 Grey Squirrels were dispatched, 20th April 2017 - 20th April 2018, by the GRSG.

This year the number of sighting and reports of Grey Squirrels is down compared to other years. Most of our dispatches took place in historical trap sites that we have been working in over the years. These sites have seen a steep reduction in numbers of Greys visiting them. This is maybe because most of our sites have a Pine Marten resident or visiting them regularly. Recent reports from research carried out between the 3 species, Red Squirrel, Grey Squirrel and Pine Marten, has shown a direct link in their population's numbers. With the non-native grey in decline in places where Pine Martens can be found linked with an increase in Red Squirrels numbers. We ourselves have seen this pattern over the last 3-4 years.

All reports we received were looked into as best as our active members and Rangers could. In several sightings where we have had Grey Squirrels reported, we actually found reds, the grey, if it was a grey was only seen once and did not return to the site. If you only see a flash of a grey or whitish tail, it is easy to make a mistake in identifying between a Red and a Grey Squirrel, but we welcome all reports, regardless of colour. Please keep them coming.

This year has seen a grey pop up again in Murlough Bay, again we are not sure how it got there. In Glenariff we had two greys shot by a land owner on the Glen Road. These squirrels were not near the forestry. There had been reports in the past about Greys Squirrels popping up in the forest but we never located them which may be related to the Pine Martens. These two greys had been spotted at pheasant feeders in an area where there had been no Pine Martens recorded.

Glendun has also had a drop in greys with the exception of Cregagh Wood, where numbers have spiked and from where the bulk of our control numbers this year have come. The number, behavior and sizes of these animals lead us to the theory that they may be getting released into the site. This could be someone for whom the Greys Squirrels are being a problem, but who doesn't want to have to kill them and so they release them where they feel the squirrels would be less of a problem. Sadly not thinking about the impacted it has on our local reds.

Those who are trapping are feeding their information back to Daniel McAfee and all dispatches are logged in group records and to CEDaR, Centre for Environmental Data and Recording.

CEDaR

The information recorded is:-

- Date.
- Grid reference.
- Sex of the animal.
- Weight.
- Who dispatched.
- Date recorded to CEDaR.

We ask the dispatcher to provide a photo and it is also logged with the CEDaR report as proof. Each dispatch is given a GRSG number and logged to CEDaR with this number. If we do not get enough information we will log it on our GRSG records but may not be able to log it to CEDaR. Since the dispatching recording started, 02-04-11 to 20-04-18, the group has officially recorded 503 Grey Squirrels across the Glens. We have been officially recording with CEDaR for 3 years, 6months. The three key species we log are Red Squirrel, Grey Squirrel and Pine Marten. We do find many other animals on our trail cameras but only record these three, live sightings, RTA, and dispatched greys.

Pine Marten 28 Red Squirrel 431 Grey Squirrel 226

The number of Reds recorded is not an accurate number as our Rangers and Volunteers do not record each and every sighting of a red that they have. Mainly because they are visiting the same sites regularly and they know that the reds, hopefully, will continue to be present at these sites.

General Report on Feed and Monitoring Sites.

The Feed sites which are open to public view are:-

- Ballycastle Forest.
- Cottage Wood Cushendall.
- Cregagh Wood (Temporally shut down for ongoing grey control, opening soon).
- Glenmona Cushendun (Temporally shut down for ongoing grey control, opening soon).
- Glenariff Forest.
- Glenarm Forest.
- Carnlough.

The Group also operates 28 Monitoring Sites within the Glens. These sites are out of public view and are used to monitor if there has been any Grey Squirrel activity. Most of these sites have cameras covering them all the time. The remaining sites have cameras, as required.

Monitoring Sites:-

- 1 Ballypatrick.
- 2 Glenariff area.
- 1 Ballyemon.
- 5 Glendun Cregagh Wood (CCGC Nature Reserve).
- 1 Cushendun.

- 2 Glendun.
- 1 Ossian's Grave.
- 3 Glenshesk.
- 3 Ballyvoy/Carey area.
- 2 Carnlough.
- 2 Cushendall.
- 1 Ballycastle Forest.
- 2 Glentaisie.
- 1 Murlough Bay.
- 1 Glenmakeeran.

Additional temporary monitoring sites in Carnlough 3, Glenariff 6, Ballycastle 2, Cushendall 2, Capecastle 1, Moyarget 2, Ballypatrick 1, Cushendun 2, Tavanaghan 1, Gaults Road 1. These sites are not covered by camera but are in location that Greys have been seen/ reported or a single animal has been removed from in the past. Cameras can be set on these feeders if needed. Some of these sites are within private land/ house holders property, they would report back to group Rangers if any grey activity takes place. We have several other sites that are privately maintained and the group is not involved in their upkeep, unless requested to, if owners need help or are away, etc.

Active Member's Reports on their Feed/monitoring Sites

Ballyeamon Barn.

Ballyeamon Barn is surrounded by mature forestry planting. The site contains large Beech trees. As well as being the venue for Glens Red Squirrel Group meetings Ballyeamon Barn has its own Reds visiting regularly. Tourists who stay here are delighted to see Red Squirrels and for many it is the first time



seeing Red Squirrels. Our Reds love the bird feeders and often prefer them to the squirrel feed boxes. It is not unusual to have a Red in one box with just a tail poking out and another one eating at the second box while our garden birds attempt to have a look in. We also have a Pine Marten which visits the squirrel feeders at the back of the barn. We have seen it regularly with the use of the trail cameras.



We love watching the antics of these nimble creatures as they scurry along ropes, up dog runs, and even on one occasion climbing to the second floor of the Hostel. An added incentive for visitors to come and stay here!

Liz Weir, GRSG Chair.

Carnlough

Since the public meeting in Carnlough in the summer of 2017, 6 feeders have been placed at strategic positions around the woods at Cranny Falls and Gortin Quarry about 1 mile from the village. To date 4 of the feeders have been visited on a regular basis. The other 2 have been moved to different locations to monitor visits but no success to date. Our best site for Red Squirrel visits is the one on the centre of the woods near Cranny Falls. There are lots of photos at this site but unfortunately our Squirrels seem to be camera shy as they stay to the rear of the tree where the feeder is sited, thus few clear shots of the Squirrels. Hugh Mc Cambridge has placed a feeder between his barn and his neighbour's where 8 to 12 Reds are frequently spotted as they enter the barns where the animal feed is located. Hugh reckons that the Reds are "overnighting" in the barns. I have had 2 sightings close to my own house in the last month, but unfortunately my neighbouring farmer has started to remove an old hedge in the field at the rear of my house this week so I expect "my" Squirrels have moved on. Several people have informed me of sighting Reds around Cranny Falls and Waterfall Rd. Unfortunately I have only seen them on camera. The good news is no Grey Squirrels have been sighted in our area. We continue to replenish and monitor the feeding stations on a weekly basis and hope we are encouraging our reds in this area.



Gabriel McAuley. GRSG Active Member.

Glenarm

This year 2017/18 was not just another year though certain aspects of volunteering will always be the same. Reports from the public using the Glenarm Forestry, testifies to an increase in the overall sightings during each of their visits. It is good to be stopped by the visiting regulars and sightseers from other places. Their conversation about their sightings leads naturally on to positive exchanges and a wider range of content. Daily visits by myself allows me to see multiple sightings of Reds. Often there are of 2 or 3 Red Squirrels involved in play activities right away from the immediate area of the feeders, then our appreciation of the tree canopies as a play arena is fully appreciated. Their natural agility is wonderfully exhibited.

Thanks to the whole GRSG team and those who support me. Thanks are also due to local man and GRSG Member, Chris Brodie who covers my holiday periods.

The “Red Squirrels” in the picture below are presents from the Glenarm Community.



Glenarm forest Red Squirrels also with the thanks of LMET Nature Photography, whose photographs and videos appear regularly on the GRSG Facebook page.
Denis McBride, GRSG Active Member.

Glenshesk

I have three permanent monitoring sites for watching reds and keeping an eye out for Greys.

Over the last year I have noticed a drop in Red Squirrel numbers within the Glenshesk area. This became obvious through my monitoring of feed sites. The number of photos taken each week had fallen from 3000 per week to about 900 per week during the summer last year, per site. We have discussed this at Committee meetings and the possible reasons. There have never been any signs of illness or disease at any time. One possible explanation is that when I started to supplementary feed them, their numbers were quite low. Over the last few years their numbers have grown so that they have reached such a density that the Squirrels themselves have decided to move out, or it could be just natural fluctuations in population numbers. Certainly the Pine Martins will be removing a few, but we have had Pine Martins in Glenshesk since I started monitoring the Reds. I had a pair of Greys that came in from the Armoy side of Glenshesk, just before Christmas. As they moved down the glen I got reports from the locals and they were seen on the cameras, but they never reached my third camera. I am sure that the Pine Martins removed them.



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Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSB Red Squirrel Ranger.

Carey

I have eight temporary monitoring sites running from Ballycastle up through Carey to Ballypatrick and into Glenmakeeran. These sites are used to locate Greys coming down from Ballypatrick Forest, going towards Glenshesk and Ballycastle. One of the highlight of my year was a Pine Martin taking up residence in Carey before Christmas. As expected, the Greys started to appear around Christmas time, as they do every year. I would see them on the Camera for one or maybe two days, then I would not see them again. Again, I am sure that the Pine Martin removed them.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenariff Report

Things are still going well in Glenariff and the squirrels appear to be in fine fettle. A long cold winter saw a lot less activity but recently we have seen the reappearance of our much loved friends in greater numbers. In autumn we had an early abundance of natural food in the forest and up and down the glen, but it wasn't too long before they were scrambling around in search of their next meal. And that's when we can really help.

The forest, itself has roughly a dozen feeders that we maintain and are used throughout the year. We are currently entering a period when the reds will be burning up lots of energy as the mating season comes upon us. During this time we could be filling the feeders twice a week.

Including feeders in members' gardens and properties throughout Glenariff, there is upwards of thirty feeders that we know of. All are currently in use. Below is a snippet from a few sites:

"I have had red squirrels for about 5 years now and they have given me such joy. They come to my balcony feeders up to 5 times a day. One winter I'd been away for a long period of time and when I returned the squirrels were gone and I was devastated. I haven't been away since and they come faithfully every day. They are great feeders and really enjoy monkey nuts, hazel nuts and sunflower hearts. In the summer there seem to be more of them, sometimes up to 5 squirrels, but now I notice there are 2 coming to the feeders together and they are playing in the trees. They are fascinating to watch and they have given me hours of pleasure. They don't seem to mind that we are so close and have got used to my Westiepool, Zeus and I watching them cracking their nuts!"

Libby, Falmabrid

"Spark and Puff visit us early in the mornings, normally about half six when the air is fresh and cool and full of bird song. Spark comes first hunting through the feeder to see if he can find any peanuts among the birdseed in the box Eamon brought up the first week he met us up at the cottage. I've kept it stocked through the spring hoping a mum would bring her kits when they were big enough."

Puff follows watching Spark nibble for a few seconds then approaching in a circumspect way. Spark acts as though he will scare her off. Clearly they have worked out who gets to eat first. She takes the hint and retreats only to circle the table and climb up the other side waiting her turn.

Their movements are so fast, almost evaporating from place to place with sudden twitches that carry a grace in their surety. They never fall. And if they leap before they look they never let on. Their alert eyes and delicate hands captivate me as I watch them from my kitchen table. Puff's tail is fuller, a gingery white plume of fluff that sets off her sleek auburn body. Spark's tail is more scraggly, he reminds me of a scrappy street fighter always checking for danger and keeping his eye on the door.

They bring such joy to my morning watching them communicate and enjoy their morning snacks at my picnic table. Sometimes I think I have missed them only to see a few ginger blond hairs sticking out of the feeder because one has decided to go for a full immersion breakfast experience.

I've set up a wildlife camera so that I can get photographs without them knowing I'm watching. Their personalities are so different and their interactions so funny I could never get tired of their breakfast visits.

I'm a stranger to this area, but the squirrels don't care. I'm an artist, a potter, an art tutor and for me Glenariff is my getaway. To watch these beautiful creatures play in front of my window in the early morning is joy upon joy".

McCall Gilfillan, Dieskirt

"We've had a squirrel feeder for the past three years and never tire of watching our little visitors come and go. There's more activity at some times of the year than others but at this time of the year they're coming and feeding several times a day as there's not much else around for them to eat. There seems to be two of them at the moment as sometimes they come and visit together but it's hard to really tell how many are visiting as they all look the same! The best time to see them is around lunchtime - they seem to know when we're sitting down to our lunch and come running down for theirs. That's the best time for us to sit and watch them for a while - at other times of the day it's just pot luck bonus if we happen to catch them at the feeder when we're near the window".

Fern & Brendan Major, GRSG Active Members

"At all times we also have a number of mobile camera monitoring sites, which are periodically moved in a bid to determine just what is visiting where ,and when. This year we monitored many of the townlands like Falmabrid, Glassmullen, Parkmore, Dieskirt, Clonreagh, Toberwine and Barahooley. These and the support of our members and local residents has proved very effective in recording a snapshot of what is going on at our sites. And with the odd sighting of a grey in the area it has led to the removal of a few of them.



On behalf of our group I really can't thank everyone enough for their continued support, it really is priceless. This year I found myself in the predicament of having to take some time off and I would like to personally thank everyone who picked up my can and ran with it".

Vince Segerdahl, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

"It doesn't seem like ten years ago that a group of us got together in Glenariff and formed the Glens Red Squirrel Group (GRSG).

The Glenariff volunteers went on to play a major role in the activities of the GRSG. This small group went from strength to strength and the number of feeders has almost trebled since those early days. Over the years the number of sightings of Reds has increased significantly in the Forest Park and have appeared further down the Glen and in the hazel thickets and braes at Garron Tower.

The number of road kills in the early years was fairly frequent but has decreased significantly in recent times. It seems the Reds are getting used to the heavy traffic!

Sightings are fairly common in the Forest Park Gardens – a bonus for the many visitors to the area.

We have never had a problem with either the dreaded Squirrel Pox or any influx of Greys in Glenariff. Greys have appeared in certain parts of the Glens but are generally quickly dispatched. For sightings of the latter we are indebted to the local community. Local people have shown a great awareness and interest in the overall project. We have had a couple of sightings of Pine Martens reported – one halfway down the Glen Road and one in the Forest Park by a runner. Both sightings occurred in late evening.

Maintenance of the feeders presents few problems other than replacement of the odd damaged lid. Cleaning and disinfection is carried out regularly. We have had just one case of vandalism of feeders in recent years.

To summarise the situation in Glenariff Forest Park:-

- 1. We have a very healthy population of Red Squirrels.*
- 2. We have an enthusiastic group of volunteers.*
- 3. We have, most importantly, an excellent supportive community”.*

Joe McKavanagh and Tom Naughton, GRSG Active Members.

Ballycastle Forest.

Ballycastle Forest is a mix of mature conifer blocks and broad leaf planting between 15-20 years old. One of the first sites for a GRSG observation site in 2008 and with assistance from the CCGHT was one of 3 Squirrel Trails in the Glens alongside Ballypatrick and Glenariff.

There are 8 feeders within the forest as part of the Squirrel Trail and they are well used and are situated on the main Ballycastle forest walk/ road

way. This walk covers the low entry to Ballycastle Forest, part of the Ballycastle railway line and then into the forestry loop to the forestry yard and down what is known locally as Donnelly's Lane, back to the low entrance. All the feeders are well used and well known by many of the walkers and users of the forest, who regularly inform us of reds they have seen and if there are any issues with the feeders such as damage or a feeder lid having come off in bad weather.



Activity in the forestry has not been disappointing with reds being regularly seen while out doing feeding. The feeders at the entrance of the forest are being used more than in past years. There is one Red that can be seen feeding regularly in the ivy covered hedgerow that was once part of the railway it has been seen feeding on the beech mast on the canopy of the tree that over hangs the hedge row.

The Pine Marten that is in the site is still visiting the feeder at the feed site with the camera. It has been sighted by a cyclist during the day near to one of the other feeders as it crossed the forest road. The local cyclists that use the forestry are very keen to stop and report any sightings to me and we thank them for their interest and help.

The camera on site has been in the same position from it was first installed and it now needing moved as the tree that the feeder is mounted on grows, causing the feeder to slowly move out of sight of the camera. Lately there has been activity by a dog at all the trees that the feeders are mounted on. The dog's nails have marked the trees as the dog try's to jump at the feeders. This may be a new walker to the forest, so far, I have been unable to meet them.

On the 25th March 2017 a dead Red had been reported by a walker in the forestry. The Forestry Service were contacted and we advised all walkers and cyclists to look out for sickly Reds in the forest or near feed sites. None were ever seen on any of our cameras. Thankfully this was a one off and no sickly or dead Reds were found afterwards.

There have been no greys seen or reported in the forest.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Ballypatrick Forest

Ballypatrick consists of large blocks of conifer planting with a small number of broad leaf trees but they were all self-seeded at this section of the forest. This year has also seen addition tree harvesting taking place in the forest.

Originally part of the first Squirrel Trail but due to works within the forestry, planting and thinning from the forestry Service 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.

Over this year a small number of Squirrels feeders were temporally put up in the area around the car park for 2-3 week to try and locate Red Squirrels, but with no joy. There was some evidence of cones eaten by squirrels but very few of them. On the main walk way a large larch tree was showing squirrel activity, but no squirrels were seen feeding. Feeders were placed near the Irish Bridge for a few weeks but again, no activity was recorded here. No feeders have been placed deeper into the forest this year but over 2018/19 it is hoped that feeders and cameras will be placed in a number of section of the forest to try and locate Reds or Greys. I have seen a female Hen Harrier twice while in the forest at the fringes of the wood land. Fewer Deer have been spotted along the road edge of the forest, passably due to shooting, either legal or illegal.

This year has seen an increase in the number of fly tipping in and around the forestry and car park areas. These were reported to the forestry who removed them.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger

Hanging Wood

This wood is a mix of Oak, Hazel, Ash and Holly with no Conifer trees. This mixed site has a wide range of tree ages. It has a variety of wildlife and plant life and is 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 impact on the number of Greys Squirrels that were making their way into Ballycastle Forest. The site had a number of Greys and no Reds when it was first set up, 7 years ago. After a number of Greys had been removed, Red Squirrels were found to visit the feeder.

This year has seen the activity in the site change. Four years ago, the first Pine Marten, a female with a damaged eye was picked up on the trail camera. As there was no eye shine at night from one of her eyes we knew that she had a damaged eye. This Pine Marten would vanish for several weeks and then return for 8-9 weeks and vanish again. Over recent months a larger male has taken up residence somewhere in the wood and is visiting the feeder nightly. The Red Squirrels activity has dropped drastically from several visits a day to only once every 3-4 days. They can be seen smelling around the feeder. This is different behaviour to what they did with the previous Pine Marten, who have not returned and I feel will not now that this male is in place.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger

Murlough Bay

This is mainly mix planting in small blocks of Oak, Ash, Holly, Beech, Larch and Scot Pine, mostly along rock faces and sheltered coves.

Back in 2016, after a reported sighting of a Grey Squirrel from a Coleraine wildlife recorder and then a second report the following day from a National Trust Ranger of having seen a Grey Squirrel. An observation site with feeder and camera was set up and the Grey was removed.



On September 2017 there had been no sighting within the area and the feed site and camera was removed for the location to be placed on a site outside of Murlough.

But on the 20-11-2017 we received a report from one of the NT Rangers, again having spotted a Grey Squirrel at Murlough, the location given was about ½ a mile from the previous feed site. So a camera trap was set up between the two locations and scatter feeding took place. Over this time Deer and a Fox were picked up but no squirrel. The camera was taken down on February 2018 to be relocated and on reviewing the footage a Grey Squirrel was seen a few days before the camera came down. The camera and feeder was reinstalled to try and attract the Grey again.

The site has a large number of Deer a fox and badgers, as well as the local sheep.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenmona Playground.

A sighting of a Grey Squirrel in and around the Church in Cushendun village prompted all the feeders to be emptied, apart from one that was monitored by a camera. Over the following months no Greys were seen. Red Squirrel activity at this feeder continued and the National Trust workshop staff reported regular sightings of Reds. We also found that passersby were paying the empty feeders a lot of attention. Concerns were raised about the other empty feeders that were on site, so these were removed, leaving the monitoring feeder and the camera still in place. We then received a number of sightings. So the Glenmona feeder was then emptied for trapping purposes, now that we had finally found its location. The feeders will be reinstalled when we are sure that no greys remain. One Grey had been picked up from the car park, it had been run over. As it was very near the bins, it's thought it was feeding from them. A second Grey was trapped in a local garden near the church. Lately we have not seen any on camera or have received any additional sightings but it is still too early to be sure that these were the only two Greys. Monitoring will continue until we are sure no greys remain.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Cregagh Wood, Local Nature Reserve.

A mix of Beech, Oak, Hazel, Ash and Holly with small blocks of Conifer trees and Scots Pine scattered across the wood. This mixed site has a wide range of tree ages. It has a wide variety for wildlife and plant life and is not to be grazed but there are several sheep that can be found from time to time. Shooting is not permitted in the wood but this year we have had several reports from visitors and locals and we were able to record a shooter on one of our trail cameras.

The GRSG first developed a Feeding and Observation site at Cregagh Wood in 2009. The wood itself is an excellent example of an old mixed woodland and provides a varied habitat that lends itself well to nature trails. This has now become a well-established part of the group's areas of work. In 2015, the then Moyle District Council took on the management of the wood as its first nature reserve. With changes in councils, this then became the first nature reserve of the Causeway Coast and Glen's council. The Hide was funded by the NGO Challenge Fund and has been a great asset for the woodland with the GRSG using it and the Councils Biodiversity officer running events at the Hide with a number of groups booked for use over the summer months growing. The Group has been active with Grey Squirrel control in the wood from 2011 when the first Grey was seen at the fixed feed site. Over the years Grey Squirrel control has become an active and continuing part of the work that takes place in the wood. We have a total of 6 monitoring sites in the wood, there are spread out across the wood and are moved around as required to cover the complete wood. This includes the fixed feed site established in 2009 and where the Hide is now situated

Lately we received a number of sightings of a Grey in the lower section of the woodland, monitoring sites were set up and cameras put in place. Several Grey Squirrels were removed over this time. Several things stood out about these greys. First, they were all adult squirrels and the second thing noticed with two of the squirrels trapped and dispatched, was that they were missing a section of their tails. This made us suspect that these squirrels may have been trapped before. This is a common occurrence if a squirrel is trapped in too small a trap. We contacted Jerry Moss, a Ranger in Cumbria and also contacted a member of the Mourne Heritage Trust to see if they had any experience or have found this in any squirrels they may have worked with. They both were able to confirm that this would be the most likely cause of the missing part of the Grey Squirrel's tail and agreed that they most likely were released Greys. We do ask the General Public if they see any suspicious activity near or within the Cregagh Woods to take photos and to pass the information to ourselves or the PSNI as it is illegal to release Grey Squirrels within the UK and Ireland.



A large number of Greys were removed from the low section of the wood with a few being picked up on camera near the Hide where they were trapped and removed. There are at least 2 Greys Squirrels still in the wood. These Greys are covering a large area, due to the poor weather conditions we stopped trapping and have started again across all sites in the wood to remove these greys now that the weather has improved.

On a positive, all the sites are picking up happy and healthy Reds. On one visit a total of 12 Red Squirrels were seen across the wood.

Unfortunately we have not been able to locate the Pine Marten that was recorded back in 2015. Sadly over 2016 there were worries about possible poisoning when cracked hens eggs were found in a number of parts of the wood. This activity puts all wildlife and dogs at risk. We do think the Pine Marten may have fallen victim to this act. We also have only seen the badger once this year. But a large increase in the Fox population, the foxes this year had at least 3 litters.



We have also been lucky to get a few sightings of the Greater Spotted Woodpecker while out walking in the wood. Along with several Woodcock this winter, we have a stoat that visits one of the feed sites regularly. This site has an old stone wall running by it and also a healthy rat population. This year did see an increase in the rat population, which when trapped we remove. With the additional sites in place we have also seen that at night the woodland floor plays host to large numbers of field mice making it a big hit with the local cats, we even had a goat for a number of weeks.
Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.



Cregagh Wood early morning in October

I'd contemplated quiet in the ancient Cregagh wood – but I didn't find that.

Instead, I found:

A creaking cabin.

Gossiping trees whispering across a gentle morning breeze.

Machine-gunning robins patrolling their territory.

Rustling drifts of tiny camouflaged birds hunting grubs among carpets of
dry leaves

Twisting- snapping- flask- opening-slurping coffee-sigh...

Flapping take-offs from surprised squadron of Magpies - *Seven for a secret never to be told*

Perhaps, but that would be such a pity...

Poem submitted by one of our Members.

Glendun.

Apart from Glenmona and Cregagh Wood there are 2 additional monitoring sites, these are along the river on private ground beyond the Glendun Viaduct. These sites have cameras as they are near areas that had been in the past, part of a Grey control program. To date we have had no Greys at them and these sites are solely there to make sure there are no Greys coming down the Glen. They are checked every two weeks. The Reds in these sites are doing very well as there is very little disruption or interference in these sites. When Kits are young they show no real fear and are happy to sit and watch you as you attend the feeders. The trail camera shows little other wild life apart from resident cats, sheep and a few wild goats. There are also 2 sites that are run privately and we get regular sightings from the home owners within Glendun. If any Greys show at their feeder they will let us know.



Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Cottage Wood Cushendall.

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.

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 here. Despite this nearby activity and disturbance from children and dogs, Red Squirrels are still regularly seen close to the recreational areas. Over recent months has seen a drop in the use of the feeders near the car park. The low feeder near the bottom entry of the pack has had more activity with several sighting of Reds being seen crossing the road to the houses and the Golf Course direction. The Reds often produce alarm calls and retreat from feeding stations to safety in the upper limbs of trees and vegetation when visitors get too close.



GRSG Active Member.

Rangers' Reports

These are GRSG member who are committed to give extra time to actively pursue Red Squirrel conservation work on behalf of the group. They are badged (uniformed) representatives of the Group, Committed to Red Squirrel Conservation and having a sound knowledge of both Red and Grey Squirrels. They are able to train volunteers in Grey Squirrel Control (as a non-native alien species), have knowledge of the legislation governing wildlife protection and animal welfare. They are able to coordinate volunteer activities and expand public knowledge on Grey Squirrel management and Red Squirrel conservation, as well as having an understanding and experience of practical conservation.

Gerard Mc Caughan

As a Ranger I had a good year. Grey Squirrel Control and maintaining / visiting Monitoring sites took up most of my "Squirrel" time. Again this year I have visited areas that I found were really beautiful and unknown to many within the Glens.

I was involved in organising a public meeting in Carnlough with help from the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, a special thanks for all her help must go to Claire Duddy. From this meeting we have gained a number of new members. We set up a number of feeding sites and have verified that there

were still Reds Squirrels in the Carnlough area. We have set up a permanent feeding site which can be seen by the general public. This group of Volunteers are continuing to explore the Carnlough area and are locating Reds as they go.

The Curragh in Glenshesk, the site that we planted a few years ago with Scots Pine and other Red Squirrel friendly trees is doing well. Most of the trees are at waist height and are growing well. The Bracken that was covering the site is not growing as tall, due to being cut down each year. Some of the trees suffered damage from local deer, so I am patrolling the site regularly, hoping my presence and the scent of my dog will keep them out.

In March 2017, I represented the group at the Red Squirrel United Knowledge fair in Cultra Manor. It was an interesting weekend and I got lots of contacts of people in similar positions as ourselves, in that we are all trying to keep Greys out of our areas. I have kept up some of these contact and we are sharing practices that we find do work.

I have helped our Rangers and volunteers within the Group with Grey Squirrel Control and the running of events. I have been in contact with other organisations through the Glens and further afield, spreading the word of Red Squirrel Conservation and the Glens Red Squirrel Group.

In January I was passed a contact from a student of Sustainable Development Engineering at the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education, Mexico. He was inquiring about our work with Red Squirrels and the equipment that we use. Once I had checked out the validity of the enquiry, we exchanged e mails and I gave him food for thought and hopefully, help with his project.

Gerard Mc Caughan, , GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Daniel McAfee

This year has been busy. I have been focusing on trying to get people out and seeing our local Red Squirrels by taking on the bulk of group walks. The walks are open to members and the general public and delivered at a level that all should understand. The walks have been well attended with no walks having to be cancelled. We have walks of 30+ people and it is great to see such an interest in what we do. We didn't see squirrels on all our walks but we did on most of them, this helped make the walks worthwhile. I have been the main contacted for any of the Groups educational work with schools and youth groups. I have repeat visits and walks planned for the incoming year. Squirreltober this year was the 4th year that we have run a month of events. Because of the help I had from the Rangers and some members, it let me focus on the walks and talks with local schools I had taken on.

As part of Ranger's duties, Grey Squirrel control has been a main part of that and we have been lucky this year that we have only had one main areas we have had to focus on. We have had very few reports of Grey Squirrel in the other Glens, two Greys popped up in Glenariff and were swiftly dealt with by the land owner and they reported the sighting and supplied photos and the relative information for recording purposes. By working with Gerard we have covered much ground and overcame a number of obstacles in some sites. We know Grey Squirrel control is an ongoing job and greys can and do spring up anywhere and at any time. I had to even deal with one who had appeared in the kitchen of the school that I work in, after a short chase and an unlucky slip by the grey, he was removed and dispatched. It was thought to be one seen at the end of June as the school finished but was never seen again until it reappeared in the School kitchen.

As part of grey control, looking for and sourcing new areas are key to preventing the influx of greys that may be slowly moving into Red Squirrel areas. This year I found it hard to do this with other sites and duties ongoing, but anything from Cushendun to Ballycastle that had been reported to me has been looked into. Over recent weeks I have been told of an area near Armoy that I hope to look into in the coming weeks.

One of the duties I do, is the Groups Face book page The GRSG's Facebook page was used to reach out to inform the Public about what work and activities our group members and Red Squirrel Rangers were doing with feeding, observation sites, and also provide feedback about how the events went on the day. We also post up photos of Red Squirrels that people are able to take when out and about in the Glens. By using Facebook we were able to reach 25,194 views over 31 posts over Squirreltober. This is a great way of getting the message out about the work what we are doing in the Glens and local area, to help our Red Squirrels.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Squirreltober, Squirrel Month report 2017

We have had a very busy and successful Squirreltober. The GRSG feel that a week is just not long enough to highlight our native Red Squirrel and the work we are doing to protect and maintain them in the Glens for the last 10 years. This is the fourth year for GRSG to run Squirreltober. As a voluntary group a week is also an issue for those who work, so events over the weekends in October can be easier to arrange and attend for many.

This year, GRSG have had one of the most active Squirreltober to date. We had a total of 16 activities and events across the month. We had 3 Walks, 1 school walk, 2 youth group talks, 1 feeder work shop, 4 Cregagh Wood Hide openings, 1 nursery school visits, 1 public information evening in Cushendall Library, 2 public information table events, one at a Health and Wellbeing event, 1 visit by BBC Radio's "Your Place and Mine" to the Hide.

Across the month at these events we reached over 200 people directly, not to mention the number who heard the radio program.

Our events were well attended, with much interest for additional events or engagement from other groups. The walks took place in Ballycastle Forest, Glenarm Forest and Cregagh Wood, Glendun. These sites are Forestry Service and Causeway Coast and Glens sites. For the majority of those on the walks it was their first time visiting that particular wood or forest and many said it was great, getting the chance of a guided walk, being shown what to look for, when looking for Squirrels or other Wild Life. The Ballycastle walk was in partnership with the "Ghost in the Glens Festival", run by the Antrim Glens Tourism Group. Their Festival attracts people from across the country and is growing year on year. We used Facebook and local papers to advertise our events but found that most of those who attended had heard via our Facebook page.

The early opening time slots of the Hide in Cregagh Wood were not as well attended as we would have hoped, the early start may have been an issue for many. The Rangers and Volunteers who manned the Hide did report that Red Squirrels were seen but they had no interest in using the feeders that were in place. This shows that the Red Squirrels in the wood were taking advantage of the bumper natural food

supply that the wood was offering. The bird feeders in the Hide area provided those in the Hide with plenty of entertainment. The local Sparrow Hawk showed up a few times and a Fox was seen on the last opening day. The early morning, Hide opening may be removed from our Squirreltober events and



moved to a different time of the year such as the spring when wild food supplies will have been used up and the Red Squirrels will be using the feeders more. Hopefully this may encourage more people to attend. The Group would like to thank the small number of very dedicated members who made this Squirrel month possible. Thanks also to Squirrel Rangers, Daniel and Gerard for guiding and assisting with the walks, Hide openings and presenting the talks over the month and not

forgetting a small number of Volunteers, especially Nuala and our Chair, Liz for attending so many of these events. Thanks to the local press for their continued support and willingness to print our events and news. Big thanks to BBC Radio "Your Place and Mine", to Cushendall Library staff for such a warm welcome and all the thought they had put into their part of the night. To the two local Schools, St.Patricks and St Brigid's PS and Ballycastle Integrated PS, who approached us and asked us to be part of their teaching plans by leading walks or visits. Thanks to the Causeway Coast and Glens Council and the N.I. Forest Service for their support in all their sites across the Glens.

Equipment Report.

The 2017-18 year provided a few challenges. Just at the time of the last AGM it came to our attention that members were no longer covered by our renewed insurance policy if they used ladders during GRSG work. Because of this change, I sent an email to all members that had GRSG ladders asking for them to not use them and calling in all ladders that belonged to the group. This request was resisted by some members who wanted to continue using the ladders. A flurry of e mails ensued. After that, I contacted a number of Public bodies that represented industries and workers who used ladders daily. They all advised me that if at all possible to remove the ladders and to work without them as the paperwork and testing required to prove that the ladders were safe to use every day was really beyond what a small group like ours could possibly do. Once the committee heard this, it was agreed to recall all ladders and to sell them. A price was agreed (£25) and an e mail was sent out to all members advising them of our decision and advising them if they wanted one of the ladders to send in their name. All the

names were put in a box and 5 names were pulled out at the next meeting. All ladders were distributed to the winning names.

In April/ March we applied to the Honourable Irish Society for a grant. We bought 4 Acorn Cameras, lock boxes, Python locks and SD cards with the money. This was a great help with our work, looking after our Red Squirrels

In September we applied for the Micro Grant again to replace existing equipment that had come to the end of its useable life. This Grant pays 85% of the cost, but the group have to buy the equipment first and we are out the total cost until we receive the money from the Department. We were awarded this grant and I attended a meeting in Broughshane regarding the paperwork and procedures to be followed. We bought additional Acorn Cameras and lock boxes, more Python locks, 4 large First Aid Kits and personal First Aid Kits for our active volunteers. All the equipment has been purchased, paperwork submitted and we have got our money. Thanks must go to Sandy Wilson and the staff of NACN for their help with this Grant.

In January 2018 we were approached by Glenariff Development Group to inquire if we would be interested in joining them in submitting a joint application for the DFC SMALL CAPITAL/EQUIPMENT GRANT. We were happy to do so and applied for a role of PVC, DPC for covering our traps when we are using them, Small scales for weighing dispatched Grey squirrels, some gardening tools and 3 additional Bushnell Cameras and lock boxes. This application was submitted, but we have since heard that we were unsuccessful.

As part of the 2016-17 yearly report to the Charity Commission I had to produce an Equipment Audit. This was done and sent in with our full report. I got a template produced which can be filled in throughout the year as we get new equipment and this will make life easy for us in future years (thanks Conor).

At the end of January 2018, I started my Annual Equipment Audit. E mails were sent out to all members that had equipment, for them to return, indicating what equipment they had belonging to the group. Returns were particularly slow this year, mainly due to the pressures of home life and other commitments.

Because of the MICRO grant and others grants we are able to maintain our level of equipment. Some of our cameras are coming to the end of their lifespan and are giving problems. Once they become unreliable they are of little use to us. We have over the last year improved our security equipment so that our cameras are now more secure when being used.

Gerard Mc Caughan GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger and Equipment Care taker.

Monthly Reports.

May.

22-5-2017. Ballycastle Forest walk for Ballycastle Guides.

Following from a talk given to the Brownies and Rainbow section of the Ballycastle Girl Guides. The group was asked to do a walk for the Brownies and Guides section in Ballycastle forest. The walk was taken by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee. No squirrels were seen at the feed sites in the forest but there were lots of birds to see and the identification of tree and plant along the way. The walk was enjoyed by all.



24-5-2017. Spring Summer Newsletter,

The Spring Summer Newsletter was published and sent out to our membership in email form.

27-5-2017. Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival.

Ballycastle Community Development Group again invited the Group to attend the Ballycastle weekend, section of "Rathlin Sound Maritime Festival" with our information table. We were in the Education and

Historical Marquee. This was the first use of our new fold-up table and bench, which we got through the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme administered by NACN.



The day was very well attended by people from across N. Ireland. The table was manned by GRSG Ranger Daniel McAfee and members, Nuala Connolly and Kelly Watterson

31-5-2017. Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme Inspection.

GRSG Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan met with Christopher Donnelly, PCS Monitoring Officer from the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme as part of a spot inspection to ensure that the Group had completed the grant as had been applied for. Gerard showed all that the grant had covered and Christopher took photos of all the items and was happy that everything was in order. Payment to the group will be made between 8-10 days.

June

2-6-2017. Posters for Talk.

Alison Diver sent draft posters to GRSG Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan for the planned talk in Carnlough. Posters were agreed and on delivery, GRSG Ranger, Vince and our PRO, Mandy distributed the flyers and posters throughout Glenarm and Carnlough area.

5-6-2017.The Great Big Walk.

Our GRSG Ranger in Glenariff, Vince, was part of the welcoming party to greet “The Great Big Walk” walkers in Glenariff Forest Park, as well as volunteers from Glenariff community. The Northern Ireland

walkers are part of a team of fifteen volunteers walking around the UK to shine a light on the work volunteers do, bringing people together to keep communities alive. The Great Big Walk is an initiative from the Eden Project made possible with funding from the National Lottery.

Brendan Major one of the group's trustees, completed the 5 hour hike from St Killian's College, over the Garron Plateau to Glenariff Forest Park, with the two Northern Ireland walkers, Olivia Cosgrove and Noel Johnston. They met volunteers from several local groups including Glenariff Oisins CLG hurling club, Friends of Glenariff, Glenariff Improvement Group, Glens Red Squirrel Group and Antrim Glens Tourism.



21-6-17. Official launch of two major projects.

The Glens Great Grassland (GGG) Trail and the Glenariff Beachfront Landscape Works. Nuala Connolly attended the opening in Glenariff on behalf of the GRSG.

July

1-7-17. Belfast Zoo Native Species Day.

Vice Chair, Daniel McAfee attended and supported the event. There were very few tables or displays. The N.I. Forest Service, NIEA, N.I. Deer Group and the National History Museum attended. The UW membership tent was also there.

3-7-17. Carnlough Talk.

The GRSG held a meeting in the Town Hall, Carnlough. GRSG Ranger, Gerard gave the talk and Ranger Vince ran the Feeder workshop, ably supported by Nuala and Mandy. All who attended were very interested in the Red Squirrel and its battle to survive. It was very evident during the event that there is a desire within the area to locate any Red Squirrels that may still exist within the greater Carnlough area and to help them in any way. A number of locations were discussed as starting points, as Red Squirrels had been spotted in the area over the last few years.



The enthusiasm shown during the talk was carried over into the Feeder Workshop and 12 Feeders were assembled. These will be used when we try to locate any Red Squirrels in the area. The GRSG would like to thank Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, especially Clare, Alison and Mary, for all their help and for the use of the excellent facilities at the Town Hall.

7-7-17. Glenmona Monitoring.

Following on from the last Meeting camera equipment had been returned from a member not using them. This freed up equipment which we were able to put straight into action in Glenmona House as we had not been able to spare a camera. Reports were received from the public about a number of Grey Squirrels in the general Cushendun area. Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan, removed 2 of the 3 feeders and the camera was placed on the remaining feeder. We have had no sighting of any Grey Squirrels at the feeder in the last week, but will continue to monitor the area.

18-07-17. Erecting of Feeders in Carnlough Area.

Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan, following on from the Carnlough information evening on 3/7/2017 erected 3 feeders and 1 camera with the assistance from new members who attended that meeting. Reports to date have been that no squirrels have used the feeders but have been seen in the area.

August

5-8-17. Hen Harrier Day.

A fine day which saw over 70 people joined the 2017's Hen Harrier Day event in Glenariff. The Hen Harrier is yet another of our native species that we are at risk of losing. It was great to see so many people joining to fight for the conservation of these lovely birds. Liz Weir our Chair, a speaker at the event, and Daniel McAfee our Vice Chair were there with our Glens Red Squirrel display.



A few people saw Reds while they were walking in the forestry that day.

5-8-17. Cushendall's RNLI Day.



A very busy day for another worthwhile cause. Great interest in the work we do in the Glens. Positive feedback overall, on Grey Squirrel control from all locals. A few sightings of reds were given to us, most being seen in the Cottage Wood. Vice Chair, Daniel McAfee manned the stall at this event.

9-8-17. Lark in the Park.

As part of the Heart of the Glens festival we attended their annual Lark in the Park and this year was great fun, yet again. The weather was good and the Park was jumping with families, fun and games. We were joined by Rachel Baine, CCG Council Biodiversity Officer, highlighting the project “Don’t Mow Let it Grow”. We had lots of interest from young and old alike. More sightings of Reds from the actual park, with Reds being seen at all feeders across the Park. So a big thanks to our volunteer who look after the Cottage Wood, Raymond Watson. We also had a very well attended information table with volunteers on the day. Daniel McAfee, Liz Weir, Tom Naughton, Vincent Segerdahl, Casey Chisolm and some members popping into say, Hi!



11-8-17. Photos from Glenshesk.

GRSG Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan sent us this photo, taken at a monitoring site set up in Glenshesk. It is the first time we have ever seen this behaviour. It may be the first time it has ever been photographed, a young Red Squirrel suckling its Mother outside of the Drey. The photo was posted on Facebook and reached 3,019 people



13-8-17. Cairns Residents Group open Day.

Great day at Cairns open day. Big thanks to the Cairns Residents Group. The weather was good and the Cairn's Residents were so helpful throughout the day. Thanks to all our volunteers who came to help our Chair Liz, Raymond, Tom and family and Vice Chair, Daniel at the Group's Information Table.



15-8-17. Pregnant Red Squirrel in Glenariff

GRSG Ranger, Vincent Segerdahl, while doing the feeders in Glenariff Forest Park observed and got a photo of a large heavily pregnant Red Squirrel at one of the feeders. This is good news but it is late in the year. We have also seen that wild food is early this year, which will cause less activity at the feeders and reduce the success of trapping.



24-8-17. Feeder Donation.

A big thanks to NI. Direct who have kindly donated 15 new feeder boxes to be used in Glenariff Forest Park. This was posted on our Facebook page and reached 436 people.

Cregagh Hide was booked for a full week by a family and a Bird Watching Group from Belfast also used it. We received generous Donations from both groups. We have had 3 road kills over the month 14-8-17, 18-8-17 and the 3-9-17 all have been logged with CEDaR. We have also had an increase in sightings of Reds from the public, reported via Facebook. Many sending photos that we post on Facebook.

August Report on Carnlough Red Squirrels Project.

As part of our program to locate Red Squirrels with the Glens area, we ran an information evening in Carnlough Town Hall at the beginning of July. This was followed by an evening event where new members from the Carnlough area set up a number of feeding sites. We were pleased to find Red Squirrels visiting our feeder site near the **Cranny Falls** Nature Reserve. The area is covered with dense Hazel trees, which presents a difficulty in getting good photos of the Red Squirrels. However we are delighted that a number of different Red Squirrels are visiting this feeder and there seems to be a small healthy population of Red Squirrels in this area. The volunteers from the Carnlough area are now in the process of moving spare feeders around, to try and locate further populations of Red Squirrels in the greater Carnlough area. The GRSG are very appreciative of all the help that the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council staff have given to us with this project. If anyone is interested in our work and would like to help us in the Carnlough area, please get in touch.

September


9-9-17. Glenariff forest walk in partnership with the Heart of the Glens LPS.

Our walk in Glenariff today was in partnership with the Heart of the Glens, LPS. It was a WET start but ended up hot and sunny. We had a large attendance. Even with the heavy rain at the start we were able to spot not 1 but 3 Red Squirrels in the first 15min, the first 2 were easy but the 3rd was a bit harder to point out in the garden section of the Forest Park. The walk was taken by our Vice Chair and Red Squirrel Ranger, Daniel McAfee, assisted by Forestry Ranger, Liz O Conor and Laura McAuley from the LPS.



20-9-17. Tollymore Squirrel Pox.


Vice Chair, Daniel McAfee received word from Tollymore Red Squirrel Group members that a Red with suspected Squirrel Pox had been found. This was posted on Facebook from the 20th to the 26th Sept, and the post reached 11,850 people. This post highlighted the issue that Red Squirrels face with Grey Squirrels and the Squirrel Pox.



Glens Red Squirrel Group is 😞 feeling sad.

Published by Daniel McAfee (?) · September 20 at 9:56pm · 🌐

SAD NEWS!!
A suspected case of Squirrel Pox in the Tollymore area.
A Red Squirrel with lesions was discovered in Clonachullion Wood on the outskirts of Tollymore Park.
The animal was examined by three volunteers of Tollymore Red Squirrel Group who agreed that squirrel pox virus was likely.
The red squirrel was trapped, taken to a local veterinary practice where it was examined and euthanised by the vet.... [See More](#)



11,850 People Reached

328 Reactions, Comments & Shares

56 Like	27 On Post	29 On Shares
3 Wow	1 On Post	2 On Shares
166 Sad	57 On Post	109 On Shares
7 Angry	0 On Post	7 On Shares
36 Comments	10 On Post	26 On Shares
61 Shares	61 On Post	0 On Shares

1,769 Post Clicks

128 Photo Views	7 Link Clicks	1,634 Other Clicks
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NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

9 Hide Post	3 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

28-9-17. Micro Grant 2017-2018

Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard Mc Caughan submitted an application for a Micro Grant to get much needed equipment that will help the group's volunteers whilst carrying out feeding, trapping and other duties.

29-9-17. RSU Report

Our Chair, Liz Weir, received our first official report from the Ulster Wildlife's Red Squirrel United (RSU) project from Conor McKinney. Vice Chair, Daniel had contacted Conor inquiring if there had been a report produced for the Broughshane/Larne part of N. Ireland as we had been informed that the Tollymore RSG had already received a report about the work taking place in the Southern part of N. Ireland where they are based.

October (Squirreltober)

5-10-17. Ballycastle Forest Schools walk.

As part of Squirreltober along with our programmed events we are also doing walks and talk for group and Schools. These are photos from a walk last week with Ballycastle Integrated Primary school and St Patrick's and St Brigid's Primary School P5 classes as part of their outdoor learning. Around 40 children

and 6 staff took part. We didn't see any Red Squirrels but we all had a good walk in Ballycastle Forest identifying all the different plants and trees.



7-10-17. Cregagh Wood Hide, Glendun, opening. 8:30am -10:00am.

Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard manned the Hide. We had visitors from Ballymena and their friends from England, who had come to visit the Hide. No Squirrel were seen but there was lots of bird life to see.



9-10-17. Ballycastle Girl Guides feeder workshop.

As part of Squirreltober we had a feeder workshop with Ballycastle Girl Guides. A great night with everyone getting hands on with feeder construction. Big thanks to all the Girls and their Leaders. 12 boxes were constructed.



10-10-17. recording for BBC Radio's "Your Place and mine".

We had an unexpected visitor to the Cregagh Wood Hide. It was Helen Mark from Radio Ulster. Our Red Squirrel Ranger, Daniel McAfee was there to show Helen around and have a chat about the work we are doing in the wood and a bit about Squirreltober. We had a good day, sadly no Squirrels showed up.



11-10-17 Ballycastle Scouts.

Vice Chair, Daniel MacAfee gave a talk and power point presentation to the Ballycastle 1st Scouts. All got



to see our Red Squirrels, feeder and foods. All of the Children got a colouring sheet and a Squirrel Information Booklet home.

14-10-17. Radio Ulster broadcast of “Your Place and Mine”.

The broadcast was shared on the groups Facebook page and several others, also.

14-10-17. Cregagh Wood Hide, Glendun, opening. 8:30am -10:00am.

Local member and volunteer Paula, manned the Hide. No Red Squirrels were seen but there was lots of local woodland bird life to see.

14-10-17. Cregagh Wood walk and Hide visit.

A lovely morning at Cregagh Wood with a walk led by Glens Red Squirrel Group Ranger and Vice-Chair, Daniel McAfee.



17-10-17. Cushendall Library, Red Squirrel talk.

Thanks to Charlotte and Anne for their warm welcome and the chance to engage with all ages in Cushendall Library. There was craft for the Kids, making very fancy Red Squirrels. A talk gave by our Vice-Chair, Daniel McAfee with a presentation and equipment for people to see. Children were given colouring sheets to take home and there was information for the adults about what to do if they see Red or Grey Squirrels. Thanks to all those who came we hope they enjoyed it and found out something new.





20-10-17. Ballycastle IP Nursery School visit.

As part of Ballycastle IP nursery school topic Autumn group Vice Chair, Daniel was asked to call in and show the children our Squirrels and give a shot talk about what happens in Autumn and where we would see Red Squirrels.

21-10-17. Cregagh Wood Hide, Glendun opening.

Local member and volunteer Paula manned the hide. A Red Squirrel was spotted this week but did not use the feeders on site.

21-10-17. Ballycastle Forest Walk, with Storywalk in partnership with “The Ghosts in the Glens” Festival.

This year we had story tellers from “The Ghost in the Glens” Festival with us. It was a great day, Ranger Daniel informed all about the forest and the work we do in it and we had plenty of spooky stories. Sadly no Red Squirrels and storm Brian gave us a spot of rain. But an enjoyable walk for all.



22-10-17. Glenariff Forest, Squirrel information table with Storywalk as part of “The Ghosts in the Glens” Festival.

Sadly due to other commitments, this planned event was unable to have any GRSG volunteers attending on behalf of the Group though the Chair was there in her role as festival director. The Ghosts in the Glens had a great turn out and the walk was a huge success.

24-10-17 NACN AGM.

Chair, Liz Weir, attended the “5 Steps to Wellbeing” night organized in Tullyglass House Hotel by the North Antrim Community Network in connection with their AGM. There were stands from all sorts of community organizations and it was a great networking opportunity. There was a lot of interest in the Glens Red Squirrel Group stand and people from a variety of places such as Cullybackey, Kells, Ballygally, Ballymoney, Cloughmills, Carnlough and Ballymena stopped to chat and ask questions. There was a report of a Red Squirrel sighting on the road in Glenarm, reports of four Pine Martens photographed by Norman at McCartney's Bridge and lots more chat

27-10-17. Cregagh Hide, Site Maintenance work.

A few members and Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard spent the afternoon transplanting Holly trees around the Hide. They did some maintenance work and removed litter that had blown into the trees. While they were there, they spotted a Red that had come to investigate the noise that they were making. This work had been discussed by the committee to both protect and enhance the habitat around the Hide. Small saplings from the wood were transplanted. This would prevent the risk of taking in any pathogens of soil based diseases.

28-10-2017. Carnlough Active Members meeting.

Active members in the Carnlough area and Ranger Gerard visited a number of places in Carnlough that have Red Squirrels, picking out sites for feeders and looking for signs of Red Squirrel activity. As the walk to the waterfall is popular with locals and foreign visitors, they decided that a feeder should be erected where people can see the Red Squirrels feeding. A feeder was erected not far from the path on the way into the waterfall. It is hoped that this will raise awareness of the plight of the Red Squirrel and the work being undertaken to try and preserve this shy and beautiful animal.

28-10-17. Cregagh Wood Hide, Glendun.

Red Squirrel Ranger, Gerard manned the Hide. A Red Squirrel and a Fox was seen as well as lots of local Woodland birds.

29-10-17. Glenarm Forest Walk.



A Big thanks to those who attended our walk in Glenarm forest. It was a Beautiful day for our last walk in Squirreltober, the Forest was alive with the colours of autumn. Big thanks to group Volunteer Denis for assisting with the walk and sharing his wealth of knowledge about the forest and for telling everyone about the off track places to sit and see the local Reds. We were lucky to see not one but two Reds while on the walk. The 1st was about 15 min into the walk and the second was harder to spot as we walked along the river. A great way to end our events for Squirreltober.

November /December

10-11-17. CCGHT and CCG biodiversity officer meeting.

Ranger Daniel was asked to join Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust's, Tiérna Mullan and Causeway Coast and Glen's Biodiversity Officer, Rachel Bain to assist and partner on some events over the 2018 events list. Both the CCGHT and the CCG council are keen to work close with the GRSG. Three events working in partnership were agreed:-

Celebrating Cregagh Wood, Squirrel feeder and bird box making day Saturday 12th May

2018, **Wildlife in the Garden**, Saturday 23rd June 2018,

Squirrel walk & talk, Cottage Wood, Saturday 13th October 2018.

17-11-17. Quiz Night.

Thanks to everyone who supported our Glens Red Squirrel Group quiz last night. A grand total of £210 was raised. Quizmaster Brendan Major, ably assisted by his wife Fern set many challenges, one of which involved construction with hilarious results. The food and drink round saw teams subjected to taste testing. There were three joint winners The Real Tufty Club, Joe's On Tour, and We're not Greys. A night of fun and laughter, all for a good cause. We would like to thank all those who provided prizes for the raffle and all our local sponsors for prizes given on the night.



27-11-17. NACN grant meeting.

Ranger Gerard Mc Caughan attended the NACN grant meeting to secure the groups successful application to update equipment for our active members working on the ground doing feeding and those doing walks.

7-12-17. GRSG hedge planting for John Muir award

Two of the Ballycastle schools came together to weed and replant a section of the Community hedge that had been accidentally sprayed last summer and killed off. Two p5 classes from Ballycastle Integrated Primary School and St Patrick's and St Brigid's Primary School as part of their "John Muir Award", came to help clean up and replant the area with the Council and the Glens Red Squirrel Group. There was over 300 plants to be planted and many very willing children to plant them. A mix of native and nectar rich plants to help or local wildlife were planted which will provide food, shelter and cover for the local wildlife. This Hedge is set to grow and grow. It was a very cold day, but all enjoyed themselves and were kept warm by their hard work.



17-12-17 Charity Commission report submitted.

The Groups Annual Monitoring Return for the financial period ending 31 Mar 2017 was submitted by Chair, Liz Weir on behalf of Glens Red Squirrel Group (registered charity number 102100) to the Charity Commission of N. Ireland.

17-12-17. Cushendun trapping Report.

Trapping stopped at the end of September as there was a large natural food supply and the squirrel activity around monitoring sites had dropped over all 6 sites. Monitoring sites were not removed, but feed was reduced. In December squirrel activity increased over 3 sites until a grey squirrel appeared, coming 2-3 times a day, resulting in a drop in reds using the sites. Trapping started in the 3 sites with no success until 22-12-17 when 8 greys were trapped and on the 23-12-17, 2 greys were trapped. Trapping was stopped because of bad weather forecast. Trapping restarted on 4-1-17 with one grey being trapped. Trapping stopped again on the 6-1-18 as poor weather was forecast. The sites were stocked and monitoring will continue.

January 2018

13-1-18. Ballymena Girl Guides came and visited the Glens of Antrim.

They stayed at Glenhaven cottage. As part of their visit to the Glens they were keen to get out and about to see our local Red Squirrels. We had planned a full day of programs for the girls, visiting some of our feed sites and the Hide in Cushendun. Unfortunately the day was wet and the two planned walks were changed to one short walk off the Cottage Wood in Cushendall. Sadly we didn't spot any squirrels there.

We visited the Hide, had lunch and the girls all got hands on experience of making squirrel feeders that will be used in Glenarm forest over the next few weeks. We all then headed back to Glenhaven for a talk and a short presentation. So the girls did see videos of our local Reds. These girls knew their stuff and had done lots of work researching our Red Squirrels and had even made squirrels out of socks!! I was very impressed with their knowledge and the preparation that they and their leaders had done before hand. All had a great day! Daniel.



22-1-18. Letter of thanks.

We received a lovely letter, art work and a very generous donation to thank the Group and to help support the work we do in the Glens.

24-1-18. Red Squirrel United.

Chair, Liz Weir received an email from the newly appointed staff from the Red Squirrel United (RSU), Project, Caroline Finlay introducing herself and informing the group there was a new RSU Ranger, Ronald Surgernor. A meeting between the RSU staff and GRSG was suggested and agreed.

25-1-18. Glenariff Improvement Group.

Vince received word of a possible DFC Small Capital/Equipment Grant. On the 26th this was confirmed and requests for ideas made on email. Glenariff Improvement Group would be leading with the grant. We had to provide a list of items to be priced for an awarded of up to £750.00.



27-1-18.A Walk to Start our Tenth Year.



A big thank you to everyone who attended the first walk to start off GRSG's 10th year of Red Squirrel conservation. We had thirty who took part in our walk of Glenariff Forest Park and we saw a short flash of a Red Squirrel in the Garden area of the forest so everyone was happy. Because of such a large group on the move we were lucky to do so. Many on the walk had never spotted a Red Squirrel before and it was to be their first walk in Glenariff.

The walk split into two groups. As there were some prams and young children, this group took an easier route and the second group took the Waterfall Walk. The waterfalls did not disappoint anyone, having a large flow of water. The weather was great and the rain held off until we were all heading home.

Our guides Daniel McAfee (Vice Chair) and Liz O'Connor (Forest Service Guide) did a great job and delivered a very informative walk which captured the children and adults alike.

It was a very enjoyable day and it was rounded off with some very tasty warm roasted red pepper and tomato soup, tea, coffee and biscuits.

February

9-2-18. Ballymena Beaver Scouts overnight stay.

Ballymena beaver scouts were to stay in Ballyeamon Barn on the 9-2-18 and they had requested a talk. Unfortunately this was cancelled by the scouts due to the snow.

10-2-18. Ballycastle Scouts walk in Ballycastle forest.

Red Squirrel Ranger, Daniel led the Ballycastle Scouts walk in Ballycastle forest, 8 Scouts and 2 leaders. We didn't spot any squirrels but we spotted lots of birds and covered plants and trees identification. A great group who we will be seeing again up in the woods.



17-2-18. Breen Walk.

What a morning for a walk in Breen, the weather was great. In all there were 32 people on the walk. We were all very lucky and we saw a Red Squirrel at the start of the walk as it ran along the tree tops into the forest. Lots of small birds and lots of Deer footprints. Thanks to those who came, many from a long distance away, Portrush, Ballymena, Coleraine and beyond to take part, for many it was their first time in Breen and their first time see a Red Squirrel.



24-2-18.Ballynature Day.

Great Day at Ballynature Day, in Ballynure, Great Event! GRSG Chair, Liz Weir, Liz O'Connor and Nuala Connolly attended to the GRSG stand. It was a terrific event with well over 1800 people coming through the exhibition space this year. We talked to many, many people and there was terrific interest shown in Red Squirrels and what we do as a group within the Glens of Antrim. There were lots of groups representing birds, bees, plants, rivers and trees. There was something for everyone. This event is getting bigger every year. Well done to all involved. We are looking forward to next year's!!



27-2-18.Festival Grant with the CCGHT.

An application was submitted for a Festival Grant with the CCGHT for assistance with Squirreltober. This application is for the printing of flyers and information sheets that the group can use on our walks, a children's activity sheet for schools and two trail cameras for a possible camera training day.

March

1-3-18.Quiz Night in Carnlough.

The poor weather had an impacted on attendance from supporters from outside the village of Carnlough. Those that did attend had a very enjoyable night and raised a lot of money for the GRSG. A big thanks to Group member Gabriel for organizing and running the Quiz, hosted in The Londonderry Arms. Thanks to the Londonderry Arms and to all those who attended, supporting the work we do in the Carnlough area.

14-3-18

Thank you to Health Care Ireland Group for the donation of feeders to the group for Glenariff Forest Park. If you or anyone you know may be willing to make a donation please let us know. Every little helps!



20-3-18. Cregagh Wood, Glendun wild life walk with Dot Blakely.

Thank to those who came on this walk. It was an early start but it was a great morning for it. Due to unforeseen events Dot Blakely was unable to make our walk. We saw lots of birds and a Red Squirrel less than 5 min into the walk. The Hide was alive with birds but no squirrels showed. Red Squirrel

Ranger, Daniel after the walk was able to see and film one of the Greater spotted woodpeckers that makes the wood its home and has done so for the last 3 years.

28-3-18. GSRG Committee meet with Red Squirrel United

The GRSg committee met the Red Squirrel United representatives in Glenariff. This was the first official meeting with the RSU since we provided help and advice during their Project's planning stage.

Summary of Hours spent by the Group on Events

Over this last year the group has taken part in and attended many events. This is a brief break down of the group's year. It does not include committee meeting, quiz nights, active members feeding sites and Grey Squirrel control.

Talks	6	Average 1-1.5hours	Average total hours	9
Walks	12	Average 2-2.5hours	Average total hours	30
Meetings	3	Average 1-2.5hours	Average total hours	7.5
Stalls	7	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours	28
Work Shop	2	Average 1-2.5hours	Average total hours	5
Hide opening	5	Average 2-2.5hours	Average total hours	12.5

Average Total hours 92 hours

Thanks to Supporters

Thanks to Supporters The Glens Red Squirrel Group wish to thank those groups and organizations who have worked with and have supported GRSg in our work this year:-

Ballyeamon Barn, Northern Ireland Forest Service, Causeway Coast and Glens Council, Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership, National Trust, Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum, The Wood Land Trust, Mid and East and Antrim Council, St. Patrick's and St. Bridget's P.S. Ballycastle, Ballycastle Integrated P.S., Kilmore House, The Heart of the Glens Festival, Friends of Glenariff, Glenariff Improvement Group, Laragh Lodge Restaurant, The Londonderry Arms Hotel, Cloud 9Yoga, Glenariff Forest Tea House, Murray and Partners, Richmond's Feeds, Fane Valley, NACN. Ballycastle Girl Guides, Ballymena Girl Guides, Ballycastle Scouts, Ballynature Team, Health Care Ireland Group, NI Direct.

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 have 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.