

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Annual Report 2024/2025

Charity Number 102100



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GLENS RED SQUIRREL GROUP CHAIR'S REPORT

This is my first year as chairman of Glens Red Squirrel Group. The group continues in our quest of maintaining and enhancing the Glens Area as a thriving space for our native Red Squirrel population.

Our membership is currently around 80 members but our members seem to be reluctant to get involved in the running of the group or taking part in the committee meetings. This is not an onerous undertaking as we only have 10 monthly meetings per year. There are no meetings in July or August as most people are on holidays etc.

Meetings are usually held in Ballyeamon Barn on the first Wednesday of each month and generally last no more than one hour.

The Hide has been very busy with visitors this year and photographers have been delighted with numerous sightings throughout the year. Squirreltober was one of our main activities again with walks in various locations throughout the Glens area. Most of the walks had good numbers attending but unfortunately several of the severe winter storms caused many of our walks to be cancelled on safety grounds.

The storms also caused havoc in the wooded areas of our squirrel's habitat with trees felled by the high winds and damage to walks and paths throughout the various forests and woods. Our rangers and volunteers have been kept busy with tidy ups on top of their regular feeding and maintenance duties.

We continue to work in partnership with other groups and stakeholders in our area with presentation stalls, walks and presentations / talks. Our annual quiz was very well attended this year. The large turnout had their brain cells well tested by a wide range of general knowledge questions.

We have many feeders distributed throughout our area which are maintained by volunteers; this helps our rangers greatly and helps spread our workload. A special thanks to our rangers and volunteers who maintain and repair the Hide and pathway around it.

It is gratifying to receive so many reports of sightings of Reds from every part of our area and several sightings of Pine Martens in various areas. This speaks volumes for the biodiversity of the Glens area.

Once again, we would like to thank the people of the Glens area for their support and assistance over the past year helping our colonies of Reds to survive and thrive well into the future.

Again, I would encourage anyone to come forward and volunteer, even if only for one or two days per year and lend their support to the group. Once you do so you will find it a rewarding experience.

Keep an eye on our web site for future events and come along and join us. Why not, bring a friend.? You will enjoy it and, best of all it is free, though a small donation would be greatly appreciated.

Gabriel McAuley, Chair of Glens Red Squirrel Group, 2024-2025

Grey Squirrel Control

From April 2024 to March 2025 a total of four greys were dispatched; one of these was from Broughshane, not the Glens, but our volunteers assisted with the trapping and dispatch on this site. We also removed one from outside Ballyvoy, one in Glenshesk and one in Cushendun. There were also reports of two Grey Squirrels killed on two different roads in the Glens. Unfortunately, we were unable to confirm as those reporting were not 100% sure. This is the lowest true number of Greys recorded to date. This takes the number of dispatches to 455 from April 2011 when the GRSG started recording Grey Squirrel dispatches or recorded road kills.



Note the 455 number is different (smaller) from that reported in previous yearly reports. It was discovered on reviewing records from 2011 that there were repeat entries submitted and logged, around the time of changes in volunteers. This had an overall effect on the numbers and this has been updated.

This is a breakdown of the number of greys from 2011 to March 2025

YEAR	NUMBER OF GREYS
2011/2012	56
2012/2013	17
2013/2014	2
2014/2015	74
2015/2016	92
2016/2017	27
2017/2018	31
2018/2019	20
2019/2020	45
2020/2021	48
2021/2022	16
2022/2023	9
2023/2024	14
2024/2025	4
Total	455

There is no set pattern to the number of greys but there are several factors that have affected this. In 2013/2014 we had two dispatches only recorded, as there were volunteers who had taken part in control but had not or were unable to submit their records for that year. In 2015/2016 the Groups, Grey Squirrel control record of 92 greys included a project in the Ballygally area carried out by our members at that time. This was an intense trapping programme to remove a large concentration of Greys Squirrels. The

GRSG's activity in the area finished shortly after this intensive control period. The local volunteers then formed a new group which did take on the continuing Grey Squirrel control as well as branching into additional biodiversity work.

We also no longer have the responsibility for the control off and the logging of Grey Squirrel records for some sites that we would have worked in, in the past. The land owners or the staff on these sites now do this themselves. This has helped our volunteers as we are no longer required to carry out this work.

We do ask if ALL our members and volunteers who are aware of any Grey Squirrel control taking place in the Glens of Antrim privately, will make us, the GRSG, aware so that we know there are greys about. We can then be on the lookout for any that may be on the move out of the area's where private control is taking place. We also ask landowners/ farmers to let us know of any greys they may have dispatched. We welcome all reports, regardless of the colour, please keep them coming. Those who are trapping are passing their information back to Daniel McAfee and all dispatches are logged in group records and in the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR).

We would encourage you to log any Red Squirrel you see no matter if it is in a known Red Squirrel area as this gives us a good indicator of Red Squirrel activity patterns, where-ever they may be.

CEDaR

The information recorded is

Date

Grid Reference

Sex of Animal

Weight

Who Dispatched?

Date recorded to CEDaR

General Report on Feed and Monitoring Sites.

Working areas.

Feed sites that are open to the public to view are: -

- | | |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Ballycastle Forest |
| 6 | Glenmona Cushendun |
| 7 | Cregagh Wood |
| 11 | Cottage Wood Cushendall |
| 14 | Glenariff Forest |
| 16 | Glenarm Forest. |
| 15 | Carnlough. |

Numbers of additional feed sites: -

Glenariff 6, Ballycastle 3, 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 locations that Greys have been seen in/reported or a grey has been removed from in the past. Cameras can be set on feeders if needed. Some of these sites are within private land/householders' gardens, who would report back to our Rangers if they see any grey activity taking place. We have other sites throughout the Glens that are privately maintained which we have limited input to, unless requested to be looked in on, if owners are away, etc.

Active Members' Report on their Feed / Monitoring Sites.

Clare Forest.

The population of Red Squirrels in Clare Forest appears to be stable, despite a second winter of wet, cold and windy weather. Two squirrels are regularly seen together at the feeders and, on a couple of occasions, three.

A young tree that fell during Storm Éowyn just grazed the tree with the camera, but no damage done.

The Pine Marten, regularly captured on camera inspecting the feeders, has recently been joined by another, and they have just succeeded in climbing up and onto the feeders and working out how to open them, so now I have lots of shots of them. One probably had a bit of shock as I found a feeder on the ground, and I do not think it was either the wind or a squirrel!

I hope that I see a thriving kit this year, having found a dead one in a feeder last year. No doubt it is the Pine Martens that are helping keep any greys at bay, so I and the squirrels had better get used to the Pine Martens having a share of the food!





Glenise Morgan, GRSG Volunteer.

Hanging Wood.

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 livestock (sheep) will get into the site. The site has a large badger set with up to ten Badgers living in it. This site was set up as a control site to impact on the number of Grey Squirrels that were making their way into Ballycastle Forest

This year has seen several reds using the site and I have seen at least four sets, each having two kit; most of these had moved on by September. There is a Pine Marten who in the last few months has been visiting less. There have been no greys seen this year in the wood or on camera. A very young grey had been killed on the road nearby. Where this squirrel came from was never discovered as I have had no sightings recorded in the area. There may be a small breeding population somewhere nearby and this young grey just headed in the wrong direction compared to other possible siblings. But the site will be monitored to see if anything shows.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Ballycastle Forest.

Ballycastle Forest is a mix of mature conifer blocks and broad leaf planting between 15 to 20 years old. One of the first sites for a GRSG observation site in 2008 and with assistance from the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, this was one of three "Squirrel Trails" in the Glens, alongside Ballypatrick and Glenariff. These all became part of "The Glens Red Squirrel Safaris.

This year Ballycastle Forest has seen a large drop-in Red Squirrel activity in general within the forest. This has also been noticed by the regular walkers who would normally see them. Squirrels are still using the feeders but it is more difficult to see them as they go about their natural day to day feeding in the trees or on the forest floor. Ballycastle Forest in previous years had been a hive of activity for reds and several had been reported by walkers through the forest on any one visit. So, it could be that this year

has seen a population crash, the summer months were very wet and very few kits were seen. No Greys were seen or recorded in the forest this year so that was good.

The feeding log near the entrance is a popular spot and we have done several live Facebook streams from it. Unfortunately, no reds have been shown unlike previous years where you may have had two or three reds on each visit. There are however lots of birds and the Jays are very happy to come in for a look and to steal a few monkey nuts or peanuts. The log did suffer damage in the summer storm and a tree fell next to it but completely covering it. The Forest Service did do some clearing of the road/path way and a few weeks later I with another volunteer, cleaned up around the log, opening it up again for a clear view and access. It took around 2-½ hours of cutting and clipping branches. People have also started put feed out on the log and the photographers were very happy

The Pine Marten can regularly be seen on the camera trap at the big bend. Unfortunately, the camera at this site stopped working in November. This camera was one of the first cameras that the group got and was on that site for eleven years so it had done very well. The only problems it ever gave were not its fault, but human errors, such as no SD card, the battery went flat or was not being switched on after a card change.

The forest has seen foot fall drop with the closure of Fairhill Street. I have noted that now, through the week, you might be lucky to meet one person on every three visits to the forest, where before you would have been meeting two or three on each walk through.

The forest is still very attractive to mountain bikers but this is mostly at weekends now with the Glenshesk side of the forest being the main spot. Up to fourteen vans with several bikes have been seen on several Sundays.

The Forest Service installed a new gate at the Fairhill street entrance, this lets them access the railway line with equipment they were unable to fit under the bridge at the start of the railway line. This enabled them to cut back the hedges for the first time. It was much needed and has opened up the railway line so much better as parts were almost single file only- a great job.

In more recent months, especially January, the forest has suffered a lot of damage with the storms we have had with many trees down across the road/path in the forest. We have been reporting these to the Forest Service and they have been very quick to deal with the issues.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenshesk/Carey.



Two Kits at one of my feeders.

I have several feeders spread between Glenshesk and Carey and I have Red Squirrels visiting most of them, as well as Pine Martens being regular visitors to the Glenshesk monitoring sites. The local people are very good at keeping me informed if they see a red or grey. Unfortunately, we lost a few reds on the roads in Glenshesk last summer, even with the reduction in traffic due to the road being closed. Lately we have had reports of Mink taking up residence on the Carey and the lower end of the Glenshesk rivers. This is worrying as they prey on the natural wildlife, including birds, fish, and mammals. They pose a serious threat to domestic poultry and all ground nesting bird populations are at risk from Mink predation. Thankfully, I have not seen them yet on my camera traps.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

The Curragh.

The Curragh was planted in 2015 and the trees are growing exceptionally well. We have had fruit from some of them already. The two Cherry trees were disappointing in 2024 as they did not provide many Cherries. The previous year was their first year to produce fruit, hopefully this summer we will have a bumper crop.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Murlough Bay.

Mixed planting in small blocks of Oak, Ash, Holly, Beech, Larch, and Scots Pine, mostly along rock faces and sheltered coves. We have had a monitoring site here since 2016 when the first grey was seen and removed.

Murlough has normally two sets of monitoring over the year. This year one was used for the Ulster Wildlife Red Grey Pine Marten Survey and the other was just for our general monitoring, in all no red or greys were seen but a one-off visit by a Pine Marten was seen.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Torr Head.

The site near Torr Head is a small slip of trees, less than three acres in size that stretch from the sea up to the cliff face. At its widest point it would be about thirty meters and at its thinnest point it would be four to seven meters. The trees are a mix of Ash, Oak, Hazel, Holly and Sycamore. The area has a small stream subject to rainfall that runs through it. You would drive past it before knowing you had. This year like Murlough Bay it was monitored twice, once as part of the Ulster Wildlife Red Grey Pine Marten Survey and the other time, our general monitoring. The camera was out of service for three months, no reds were seen on the second set up and this was strange as there were at least three reds on site previously. Thankfully no greys were seen but there are at least three maybe four different Pine Marten spotted, and a Stoat was picked up on the camera as well, that is the first stoat we have picked up on this site. There are still many Deer about Torr Head.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenmakeeran

There are two feeders at extreme ends of a medium-sized copse of deciduous trees which runs along the Glenmakeeran River. The copse is a mix of native deciduous trees with a lot of Larch throughout. There are several Red Squirrels in the vicinity which attend both feeders regularly though more frequently at the lower, or northerly, end. A Pine Marten is also a regular attendee at both feeders and is not the same animal that visits the Ballypatrick site which is approximately a kilometre away. Although

Grey Squirrels have been spotted not far away, within the last 6 months there has not been a sighting in Glenmakeeran.

John McGill, GRSG Volunteer.

Ballypatrick Forest.

The feeder is in the vicinity of the forest and is surrounded by non-native Spruce by at least 100 metres on all sides. The feeder is very frequently attended by a Pine Marten and for the first time this year it was attended by a Red Squirrel which has returned several times since its initial visit. The feed is usually peanuts though, meat and eggs are put out too as the Pine Marten is the main visitor.

John McGill, GRSG Volunteer.

Cregagh Wood, Local Nature Reserve.

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 council, this then became the first Nature Reserve of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council. The Red Squirrel Hide was funded by the NGO Challenge fund and has been a great asset for us and the wood with the GRSG using it for events and photographers using it by booking.



This year was a strange year for the woods and its wildlife. The cold wet summer resulted in most of the nest boxes being used, but from cleaning out boxes in October about 95% had dead chicks or adults and chicks. This was the worst year to date for deaths in the nest boxes.

Our feed sites were all active up to September/October and then after that we had very little activity. At the Hide we had nothing up to mid-January and this was very odd because normally the Hide would be active from late November onwards with red numbers up to 8-10 squirrels. Red numbers around the Hide currently are a maximum of three reds at any one time. It may be possible that we have had a Red Squirrel population crash in Cregagh wood but, the woods around Cregagh Wood are still very active with reds.

Two greys were spotted in July by a photographer who used to visit parts of the woods well away from the public paths and in an area where, we did not have cameras. We did not pick these greys up at any of the four camera trap sites we had. I moved a camera about to different areas to try and find these greys. In August they were seen at the Hide and all feeders were removed; however, they were not coming at any set time or pattern to try and remove them. It was December before they started to come regularly, so trapping started. Due of the risk of reds being caught, all traps were only positioned and set while I was in the Hide. This took a total of eight hours, approximately, two hours on four different days. On some of these sittings the grey did not appear; when he did, he was happy to investigate the traps and was eventually removed. A second grey had been spotted, killed on the road not too far from the woods.

The resident Pine Martin has been active across the woods with one visiting the Hide every second or third night. This year we did not pick up any Pine Martin Kits and this is strange, but that is not to say they were not in other parts of the woods.

The Greater Spotted Woodpeckers are still very active but their activity around the feeders had stopped until February when they started to come back. There are several Deer in the woods with one actual being picked up on a Facebook live stream; this was a male and the first time on a live stream. We also had several Bramblings over February among the twenty to thirty chaffinches.



Photo taken by Dermot McVeigh

Over the year we had a few issues with people walking dogs through the front of the Hide while photographers were using it, chasing away wildlife. Thankfully this did not put them off visiting again.

We took the step of installing a Dead Hedge, which was supposed to have been done through other partnerships but never took place. The Dead Hedge has worked well in stopping people walking through and we have seen, with the use of the camera traps, that we are having fewer dogs in and around the front of the Hide. We are also seeing that it is benefitting the wild life as well; the small birds are using it for cover when the Sparrow Hawk comes through and we see the reds using it to shelter when it rains. Like many woods it has also suffered with the storms. Many trees have been damaged across the wood, one of the Bat boxes we had installed was hit by a large branch and when I looked in it, it had a Bat inside it. The Bat was a Leisler's Bat one of our largest Bats; the box was then put back up. The tree our Pine Martin Den box was on, put up as part of the same project, had been damaged. We have looked at the camera trap and there was no activity around the Den box so it will have to be moved and installed in a different location to enable the Pine Martins to use it.

Bird box, clean out, in Cregagh Wood also took place as part of Squirreltober.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glendun.

As well as the Glenmona and Cregagh Wood, there are three additional monitoring sites; these are along the river Dun on private ground within Glendun. These sites have cameras as they are near areas that have been, in the past, part of control programs. One of these sites was used for the Ulster Wildlife Red Grey Pine Marten survey. We have had no Greys in these sites. The reason for this may be because we have been very vocal about the illegal release of greys that we suspected a few years ago. This has been fantastic news; it may also be because Pine Martens are moving through many of these sites.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenmona Feed site and Playground.

This has been a good year for the Glenmona Red Squirrels. Most people who have walked within the grounds have seen a red at one time or another. The feeders are regularly refilled by our volunteer, Carole O'Hara and this keeps the reds coming to the feeders.

Cushendall and Cottage Wood.

The Cottage Wood has been quite similar this year to last year. The feeders are all pretty busy; again another red was run over on the Shore Road but no others reported. The feeders all had to be lifted further up the trees for a few months in the autumn due to damage being caused by fireworks. Most of the feeders have been replaced and again the old feeders are refurbished and handed out to residents who expressed an interest in having one.

Laurence McAlister, GRSG Volunteer.

Laragh Lodge and lower Glenariff Forest Park

The squirrel feeders at the Laragh lodge provided a mixed bag this year. At times they were really busy and at other times were really slow. However at every visit at least one or more squirrels were seen. A few new feeders were erected and all the boxes have been replaced with new ones. The old feeders were tidied up and given out to people in Glenariff who had expressed an interest. Unfortunately few Red Squirrels are still being found run over on the Glenariff Road. The storm felled a lot of trees in the Forest Park but luckily none of the feeders were damaged. Several Pine Marten have been seen around

the Forest Park and I had one report of a Grey Squirrel but despite traps being deployed no grey was caught.

Laurence Mc Alister, GRSG Volunteer.

Glenariff and Parkmore Forest Park

I have 12 feeders in and around the Forest Park which I regularly monitor, maintain and keep topped up with feed.



I have had the pleasure of spotting the Pine Marten twice within the Forest Park, which hopefully will deter Greys from visiting.

Paul McHugh, GRSG Volunteer.

Carlough.

It has been a relatively quiet year in the Carlough area for the GRSG. Straidkelly Nature Area to the south of the village has continued to be a thriving environment for our Reds thanks to the work of local conservationists. With the overgrown walks through the woods opened, more visitors can access this area and see nature close up. Numerous sightings of Red Squirrels in this area bodes well for their future.

Cranny Falls and Gortin Quarry Nature Reserve is another thriving area for our red population with many feeders spread across this area and many of the residents also provided with feeders. Sightings of reds has increased massively in recent years. A report of a sighting of a Pine Martin near Cranny Falls in August also bodes well for the biodiversity of the area.



Junior helper Ben, checking out feeders at Cranny Fall

Gabriel McAuley, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenarm.



Colin Urwin checking and refilling the Red Squirrel Feeders in Glenarm Forest after Storm Éowyn.

Storm Éowyn did fell a lot of trees throughout Glenarm Forest... but as we know, it is that time of the year for storms anyway. Thankfully the reds in Glenarm Forest were not put out in any way, they are still as active as always.



Red Squirrel in Glenarm Forest by Joe Crawford.

Colin Urwin, GRSG Volunteer.

GRSG Rangers Reports.

These are GRSG Volunteers who have committed to giving extra time to actively pursue Red Squirrel conservation work on behalf of the Group. They are badged representatives of the Group, having a sound knowledge of both Red and Grey Squirrels. They can train volunteers in Grey Squirrel Control (as a non-native alien species) and have knowledge of the legislation governing wildlife protection and animal welfare. They can co-ordinate volunteer activity and expand public knowledge on Red Squirrel conservation and Grey Squirrel control, as well as having an understanding and experience of practical conservation.

Gabriel McAuley's Report.

On May Bank holiday weekend, we attended the spring fair at Glenmona in Cushendun. Our presentation was well received by all the visitors.

In August we had our information stand at the Heart of the Glens Festival in Cushendall, another very well attended event.

In November Laragh Lodge hosted our Annual Quiz. This was another excellent night's entertainment with eleven teams competing fiercely to claim bragging rights as "Top Dog." Many thanks to the staff and management of Laragh Lodge for their assistance in making the quiz such a success, and their sponsorship of the top raffle prize.

Gabriel McAuley, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Daniel McAfee's Report.

This year has been a busy year for me as the booking of the Hide mainly goes through me. The site is stocked once a week, like most of my feed sites, but if I know there is a booking I try and do the feeding 2-3 days before hand, if possible, to ensure the wildlife are still very active with food being there. Depending on circumstances, this can mean two visits to the site to make sure all is well.

I have been lucky enough to be dealing with a mix of novices, semi-professional and professional photographers from all over N. Ireland and Ireland; many send us their photos to use on our Facebook page. During all visits to the Hide, people are asked to log their visit in the Hide Log Book and record what they see while there.

Over the year we had a few issues with people walking dogs in front of the Hide while photographers were using it, chasing away wildlife. Thankfully this did not put them off visiting again. We took the step of installing a dead hedge. This was to have been done through other partnerships but that never took place. Gerard and myself did this work. The dead hedge has worked well in stopping people walking through and we have seen, through the use of the camera traps, that we are having fewer dogs in and around the front of the Hide. We are also seeing that it is benefitting the wildlife as well; the small birds are using it for cover when the Sparrow Hawk comes through and we see the reds using it for shelter when it rains.

In October, I started to clean out bird nest boxes. October is the best time of year and cleaning the boxes out encourages the birds to use them next year. Unfortunately, this year has not been a good breeding season for our small birds and this was clear to see. We found a few of the boxes had dead chicks and one had a dead adult.

In the spring one of the earlier storms caused the "Log" in Ballycastle Forest to suffer some damage when a tree fell taking two others with it. I went up and cleared as much of the Log as I could and opened the area up again, as this is a favourite spot for several professional and hobby photographers. I also had several events over Squirreltober and had conversations with the BBC over October. I had also been contacted regarding an item for Red Squirrel Appreciation Day. This was printed in the Sunday Life and the Belfast Telegraph. Katie Bell from Ulster Wildlife had put them in touch with the Group and it was passed on to me.

Grey Squirrel trapping has been low for me but in Cushendun I had a Grey around the Hide which made it difficult to trap, so I had to install and monitor the traps while on site until the Grey was captured. Thankfully this did not take too long.

I also, on behalf of the Group, took part in the Ulster Wildlife Red Grey Pine Marten Survey covering twenty sites within the Glens and along the buffer zone; no Greys were seen on the camera traps.

I have also been in touch with the Forest Service quite a bit this year regarding storm damage and they have been more than helpful in dealing with the issues I have reported to them.

Daniel McAfee, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Gerard Mc Caughan's Report.

I quiet year for me in the sense that I was only involved in looking for two Grey Squirrels. We got a lot of reports of sightings from throughout N. Ireland via our hot line which I dealt with, responding to all of them and passing on the information to the relevant Red Squirrel Group and/or CEDaR as necessary. I was involved in the erection of the Dead Hedge at the Hide which I have added to as required.

There were not as many new volunteers to be looked after/trained this year, which is unfortunate. I think most small groups are finding that it is hard to find volunteers who are willing to give up their time, regardless of the good cause and less are willing to take on jobs with responsibility. A sign of the times we live in.



One of my trail cameras captured this athlete in full flight at one of my monitoring stations. She must have moved the camera on her outgoing journey.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Equipment Report.

We were very fortunate this year in that we were able to benefit from two, Rural Micro Capital Grant Schemes. These grants are provided by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and administered by North Antrim Community Network (NACN). In both grants we were able to get replacement equipment, and some new equipment, all to help us with our task of helping Red Squirrels within the Glens of Antrim. As always, I would like to thank the NACN for all their help this year and on previous years. In fact, it went so smoothly that you would not have known that Sandy Wilson had retired from the NACN office. As with any grant, the paper work needs to be accurate and all completed on line, time consuming but very beneficial to our Group. All the equipment we got, was marked and distributed where it was required.



One of our cameras with the Solar panel attached.

The normal Annual Equipment Audit was carried out at the start of the New Year; Thankfully all the returns came in quickly this year, so I was able to get all the paperwork ready in good time for our AGM and the Charity Commission Report.

We did lose a “Red Squirrel, Slow “sign from the lower end of the Cregagh Wood on the Loughareema Road. Someone decided to take it home with them, which is disappointing. We are looking into getting it replaced.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger and Equipment Caretaker.

Squirreltober Report 2024.

This year has been another busy Squirreltober not as busy as some but there were a few factors that restricted us from doing more as we could not commit to dates. We had been contacted by two different BBC programmes who were interested in coming to the glens to film reds. The first made contact in late September with plans to come in mid-October after several on-site Zoom meetings in early October. Cost cutting from the BBC meant they were not able to come and they would film in Scotland instead, very disappointing. The second came days after finding out that the first people were not coming, this time it was for the BBC Springwatch team for their Winter Watch programme. They wanted to come to N. Ireland to see what they could cover, and they wanted to possibly film Red Squirrels. We had a few phone calls and members of their team came to N. Ireland where they visited several locations. I met with them in Cregagh Wood and gave them a tour of the woods. They were impressed with the Hide and location, thinking it would be ideal for what they were looking for. Several days went past and they got back to me saying they were not able to come to N. Ireland after all, again because of the cost, and thanked me for my help. Unfortunately, this all impacted on planning things, dates were lost that could have been used for Squirreltober events.

The events that did take place went well. We did have a few last-minute cancellations on two of the walks but two of our other walks, one of our partnership walks with the Storytelling festival and the other, the Ballycastle Red Squirrel Safari, were cancelled because of a weather warning. We had been very lucky with the weather apart from these days. This was the first year that NO squirrels were seen on any of our walks but this was down to the volume of wild foods that were available through October.

5th October, Cottage Wood Red Squirrel Safaris.



Our first Squirrel Safaris for Squirreltober. The forecast was bad and we had a few families who had booked, but decided to cancel because of the weather. Thankfully, Robin and dad, Andrew, risked it and the poor weather did not materialise. The Cottage Wood was quiet. We did not see any Red Squirrels this time but we did lots of tree identification, found Acorns, Sweet Chestnut nuts and lots of other seeds and berries in the woods.

Robin did get to meet our red and grey display squirrels and he went home with some “wet day activity sheets” for when the rain does come.

13th October, Cregagh Wood Red Squirrel Safari.

Big thanks to Fiona, Adam, Edel, Seamus and Maeve for coming along on our Red Squirrel Safari of Cregagh Wood. This was their first visit to the wood. Unfortunately, no squirrels were seen, the wood in general was quiet but there were lots of Acorns and Toadstools to find. We did hear the buzzards and ravens over the wood and at our visit to the Hide, we saw some of the woodlands birds that stop for a feed.

The weather over all was kind although slightly windy, but everyone had a great morning.



14th October, Kilraught's Boys Brigade talk.

Squirrel Ranger, Daniel was out with Kilraught's Boys Brigade 14th October, giving a talk about Red Squirrel conservation and the work that the Glens Red Squirrel Group have been doing over the last 16 years. Daniel delivered a talk to all sections and the boys were very interested. Thanks for the invitation to come and talk.





Daniel with Chris Frew and Adam Brogan.

14th October, Nest Box Clean, No 1.



Over October in Cregagh Wood our Rangers started to clean out bird nest boxes. October is the best time of year for this, and by cleaning the boxes out it encourages bird to use them next year. Unfortunately, this year has not been a good breeding season for our small birds and this was clear to see. We found a few of the boxes had dead chicks and one had a dead adult bird. Sad to see but, due to the very poor weather this summer, we did expect it. There were still several more boxes to do over the following weeks so that next year's birds could be given more nesting opportunities.

18th October, Ranger Daniel visited the Ballycastle Men's Shed.

Squirrel Ranger Daniel visited the Ballycastle Men's Shed, as part of our engagement with groups over Squirreltober in raising awareness about our native Reds and the issues they face. It was a great night with much interest.



19th October, Story Telling Walk in Glenariff Forest Park.

Over the past few years, the Glens Red Squirrel Group has partnered with the Glens Storytelling Festival to offer story walks in local forests. This year, storyteller Janice Witherspoon took part in a story walk in Glenariff Forest Park with Forest Service guides Lynn and Petra. It was a bright sunny day and while no reds were sighted, the attendees learned a lot about our native reds and heard some nature-themed tales.



Great morning for today's walk in Glenariff Forest in partnership with the Glens Storytelling Festival



20th October, Story Telling Walk in Glenarm Forest.

Sadly, due to severe weather warnings the second Story Walk in Glenarm Forest had to be cancelled as the Forest Service closed all forests. Hopefully this partnership with the Glens Storytelling Festival will be continued in years to come.

21st October, Log work.

In the spring, during one of the earlier storms, "The Log" in Ballycastle Forest suffered some damage when a tree fell taking two others with it. For anyone who is new to liking or following us "The Log" is a feed site where we have done several Facebook live streams. It has been very active with squirrels and a mix of woodland birds. The posts are still on our page to view.

We had several professional photographers and some hobby photographers very disappointed in this as many used the Log for photos. Two of our volunteers went up and cleared as much of the Log as they could and opened the area up again. They put out some treats for the birds and squirrels so we hope they will start to visit again.

We will hopefully have some live streams this winter.

23rd October, School Walk with Ballycastle Integrated PS and St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's PS



Squirrel Ranger Daniel took P5 classes from Ballycastle Integrated Primary School & Nursery Unit and St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School on a Squirrel Safari. It was a little bit different this year as walking access to Ballycastle Forest from Fairhill Street was closed, so we did the Tow River Walk.

On the walk, there were lots of plants and trees to see. We covered grassland habitats and some new topics, such as Swifts, as we were able to see Swift Boxes on the Council offices.

"P5 had a great morning meeting up with their friends from St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School. We were so lucky to have our very own ECO Teacher of the year, lead our walk. Daniel taught us so much about the trees, plants and wildlife which are literally outside our school. Thanks Daniel - we had a super morning."

From Ballycastle Integrated P.S & Nursery Unit

24th October, Live Red Squirrel Stream from Ballycastle Forest Log.

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or to see the wildlife that may be about at that time.

25th October, Quiz Night

Great quiz last night, eleven teams. A big thanks to Tom for his assistance and special thanks to the management and staff of Laragh Lodge who also donated a bottle of Bushmills for the raffle. A fantastic night and all good fun. Well, done to “Rusty Nuts” winners on the night.

26th October, Ballycastle Red Squirrel Safari

Due to a weather warning this was called off.

27th October, Hide Opening day.

Marked as the last of our activities for Squirreltober 2024 with our Hide open day. Unfortunately, no squirrels were spotted by any of our visitors, but there had been a passing red that some may have seen on our live feed.



BBC Programme Meetings.

Over October Daniel had phone call meetings, Zoom meetings and a face-to-face meeting with two different sets of programmers for the BBC. Phone and Zoom meetings were with Hamza Yassin about wildlife in different seasons they wanted reds in autumn. After a few meetings they decided it would cost too much to come to N. Ireland; they would still cover Red Squirrels, but in Scotland.

Then Daniel had an on-site meeting in Cregagh Wood with members of the Spring Watch Team for their upcoming “Winter Watch”. They were really impressed by the Hide and how easy it was to access. Daniel took them on a walk through the woods and some of the locations in the woods that may be suitable for getting footage of wildlife or for installing equipment for recording. They were amazed to hear about the large variety of wildlife that could be found in the woods.

Unfortunately, Daniel was informed that, due to the cost of coming to N. Ireland, the Spring Watch Team were no longer using it for any filming. This was very disappointing.

Squirreltober Thanks.

A **BIG** thanks to all who helped or took part in this year's Squirreltober. Thanks to the Forest Service educational guides, Liz and Petra, for assistance on walks and to The Glens Storytelling Guild for entertaining us on many of our walks with their very interesting stories. To our GRSG volunteers who helped and keep feeders stocked over the year to support our Reds and to make sure that our visitors get the chance to see Red Squirrels. To the Armstrong Storytelling Trust, Kilraught's BB, Pupils and Staff of St. Patrick's and St Brigid's PS, Ballycastle Integrated PS, Laragh Lodge, Ballycastle's Men's Shed. The News Letter, Belfast Telegraph, the Ballymena/Coleraine/Ballycastle Chronicle, Ulster Wildlife, UK Squirrel Accord and other groups who helped put items out on their social media during the months about our events. A Big Thank You to all and we hope to see you all again next year

Forest Service Northern Ireland and GRSG Partnership.

From the formation of the Group, we have worked with the Forest Service Northern Ireland. This partnership in our early years was vital to the work we did and still do in the Glens. Forestry Service properties (Clare Wood, Capecastle, Broughammon, Ballycastle, Coolaveely, Breen, Ballypatrick, Glenariff and Glenarm) offer an opportunity for members of the public to access large areas to walk and run in and the opportunity to meet its wildlife. This is where our feeding sites, give people the chance to see our native Red Squirrels that make the forest's their home. This partnership has allowed us to highlight the fact that "Yes" we do have Red Squirrel in The Glens.



An issue we found was that people did not know we had Red Squirrels in Northern Ireland, let alone in the Glens, but through our work with the Forest Service N. Ireland and within their forest's we are educating the young and the not so young about NOT only Red Squirrels but also about many of the plants and animals that call these areas their homes.

The Forest Service N. Ireland have supported us with feed for two of the sites that we operate in across the Glens; the two sites supported are Glenariff and Glenarm. We are very grateful for this support as feed is a large outgoing for the Group and one of the most important parts of the work we do. By providing supplementary feed for adults and young reds, we have found that Red Squirrel numbers are increasing and so they are expanding to new areas.

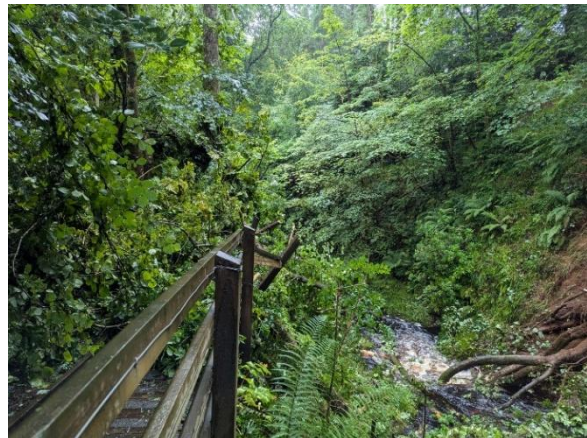
Increasing Red Squirrel numbers is linked to their overall health. Our volunteers do keep a close check on our squirrels' conditions. Part of this good health is down to very little encroachment of Grey Squirrels within the Forest Service N. Ireland properties that we work in. We believe there are several reasons for this, one is because of the public's and the Forestry staff's vigilance as they are quick to report to us any greys they see. A second reason is because most of the Forest Service N. Ireland properties in the Glens are home to Pine Martens. The presence of Pine Martens does have a negative impact on Grey Squirrel behaviour and abundance in an area. The concentration of Pine Martens in Forest Service N. Ireland properties varies from property to property but we do pick them up when monitoring and going about our work.

The Forest Service N. Ireland staff that we have made links with within the Glens area are a vital asset to the work we do and in assisting us with that work, whether it is topping up feed bins, informing us of work taking place or assisting with activities. We must give a BIG THANKS to Forest Service NI Educational Guides, Liz O'Connor and Petra, who have assisted with education walks that we have

held over the last year. Their knowledge and manner of portraying this knowledge to those on the walk is brilliant. They are both a true asset to the Forest Service N. Ireland. We also must thank Jim Marshall. Jim has been key in our planning for setting up sites in areas by ensuring no works are planned that could impact on equipment, etc. We also provide feedback to Jim on any issues we may find on our weekly duties in the Forest Service N. Ireland properties, such as fallen trees that may cause injury to the public, any damage to roads, fences, bridges and any damage done due to weather or antisocial behaviour such as fly tipping etc. This works well for us and, we hope, also for the Forestry Service N. Ireland too. We also want to thank the men in Glenariff Forestry Yard. They are more than willing to assist and they keep an eye on the reds in the yard as well. They are all very helpful and we are very grateful.

Overall, we see this partnership going from strength to strength for the protection of Red Squirrels in "The Glens" and we are very grateful for it. Over this year we have seen more work taking place across many of the forests in the Glens.

This year Forest Service NI carried out some much-needed work in Ballycastle Forest to replace a gate and open access to the railway line for equipment they were unable to fit under the bridge at the start of the railway line. This enabled them to cut back the hedges for the first time. It was much needed and has opened the railway line up so much better as parts were almost single file only; it has made a great difference.



The last few months have been very difficult for the Forest Service N. Ireland with the amount of storm damage across all their forests. We have been reporting any trees down in the areas we work in and the Forest Service N. Ireland have been very proactive in removing any fallen trees. We are happy that we can help in this way.

2024-25 Monthly Reports

April 2024.

6th April, Hide Open Morning.



The Hide was open every Saturday morning in April for people to come and enjoy the wildlife in Cregagh Woods. This year we were very busy and the local Red Squirrel and birds kept us all entertained.



13th April, Hide Open Morning

We had a fantastic turn out over April and everyone who attended went home smiling!! The squirrels and other wildlife were more than happy to put on a show and did not disappoint.





20th April, Hide Open Morning





Taken at the Hide by Bobby McGlade

27th April, Hide Open Morning

A few of the people who were lucky to see a Woodpecker drumming in front of the Hide and a number of Reds Squirrels running around. Thanks to Charlene who was at the Hide this week simply to watch wildlife for the first time. She did take a few phone photos. We love hearing feedback and Charlene was not disappointed.

"O my goodness never a dull moment - a Great Spotted Woodpecker was on a feeder and a Red Squirrel was peeking in at me as soon as I opened the hatch. Three reds were feeding when they all stopped and did not move a muscle. I did not know what had alarmed them until a Buzzard swooped right over the top of us. The Blue Tit is tending a nest straight in front of the Hide, the Jays and Wood Pigeons were around too, always something to look at. Great spot!"



Editor's Note. The Hide is open to anyone that wants access to it. To access the Hide, WhatsApp to 07706903024 (messages only – no calls). There is no set charge for the Hide but we do ask for a donation. This can be done with the collection box in the Hide or on line through our website via PayPal, www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com (we do prefer this if possible).

AGM 2024

A big thank you to all who attended and heard Ross McIlwrath's, from Ulster Wildlife, talk on Barn Owls as part of our AGM. The talk was fantastic, telling us what to look out for, what can be done to help Barn Owls and the importance of recording sights of these birds and even their pellets. It was a great night.

For more information on NI Barn owls, visit <https://www.ulsterwildlife.org/barn-owls> or to report sightings go to <https://www.nationalmuseumsni.org/cedar>



Chair Gabriel and committee members with Ross McIlwrath, Priority Species Officer Ulster Wildlife

1st April,

13th April, Dead hedge at Hide.



After the Hide was originally erected, it was proposed that some form of barrier be erected between the area in front of the Hide and the path going up the side. A Dead hedge was the preferred solution and was to be erected at one point. Unfortunately, this never happened for one reason or another. Lately

we have had a little unsocial behaviour disturbing some of our regular photographers. It was decided that the Dead hedge would need to be installed.

GRSG Rangers Daniel and Gerard erected two Dead hedges. One at the side of the Hide to direct walkers up the path and away from the front of the Hide and another further up the path to direct those walkers who were walking down towards the Hide, again, keeping them away from the front of the Hide.



May 2024.

5th May, Cushendun Big Arts Weekend.



Chair Gabriel, Vice Chair Liz and Ranger Daniel did the information table in Glenmona House it was a busy morning with lots of interest. Many locals reporting seeing reds in and around the village.



Gabriel McAuley and Liz Wier, hard at work.



9th May, 4,500 Facebook “likes” Milestone reached.

We had reached just over 4,500 likes on Facebook. This is fantastic!! it is a fantastic way of showcasing what we do and it is a free way to promote the work and the Glens Biodiversity.



17th May, a Long-eared Owl

A first for us, a Long-eared Owl visiting one of our feeders. We know that the Glens have Owls but we have never in our sixteen years of using trail cameras picked one up in or around our feeders. They are fantastic birds!



20th May, Invasive Species Week

Across this week on Facebook, we highlighted some of the invasive species that are in the Glens. What they look like, the impact they have and what should be done to deal with them. Grey squirrels were highlighted and people encouraged to report what they seen to us.

31st May, Where there is a will there is a way.

We have had some people who say the Hide is too far out of the way, I cannot drive etc. This is true, the Hide is secluded but not impossible to get to and it is right next to the road to provide ease of access once you get there. We have a regular visitor to the Hide who does not drive and lives in Belfast. He books the Hide and travels down in all weathers. He kindly gave us his travel plan to show us **where there is a will and a love of nature there is a way to get out and enjoy it**. The following is his travel plan.

A visit to the Glens Red Squirrel Hide from Belfast using public transport.

Dep. Lanyon Place 07.20

Arr. Ballymena 08.00

Dep. Ballymena 08.45 (service 150) Check weekend operational services

Arr. Cushendun 09.45

I get off the bus one stop before Cushendun and walk about 1.5 miles to the Hide. The last part of the walk is quite steep.

Arrive at the Hide by 10.30

Leave the Hide at 15.30

Dep. Cushendun 16.45

Can return to Belfast from Ballymena by train or by bus.

This is the journey of a true nature lover.

June 2024.

4th June, Live from the Hide.

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or the wild life that may be there at the time.

24th June, Disappointing news.



A dead red was found on one of our feeders in Glenarm Forest. It looked healthy and we suspected that it was placed on the feeder by a passing member of the public.

Our Chair, Gabriel McAuley was able to retrieve the dead red. It looked like a healthy male with no evidence of injury. The red had been dead for at least two days and had been set on the feeder.

We asked the public via Facebook to keep an eye out for any sick or sickly Red Squirrels.

We also contacted a member of Glenarm Castles's Red Squirrel volunteers in case they also came across any sick squirrels.

August 2024.

2nd August. Thank you letter from Kate Mc Dowell.

"There is something so calming about sitting in the middle of the woods watching wildlife just do what they do

Some of you might think, I am mad, sitting for 5 1/2 hours watching Red Squirrels and birds, but you know what, just sitting listening to the birds singing, the Woodpecker pecking on the trees and the Red Squirrels throwing the nuts from the trees just gives you time to escape the world.

And at the end of the day, you can capture some good pictures."



Once again thanks to the guys who look after Cregagh Wood for letting me use the Hide on Wednesday morning

[Katie Mc Dowell Photography](https://www.facebook.com/katiemcdowellphotography/)

<https://www.facebook.com/katiemcdowellphotography/>

12th August, Family Wild Life Safari in Cottage Wood.



A Big thank you to everyone who attended our Wildlife Safari in the Cottage Wood lead by our Squirrel Ranger Daniel. The weather was fantastic! We saw and learnt lots of things about the plants and animals that call the Cottage Wood their home.

Unfortunately, we did not see any Red Squirrel but everyone now knows where our feeders are and can look out for reds using them.

We did see Swifts, Swallows and House Martins, we were able to catch Bees and Hoverflies and found out how much we need these important insects and we saw where the Cottage Wood's Bats have their homes.

We had fun gathering leaves, twigs, feathers and lots of other things.

All the children were very interested and so were the adults. The children got an activity book home with colouring sheets and lots of different Identification sheets for trees, bees and butterflies so they can have their own safaris at home or the next time they visit the Cottage Wood.



14th August, Lark in the Park

We attended Lark in the Park as part of the Heart of the Glens festival. Our Chair, Gabriel McAuley was there along with other volunteers to highlight our native Red Squirrels.

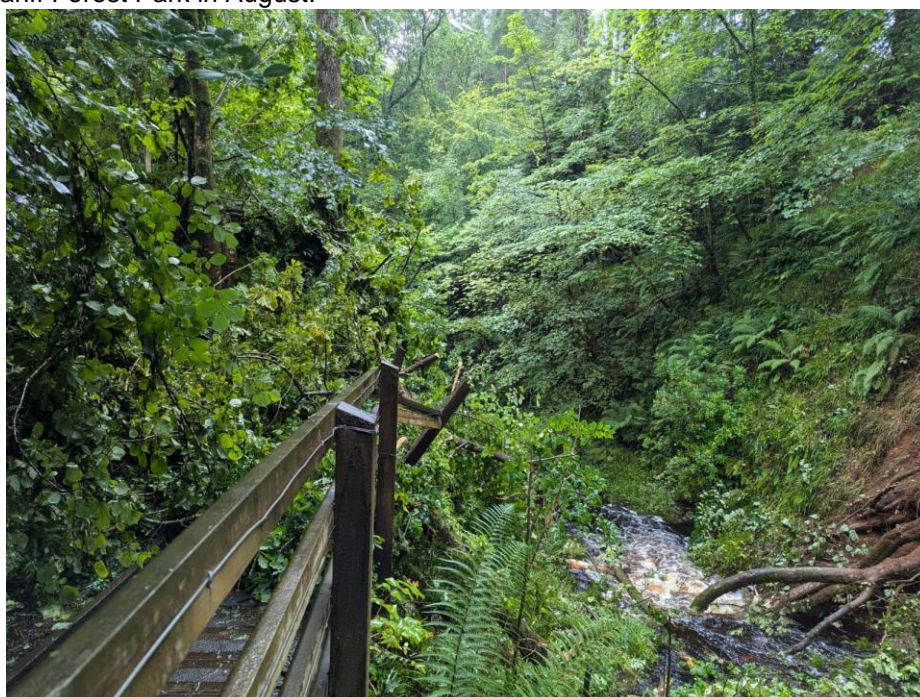




Gabriel at the Red Squirrel Information Table at Lark in the Park.

26th August, Storm Damage

The summer weather has been far from sunny this year. The last few weeks have been more fitted to November than August and this is something we would not have been expecting, trees down and paths closed in Glenariff Forest Park in August.



28th August, Cushendall Men's Shed.

Cushendall Men's Shed spent a few hours building a load of new feeders for the Red Squirrels in the Glens. Here they are taking a well-earned rest during the construction work.



September 2024.

21st September, Micro Grant Funding.

As part of a Micro Grant, we were able to get funding for a few new items. We replaced an old laptop that was badly out of date and bought these Squirrel Proof Bird Feeders. Why would a squirrel group need Squirrel Proof Bird Feeders? For us the answer was simple. It was to stop the squirrels getting hurt if they were eating from standard peanut feeders, all squirrels can cut their mouths on the sharp wire of bird feeders. If there were greys and they did find the older feeders, they could also cut themselves and then if a red was to come along and use it, this could be a point of contact for Squirrel Pox and we did not want this.

So, through the funding we got four Squirrel Proof Feeders and they have worked really well.





October 2024.

See **full report** on the **Squirreltober events** earlier in this document.

1st October, 10 years ago!



This date 10 years ago, marked the release of captive breed Red Squirrel from Belfast Zoo to Glenarm Estate. A First for Red Squirrel conservation here in Northern Ireland. These were the first of many young reds, born in the Zoo, to have been released in several locations across Northern Ireland. There

are still active Red Squirrels in Glenarm estate thanks to a team of volunteers there. You can see photos on the Glenarm Red Squirrel Facebook page. We also have a very active population of reds in Glenarm Forest thanks to the hard work of our local volunteers. As autumn moves in, Glenarm Forest is one of the best for spotting squirrel Dreys.

Newspaper Report; Glens Red Squirrel Group in Northern Ireland First!

In recent weeks the Glens Red Squirrel Group and Belfast Zoo have played a vital role in a monumental achievement for Northern Ireland Wildlife.

Four Red Squirrels, born at Belfast Zoo, were recently released into the wild at Glenarm Estate. Belfast Zoo first became home to Red Squirrels in 2012, when Taisie, Shesk and Oisin arrived at 'Red Squirrel Nook', from the Glens of Antrim, with the help of the Glens Red Squirrel Group. The aim of the Red Squirrel Nook was predominantly education and interaction.

However, from the beginning, the hope was that the squirrels would be sufficiently content in the nook to breed. One kitten was born in 2013 and in 2014 Belfast Zoo has been celebrating the arrival of six more squirrel kittens.

The Glens Red Squirrel Group were asked by the NIEA to facilitate a "Soft Release" in Glenarm. Zoo Curator and chairperson of the Belfast Zoo native species group, Alyn Cairns, explains, *"Here at the Zoo, we care for and conserve a variety of endangered species from across the world. However, we are equally delighted to be playing an active role in the conservation of our own wildlife."* Since the release of the four Red Squirrels, volunteers from the Glens Red Squirrel Group have continued to monitor the animals, demonstrating their commitment and passion for such a charismatic native species and the project. Glens Red Squirrel Group chair, Daniel McAfee stated, *"The release was a very rewarding experience for all our very dedicated group members who took on feeding and monitoring of the squirrels while they were settling into the new surroundings. We are glad to see such a successful breeding programme at Belfast Zoo, and the time, effort and research that the Zoo team has and continues to put into the squirrels. This is a great example of how Zoos can help local wildlife as well as exotic and endangered animals. We have been grateful to be part of the first captive release of Red Squirrels in Northern Ireland and the first native species release for the Belfast Zoo."*

November 2024

1st November Monday bat box

One of our Rangers was out checking what damage may have been caused by the weekend storm.

Thankfully in the Glens there was minimal damage. However, one of our Bat boxes in Cregagh Wood took a slap from a branch. We looked in quickly and spotted it had a resident, which appears to be a Leisler's Bat. So, it was back to the car to get the ladder and up it went.



Bat
box

2nd November, Nest Box clean 2

We got out again and cleaned out a few more nest boxes. It was a sad task to do as most of the boxes had dead birds, one box had two dead adults and four dead chick's it was so hard to see.

29th November, Dribbly Yak Christmas Card

Christmas is coming and we would like to thank Dribbly Yak.

Some people like to send Charity Christmas cards. This year, Dribbly Yak, an eco-conscious wood engraving company based in Glenarm, are selling cards, illustrated with a picture of a Red Squirrel. They are giving our Group a £1 donation for every card sold, and the cards (and tree decorations) look very attractive. Dribbly Yak has their shop in the Glenarm estate. Or order online for next year.

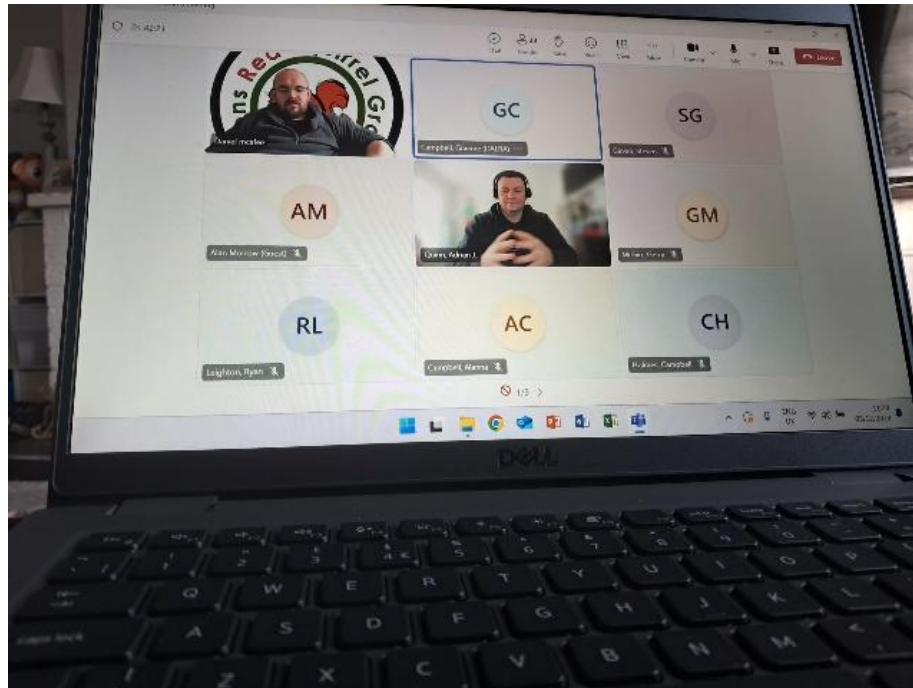
<https://www.thedribblyyak.com/product-page/christmas-card-and-bauble>



December 2024.

3rd December, Zoom talk for DAERA Countryside Management Delivery Branch and Agri Environment Management Branch.

Daniel had a zoom talk with DAERA Countryside Management Delivery Branch and Agri Environment Management Branch about the work we have been doing in the Glens to help our Red Squirrels and the conservation projects we have taken part in over the years. There was twenty-three in attendance. It is hoped in the spring of the year, that they will visit Cushendun and will visit some of our sites.



14th December, Live Stream from Hide

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or any wildlife that may be there at the time.

January 2025.

6th January, Animal feed dumped at Glenmona.

We had been contacted by National Trust Rangers regarding this feed that has been placed along the road side into Glenmona. This feed was not placed by any of our volunteers or Rangers. We know this has been someone meaning well, unfortunately the location and amount of feed was not suitable. Along the edge of the road certainly is not suitable as it will put all the wildlife at risk of being run over. The amount of feed in the one location also is too much as it would spoil before it all was eaten. The National Trust Rangers cleaned up the feed and moved it across the site for the wildlife to more suitable locations.



8th January, Live from the log

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or to see wil life that may be there at the time.

14th January, Hide board walk, board replacement.

One of the boards outside the Hide door broke due to rot and was replaced by a Ranger, then a second went. At this stage we examined the complete board walk and decided that the first section needed all the boards replaced before they became a health and safety issue. Laurence then took it upon himself to replace all the boards on this section of the walkway in to Cregagh Wood. The GRSG is not responsible for the boardwalk as this falls under access to the woods. But as the current Biodiversity Officer is on leave, it was not safe to leave it any longer. This enabled the access to Cregagh Woods to stay open otherwise, it would have to be closed and there are only two official access points into the woodland.



16th January, Live Stream from Log.

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or what wildlife that may be there at the time.

21st January, Live Stream from Log.

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or what wildlife that may be there at the time.

21st January, Sunday Life AND Belfast Telegraph Red Squirrel Appreciation Day.

And if you lucky enough to have seen the Sunday Life and Belfast Telegraph you would have seen an article from Jade Beecroft about Red Squirrels here in Northern Ireland. The article featured one of our Squirrel Rangers, Daniel McAfee and Katy Bell from Ulster Wildlife. Big thanks to Jade for writing the article.



28th January, Live Stream from Hide.

These are Facebook live streams that enable anyone to watch what we are doing or to see any wildlife that may be there at the time.

29th January, Happy Birthday US!!

This week we celebrated our 17th birthday!! Yes, 17 years, **we** have been working hard, protecting and maintaining Red Squirrels in the Glens of Antrim. With our small team of volunteers, some new and some long standing. We are all proud of the work we have done over these last 17 years.

We want to thank everyone for their help and support over these years. A big thanks to all our members and volunteers who make the work we do possible.

We hope everyone can get out and about exploring the Glens looking for Red Squirrels and enjoy them, this is what makes it all worthwhile for us.

March 2025

1st March, Lime Park Tree Planting.

The GRSG were able to assist the project by supplying tree guards and bamboos rods to help the trees in their first few years. It will be great to see these trees grow, and the site develop for the community and the biodiversity of the area.



Reflection on our Work over the Years from 2015/2016 to 2024/2025

This is a brief breakdown of the group's year from 2015 to 2025. These hours **do not** include hours that volunteers put into feeding, Grey Squirrel Control, monitoring, survey work, reviewing camera trap footage or committee meetings.

2015-2016

Talks	6	Average 1-1.5 hours	Average total hours 9h
Information table	11	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 36h
Walks	13	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 32.5h
Meetings	11	Average 1-3 hours	Average total hours 33h
Activities	10	Average 1-2.5 hours	Average total hours 25h

Approx. Total 141.5h

2016-2017

Talks	10	Average 1-1.5 hours	Average total hours 10.5h
Information table	6	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 24h
Walks	14	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 35h
Meetings	7	Average 1-3 hours	Average total hours 33h

Approx. Total 87 hours

2017-2018

Talks	6	Average 1-1.5 hours	Average total hours 9h
Information Table	7	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 28h
Walks	12	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 30h
Meetings	3	Average 1-3 hours	Average total hours 7.5h
Activities	2	Average 1-2.5 hours	Average total hours 5 h
Hide openings	5	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 12.5h

Approx. Total 92 hours

2019-2020

Talks	5	Average 1-1.5 hours	Average total hours 7.5h
Information table	5	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 12h
Walks	2	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 5h
Meetings	1	Average 1-3 hours	Average total hours 3h
Hide opening	5	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 12.5h

Approx. Total 40 hours

2020-2021

Walks	5	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 12.5h
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Approx. Total 12 hours

2021-2022

Talks	2	Average 1-1.5 hours	Average total hours 3
Walks	6	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 15
Stalls	1	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 4
Facebook live	4	Average 30min - 1hour	Average total hours 4
Litter picking	1	Average 1 hour	Average total hours 1
Car boot sale	7	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 25

Approx. Total hours 50

2022-2023

Talks	2	Average 1-1.5hours	Average total hours 3
School visit	1	Average 1-1.5hours	Average total hours 1.5
Walks	10	Average 2-2.5hours	Average total hours 25
Stalls	2	Average 3-4 hours	Average total hours 4
Hide openings	6	Average 2-3 hours	Average total hours 18
Facebook live	10	Average 30min - 1-hour	Average total hours 10

Approx. Total hours 61

2023-2024

Talks	5	Average 1-1.5 h	Average total hours 7.5
Walks	8	Average 2-2.5 h	Average total hours 14
Stalls	1	Average 3-4 h	Average total hours 4
Hide opening	5	Average 2-3 h	Average total hours 15
Facebook live	3	Average 0.5-1h	Average total hours 3
Meetings	5	Average 1.5-2h	Average total hours 10

Approx. Total hours 53

2024-2025

Talks	3	Average 1-1.5 h	Average total hours 4.5
Walks	5	Average 2-2.5 h	Average total hours 12.5
Stalls	2	Average 3-4 h	Average total hours 8
Hide opening	5	Average 2-3 h	Average total hours 15
Facebook Live	8	Average 0.5-1h	Average total hours 8
Meetings	6	Average 1.5-2h	Average total hours 12
			Approx. Total hours 60

We thank all those who give their time to enable the group to attend these events over the year.

Without you, this would not be possible.

Thanks to our Supporters.

The Glens Red Squirrel Group wish to thank those groups and organisations who have worked with us and have supported the GRSG in our work over the last year. Forestry Service Northern Ireland, North Antrim Community Network, Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Laragh Lodge Restaurant, Boyles Spar Ballycastle and Carnlough, Ulster Wildlife, NI Direct, William Hamill & Sons, Steels Feed Supplier, Red Squirrel Survival Trust, Ballyeamon Barn, St. Patrick's and St. Bridget's PS, Ballycastle Integrated PS, Cushendun Big Arts Committee, Lark in the Park, Cushendall Development Group, Heart of the Glens Festival Committee, Armstrong Storytelling Trust, Kilraught's Boys Brigade, Ballycastle and Cushendall Men's Shed, Dribbly Yak. LOVE Ballymena Facebook and other Facebook pages for sharing our posts.

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. 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 were not for all the hard work of all these members

We as a group are indebted to the many households throughout the Glens that have Red Squirrel feeders in their gardens. These families maintain and fill the feeders at their own expense. They are our first line of defence, because if they should happen to have a visiting grey, they are on to us quicker than you can say "Glens Red Squirrel Group." We are updated continuously by these people as to what "their" Reds are doing. This frees up our volunteers to do other Red Squirrel conservation work as well as helping to reduce the Group's feed bill.

We would also like to thank all those who made donations to the group over the last few years to help us over this stressful time. Due to the pandemic and its aftermath, we have not been able to gather resources from our usual means and so these donations are helping us through these lean times