



NIC 102100

Glens Red Squirrel Group. Report from June 4th 2014 to May 27th 2015

The group continues to operate Red Feeding sites in Ballycastle Forest, Ballypatrick Forest, Cregagh Wood, Cushendun, Glenmona with the Red Squirrel playground, Cottage Wood Cushendall, Glenariff Forest Park, Garron Point, St. Killans Secondary School within the schools' appointed Nature Reserve, Glenarm Forest and Glenarm Estate.

Glenariff Forest Park and Glenarm Forest are the only two sites where we get support with feeding from the Forestry Service NI, two of the four Forestry Service wood lands that we operate in. The Group supply feed for a total of 6 sites. Last year I reported that a single feeder site in Craiganee had been set up. The site was and continues to be very active; as of last week, a local landowner is willing to look after the single feeder but he admits that it may not be as regularly filled as he lives in Ballymena.

The Group meet the first Wednesday of each month. This year, we have not had to cancel any of our monthly meetings, but did have to rearrange dates due to poor weather, snow being the problem. We meet in Ballyeamon Barn Tourist Hostel and thanks to Liz Weir for her support and generosity for allowing us to do so.

The Group maintain an active webpage and an active Facebook page (1,071 likes). We have found that many people are using our Facebook page to report sighting of red and grey squirrels. Our hotline number and our web page are being used to report sightings also; the number of web page reported sighting have dropped lately.

The sighting of reds has increased and we are now formally recording squirrel sightings on the CEDaR web page. We are also in the process of joining "Environmental Recorders Group" (ERG). "The ERG was established to provide a forum for people in Northern Ireland who are interested in environmental recording. The group meets twice yearly for discussions, and to share ideas and expertise."

Our Rangers are still operating with feeding and grey control on private, forestry and of late NIEA ground. The Rangers continue to do walks with groups and schools. Some of these will be listed below. This year has seen an alarming increase in Greys in Glendun, control is taking place but it is hoped this will be stepped up with all the Rangers taking this on, as a joint project.

This year saw the first captive squirrels from the Zoo being released into the wild in the Glenarm estate.

We have been lucky to be successful with one of our applications for this year's Challenge Funds: the PONS project, running a Grey Squirrel Removal Project in the Carnfunnock Country Park.

Committee members took on the roles as trustees to assist in the process of charity registration. We had to call an emergency group meeting to amend our constitution to assist with his process.

Changes in positions; Joe Dowdall stepped down as secretary of the group, Daniel took on the role for several weeks and Vincent Segerdahl then took on the role as secretary.

Daniel McAfee, Chair of Glens Red Squirrel Group.

The following is an account of the activities and events the group have run or attended from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015. Note the monthly committee meetings are not included in this report.

June.

4-6-2014, Group AGM Joe Dowdall stepped down as chair after 6 years in the position. Joe took on the role as secretary, Daniel McAfee was nominated as Chair and accepted the position. Several changes and additions were made to the constitution.

14-06-14, Ballintoy Coleraine Old Vehicle Club Coastal Run. Daniel McAfee and Gerard Mc Caughan attended and set up the GRSG Information Stall and Display, which Gerard manned. It was a well-attended day by locals and people from as far away as Armagh and Newry.

15-06-14, Open Day, Broughammon Farm, Straid Road, Ballycastle. Daniel attended with the GRSG Information Stall and Display, it was a good day, very family friendly with other conservation groups attending, RSPB and UW.

July.

6-7-14, The Group's "News Letter" was produced and circulated on e-mail, broadsheet and on the web where it can be viewed.

Cushendun public meeting to raise awareness

The meeting was poorly attended. It was followed by a feeder workshop, two weeks later. Kelly, Su, Gerard, Joe McK and Daniel all attended.

13-7-14, The Group held a walk in Glenariff Forest Park. Ten people, a mix of members and non-members attended, guided by Liz O'Connor. Joe McK, Sylvia and Molly accompanied the walk. Liz, Nuala, Vince and Joe staffed the information table.

19-7-14, Belfast Zoo's Native Species and Red Squirrel Fun Day. The Group's Information stall and display was set up in the farm area near the Red Squirrel Nook. It was a good family day out. Several members attended. Vince, Mandy, Frank, Nuala, Kelly and Daniel manned the information table in shifts.

24-7-14, Group attended Riverside Park Environment Day in Armoy. The Event was run by the CCGHT and they were very helpful. The day focused on children, getting them to start seeing their wild environment: Bugs, Bees and Butterflies. This event had been running for three years. Sadly, due to cuts for local summer schemes, the event was not as well attended as in the past. Kelly, Vince and Daniel attended with the information table.

26-7-14, Wildlife Day in Glenariff Forest Park. Butterfly Conservation NI, Catherine Bertrand, the RSPB and the NI Bat Group all attended, Jon Lees NIEA called. It was a wet day, but for a first-time event like this for the group it went well. Several members attended Liz O, Su, Joe, Vince, Mandy and Daniel.

August.

2-8-14 The Groups first time attending Cushendall Lifeboat Open Day. A very wet day but it was well-supported. Members on the stall: Mandy, Liz, Fern, Mike, Errol, Brendan, Jimmy, Tom and Vince.

3-8-14 The Group held an information table at the Ballycastle Market. We had been given their charity table which they offer free of charge to local charities. Daniel and Kelly attended.

10-8-14 As part of Heart of the Glens Festival Week a special Red Squirrel Walk had been arranged in Glenariff Forest Park, starting from the Laragh Lodge Restaurant up to the main Forest Car Park and Garden.

The Group attended their annual spot in Lark in the Park in the Cottage Wood Cushendall as part of the festival week. This was a very well attended day with a lot of interest in the information table and crafts.

12-8-14 The Group hosted a visit from Portglenone Green Gym at Glenariff. The Exhibition Centre provided a suitable shelter and Liz Weir entertained the visitors with story and song. Maria did a Card making session, everyone got a Red Squirrel greetings card to take home. 10 new Red Squirrel feeders were also made by Joe D, Maria and Liz W.

19-8-14 Members of the Group from all over the Glens got together with the Gamekeepers of Glenarm estate to construct a "Soft Release Pen" to help in the introduction into the wild of the young Red Squirrel born at Belfast Zoo last year 2013. This is a result of a project undertaken by the Glens Red Squirrel Group and Belfast Zoo with the co-operation of the NI Squirrel Forum.

20-8-14 LCS Electrical, a local Glens business, donated a Rip Saw to assist with feeder making.

The Group attended the Glenravel Festival - the first time it has been run - to get children involved with their local environment. Joe and Liz attended.

September.

6-9-14 Blacks Saw Mill in Glenariff donated wood for 25 feeders.

8-9-14 The Group had an information night in the Moyle Council Offices with a short information power point and videos of reds with a question-and-answer session, a feeder workshop was offered. 15-20 people attended with 3 local councillors. Thank to Rachel for providing tea and treats for after meeting. Daniel and Gerard attended.

Group members attended the European Heritage open day in Glenmona, Cushendun, with our information table.

21-9-14 We took part in the annual "Get Outdoors" weekend running two walks: an early Ballycastle walk and a mid-day Glenariff Forest Park Walk. Both walks were well booked up, but on the day, numbers did not mirror this. The walks in Ballycastle had two people but were lucky to see two squirrels. Glenariff had 7 people but no luck with squirrels. Daniel in Ballycastle, Liz, Nuala and Daniel in Glenariff.

28-9-14 The Group attended the "Bonkers about Conkers Day" in Carnfunnock Country Park. it was a great day and well attended, the area is to date a grey only area. Through the NGO Challenge Fund this year, we are planning the "Protecting our Native Species" project, acting to reduce the numbers of Grey Squirrels in the area. Joe D, Su, Anne, Pete, Hester, Daniel and Kelly all attended.

October.

27-9-14 to 5-10-14 Glenariff Forest Park Education Centre got a squirrel face lift with photos, squirrel facts and the display case filled with squirrels, 7 in all. Joe, Liz O, Kelly, Daniel and Vince all attended.

On the run up to "Squirrel Week" the Group normally give all the local schools in the Glens the Squirrel Educational Packs. This year we did the same but ran a pilot project, offering the three Ballycastle schools a school visit talk or a walk. All the schools took up the offer with one school taking a talk and 3 class walks to link with their woodland topic. We hope to extend this next year. If we have the people power to do so.

19-9-14 As part of a local storytelling festival "Ghost in the Glens" we took part in their forestry walk and had our info table at their meeting point. Vince, Mandy, Su, Brendan and Fern all attended.

The Group took part in partnership with the Zoo, NIEA and Glenarm Estate in the release of the captivity young reds into the wild.

11th to 20-9-14 The report of a sick squirrel to myself led to it being nursed back to health for several weeks and then released on the 20th in Slieveanorra Forest as per the instructions of the NIEA.

November.

Sighting of Greys increased, Breen Oak Wood being one of the sites, Gerard worked with the Forestry Service NI and the NIEA wardens to remove four greys. Trapping stopped once the greys were removed.

A Ballycastle Squirrel was spotted shopping in Ballycastle and sparked local and wider news coverage.

December.

4-12-14 Due to changes in the Charity Commission rules, changes needed to be made to our constitution. We had to call an Emergency General Meeting to make amendments. Changes made at the AGM in June were found to be conflicting with the new Charity Commission rules. North Antrim Community Network provided us with advice and expertise on this matter.

11-12-14 Saw the cancellation of the first meeting for Dave Tosh as part of the Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey.

14-12-14 Ranger, Gerard McCaughan was awarded the BT people award, getting £700; we bought additional Trail cameras with the award.

17-12-14 Glen's business Boyles SPAR in Ballycastle and Carnlough gave the Glens squirrels a Christmas treat by supplying them with monkey nuts.

17-12-14 The Group got word that one of its two projects had been selected to be funded by the Challenge Fund, the "Protecting our Native Species (PONS)" project which was for the removal of Grey Squirrels from Carnfunnock Country Park.

The Group's work in the Glens of Antrim will get mentioned in the upcoming "Lesser Spotted Ulster" TV programme. The programme will feature Glenshesk and all that it has to offer. Daniel and some of the Glenshesk reds will be shown. This will be aired in the autumn of this year and as part of the new UTV all Ireland channel.

January.

7-1-15 Joe D did a feeder workshop in St Killian's School to assist with the changeover of feeders in their reserve.

22-1-15 Ranger Gerard McCaughan, with a local landowner and the LPS, started working on the planting of a new woodland in Glenshesk, The Curragh.

24-1-15 A Trap Training event took place in Carnfunnock Park as part of the PONS project. This was open to the public and to members. Joe D. took the training.

26-1-15 A walk was held in Ballycastle Forest in memory of Logan Crawford (a seven-year-old boy who was killed in a coastal accident). The family had donated to the group on Logan's behalf. To mark the donation, the Group erected a feeder with Logan's name on it. Logan had a great interest in wildlife and loved Ballycastle Forest. The feeder had a plaque with a squirrel on it attached to the feeder. It's the only feeder at which you will always see a squirrel. The walk was well attended but no squirrels were seen. Daniel, Kelly and Gerard were present.

February.

4-2-15 Members of the group were invited to carry out a talk about our work to the Larne RSPB. Joe D. and Su did the needful.

7-02-15 The Group were invited to a public Consultation think tank on the Tow River Community Garden Project, with our info table. This was a day the public could put their ideas across about what they would like to see in the Garden. It was held in the Council offices. Daniel, Kelly and Rodney.

20-2-15 The Group held a social night in Laragh Lodge marking seven years of operating. There was music by local artists, it was a very enjoyable night.

21-2-15 The Group held a Community Hedge "revisited" event, assisted by the Moyle Council Biodiversity Officer, Rachel Bain. Daniel and Kelly attended. Several members of the Ballycastle Community Development group assisted. This event was a revisit to a Hedge that was planted late 2013 early 2014 as a community event. We were carrying out some much-needed weeding and trimming to strengthen the hedge. The day went well.

March.

9-3-15 Chair, Daniel McAfee was invited by Biodiversity Officer, Rachel Bain to attend a meeting in Portstewart with a group of people who wish to bring back Mount Sandel into the public domain as many believed this site would be a great site for Red Squirrels. Daniel told them about the work that would be needed to make this possible with an extensive Grey Squirrel control program. This was accepted as possible, and a Biodiversity group is being set up.

19-3-15 Joe D. and Su attended the AGM of the Girl Guides. A talk was given on the work that the Group does and the squirrel release in Glenarm Estate.

22-3-15 The Group held a public walk in the Cottage Wood in Cushendall. The walk was well attended by several members. Daniel led the walk, assisted by Liz O'Connor. The walk was enjoyed by all; no squirrels were seen but thankfully the weather was good.

24-3-15 The Group were invited to a community life contribution presentation run by Moyle District Council to mark the end of Moyle before the merge into the super council of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council. Chair of the group, Daniel McAfee attended. The night was to thank and recognise the work of community groups within Moyle. Each group was awarded a certificate. We were the only conservation charity.

27-03-15 The Group were invited to the opening of the Glenariff Beach Cafe. Chair Daniel McAfee and secretary Vince Segerdahl attended as well as several local members.

28-03-15 Raceview Mill in Broughshane had its first "Food & Craft Market". The Group were invited to have their information table at the event, Daniel manned the table. It was a busy day and there was interest in the Grey Squirrel aspect of the work we do, as many of the locals had problems with greys.

29-03-14 As part of the Challenge Fund we are operating the "Protecting our Native Species" (PONS) project. The Challenge Fund is operated by the Northern Ireland Environmental Link on behalf of the

Environment Agency. We had a day in Carnfunnock Country Park to inform local people about the impact Grey Squirrels are having on the overall eco system as well as their effect on Red Squirrels. Members Joe D, Su, Kelly, Daniel, Vince and Mandy all attended. The event was poorly attended. There was a date clash with a larger event in Larne.

April.

15-4-15 LPS meeting on the LPS projects to date and how the environmental funding cuts have affected the work they are doing. It was passed at that meeting to provide funding to the GRSG to get tools for making flat pack for building feeders.

16-4-15 Daniel and Vince were invited by the GIG to attend the IT launch of the Camera System in Glenariff Forest Park. This project links all parties, GIG, GRSG and NIFS.

19-4-15 Ballycastle was the location for a Spring Walk. The walk was well attended, mainly by people from the Coleraine area. This was because of the event being e-mailed out by Rachel Bain as Biodiversity Officer for the new super council. Four squirrels were seen, one we watched for 15-20 minutes, feeding. Daniel and Kelly took the walk.

21-4-15 Quiz in aid of the GRSG in the Larne area.

22-4-15 The GRSG got the use of the Workshop in Glenmona to cut flat packs. Daniel and John attended.

27-4-15 Dave Tosh came to give his findings on the Pine Marten and Squirrel Survey. He was very happy with the work that members and volunteers put into the survey in the Glens area. He informed us that we and the Tollymore group (the most active squirrel groups in NI) all got the steel squirrel feeders and he found this had an impact on the results. The squirrels were apprehensive about using the steel feeders compared with using the traditional wooden feeders. He has yet to compile all the results from the rest of N. Ireland. The meeting was held in Cross and Passion College, Ballycastle.

May.

2-5-15 Ballintoy and Dunseverick Scouts and Leaders requested an onsite talk in Ballycastle Forest. Daniel did the talk and a short walk.

3-5-15 The group agreed to have a stand at the Glenmona Arts Week event. Joe attended

4-5-15 The Group attended the Bluebell Festival in Portglenone Forest. The day was a well-attended family day. We had our information table as well as arts and crafts. Daniel and Liz O attended.

10-5-15 Glenariff Forest Park Walk from the Laragh Lodge. Liz O led the walk. Daniel, Vince, Mandy and Philomena attended, unfortunately no squirrels were seen.

20-5-15 Daniel, John and Gerard met in the Ballycastle Forestry shed. They set it up as a workshop and store for some of the group's equipment. Thanks to the Forestry Service NI for the use of part of the shed. There is still an ongoing rat removal issue. The shed will give a location for feed, traps and a change of feeders for use in the forestry.

24-5-15 The group had been invited to have the information table at the Rathlin Maritime Festival. The day was overcast but well attended. Daniel and Kelly manned the table.

Monthly meetings, weekly or fortnightly feeding and Grey Squirrel control are not covered in the list above. The above events have been recorded through the Chair, secretary or taken to the committee at meetings. Meetings outside of this are not recorded as they were not reported to the committee.

Reflection on our Work

In all 63 significant GRSG events/activities.

12 walks

11 talks

19 info stall/table.

Average hours at each activity.

Walks can last 1.5 to 2 hours

Talks 1.5 to 2 hours depending on what is requested.

Stall/table at events 5-6 hours.

Walk hours 24h

Talk hours 22h

Stall/table hours 114h

Total volunteer hours 160 hours

not including monthly meetings, weekly or fortnightly feeding or grey control that volunteers do individually.