Red Squirrels United: a nationwide approach to red squirrel conservation

Conor McKinney
Ulster Wildlife
Red Squirrels United

- The first UK-wide network working together to secure the future of our red squirrels, uniting 40 organisations across the UK and 5,000 volunteers.

- The largest invasive species management programme in Europe, representing a significant investment by EU LIFE and HLF of ~£3 million.

- A scientifically robust programme of conservation, protecting nine main stronghold red squirrel populations.
Red Squirrels United Mission

- Support local communities carrying out red squirrel conservation.
- Monitor squirrel populations and prevent the further spread of invasive non-native grey squirrels.
- Underpin our conservation work with the latest scientific research.
- Share knowledge and best practice on invasive species management.
Red Squirrels United Conservation Areas

Legend
- Red Squirrels United
- Project delivery areas

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Engaging the community

Results from Forest Service Public Attitudes Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>How do we find them?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squirrel rejecters (9%)</td>
<td>Aren't interested in seeing any squirrels</td>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife ambivalents (8%)</td>
<td>They wouldn't mind seeing squirrels but this is low in their list of priorities and they are not willing to take any action for wildlife</td>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalist squirrel appreciators (55%)</td>
<td>They like wildlife but are unaware of the threats. Likelihood to act is low. May be gardening positively for wildlife and enjoy spending time outdoors</td>
<td>Raise awareness of the need to conserve red squirrels. Inspire them to visit locations where they can see red squirrels.</td>
<td>National media, Social media linking to titles that connect with their interest in wildlife, gardening and sending time outdoors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Wildlife enthusiasts (26%)</td>
<td>Already take action such as wildlife gardening and green consumerism and some are more actively volunteering and/or signing petitions for wildlife issues</td>
<td>As above plus: If they live in an area with red squirrels then encourage them to take positive action e.g. feeding, nest boxes, recording sightings. If they don't then potentially encourage supporting red squirrel conservation financially e.g. red squirrel adoption</td>
<td>Existing members of conservation organisations, volunteers in their local community, campaign petition signers. Visit natural places, garden centres etc. Typically have more time and/or money e.g. retired, higher wealth, suburban/rural rather than urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal welfare/rights advocates (2%)</td>
<td>Don't want any animal to be killed – a small proportion of these will be activists and vocal</td>
<td>They don't focus on grey squirrel management</td>
<td>Reactive response to them making contact Proactive mapping of key influencers in this sector through past contacts, social media, blogs etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empowering the community

A Ladder of Engagement

- **Empowered**: e.g. self-sufficient red squirrel group
- **Collaborating**: e.g. local campaign group set up
- **Engaged**: e.g. volunteers inspire their friends
- **Involved**: e.g. individual starts volunteering
- **Informed**: quality framework ensures competence at all levels

- Spontaneous Participation
- Induced Participation
- Education
Red Squirrels United - Informing

- National press campaign
- Call for volunteers on 24/02/2017 gained national coverage:
  - BBC Breakfast, BBC News, ITV Good Morning Britain, ITV News, Sky News Sunrise, Channel Five News
  - BBC Radio 1, 2, 4, 5 live, World Service, Planet Rock
- Inundated with requests for help and running out of woodlands!
Northern England – Involving and Engaging

Portion of surveys carried out by volunteers / local groups / eNGO (Spring 2017)
- 150 volunteers involved (not including volunteers from local groups)
- In total volunteers responsible for 87% of survey effort
- Survey has been ongoing since 2012
Northern Ireland – Involving and Engaging

- Training
- Thank You Events
- Experiencing
- Gifts / Bribes
### Northern Ireland – Involving and Engaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>County area (km²)</th>
<th>Survey sites per 10km² (effort)</th>
<th>Num. of woodlands surveyed</th>
<th>No. of sites with red squirrel (%)</th>
<th>No. of sites with grey squirrel (%)</th>
<th>No. of sites with pine marten (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>3095.63</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16 (39.0)</td>
<td>5 (12.2)</td>
<td>7 (17.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>1325.86</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
<td>4 (36.4)</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>4857.44</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3 (27.3)</td>
<td>2 (18.2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>2498.76</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9 (16.7)</td>
<td>23 (42.6)</td>
<td>11 (20.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>1850.59</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>20 (43.5)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>19 (41.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L/Derry</td>
<td>2121.13</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4 (9.5)</td>
<td>13 (36.0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>3264.88</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6 (18.8)</td>
<td>3 (9.4)</td>
<td>4 (12.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NI Presence / Absence Survey**

**Red Squirrels**

**Grey Squirrels**

**Pine Marten**
Northern Ireland - Collaborating

Red Squirrel and Pine Marten Community Meeting

We’re seeking volunteers to help us protect red squirrels and pine martens in woodlands across North Down. Get involved and help give our last remaining reds a fighting chance of survival.

A survey carried out last year has revealed populations of pine marten and red squirrel across some fragmented woodlands across North Down.

If you’d like to find out more please join us at Holywood Library on Thursday 29th March at 6:30pm.

All welcome!

Presentation starts at 6:30pm.

Want to know more?
E-mail: Conor.mckenna@ulsterwildlife.org
Telephone: 028 9083 8111
http://www.ultrewildlife.org/whgsmweb

The National Lottery Community Fund funds this event.
The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum - Collaborating

**Statutory Body Signatories:**
(Also provide Chair and Secretariat)

**Third sector organisations**

**Grassroots community groups**

**Private Sector**
The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) was established to bring together statutory and non-statutory organization as well as representatives of country parks, private landowners and local volunteer organizations dedicated to protecting the red squirrel in Northern Ireland.

**Squirrel Hygiene Protocol**

**Grey Squirrel Control Protocol**
Northern Ireland - Empowering

30 members

7 - Retired / Not working
1 - Farmer
2 - MSc student
1 - High School Student
1 - Secondary School teacher
1 - Conservationist
2 - Engineer
1 - Tradesman

Etc etc........
Northern Ireland - Empowering

Muff Glen 2017:
Total Control Count = 45
Northern Ireland - Empowering

- Illegal
- Legal
Northern Ireland - Empowering

Muff Glen, Enagh Lough, Prehen, St Colombs Park 2018: Total Control Count so far = 105
Red Squirrels United Communication

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Meet us: Annual knowledge fairs
Thank you for listening

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