

The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF)

The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) was established to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisation as well as representatives of country parks, private landowners and local volunteer organizations dedicated to protecting the red squirrel in Northern Ireland. The NISF provides an opportunity for the members of the group to feedback details of news, exchange ideas, new research findings, best practice on how to help conserve red and control grey squirrels.



The NISF is chaired by the [Northern Ireland Environment Agency \(NIEA\)](#) and has representation from:

- [Department Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(DAERA\), Countryside Management](#)
- [\(DAERA\) - Forest Service](#)

Biodiversity Officers from:

[Fermanagh and Omagh District Council](#)

[Derry City and Strabane District Council](#)

[Mid and East Antrim Borough Council](#)
[Belfast City Council](#)

[Newry, Mourne and Down District Council](#)

[Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council](#)

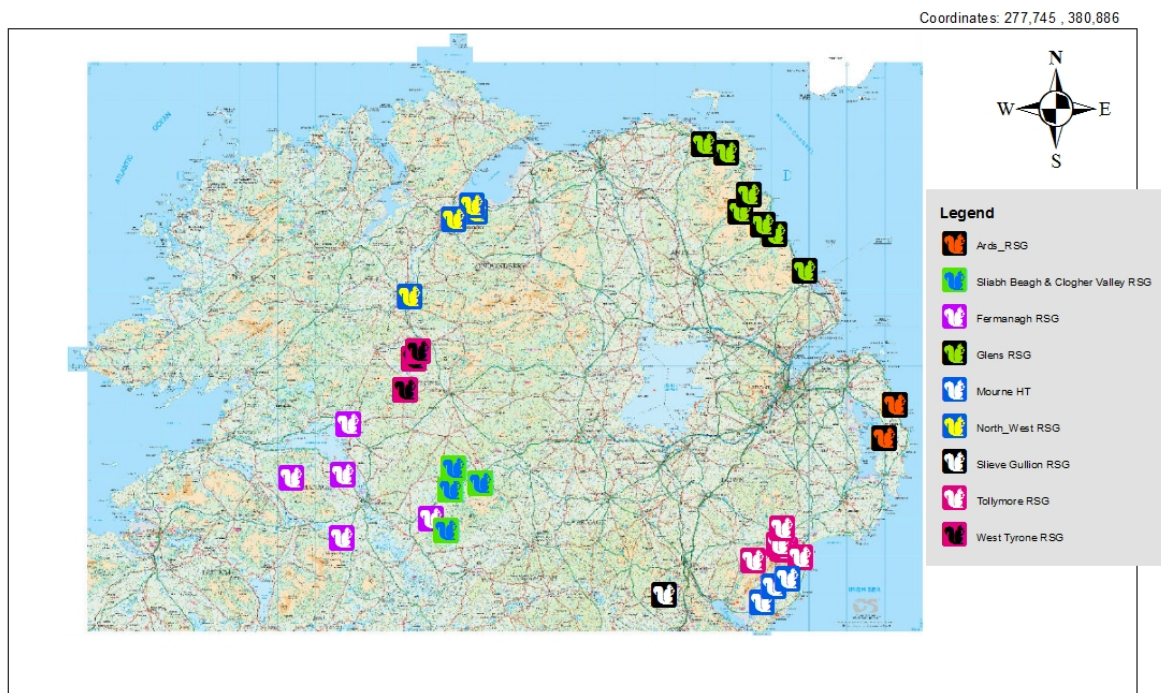
[Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council](#)

And

- [The National Trust](#)
- [Ulster Wildlife](#)
- [The Mourne Heritage Trust](#)
- [Belfast Zoo](#)

- [Queens University Belfast](#)
- [The Strangford and Lecale Partnership](#)
- [Abercorn Estates Ltd](#)
- [Shanescastle Estate Company Ltd](#)
- [Scottish Woodlands Ltd](#)
- [The British Association for Shooting and Conservation \(BASC\)](#)
- [The Scottish Association for Country Sports \(SACS\)](#)
- [The local squirrel groups](#)

Northern Ireland currently has eight Red Squirrel volunteer Groups who work with the statutory agencies and land owners to secure the future of the red squirrel. The map below shows the approximate working areas of the 8 Red Squirrel groups currently operating in Northern Ireland.



Title: squirrel data
Scale: 1:1,068,214
Drawn by: 1423024
Date: 13 June 2016

Description:
 ENTER MAP DESCRIPTION

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An Agency within the Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
 and Rural Affairs**
www.dema-ni.gov.uk

NIA Northern Ireland
 Environment
www.nia-ni.gov.uk | Agency

The Glens Red Squirrel Group

This group works with another local wildlife group the Glenarm Wildlife Group to cover a vast area of the north-east of Northern Ireland.

Working on a variety of land including Forest Service estate, golf courses, private estates and farmland. The group has established a partnership with the local councils further extending their range. The Group was formed on Sunday the 13 January 2008 at a meeting in Glenariff Forest Park. The Glens Red Squirrel Group has in its constitution the following Objective:

“The Group is established to monitor and report the activities of the Red Squirrel in the Glens of Antrim. The Group will endeavour to protect the Red Squirrel and to provide whatever assistance possible to enable it to thrive in the Glens of Antrim.”

In furtherance of these objectives the Group raises Public awareness of the plight of the Red Squirrel and educates and encourages young people in conservation of the “Reds” throughout the country.

The GRSG operates feeding/monitoring sites in:

- **Garron Point**
- **Cottage Wood Cushendall**
- **Cregagh Wood Glendun**
- **Ballypatrick Forest**
- **Ballycastle Forest**

The Group seeks support from all sources and areas. We are always in need of active “Field” people to go and survey and gather data. We also need people to:-

- Make and look after feeders.
- To record reports and results of surveys
- To visit other organisations and co-ordinate joint initiatives
- To join up and attend events
- To get others to join if only to donate a small amount to pay running costs.
- Give ideas and then to help carry them out.

To date the GRSG has made a positive impact within the Glens of Antrim both in the increase of the actual number of Red Squirrel and also in the dedicated control of greys.

"This is the time to do something that will make a difference save the red squirrel for the next generation it is up to us. No one else can or will do it."

Chair GRSG, July 2011.

Contact the group via email: Chair@glensredsquirrelgroup.com

For further information please visit the Glens RSG website
www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com

The West Tyrone Red Squirrel Group

This is smaller groups lead by Fermanagh & Omagh District Council Biodiversity Officer Julie Corry. The group are working at sites both in private ownership and some Forest Service owned land. The focusing on Baronscourt and Drumquin and the area in between as most members are currently from those areas. Should interest arise in other areas the target areas could be expanded. Contact Julie by email: julie.corry@fermanaghomagh.com

The North West Red Squirrel Group

Another group which started with help from the Biodiversity Officer, centred on the Londonderry City squirrel population, the group was initiated by Derry City & Strabane District Council Biodiversity Officer Christine Doherty. Subsequently the groups has moved away from the Council under its own control. The group's membership has recently expanded to include interest outside the city and they are looking to work on a number of sites in the Strabane area. Over forty local people have joined the group and have formed a baseline with records from Culmore, Learmount Forest, Prehen Wood, St Columb's Park, Gransha Wood and Muff Glen. If you would like to join the Local Red Squirrel Group or obtain further details contact

See the group's activities on FACEBOOK:

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

Contact the group either through Facebook or email

nwredsquirrelgroup@yahoo.com

The Tollymore Red Squirrel Group

Tollymore Red Squirrel Group has been established to conserve the red squirrels of Tollymore Forest Park.

Tollymore Forest Park is situated in the northern foothills of the Mourne Mountains in Co. Down, Northern Ireland, approximately 2 miles from the seaside town of Newcastle. The park is managed by Forest Service (DAERA) and covers almost 480ha.

Red squirrels are known to have been present in Tollymore Park since 1880, but were probably there long before that. Grey squirrels arrived in the park in the mid 1990's. In early 2004 it could be seen that grey squirrel numbers were dramatically increasing and that red squirrel numbers were in decline. Something drastic would have to be done if native red squirrels were going to survive in Tollymore Park.

The Tollymore Red Squirrel Group was formed in 2004 by a group of volunteers and Forest Service management and staff, united by a common concern – the loss of the red squirrel in Tollymore Forest Park.

A few years later the group was joined by personnel from Mourne Heritage Trust. The group is dependent on its partnership with Forest Service, who is the landowner of the forests in which it works.

Two of our furry friends helping the Tollymore RSG promote the red squirrel at Tollymore Forest Park.

Since 2004 the group has been actively involved in conserving as well as increasing the red squirrel population in Tollymore Park, by supplementing the red squirrels natural food and managing the grey squirrel population within the park. The group is also involved in educational activities with schools and the general public about the plight of the red squirrel, and takes part in various exhibition days and events throughout the year. Members of the group are also involved in monitoring and recording numbers of both red and grey squirrels within the park.

Tollymore Red Squirrel Group started off with only two red squirrel feeders in operation, and as the members grew in confidence and their numbers increased, they took on responsibility for more feeders. Today there are over sixteen supplementary feeders scattered throughout Tollymore Park and outlying forests.

- Tollymore Red Squirrel Group website <http://www.tollymoreredsqurirelgroup.com/>.
- email: info@tollymoreredsqurirelgroup.com
- Tel: (028) 437 724059

Fermanagh Red Squirrel Group

Fermanagh red squirrel group was formed in early 2011 following two successful public meetings. The conservation of the Red Squirrel has gathered a lot of public and media interest in Co. Fermanagh and has the support of the local Forest Service office as well as environmental organisations such as the National Trust.

There are two '**Red Squirrel Preferred Areas**' (RSPA) in the county - these are areas where there are red squirrels only and are largely conifer forests managed by the Forest Service. The Slieve Beagh Area in East Fermanagh and the large conifer plantations in West Fermanagh are the two hotspots for the county. Red squirrels certainly exist outside these areas and they also play an important role in maintaining populations.

This will be the first autumn/winter season for the FRSG. Winter 2010/2011 was record-breaking in terms of cold temperatures and its duration. Undoubtedly this was a very difficult time for all animals where long perma-frost conditions meant food was very difficult to access. As we now have members **monitoring their local forests**, we will be able to support these red squirrel populations through **supplementary feeding**. However, there are still large areas left unmonitored so we are continuing to look for new members to take on areas in their locality that we have few or no records for.

The FRSG was initially facilitated by Fermanagh District Council and the **Local Biodiversity Action Plan Project**. In 2013 the group became constituted and it became an independent group. All FRSG meetings are open to everyone, whether you want to become a member or simply want to learn more about red squirrel conservation activities.

Visit our website <http://www.fermanaghredsquirrelgroup.com/>

To find out more, please contact the FRSG by email: contactus@fermanaghredsquirrelgroup.com or follow the Red Squirrel link from the website.

The Ards Red Squirrel Group

There is an important red squirrel population surviving on the Ards Peninsula despite a relatively low percentage of tree cover. These reds are best known at the National

Trust's Mount Stewart Estate near Greyabbey but pockets are known to the south as far as Portaferry.

The full picture of the distribution of the red squirrel in the area is unclear and a key target for the immediate future is to tap into the local knowledge and confirm the animals presence at a number of sites.

The *Ards Red Squirrel Group* has been set up to actively protect red squirrel populations on the Ards peninsula. The Ards Peninsula is one of the key strongholds of the red squirrel in Northern Ireland.

The core representatives on the group are the National Trust (Lead Organisation), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Queen's University Belfast (QUB), British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), Strangford Lough and Lecale Partnership (SLLP) and the Tollymore Red Squirrel Group.

We aim to:

- Collect sightings of live and dead red and grey squirrels across the Ards Peninsula and North Down
- Liaise with estate owners/managers across the Ards Peninsula to encourage involvement in the group
- Establish a buffer zone between the southern limits of Newtownards and Donaghadee southwards to known red squirrel hotspots at Mount Stewart, Carrowdore Castle and Ballyrolly House. This involves preventing colonisation by grey squirrels, working in partnership with landowners
- Analysis of dead squirrels (both red and grey) by QUB to determine presence of the squirrel pox virus.

There are unconfirmed reports of the presence of greys as far south as Kircubbin. Grey Squirrels are spreading throughout Newtownards and Bangor and dispersing out from there. The geography of the peninsula means that theoretically the movement of the greys can be relatively easily arrested. To undertake this control, a network of local spotters to report sightings are required and then appropriate permissions for access are needed for culling. The establishment of a local squirrel group is a key priority for the area, the National Trust have agreed to help facilitate this and the British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC) will also be involved. The main asset will be those individuals that live and work locally with regular access to the outdoors to report squirrel sightings to a central point. In particular local landowners are very important, with much of the land on the

Peninsula under the control of relatively few land managers, bringing these people to the table is very important.

Visit our website here

Contact details for the group are:

Andrew Upton,

Coast and Countryside Manager (Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula),

National Trust, Mount Stewart, Portaferry Road, Newtownards, BT22 2AD.

Tel: (028) 4278 7803

Email: andrew.upton@nationaltrust.org.uk

The Ring of Gullion Red Squirrel Group

The Ring of Gullion Red Squirrel group formed in the summer of 2012.

The group operate over an area of about 15300 hectares with at least five healthy population groups of red squirrel. There are populations of grey squirrel on the North East from Newry City, South in County Louth and West from the rest of South Armagh however sightings of greys within the Ring dyke have, thankfully, remained absent up until now.

The group has close ties with local landowners, businesses in the area, Newry, Down and Mourne District Council and has a good working relationship with NI Forest Service. We are always looking for more interested people!

The Ring of Gullion website is linked below. You can read all about the groups aims and objectives as well as download the management plan, get regular updates and report sightings too.

www.ringofgullion.org

<http://www.ringofgullion.org/Red-Squirrel-Group.aspx>

You can contact the group via the online form on the website or by emailing info@ringofgullion.org

Sliabh Beagh & Clogher Valley

The red squirrel group are currently operating in the Clogher Valley area with feeding stations at Favour Royal, Altadaven wood (St. Patricks Chair) and Fardross forest. Our aim is to help to increase the population of our native red squirrel in these pockets where this now rare species still exist. We hope that by supplying food the squirrel will produce bigger broods as it has been proved that this is the case when things are plentiful.

It is thought that the survival of our red squirrel is closely linked to the pine marten, another animal in danger of becoming extinct on this island.

We are also interested in recording sightings of these and other species of birds and animals you see when out in these areas. You can record your sightings [here](#) on our sightings form.

<http://blackwatercatchmenttrust.com/red-squirrels/>

Interested in setting up your own Volunteer Group?

All the groups would happily welcome more support, but there are areas where we need more squirrel volunteers

Parts of West Armagh have some quite healthy pockets of red squirrels and we would certain love to hear from people interested to help conserve them in this area. East Londonderry, Limavady and Colerine have had red squirrels in their forests in good numbers until recently, the decline is probably due to increasing grey squirrels, but potential for healthy red populations remains.

There is potential to bring back red squirrels to many parts of Northern Ireland if the grey population is severely reduced. The NISF and NIEA would welcome and support anyone interested in developing a volunteer group.

Contact Jon Lees on (028) 9056 9551 or email Squirrels@daera-ni.gov.uk