

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland · Charity number 102100

Details

Known as	GRSG
Status	Received
Registered	2015-03-02
Register	View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register

Contact

Address	22 Shore Street Cushendall Co Antrim Bt44 0na BT44 0NA
Phone	07808164490
Email	chair@glensredsquirrelgroup.com
Website	www.glensredsquirrelgroup.com

Activities

Purposes: 1. To protect and maintain the population of red squirrels in the Glens. 2. To educate the local population through schools/youth groups/Clubs/ Young Farmers Groups and other relevant organisations, through attendance at events, and through the organisation of specific events based on promoting the plight of the red squirrel and the objectives of our group. 3. To extend the range of red squirrels in the Glens of Antrim and beyond by all necessary legal means. 4. To recruit volunteers to support the work of the group. 5. To encourage and support the development and activities of existing and new Red Squirrel Groups in Northern Ireland and/or any groups with similar aims, which may involve collaboration on events and activities, the participation in, and/or the carrying out of, research and investigations, and the publishing of the results thereof, to support the plight of the red squirrel both in our local area of the Glens of Antrim and throughout Northern Ireland. 6. To work with land owners to help red squirrels and remove grey squirrels. 7. To raise funds to invest in the work that we do, in the form of donations, grants, membership fees and fundraisers.

What the charity does: The advancement of environmental protection or improvement, The advancement of animal welfare

How the charity works: Animal welfare, Education/training, Environment/sustainable development/conservation

Who the charity helps: Children (5-13 year olds),General public,Men,Volunteers,Women,Youth (14-25 year olds)

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£4,502	£4,181	£0	0

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Mr Daniel McAfee		
Mr Gabriel Mc Auley		
Mr Gerard Mc Caughan		
Mr John Mason		
Mr Laurance Mc Alister		
Mr Thomas Naughton		
Mrs Elizabeth Weir Ba Ala Dip Lib Stud		
Mrs Glenise Morgan		

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Accounts

Glens Red Squirrel Group
Accounts for year ended 31/03/2025

	Income		Expenditure	
Hide	£542.20 ✓		Rent	£28.80 ✓
Paypal	£1,240.65 ✓		Feed	£1,022.92 ✓
Membership	£260.00 ✓		Equipment	£2,567.64 ✓
Christmas Cards	£61.00 ✓		Expenses	£151.20 ✓
Quiz	£305.00 ✓		Insurance	£345.82 ✓
Donations	£125.00 ✓		CDG Membership	£20.00 ✓
Grants	£1,968.44 ✓		Bank Fees	£45.28 ✓
		£4,502.29 ✓		£4,181.66 ✓

Income	£4,502.29 ✓
Expenditure	£4,181.66 ✓
Surplus	£320.63 ✓
Bank Balance 31/3/2024	£8,090.27 ✓
Plus Surplus	£320.63 ✓
Bank Balance 31/3/2025	£8,410.90 ✓

Balance Correct

(FRANCIS CLOSE)

9/5/25

Statement of Assets and Liabilities, 31st March 2025

Cash held and at bank	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds
	£	£
Danske Bank (end of year 31/3/2025)	8,410	8,410
<hr/>		
Total Cash held in Bank	8,410	
Other Assets held for Functional use		
All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund		
		Value (£)
Tools		699
Traps and accessories		1,453
Furniture		308
Cameras, IT and accessories		6,333
<hr/>		
Total		8,792

Notes to the above accounts.

Basis of Valuation

The equipment held by the Charity is initially recognised at cost. The Charity uses the straight-line method to allocate the cost of the equipment to the profit and loss over their estimated useful lives.

Liabilities

As of the end of year 31/3/2025, the group has no Liabilities.

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Accounts

**Glens Red Squirrel Group
Accounts for year ended 31/3/2024**

Income		Expenditure	
Membership	£170.00 ✓	Insurance	£342.39 ✓
Donations	£1,505.00 ✓	Feed	£1,431.51 ✓
Grants	£537.00 ✓	Web Security	£149.99 ✓
Paypal	£1,001.63 ✓	Printing	£30.00 ✓
Hide	£146.66 ✓	Rent	£14.40 ✓
Quiz	£110.00 ✓	Wood	£47.98 ✓
		Bank Fees	£34.10 ✓


£3,470.29 ✓

£2,050.37 ✓

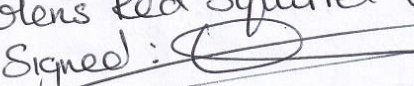
Income	£3,470.29 ✓
Expenditure	£2,050.37 ✓
Surplus	£1,419.92 ✓

Bank Balance 31/3/2023	£6,670.35 ✓
Plus Surplus	£1,419.92 ✓
Bank Balance 31/3/2024	£8,090.27 ✓

Balance Correct

 30/5/2024

*I certify this is an accurate and true statement of
the Glens Red Squirrel Group Account.*

Signed:  (FRANCIS CLOSE)

30/5/2024

*Former principal of Glenarr
Primary School Cusheadall.*

Statement of Assets and Liabilities, 31st March 2024

Cash held and at bank	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds
	£	£
Danske Bank (end of year 31/3/2023)	8,090	8,090
<hr/>		
Total Cash held in Bank	8,090	8,090
Other Assets held for Functional use		
All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund		Value (£)
Tools		767
Traps and accessories		1,751
Furniture		223
Cameras, IT and accessories		5,626
<hr/>		
Total		8,367

Notes to the above accounts.

Basis of Valuation

The equipment held by the Charity is initially recognised at cost. The Charity uses the straight-line method to allocate the cost of the equipment to the profit and loss over their estimated useful lives.

Liabilities

As of the end of year 31/3/2024, the groups have no Liabilities.

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Annual report

Glens **Red Squirrel** Group Annual Report 2023/2024 Charity Number 102100



Index.

Page 2	Chair's Report
Page 3	Grey Squirrel Control
Page 3	CEDaR
Page 4	General Report on Feed and Monitoring Sites
Page 5	Active Members' Reports on their Feed/ Monitoring Sites
Page 15	Rangers' Report
Page 16	Equipment Report
Page 17	Squirreltober Report 2023
Page 22	Squirreltober Thanks.
Page 23	Forest Service Northern Ireland and GRSG Partnership.
Page 24	Monthly Reports
Page 49	Reflection on our Work over the Years
Page 50	Thanks to our Supporters.

GLENS RED SQUIRRELGROUP CHAIR'S REPORT

This year marks my last year as Chair of the GRSG. The last three years for me have been very enjoyable and busy with family, work and group activities that involved walks, talks and events across the Glens and further afield. I would have liked to have seen more of our GRSG members take part in some of these activities as a way of getting involved, seeing what we do on the ground and possibly start volunteering their time to help. This would really help in the Group's continuing work overall.

This has been a very quiet year for the GRSG, but this has not meant that our volunteers have not been busy with their work to help the Red Squirrels here in the Glens of Antrim.

This year we saw a new Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Biodiversity Officer, Lisa Russell; this should be good news for the CC&G council area. I was able to meet with Lisa and talk about the work we have been doing in the Glens over the last 16 years. She is keen to assist in any areas that she can.

This year we have had several new visitors to the Hide all having had a great experience when visiting it. Over recent months, with some very strong storms, we did see a large part of one of the beech trees come down in the Hide area. This, although sad to see, did add some different set ups for photographs and many of the regular photographers like it. Sadly, this tree was cut up and removed with other branches that were laid out for the purpose of photographing. The general area has been left in a mess unfortunately. I have talked to Katie English (landowner) and permission had been given for general storm damage work within the woodland but she was unaware that it was so near to the Hide and had been an actual beneficiary to the Hide. She has assured me that this will not happen again around the Hide without consultation with us first. We will have to try and tidy up the smaller branches that were of no use to those removing the wood; these could form part of the dead hedge that was meant to be installed as a project with the Landscape Partnership Project several years ago.

We had a very successful year on our walks with Red Squirrels being seen on most of them, to the enjoyment of all who took part. This shows the benefits of our work. Our Red Squirrels sightings are up in our areas of work within the Glens but our sightings in new areas within the Glens are down. I feel

this is due to lack of volunteers. The Glens in general have reds widespread throughout them now and this is fantastic as they will be moving out beyond the Glens.

We have got a few new volunteers this year who have taken on feeding in some of our historical sites, Glenmona and in our buffer zone, Clare Forest. This is great as it means more people keeping an eye on the health and wellbeing of our Reds.

I would like to thank all our volunteers who give up their time to do feeding, control, attend events and help in any way. The success of the Group is down to the work of our many volunteers.

Daniel McAfee, Chair of Glens Red Squirrel Group, 2023-2024

Grey Squirrel Control

This year there was a total of thirteen Greys dispatched, nine of these were from the Cargan area, carried out by our volunteer in that area. This a key area as it is preventing the movement of Greys into Glenariff, two were from Broughshane, yes, not the Glens but our volunteers assisted with trapping and dispatch on this site. We also removed two from just from outside Ballycastle.

This takes the number of dispatches to 653 from 2nd April 2011 when the GRSG started recording Grey Squirrel dispatches or recorded road kills.

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?

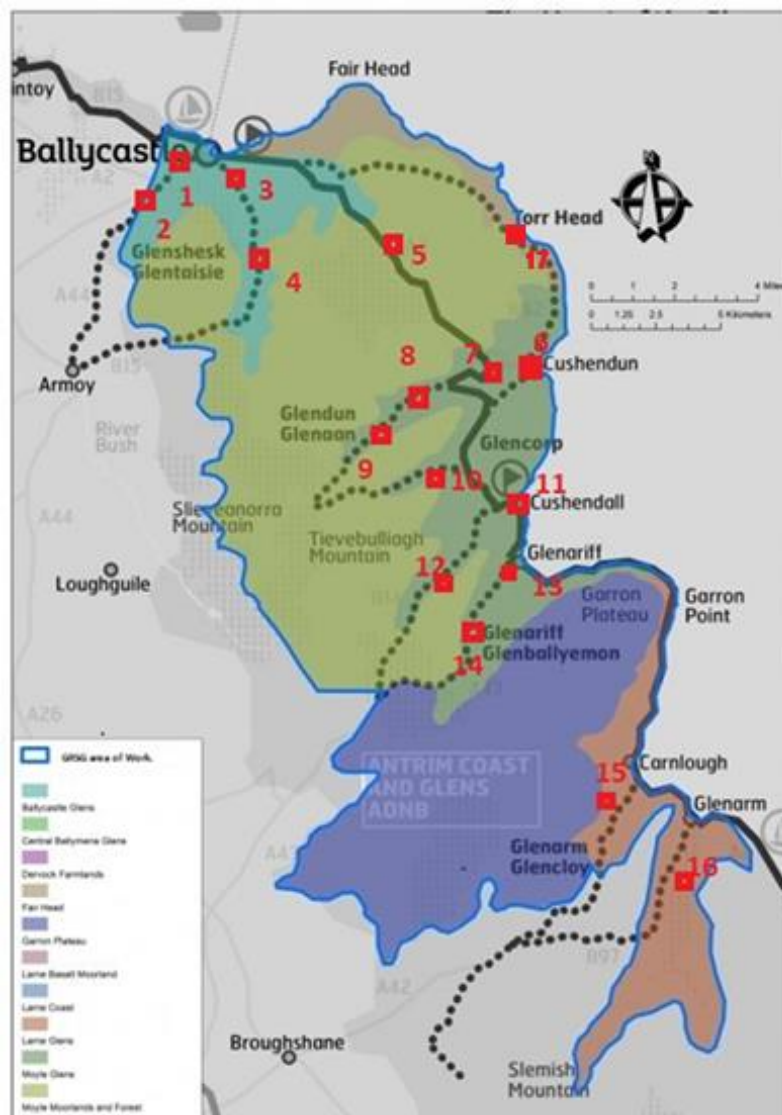
Date recorded to CEDaR

General Report on Feed and Monitoring Sites.

Working areas.

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

- 1 Ballycastle Forest
- 5 Ballypatrick Forest (Suspended due to ongoing works)
- 6 Glenmona Cushendun
- 7 Cregagh Wood
- 11 Cottage Wood Cushendall
- 14 Glenariff Forest
- 16 Glenarm Forest.
- 15 Carnlough.



Feed sites that are permanent, but not open to the public: -

These sites are out of public view and are used to monitor if there has been any Grey Squirrel activity. Most of these sites have cameras covering them all the time. Some cameras are moved between sites as we have a limited number of cameras.

2 Glentaisie

5 Ballypatrick

8 & 9 Glendun

3 & 4 Glenshesk

17 Torr Head

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.

This is the first year that I have been feeding Red Squirrels in Clare Forest at a site off the Glenstaghey Road. There have been feeders in the past but on an old farmstead opposite the current location. I and others had reported sightings of Red Squirrels on the road (both alive and dead!). Apart from the Forest, Red Squirrels were sighted at the Glenmore caravan site (at the end of the Glenstaghey Road, at the junction with the A2 coast road on the way to Ballycastle). However, the site has been expanded in the past year, the Leylandii chopped back, and I have not seen any Red Squirrels on the road since – dead or alive! However, squirrels do not need to cross the road now for food.



Two feeders were set up, together with a camera in the early summer of 2023. From the camera footage, I could see that two Red Squirrels visit, often several times a day. There has in fact been a third squirrel but however, there were three squirrels around again in August. I have not seen any Grey Squirrels luckily. On several occasions, I have been able to wait quietly close by for about 30 minutes and watched the squirrels in action until they had finished feeding, which was quite magical.



With regard to other wildlife, I've also seen Magpies and other birds, a Badger, a Deer and a Pine Marten. Also a few curious humans!

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.

The Site has been very busy this year with five Reds being picked up on camera at one time. There is still a strong Badger population in the woods. The site has seen more people activity in it over the last year with a mountain bike trail being installed in it. It has not had a notable impact on the activity around the feed site.

No greys have visited the site in the last year.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Ballycastle Forest.

Ballycastle Forest is a mix of mature conifer blocks and broad leaf planting between 15-20 years old. One of the first sites for a GRSG observation site in 2008 and with assistance from the 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 Squirrel Safaris."

Another fantastic year for the Reds and for the people who use the forest being able to see Reds. I have noticed that there has been a reduction in people using the forest in general. I know I have a set time I normally go up to sort the squirrels each week and it may be that there are fewer walkers through the day now. I also take any chance I have, to take a quick walk up and on these occasions, I am meeting less people. This may be just a phase and it will change and hopefully more people will start using the forest again. There are still several bikes using the trails. They are more aware than in the past few years and will now stop for a chat and let me know of any Reds they spot in the forest or at the feeders.



The Forest Service also did some work removing the bar in the low entrance gate; this was to let prams and push chairs in. This has made family walks a lot easier for us as we do not have to lift prams in and out. I have not seen too many other families on my walks. There was a fear that motor bikes may have started using this as an access but thankfully this has not happened.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenshesk/Carey.

I still maintain several monitoring and feeding stations within the greater Glenshesk and Carey areas. I do have the occasional Grey Squirrel that comes through my area, but thankfully the resident Pine Martins seem to remove them. Having said that, I have a particularly lucky grey at present in Glenshesk who is giving me the run around, only visiting every few weeks.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

The Curragh.

The Curragh is growing very well. Red Squirrels have been spotted in it, but as yet the only food available to them are the fruit trees and bushes. A few of the larger Scots Pines are starting to produce a few pine cones, but it will be a few years before they are in full production.

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.

Over the last year, we did not pick up any squirrels on the cameras. There is still a large Deer population in the area; we didn't pick up the Pine Marten but from talking to local Deer stockers they have picked it up on their cameras. They also have not picked up any squirrels on any of their cameras. This year it will be part of the Ulster Wildlife survey and we might pick something up in May/June.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and 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, all of various ages. The area has a small stream subject to rainfall that runs through it. You would drive past it before knowing you had.

There are now three or four Reds in this area of Torr with two the most being seen on camera at any one time, but with size and coloured differences on camera, there are more than two. The site is quite difficult to get to and was serviced once a month. We have one Pine Marten which visits the site every four to five days. It does not really show much interest in the feeder, it seems to just visit the site when doing its rounds.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenmakeeran

Within Glenmakeeran there is a medium-sized copse of deciduous trees which fills the western side of the glen through which the Glenmakeeran River flows. The feeder is an area of exclusively Larch trees though there are other native species in the vicinity. There are regular but infrequent visits by Red Squirrels. Upriver of the site, the Glenmakeeran River extends into a part of Ballypatrick Forest where there is an extended area of native trees and where Red Squirrels are known to be present. A much more frequent visitor to the site is a Pine Marten (and of course Wood Mice). The Pine Marten is almost certainly a different animal to the one attending the Ballypatrick site as it took time for it to learn to operate the feeder while the Pine Marten in Ballypatrick was feeding easily. The Red Squirrels are not deterred by a Pine Marten having recently attended the feeder. Several local instances of Pine Marten Road kills and previous observations at Ballypatrick suggest that there is a healthy population of Pine Martens in the area.

John McGill, GRSG Volunteer.

Ballypatrick Forest.

Ballypatrick Forest was originally part of the first Squirrel Trail. The feeder site is in the vicinity of the forest and is surrounded by non-native spruce. There has been significant tree-felling in the area over the course of the last few years though despite the disturbance, the feeder is very frequently attended by a Pine Marten. There has never been a visit by a squirrel, Red or Grey. Due to the total absence of squirrels in the area I usually put meat or an egg out along with Sunflower Hearts and this keeps the Pine Marten's attention, including right through last summer. A Jay is another frequent visitor to the site for the stray seeds and there is a large population of Sika deer in the forest.

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 continuously.



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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 continuously.

There are several monitoring sites within the wood. These are covered by cameras and are a mix of scatter feed and feeder sites.

In 2015 a single Great Spotted Woodpecker was spotted in the wood. Over the last few years, they have successfully had chicks and fledged young. The Great Spotted Woodpeckers are still coming to the Hide to use the feeders. This has been fantastic and offers professional photographers and hobbyists wanting to try and photograph them a great opportunity, The birds are very shy still and do not stay long at the feeder. Spring/summer of 2023 was the first time we had two male GSW in the woods drumming. This shows that the population is growing. We do know the pair in the woods have had young, but when they leave the nest, we lose track of them; hopefully they are moving out into the glen and further afield.



The red population has continued to thrive, numbers coming to the Hide are up, with seven having been seen at one time in the last few weeks. The activity around the Hide would normally pick up around December but this year it was February before the Reds were seen in numbers regularly at the Hide. I put it down to plenty of natural food within the woods.

The wildlife in the woods across all the sites has been very active and we have had a few additions to the woods that we have not had before. We now have a few Deer, a pair of Ravens who have just arrived over the last few weeks and several Badgers have been seen in the woods. This is great for the biodiversity within the area.

This year we did not have any young Pine Martens born. We did have at least three adults in the wood, one female and what looked like two males; one was a lot larger than the other. It was unfortunate that they did not have any young but hopefully this year they will do.

The Hide this year has seen a fantastic run over the last few months with it being booked by individuals and small groups of photographers. We have had people from Dublin, Letterkenny, Bangor, Belfast, Cookstown and Newcastle to name just a few. We did have one photographer raise an issue he had the last time he visited. On a previous visit he had six Reds around the Hide, but on this last visit he only had the one. It is just the luck of the draw.

As I have mentioned in the Chair's Report there was some storm damage and the area can do with a bit of a tidy up and new set up for photos.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glendun.

Apart from 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. 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 there are Pine Martens moving through many of these sites.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenmona Feed site and Playground.

In October a notice was sent round the Cushendun Swimming Group to see if anyone was interested in helping to fill the squirrel feeders in Glenmona House grounds at the sea front of Cushendun.

Having holidayed in the lovely village for many years and recently retired, I jumped to volunteer. I had been a member of the GRSG many years ago even though I was in Belfast living among the Greys! I loved to think that my little fee was of help and I read the emails that I got with enthusiasm.

I was happy to be invited to help and Gerard did a great enthusiastic introductory tour with me and armed me with feed.

My first foray was a cold Monday morning, armed with feed, measuring cup, hand gel, wipes and a sterilised litter tray scraper- I was determined that no viruses would be passed on by me! 30 minutes passed before the two feeders were emptied of husks and new seed added after a good scrape of the inside of the feeders. I needed a cup of tea after that! Luckily, I got much quicker over the weeks and so disturbance to the squirrel families is at a minimum.

I also realised that between my prolonged presence and my accompanying dog that I had spoilt my chances of actually seeing a squirrel. I am happy to tell you that they are still definitely there as all the seed is eaten every week. Other people who have seen me fill the feeders have given me stories of having seen squirrels playing on the tree ropes and at the feeders and thankfully they are all red!

I am still waiting for my first glimpse of a squirrel in Glenmona- as long as it is red!

Carole O'Hara, GRSG Volunteer.

Cushendall and Cottage Wood.

There are seven feeders in the Cottage Wood and all are being used; whilst the Reds are not always there in numbers; it is usual to see a Red when topping up the feeders. All the old feeders that were replaced were repaired and given to interested families and the feedback from them is that they are all having Red Squirrels attending their feeders. Those families are in Layde, Gaults Road, Glen Road Glenariff and on the Shore Road in Cushendall.

Laurence McAlister, GRSG Volunteer.

Laragh Lodge and lower Glenariff Forest Park

There are now eight feeders at the Laragh Lodge end of Glenariff Forest Park. All these feed stations are busy and very well attended. Most mornings, when topping up the feeders, Red Squirrels are visible with six being the most at any one time. The public are delighted whenever they see Red Squirrels and the squirrels have got used to the public's coming and going and generally continue feeding when people are about.

Laurence Mc Alister, GRSG Volunteer.

Glenariff and Parkmore Forest Park

There are eleven feeders in and around the upper part of the Forest Park which I regularly monitor and maintain. In Glenariff Forest Park there are a healthy number of Reds which visit the feeders regular.



And the Perspex feeders that were introduced last year seen to be a hit with the Squirrels and photographers.

Thankfully no Greys have been sighted within the forest for a few years.



Grace and Molly who regularly help with filling the feeders in the Forest Park.

Paul McHugh, GRSG Volunteer.

Martinstown and Glenravel.

In Cargan and Martinstown area unfortunately, sightings of Greys have been increasing regardless of my best efforts to keep them under control. This area requires a lot of work and I could do with a few extra volunteers to help control this problem.

We had a Red Squirrel sighted a few times at Ben's Wood late last year, hopefully it is still in the area.

Broughshane Wildfowl Park had a problem with Greys regularly visiting their Duck and Hen ground feeders. I was contacted over the Christmas period for help in removing them and thankfully was able to eliminate the problem.

Paul McHugh, GRSG Volunteer.

Carnalbanagh/Slemish area.

There have been no Red Squirrel sightings in the Carnalbanagh/Slemish area, despite it having suitable habitat and adjoining the Glenarm Forest where Red Squirrels are frequently spotted.

There are however periodic sightings of Grey Squirrels in the area and in the past two years approximately eight have been trapped and dispatched in two locations near Slemish. Grey Squirrel captures and sightings of their direction of travel suggest that the Slemish/Carnalbanagh area is an active corridor for the expansion of the resident Grey Squirrel populations of Broughshane and Ballymena into Red Squirrel strongholds in the Glens. Continued trapping and dispatching of Grey Squirrel in the Slemish/Carnalbanagh area remains an important measure to conserve the Glens' Red Squirrel populations, particularly in the Glenarm area.

Philip Applenton, GRSG Volunteer.

Carnlough.

I currently have eight sites in the Waterfall Rd. & Gortin Quarry/Woods area. Volunteers look after about twelve feeder boxes in various locations in the Glen and wider Carnlough area. I am pleased to report that sightings of Red Squirrels have become more numerous over the past year, especially in and around the homes on the fringe of the village.

Retired Minister, the Rev. Henry Kees and Eamon Mc Cormick seem to have adopted Straidkelly Wood and have feeders placed in various sites in the wood. Unfortunately, following someone having an accident and falling, the council have now closed off some of the paths to the woods thus restricting our access. Activity at feeder boxes was very quite last summer and autumn as usual but, since Christmas, activity has increased as natural food has got scarcer. No Greys have been reported in the area in the past year though a dead Grey was seen near Drumnasole on the Shore Rd (road kill). Unfortunately, one Red was also killed on the Straidkelly Rd. last summer (road kill).

There have been a few reports of Pine Martin sightings in the area between Glenarm and Carnlough last Autumn.



My Grandson, Ben (5) is a willing assistant in all my endeavours and perhaps a future Ranger? Style kindly installed by the council to make entry to Curragh Wood more accessible.

Gabriel McAuley, Deputy Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenarm.

This has been a good year for the Glenarm Red Squirrels. Most people who have walked within the forest have seen a red at one time or another. The feeders are regularly refilled by our volunteer, Colin Urwin and this keeps the reds coming to the feeders.

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.

Daniel McAfee's Report.

This year has been quiet as far as trapping is concerned. I was called out to investigate a sighting on Moyarget of a Grey that had been visiting a feeder for a week and the next day removed two male Greys. The landowner was keen to see how we did our dispatch and was very shocked that there had been two Greys and was impressed at the speed the Greys were trapped and dispatched. Over recent weeks I have had people asking about having Greys removed from their gardens near Bushmills.

Feeding and monitoring still takes place on all my sites and this year I did not pick up any Grey Squirrels.

I had a meeting with Forestry Service with regards to how we carry out Grey Squirrel control on their grounds.

Over the year I was able to get out and about with presentations and talks. So, it was good to get back out to groups and schools across Squirreltober and a few invited talks.

The booking of the Hide mainly goes through me and 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, I have found that many of the professional photographers do not actually do this and when posting their own photos, they will not state where they took them. But we know where they took them. It is fantastic to see the photographs people are getting.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Gabriel McAuley's Report.

It has been a quiet year so far and I have been mainly occupied with making, maintaining & repairing feeder boxes. Hedge cutting in recent weeks has disturbed some of my feeding sites so some feeder boxes have had to be moved; hopefully things will settle back to normal soon. The annual GRSG Quiz was well supported and all present enjoyed the evenings fun.

Gabriel McAuley, Deputy Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Gerard Mc Caughan's Report.

A quiet year as far as I was concerned; I recruited a few more volunteers to help with the feeding and monitoring within The Glens, supplying them with the necessary equipment. Paperwork seems to take up more and more of my time with very little practical work to show for the time spent, but as we all know, keeping the paperwork up to date is a major task in any organisation.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Equipment Report.

There was no Micro Grant this year, due to the political situation in Northern Ireland. Now that things are working again, hopefully next year it will be available. At present we have sufficient equipment to supply all our volunteers. Certain equipment like cameras do need to be replaced as they especially have a limited life span, but at present that is not causing us any problems.

The yearly audit is getting harder to complete each year, mainly due to our volunteers having less time due to other commitments. This year I found it particularly difficult to complete due to slow response from some of our volunteers. I feel that we need more volunteers covering smaller areas and so needing less equipment, but that is a difficult ask. As we all know, finding people who have the time to volunteer is very difficult.

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

Squirreltober Report 2023.

6th October, GRSG Squirreltober Quiz.

A night of fun and laughter, all for a good cause. Quizmaster Gabriel McAuley, ably assisted by his wife Mary, provided us with many challenging questions. Team, John and Geraldine from Carnlough, raced ahead at the last round to win. A grand total of £110 was raised. We would like to thank Laragh Lodge for their support and allowing us the use of their restaurant, to those who provided prizes for the raffle and to all our local sponsors for prizes given on the night.

10th October, Cookstown Wildlife Trust talk

A bit of a drive but more than happy to talk to this large group, in all forty people including members of the Mid-Ulster group. Chair Daniel McAfee delivered a talk on Red Squirrels in NI and the work we do and have done here in the Glens. A very well received talk with much interest in the removal of Greys. Some had seen Reds but most outside of N. Ireland.

15th October, Cottage Wood Red Squirrel Safari walk

GRSG Ranger, Daniel, led this Red Squirrel Safari. It was a fantastic morning for it. We were lucky to see two very quick sightings of Red Squirrels as they ran through the trees tops on our walk. Lisa Russell, our new Biodiversity Officer for the Causeway Coast and Glens Council joined us for this walk. This was Lisa's first venture out with us on a Red Squirrel Safari.





21st October Glenariff Forest Wood Story Walk

Once again, the Glens Red Squirrel Group partnered with the Armstrong Storytelling Trust to deliver two storytelling walks during the 2024 Glens Storytelling Festival. One took place in Glenariff and the other at Cregagh Wood. Deputy Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Margaret Anne McKillop joined The Cregagh Wood Walk. Storyteller Janice Witherspoon shared tales while GRSG volunteers told participants about our Reds and the work of the group.

Two very pleasant mornings.



22nd Cregagh Wood Storytelling and Red Squirrel Safari

A great day on the Storytelling and Red Squirrel Safari. No squirrels were spotted but we had a combination of nature stories and facts about the wildlife that live in Cregagh and about the fairy that lives there too.





24th October, Ballycastle Integrated PS & St. Patrick's and St Brigid's PS Sheared walk.

This walk takes place as part of their sheared education and outdoor learning, this lets the two schools mix and facilitate the children to build friendships with children they don't know. This is the first walk they do in the woods before doing several other "follow on" walks with different themes such as Art and Maths. This walk gives them a general feel for the forest.

This year we had two primary 5 classes from St Patrick's & St Brigid's Primary School and one from Ballycastle Integrated PS, totalling 90 children and 8 adults. On the walk we covered Tree ID, Seed distribution (means and ways), food chains, food webs, some plant identification, safety in the forest and where we got the chance we did some bird identification also.

Woodland and Forestry, fall into topics that St. Patrick and St, Brigid's cover in class and the children had a very good knowledge of them. I was most impressed with their knowledge on seed distribution.

In all a very educational walk and as it was dry this did help. Sadly, no squirrels were seen on the walk.



29th October, Ballycastle Squirreltober Walk

Our Chair and Red Squirrel Ranger, Daniel led a walk in Ballycastle Forest which was well attended. It was a great morning for it with lots to see. We saw Bullfinch, Jay, Buzzard and lots of Rooks taking pine cones from the trees. The autumn colours were slowly making their way into the forest which added to the beauty of the walk. Unfortunately, no Reds were seen this time. With the abundance of wild food, the Reds are not interested in our feeders in Ballycastle now; as the cold weather creeps in, this will change.



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 Janice Witherspoon, The Storytelling Festival, SDLP Glens Councillor, Margret-Anne McKillop, Pupils and Staff of St. Ciaran's PS Cushendun, St. Patrick's and St Brigid's PS, Ballycastle Integrated PS, Laragh Lodge, The News Letter, Belfast Telegraph, The Ballymena/Coleraine/Ballycastle Chronicle, Ulster Wildlife, UK Squirrel Accord and other groups who helped us out during the months, from practical tasks to putting up our events on their Facebook pages, etc.

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 and the opportunity to meet its wildlife. This is where we, with our feeding sites, give people the chance to see our native Red Squirrels that make the forestries 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 with our work with the Forest Service NI and within their forestries we are educating the young and the not so young about NOT only Red Squirrels but about much of the plants and animals that call these areas their homes.

The Forest Service NI 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.

Thankfully our healthy Red Squirrel numbers are linked with 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 NI properties that we work in. We believe there are several reasons for this, one is because of the public's vigilance and forestry staff's vigilance as they are quick to report to us any Greys they see. A second reason is because most of Forest Service NI 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 NI properties varies from property to property but we do pick them up when monitoring and going about our work.

The Forest Service NI staff that we have made links with within the Glens area are a vital asset to the work we do and assisting us with that work. If 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 Guide, 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 NI. We also must thank Jim Marshall. Jim has been key in our planning for setting up sites in areas to ensure no works are planned that could impact on equipment, etc. We also feedback to Jim on any issues we may find on our weekly duties in the Forest Service NI 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 NI too. We also want to thank the men in Glenariff Forestry Yard, they are more than willing to help and they keep an eye on the Reds in the yard as well. They all are 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. The Forestry Service have let us know of new works in the forest and we were able to add more forests to our licences agreement and hope to start work in them soon.

Lately, we had meeting with Jim Marshall and a members of an external auditing team in Glenariff

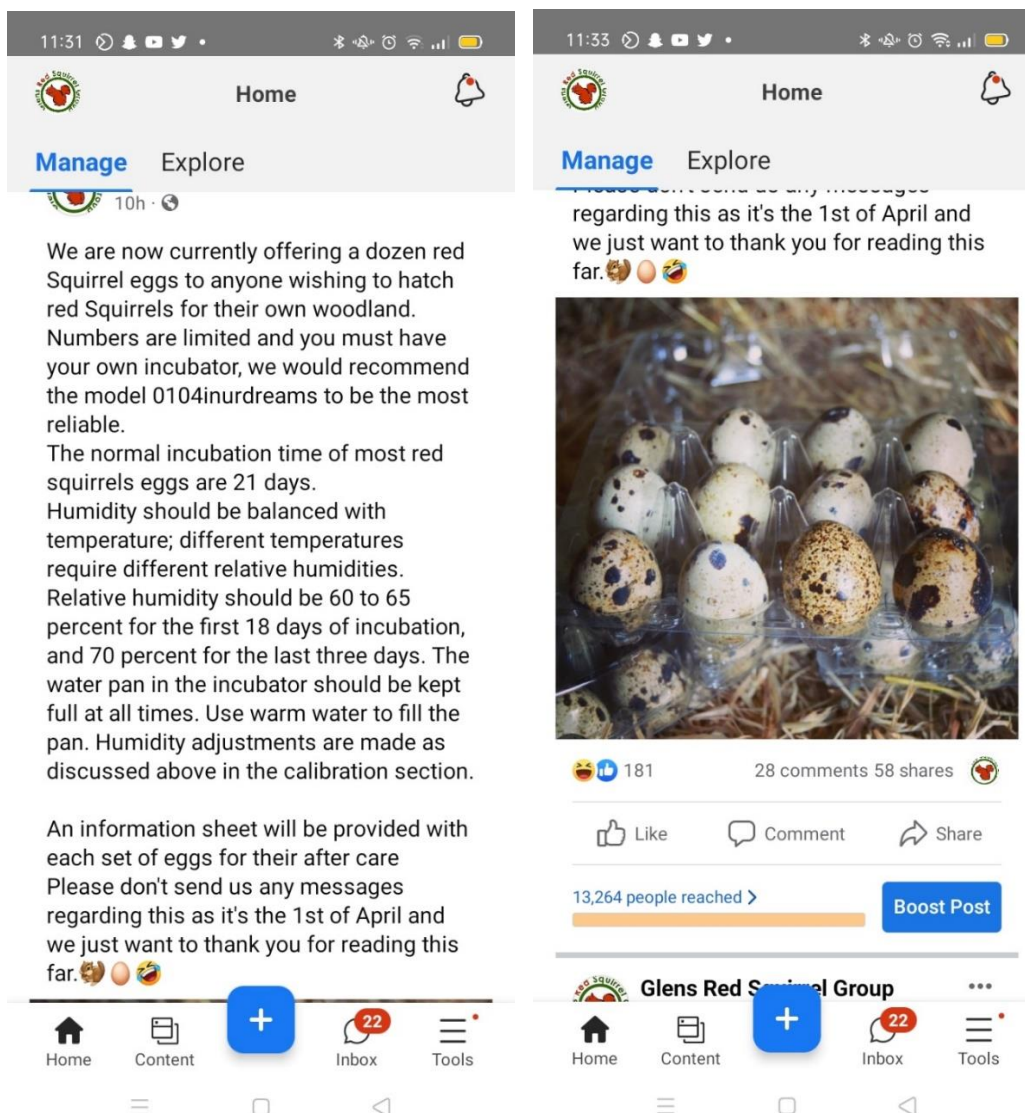
regarding our partnership and the way Grey Squirrel control and management is carried out by ourselves on Forestry Service ground. We were able to show that when trapping we follow good practice guidelines and explained what we, the group, expect from our volunteers when doing control. We were able to show and explain the methods of dispatch we use and the information we record and how it is used. While in Glenariff we took a walk around some of our feeders. During the quick walk round, we saw a total of six Red Squirrels at the feeders. In all a very productive meeting.

2023-24 Monthly Reports

April 2023.

1st April, Unprecedented Sale of GRSG Surplus.

The GRSG offered to sell off some of its surplus of “Red Squirrel eggs.”



The response to this advert was mind-boggling. Everyone had a good laugh once they realised the date!

1th April The Hide Open Day.



Taken by Jim Kerr



Taken by Jim Kerr

2nd April, Tree Planting

This is one of our many “Planning for the Future” Projects. We spent the Sunday planting trees beside the Ballyeamon Barn at the top of Glenariff. The GRSG had been asked to manage this ground for wildlife purposes by its owner Liz Weir. The trees were sourced by the GRSG and planted out. This type of management project has really taken off since the first area, “The Curragh” in Glenshesk was planted out in 2014.



8th April The Hide Open Day.



14th April, Cottage Wood Red Squirrel Safari.

Daniel, our Head Ranger, led this walk through the Cottage woods. We were lucky to see two very quick sightings of Red Squirrels as they ran through the tree tops during our walk. Lisa Russell, our new Biodiversity Officer for the Causeway Coast and Glens Council joined us for this walk.

15th April, The Hide Open Day.



22nd April The Hide Open Day.

27th April, Live from the Hide.

Live broadcast from the Hide in Cushendun to the Facebook page.

29th April, The Hide Open Day.



Taken by Peter Anderson

The Hide open days during the Month of April were and are continuing to be well supported. We are getting a lot of people who have never seen a Red Squirrel, never mind “up close,” visiting the Hide. Many of them make book the Hide for return visits, which is great to see.

29th April, Cushendun Big Arts Weekend

The GRSG attended the Cushendun Big Arts Weekend. We had an information table set up in Glenmona. Great interest was shown in what we do and how we are working to support the Red Squirrels in the area and throughout the Nine Glens of Antrim. Daniel and member, John McGill, manned the stall. A slow start to the morning but the weather was very poor. We had a few locals who were very happy to share their stories of Reds that they see in the village and around Glenmona House



May 2023.

19th May, Woodpecker in Cregagh Woods.

One of our Rangers had topped up the various feeders that we have around the Hide in Cregagh Woods and was about to leave when this male Woodpecker showed up.





25th May, Ardwell Bay Beach, Stranraer, Scotland.

We got this e mail from Heidi Kirby. She had been out having a walk on the beach and found part of one of our feeders. We had a little vandalism at one time at a feeding site and we presumed that the feeder had been thrown into the river. Here is the proof.

Hi

Just a little bit of info for you. I found one of your small platforms with your information attached to it on Ardwell Bay Beach, Stranraer! It has travelled across the Irish Sea 🤔

We hope you have a lot of Red Squirrels 🐿

Best wishes

Heidi



25th Live from Hide.

Live broadcast from the Hide in Cushendun to the Facebook.

June 2023

6th June, Pine Martin Road Traffic Accident.

We got a report of a dead Pine Martin. This one is not far from one of the woodlands that we work in. We had picked her up on the trail cameras as she was a regular visitor to our feed site. It is very unfortunate and something we do not like to see.

12th June, Cora McGoldrick's Final Year Documentary.

Cora McGlodrick produced an environmental short documentary in her hometown of Ballycastle as part of her final year's media coursework. The filming took part in late February/early March. She covered food waste being taken to the newly formed Community Fridge who were offering good food out to the community rather than going to land fill. She was also keen to capture a local biodiversity aspect and she chose Red Squirrels and the work that is taking place in Ballycastle Forest. It was a cold morning the day of the filming and we were lucky to see three different Reds at two of the feeders in the forest.

12th June, 7th Ballymena Scout Group - All Saints

There were 10 teenagers and two Scout leaders. The combined knowledge of the group was saddening, even with simple things like tree and bird identification, and even basic Key Stage 3 science, such as food chains and webs, were a challenge for them. These kids were all very bright but there was definitely a gap in their knowledge of our natural environment and biodiversity. We feel that our education system is geared more to exam results, rather than general knowledge and the environment around us. The Scouts as an organization are trying to install environment knowledge into these young people, but they can only do so much.

We did have a good day and they did enjoy the walk. There were lots to see and they became interested as the walk went on and keen to ask question about plants, trees and birds that we did see. We visited the Hide but unfortunately, we did not see any Red Squirrels on the walk.

It was a fantastic day for a walk amongst the trees. Unfortunately, no squirrels were seen but in the heat wave then, who would blame them!







13th June, 20-23 Ballycastle Golf Club.

The Golf Club in Ballycastle had an unexpected visitor to their course. This Red Squirrel, wandered about, possibly looking for a “Squirrel” (one for you golf fanatics).



July 2023.

8th July, Red Squirrel in a Wood burner Stove in Glenarm.

We got a report from Jim Caughey in Glenarm.

“We heard some scratching noises this evening in the wood burner and when I opened the door there was a Red Squirrel. It then disappeared up the flu but not far, it clearly cannot get back up the flu and I think I can see a bit of tail”.

Colin, our volunteer in the area, was quickly on the scene and removed the Red from the stove. This can be a tricky operation to carry out. Thick gloves are required as they will bite and scratch. If they should get into a room, they will also run amok as they can run up and down walls very quickly. If one should break the skin or bite you, you will need a tetanus injection, just for safety's sake.





28th July, Meeting with Ross McIlwrath Ulster Wildlife

Ross McIlwrath from Ulster Wildlife met up with Daniel to learn how our work here in the Glens of Antrim was going.

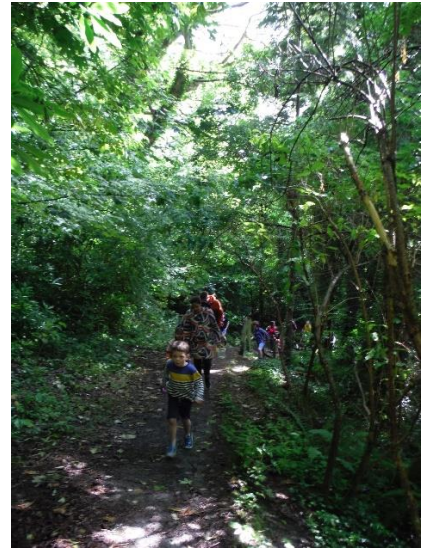


Daniel met Ross at the Hide in Cregagh Wood and they talked about the work the Group is currently doing. Ross was very impressed with all our achievements and hopes to return later.

August 2023

10th August, Cottage Wood Walk.

Our Family Nature walk led by GRSG Chair and Squirrel Ranger, Daniel McAfee in the Cottage Wood, Cushendall. This walk was linked with the Heart of the Glens festival. Eight adults and ten children attended on the morning. The walk started off dry but got very wet and muddy and ended in the heat of bright sunshine. We learned about the wildlife that call the Cottage Wood their home: from bats to birds and bees and squirrels. We did tree and plant identification and talked about the importance of our insects. We were also lucky enough to see a Red Squirrel at the feeder near the low gate. Everyone had a great time and all the children went home with a GRSG activity and an identification book to keep them busy in the wet weather and to help them look for wildlife in the good weather.





The remains of a Pine Cone picnic.



9th August, Lark in the Park, Cushendall

We set up our information table. As always, we were inundated with questions from both young and old about our work, Red Squirrels, Pine Martins and of course, Grey Squirrels.

October 2023.

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

October, Donation to the GRSG

In early July 2023 we received an email from the Charities Aid Foundation, a charity that deals with donations to different charities. They informed us that a doner wished to donate to us. They were looking for some information. Once we verified who they were, we provided them with what they wanted.

About 2 weeks earlier we had an email from a person who was donating £1,000,000, yes one million pounds, upon receipt of our bank details. Needless to say, we filed this request away in the circular filling cabinet. This first email gave the committee a chance to come up with some outrageous projects; a million is hard to spend. We all enjoyed the moment's fun!

In early October we received a donation via the Charities Aid Foundation. This was gratefully accepted, and it will go towards our work here in The Glens of Antrim.

To the person who made the donation, a very big heartfelt **THANK YOU** for your generosity.

2nd October, Dead Red found in Glenariff.



GRSG Volunteer, Paul was doing his weekly rounds in Glenariff Forest Park and came upon a sad sight, a dead Red in a feeder. On close examination it was a young squirrel and was in a very thin condition; its eyes and paws were clean, with no sign of infection. It was determined that the squirrel had died of natural causes.

26th October, Heritage 4 Health talk, in Old Church Cushendun.



Heritage 4 Health

Chair, Daniel McAfee gave a talk on the work we do here in The Glens helping our Reds which are very much part of our environmental heritage. Our environment heritage in The Glens is one of the least covered aspects when it comes to Heritage and this was a great way to link it in.



Thanks for the invite and fantastic work by the Northern Area Community Network

December 2023.

13th December, Live on Facebook at the LOG in Ballycastle Forest.

We had 27 people join the live stream on Facebook. It was a slow start as it had just been raining. We had a mix of small bird, a Robin, 5-6 Blue Tits, 8-10 Great Tits and 15+ Coal Tits. Sadly, no reds visited on this morning and when we had finished the Jay decided to show.

January 2024.

25th January, why did the squirrel cross the bridge?



Well, in Cushendun village it is the dryer option! Thanks to Seana for this photo of a Red Squirrel rocketing across the bridge in Cushendun.

February 2024.

4th February, Walk in Cushendall for Cushendall Development Group

A damp morning for the walk but a good turnout of people. The walk was led by our Chair, Daniel McAfee. The route followed was along the Riverside Walk and through the Cottage Wood. We covered plant and tree identification with Japanese Knotweed being a big problem along the river; many in the group were unaware of the issues it causes, and can cause. We were able to do some bird identification in the Cottage Wood and covered what steps you can take at home to help the wildlife in your garden. All had a very enjoyable morning.

8th February, Meeting with NI Forestry Service.

We had meeting with Jim Marshall and a members of an external auditing team in Glenariff regarding our partnership and the way Grey Squirrel control and management is carried out by ourselves on Forestry Service ground. We were able to show that when trapping we follow good practice guidelines and explained what we, the group, expect from our volunteers when doing control. We were able to show and explain the methods of dispatch we use and the information we record and how it is used. While in Glenariff we took a walk around some of our feeders. During the quick walk round, we saw a total of six Red Squirrels at the feeders. In all a very productive meeting.

11th February, The Volunteers fighting to conserve N. Ireland's Wildlife

BBC News published "The Volunteers fighting to conserve N. Ireland's wildlife" by Niall Glynn. This article included groups such as the NI Raptor Group, NI Badger Group and Glens Red Squirrel Group, all home-grown grass roots, small conservation groups who are working hard to help our local wildlife, some of the aspects of our work and what we face when doing our volunteer work.

The Volunteers Fighting to Conserve NI's Wildlife

By Niall Glynn
BBC News NI

Restoring Red Squirrel Numbers. *While Grey Squirrels are becoming an ever more common sight in Northern Ireland, the same cannot be said for the Red Squirrel. Several groups have been established across Northern Ireland to try to do something about this.*



IMAGE SOURCE, DANIEL MCAFEE

The Glens Red Squirrel Group says it is seeing an increase in the population of the animals in its area. Daniel McAfee is from the Glens Red Squirrel Group based in the Glens of Antrim since 2008.

"We were the second Red Squirrel group in Northern Ireland, now there are 14," he said.

"Part of the work that our volunteers do is going out into the woodlands, setting up feeders, putting cameras up so that we can see what's coming, whether it's Red Squirrels, Grey Squirrels or Pine Martins.

"We do a lot of educational visits with schools, walks and talks with anybody that'll really listen to us to highlight and promote Red Squirrels, our natural environment and local biodiversity."

The volunteers have also planted trees - with landowners' permission - on sites such as a two-acre field in Glenshesk.

"That's thinking for the future. It's all right us feeding the squirrels, but they're going to need to have the habitat that will sustain them in another 10, 20, 30 years," Mr McAfee said.

Another difficult part of the group's work involves the removal and culling of Grey Squirrels, which can starve out Reds from an area and also spread disease to them.

As Greys are an invasive species, it is illegal to release them after they have been trapped. Since 2011 the group has removed about 600 Grey Squirrels from the area they cover.

County Fermanagh is now regarded as Grey Squirrel-free after the Pine Marten was restored in the area.



IMAGE SOURCE, DANIEL MCAFEE

The group offers woodland walks where the Red Squirrels can be spotted.

Mr McAfee said the group's efforts are producing results.

"We're seeing populations of Reds that we hadn't got before and we're seeing the Reds that are in The Glens actually expanding and moving out into new areas," he said.

The groups say they are filling a gap in Northern Ireland conservation by concentrating on smaller localised areas.

While Grey Squirrels are becoming an ever more common sight in Northern Ireland, the same cannot be said for the Red Squirrel.

A growing number of groups have been established across Northern Ireland to try to do something about this.

A Big thanks to Niall Glynn for getting in touch with us.

24th February, BASC Glenwherry Trap Training.



As part of the NI Game Keepers course, we had been asked in early 2023 would we assist in delivering a Grey Squirrel Trap Training Day. Part class, part practical training day. The course normally touches on Grey Squirrel trapping as a part of the course, but they asked the GRSG to deliver a more in-depth look at trapping as part of an overall conservation effort and not just as part of a Gamekeepers management.



The day covered Red Squirrel and Grey Squirrel in N. Ireland, their impact on each other and woodlands, the Law / Wildlife act, Camera Traps, Squirrel groups in NI and the value of feeding information to these group to inform them of any control they may be doing, NISF trapping good practice and dispatch. We did not cover shooting as this is a method we the GRSG don't carry out, but this did let me ask them some questions on matters around shooting that were very interesting.



Everyone got to handle and try out cage traps. All but one had done some kind of Grey Squirrel control the man who was from Fermanagh and he had never actually seen a Grey Squirrel in his life in Fermanagh. Over all a good day and everyone went home having learned something on the day.

29th February, Talk to Portstewart Gardening Club

This talk was booked in early 2023 and was the second time we have given a talk to this group; the first time was 8-9 years ago. I was great to be asked back and to see them again. There were some very keen members interested in how to get rid of Grey Squirrels from their gardens. Many had visited some of our sites to see reds after my last visit and a few had attended walks I had have taken and thankfully we had seen reds on those walks which delighted them at the time, they were able to relive the sightings.



Mary Acheson, Mary Malvern and Helen Kirkpatrick, Portstewart Gardening Club

Reflection on our Work over the Years from 2015/2016 to 2023/2024

Over this year the group have taken part in, and attended, less events than pre-pandemic but this is to be expected as things try and get back to normal.

This is a brief breakdown of the group's year from 2015 to 2024. These hours do not include hours that volunteers put into feeding, Grey Squirrel Control, monitoring, survey work 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

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, National Trust, Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership, North Antrim Community Network, Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum, The Woodland Trust, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Laragh Lodge Restaurant, Boyles Spar Ballycastle and Carnlough. Glenariff Improvement Group, Ulster Wildlife, NI Direct, Red Squirrel Survival Trust, William Hamill & Sons, Steels Feed Supplier, Ballyeamon Barn, St. Ciaran's PS, 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, Janice Witherspoon, Armstrong Storytelling Trust, Heritage 4 Health, Niall Glynn BBC News NI, BASC, LOVE Ballymena Facebook and other 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 many 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

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Annual return

Independent Examiner's Report to the Charity Trustees of the Glens Red Squirrel Group

This report relates to the accounts of the Glens Red Squirrel Group for the year ending 31st March 2024

Respective responsibilities of Charity Trustees and Independent Examiner

Charity Trustees

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Independent Examiner

It is my responsibility as the Independent Examiner to:

- * Examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- * Follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b)

of the Charities Act

- * State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention

Name: FRANCIS CLOSE

Relevant professional qualification or body: FORMER PRINCIPAL OF GLENANN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Address:
CUSHENDALL
20 MOUNT EDWARDS HILL
CUSHENDALL
BT44 0TQ CO. ANTRIM

Date 30/5/2024



(FRANCIS CLOSE)

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Accounts


Glens Red Squirrel Group
Accounts for year ended 31/3/2023

	Income		Expenditure	
Membership	£260.00 ✓		Insurance	✓ £417.51
Donations	£378.60 ✓		Feed	✓ £420.00
Grants	£1,790.49 ✓		Computer	✓ £670.69
Paypal	£771.42 ✓		Wildlife Boxes	✓ £375.48
Hide	£60.00 ✓		Printing	✓ £546.00
Feeders	£50.00 ✓		Equipment	✓ £1,455.52
Quiz	£170.00 ✓		Bank Fees	✓ £33.86
Correcting Entry	£290.00 ✓		Rent	✓ £1.19
			Correcting Entry	✓ £290.00
	£3,770.51 ✓		£4,210.25	

Income	£4,210.25
Expenditure	<u>£3,770.51</u>
Deficit	£439.74 ✓

Bank Balance 31/3/22	£7,110.09
Less Deficit	<u>£439.74</u>
Bank Balance 31/3/2023	£6,670.35 ✓

I certify this is an accurate and true statement of the Glens Red Squirrel Group Account.

Signed:  (FRANCIS CLOSE)

5/7/2023

Former principal of
 Glorann Primary School
 Cushordall.

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash held and at bank	Unrestricted Funds	Total Funds
	£	£
Danske Bank (end of year 31/3/2023)	6,670	6,670
<hr/>		
Total Cash held at Bank	6,670	6,670
Other Assets held for Functional use		
All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund		
		Value (£)
Tools		771
Traps and accessories		1,399
Furniture		248
Cameras, IT and accessories		7,182
<hr/>		
Total		9,600

Notes to the above accounts.

Basis of Valuation

The equipment held by the Charity is initially recognised at cost. The Charity uses the straight-line method to allocate the cost of the equipment to the profit and loss over their estimated useful lives.

Liabilities

As of the end of year 31/3/2023, the group has no Liabilities.

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Annual report

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Annual Report 2022/2023

Charity Number 102100



Index.

Page 2	Chairs Report
Page 3	Grey Squirrel Control
Page 3	CEDaR
Page 4	General Report on Feed and Monitoring Sites
Page 5	Active Member's Reports on their Feed/ Monitoring Sites
Page 16	Rangers Report
Page 17	Equipment Report
Page 17	Squirreltober Report 2022
Page 32	Squirreltober thanks.
Page 32	Forest Service Northern Ireland and GRSG Partnership.
Page 35	Monthly Reports
Page 47	Reflection on our work over the years
Page 49	Thanks to our Supporters.

GLENS RED SQUIRRELGROUP CHAIR'S REPORT

Chairman's Report.

This has been a quiet but busy year for the GRSG. This year we celebrated 15 years of Red Squirrel conservation in the Glens of Antrim and all our hard work is definitely making a positive impact on our Red Squirrels, natural environment and over all wildlife in the Glens.

This year our thoughts and prayers were with the Connolly family with the passing of one of our founding members, Frank Connolly in December. Frank had been a very active member within the group who was always first at any of our events and walks over the years. Frank will be missed and gave much to the group.

This year we also saw the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Biodiversity Officer; Rachel Bain leave the council. We have worked with Rachel over the last 12 years first with the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and then in council. We worked on several projects from tree planting, hedge planting to habitat enhancement with bird and bat boxes to list just a few. We did joint walks on council ground with each other as she was always willing to help. We wish Rachel all the best in her new ventures. At this current time there is a new Biodiversity Officer but we have yet to meet with them in their new role and we hope we can grow our links with the council.

Personally, Kelly and I have seen our family grow with the birth of our third son, Theo. This has been a bit of a change but thankfully have two great helpers now with Ben and Charlie who are always happy to go squirreling. They love helping scatter feeding and getting to see what we pick up on the trail cameras when we get home. In saying that at the start it was difficult to see a squirrel when out with them but I think the squirrels have got used to them now and we are seeing more reds when we are doing feeders.

Over this year I took part in the Ulster Wildlife's Red/Grey/Pine Marten survey work. I was able to cover 16 sites in all. These were sites along our buffer zones and historical sites for the survey. The sites picked up reds in most, a few Pine Martens and thankfully no greys. The results were given to Ross McIlwrath from Ulster Wildlife and we logged the information.

This year saw Squirreltober back to more or less normal with school visits, talks and walks. With things different after Covid (like grey squirrels we know it is still out there) getting back to the way it was pre Covid has been our aim. We have noticed that people are coming out to walks more and wanting us to come to them, which is great. We have even had booking for 2024 as other groups plan their programs and we look forward to more events in the next year.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's Mayor, Ivor Wallace held an event to recognise Gerard Mc Caughan's achievement as "Volunteer of the Year." The event was held in Ballycastle Council Offices and the committee were also invited. Mayor Wallace was really interested in what Gerard and our volunteers do as a group. He has promised to help us in any way he can.

I would like to thank all our volunteers who give up their time to do feeding, control, attend events and help in any way. The success of the Group is down to the work of our many volunteers.

Daniel McAfee, Chair of Glens Red Squirrel Group, 2021-2023

Grey Squirrel Control

This year there was a total of 9 greys dispatched, all these were from the Cargan area, carried out by our volunteer in that area. This is a key area as it is preventing the movement of greys into Glenariff.

This takes the number of dispatches to 640 from 2nd April 2011 when the GRSG started recording Grey Squirrel dispatches or recorded road kills. 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 a known red area, this gives us a good indicator of Red Squirrel activity patterns in the area.

CEDaR

The information recorded is

Date

Grid Reference

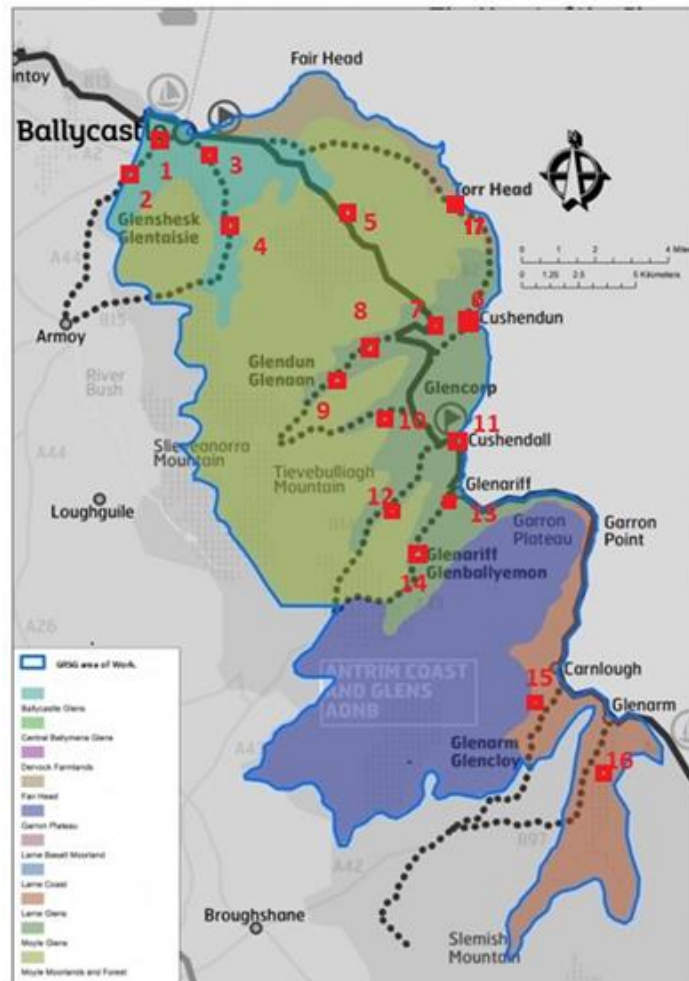
Sex of animal

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
- 5 Ballypatrick Forest (Suspended due to ongoing works)
- 6 Glenmona Cushendun
- 7 Cregagh Wood
- 11 Cottage Wood Cushendall
- 14 Glencarriff Forest
- 16 Glenarm Forest.
- 15 Carnlough.

Feed sites that are permanent, but not open to the public: -

These sites are out of public view and are used to monitor if there has been any Grey Squirrel activity. Most of these sites have cameras covering them all the time. Some cameras are moved between sites as we have a limited number of cameras.

2 Glentaisie

5 Ballypatrick

8 & 9 Glendun

3 & 4 Glenshesk

17 Torr Head

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 / 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 / house holders gardens, who would report back to our Rangers if they see any grey activity takes place. We have other sites throughout the Glens that are privately maintained which we have limited input too unless requested to be looked in on, if owners are away, etc.

Active members report on their Feed / Monitoring Sites.

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 10 Badgers living in it. This site was set up as a control site to impact on the number of Greys Squirrels that were making their way into Ballycastle Forest. The site had several greys when it was first set up and no Red Squirrels, after several greys had been removed, the reds returned.

This year the activity in this small woodland has been very mixed with the reds not as active as in previous years they had vanished for about 4 months only to reappear for a week or so and then go again. I do not think the visiting squirrels were the squirrels that had been resident previously. But over the last month the activity has picked up, the reds are showing singly but often. No greys have visited the site in the last year.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Ballycastle Forest.

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

Ballycastle Forest has had a fantastic year for the reds and for the people who use the forest, with more people seeing reds when using the woods. Two things of note have happened over the last year;

1: We have a Red Squirrel that has become a bit of a celebrity with everyone on the lookout for him and knowing his name, this squirrel is called "Peter". This name came about, from having a chat with an elderly gent who walks the wood regularly and I mentioned, had he seen the red who was around the gate? He replied, yes, Peter. Why do you call him that I asked, he is like St. Peter looking after the gates of Heaven and sure is not the forest just heaven to be in. So, the name has stuck and it is quite fitting with most of the regulars knowing him well now.

2: This year I have been doing live feeds on the Facebook page from "The Log" in Ballycastle Forest, this is simply a log that is just below one of the first feeders in Ballycastle Forest. The activity at the log has been great and very entertaining with birds from Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jays, Blackbird and of course Red Squirrels. I have been able to set the phone up and walk away about twelve feet from the log and the wildlife comes and feeds very happily. The log has also given several photographers the opportunity to set up and snap reds as they come and go. Many of them have sent their photographs to us and let us use them on our Facebook page.

This year in the forest we have found that some red females have had a late litter, kits were seen well into October. This has been common across many of the sites I have been working in and this is the fifth year it has happened. It could be the better autumn, warmer drier weather, or the females being in better condition, making reds have a third litter.

The squirrels also started to make their dreys early this year with many new dreys being made late December and like past years the dreys are made out in the open in many of the Birch trees or Hazel bushes.

We were able to pick up a few Red Stags in the forest this year as they passed through. Normally we would find Sika deer in the forest but we did not pick any up this year on camera. The Pine Marten is still in the forest and this year she has had three young. The female did move away from the feeding areas this year but this may be because of the increase in activity within the forest.

We have seen an increase in mountain bike activity in the forest on one morning there was 32 bikes, I asked, was there an event organised and was told that it was a Facebook post that had got out of hand and more people were showed up than they were expecting.

There has also been in an increase in dog walkers and from experience and talking to people who walk the forest they are being put off and, in some cases, harassed by dogs off the lead. Some of the dog owners get very confrontational when they are asked about their dog's behaviour.

The Forest Service also did some work over the last three months by removing all the Ash trees along the forest roadways. The work only took a few days and it had no impact on the squirrels or any of the activity of the wildlife in the woods.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenshesk.

I have four permanent monitoring sites that cover the most of Glenshesk. They are visited every week with extra sites being added if I get sighting of a suspected Grey Squirrel. We have a healthy population of reds within Glenshesk. I am also lucky to have a few squirrel fanatics who have their own feeding station in their gardens. They keep me updated with the goings on of their Red Squirrels. We have two pairs of Pine Martins within the glen which have removed a few greys that have ventured my way.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

The Curragh.

The trees in the Curragh are really doing well. On days gone by, this area would have been used to grow carrots and other root vegetables so the ground is very fertile. The Apple trees and the Cherry trees produced fruit last year, as did the Red and Black Currant bushes, not forgetting the many Rosehips and Blackberries. They all attract a lot of birds to them and you can always hear bird song anytime you walk through it.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Carey.

I have four permanent monitoring feeding stations in the wider Carey area as well as another three monitoring feeders that I move about, always trying to find more reds. Up until last year, Red Squirrels were only present at one site in Carey. They have now spreading out and I have them permanently at two of my sites. Tree cover (wooded areas) and sufficient food supplies, I feel are keeping them from expanding further. As in all areas there are a few farmers who do plant trees, unfortunately most do not see the benefit of having trees and the shelter they provide to their farms.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Murlough Bay.

Mixed planting in small blocks of Oak, Ash, Holly, Beech, Larch, and Scot 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 been visited several times this year and this is the first year we have seen a Pine Marten on camera here. We did not pick up any squirrels on the cameras. We did have a reported sighting of a red but we could not confirm that it was a red that was seen. Monitoring will continue to be carried out in the coming year; we may look more into the Hazel scrub rather than veins of mature forest that hug the ravines in Murlough as they may not offer the squirrels the cover they need. The deer population has increased in the area.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Torr Head.

The site near Torr Head is a small slip of trees less than 3 acres in size that stretch from the sea up to the cliff face, at its widest point it would be about 30 meters and its thinnest point it would be 4-7 meters. The trees are a mix of Ash, Oak, Hazel, Holly and Sycamore all of various ages. The area has a small stream subject to rain fall that runs through it. You would drive past it before knowing you had.

There are now three or four reds in this area of Torr with two the most being seen on camera at any one time, but with size and colour differences on camera there are more than two. The site is quite difficult to get to and was serviced once a month. But we did pick up in one month that we had at least five different Pine Martens over a few weeks. This was the most we have seen here; we knew there were two for sure in the area and they have been there from 2019. Its possible that these were their three young as there was no difference in size between three of them. The reds are not put off by the Pine Martins and continued to use the feeders.



Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Ballypatrick Forest.

Ballypatrick Forest consist of large blocks of conifer planting with a small number of broad leaf trees which are all self-seeded. Originally part of the first Squirrel Trail but due to works within the forest of thinning and illegal felling, the squirrel population in the area vanished or moved on. We have found that squirrel activity in the area around the carpark has never picked up to the same as it was in 2015-2016 pre this disturbance.

This year saw large scale harvesting taking place in Ballypatrick Forest. Pine trees were removed from along the road side as part of the normal harvesting, this has opened the area up considerably.

Monitoring continues to taking place showed that there is several Pine Martens across the forestry and a large population of deer. Bird activity can be mixed depending on the location. Along the edges and boundary's, we have picked up Jays, Magpies, Crows and a wide mix of small birds. A good population of wood mouse across the forestry's and rat activity is isolated to areas near the main road/ carparks/ and near rivers or streams but more where people are active. For the large number of small rodents that were found, no owls were spotted in any of our monitoring sites sadly, but there are bound to be some within the forestry. From all reports, the number of field mice throughout the Glens has increased dramatically.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

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 continuously.



In 2015 a single Great Spotted Woodpecker was spotted in the wood. Over the last few years, they have successfully had chicks and fledged young. This year seen the Great Spotted Woodpecker coming to the hide for the first time to use the feeders. This has been fantastic as it has resulted in an influx of professional photographers wanting to try and photograph it, the bird is very shy and does not stay long at the feeder.

There are several monitoring sites within the wood. These are covered by cameras and are a mix of scatter feed and feeder sites. The red population has continued to thrive but there has been an overall reduction in red numbers coming to the hide were before you could have had up to nine reds, but over recent months the number seen at any one time has reduced. The activity around the hide would normally pick up around December but this year it was February before the reds were seen in numbers regularly at the hide. I put it down to plenty of natural food within the woods.

We had several early morning live feeds via Facebook from the Hide and we have had reds appear at them all. The live stream has been picked up well for a non-advertised event on Facebook. We have had up to thirty people join to watch, which is fantastic as we would not have got this number if people had to attend in person.

The wild life in the woods across all the sites has been very active and we have had a few additions to the woods that we have not had before. We now have a few Deer, a pair of Ravens who have just arrived over the last few weeks, one Badger has been seen and an increase in Pine Marten numbers, to at least four. We do know that the female had three Kitts (two males and a female) this year as we were able to get them on our camera traps. The female stayed and the two young males moved down Glendun where they were picked up on several of the monitoring cameras along the glen, but they did return to the woods. It maybe that they got as far as the large male who is at the far end of Glendun and they could not get beyond him. There is another adult male in the woods, he has been seen with the female a few times.



The Hide this year has seen a fantastic run over the last few months with it being booked by individuals and small groups of photographers. We have had people from Dublin, Letterkenny, Bangor, Belfast, Cookstown and Newcastle to name just a few. Some of the people have been members of other N.I. Squirrel Groups and when asked why have they come to our Hide, they said it is because they were guaranteed to see reds. Unfortunately, this is one guarantee we cannot provide when people are booking. We really are getting great feedback from those who are attending the Hide and we have been offered advise on how we can add to the set up here.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glendun.

Apart from 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 had been in the past, part of control programs. We have seen a great reduction in the number of greys being picked up in these sites. The reason for this may be because we have been very vocal in the area about the illegal release of greys that we have suspected over the last number of years. This last year has seen these sites pick up only one Grey Squirrel and this animal was not picked up on camera again or at any other site in Glendun. This has been fantastic news; it may be because the Pine Martens have been moving about and may have got the grey or the grey has got their scent and moved on.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger

Glenmona Feed site and Playground.

The Playground had been temporary stood down due to grey activity a few years ago but was reinstated at the end of 2021 as we had no grey sightings in the overall area of Glendun. Red numbers in and around Glenmona grow from strength to strength with the partnership between GRSG at the playground and National Trust Rangers feeding in and around their workshop. Several feeders are now located around the Glenmona grounds in gardens and on private land. A few caravan owners have feeders also and they help when trap monitoring is needed. Several landowners in the area were also given feeders to monitor and they have had great success removing any greys that did pop up. With this monitoring system in place, it is hoped that the greys will not become a problem again in the playground.



We get a lot of reports and photographs from people who use the car park and the gardens of Glenmona about seeing Red Squirrels in the trees and using the feeders. These reports show us that people do appreciate the work that the Glens Red Squirrel Group do within the Glens of Antrim and further afield.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Cushendall and Cottage Wood.

The Cottage Wood, a Council site and part of our “Red Squirrel Safari Trail,” is a mixed mature woodland containing Sweet Chestnut, Scots Pine, Beech, Sycamore and Ash trees. At present there are feed stations within the Cottage Wood, at Gaults Road and the Glenville areas, all these feeders are being well attended with five reds seen at the one time at a feeder within the Cottage Wood. There are also feeders located with eight households in the general area and all seem to be visited by reds and are being maintained by the families themselves.



On a negative note, however the River Walk in Cushendall was maintained for five months with five feed stations without any success so the feeders have been removed. I will be monitoring the area and the feeders will be returned if reds are seen to be in the area again. Two sightings of greys were reported and despite my best efforts for several weeks not a single grey has been spotted again.

Laurence McAlister, GRSG Volunteer.

Glenariff and Parkmore Forest Park

In Glenariff Forest Park there are a healthy number of reds which visit the feeders regularly. The Perspex feeders that were introduced last year seem to be a hit with the squirrels and photographers.



Paul McHugh, GRSG Volunteer

Martinstown and Glenravel.

I continue to monitor a couple of areas in Cargan and have removed several greys, mainly from Ben's planting where with control, the number of greys sighted is declining. We had a Red Squirrel sighted a few times at Ben's late last year, hopefully it is still in the area.

Paul McHugh, GRSG Volunteer

Ballyeamon Barn.

The barn continues to welcome members of the Glens Red Squirrel Group committee for their monthly meetings. Sadly, since the total felling of the forest behind Ballyeamon Barn our Red Squirrels have moved on. Apart from a one-off sighting of a large Grey Squirrel there have been no sightings at all of reds to report. If the Forest Service had even left one stand of trees for our reds this report might have been more optimistic but the bleak barren landscape behind the premises is not conducive as a habitat for man or beast.

Liz Weir, GRSG Volunteer

Garron Point.



This is a photo of a red that visits my garden in Garron Point regularly. I have a very busy bird feeder close by. They see the nuts in the feeder and try to peck them, quite amusing. My reds have produced two, possibly three kittens and they are busy dashing around my garden.

Elizabeth Gracey, GRSG Member.

Carnlough.

The waterfalls are still officially closed because of a landslide last year so my main area for feed stations is the nearby quarry and Waterfall Rd. I have seven feed boxes located in these areas.

Volunteers throughout the glen maintain about twelve feeders in their gardens or close to where they live.

Activity at the feeders was quite last summer and autumn, but since Christmas, activity has picked up and since the snow in January, feeders have needed replenished weekly. In general, sightings have become more frequent over the past year with numerous kits sighted in various locations. So, our efforts seem to be paying off with greater numbers of sightings.

Gabriel McAuley, Deputy Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Glenarm.

This has been a good year for the Glenarm Red Squirrels. Most people who have walked within the forest have seen a red at one time or another. The feeders are regularly refilled by our volunteer, Colin Urwin and this keeps the reds coming to the feeders.

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), 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.

Daniel McAfee's Report.

This year has been quite as far as trapping is concerned, but otherwise a busy year. Feeding and monitoring still takes place on all my sites and this year I only picked up one grey and it was only a fleeting visit from it at one of my scatter feed sites in Cushendun. This has been my quietest year to date for Greys Squirrel control, but I know I cannot become complacent that a grey or greys could pop up at any time.

Over the year I was able to get out and about with presentations and talks to groups Covid had seen activities like this stop. So, it was good to get back out to groups and schools across Squirreltober and a few invited talks. I have had two bookings for 2024 already, I know from talking to different groups, they are only starting to find their feet again and organise programs for talks.

This year I took part in the Ulster Wildlife's Red / Grey / Pine Marten Survey Work. I was able to cover sixteen sites in all. These were sites along our buffer zones. The sites picked up reds in most, a few Pine Martins and thankfully no greys.

This year I have also had a few days with award winning Photographer, Tom McDonnell in our sites to try and assist him with getting photos of "Glens of Antrim" Pine Martens. I have Pine Martens now in all my feed sites and many of my monitor sites, so knowing the sites was easy, the hard work was up to Tom to try and get them on camera and the results so far are fantastic and I cannot wait to see more from him.

The booking of the Hide mainly goes through me and 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, I have found that many of the professional photographers do not actually do this and when posting their own photos, they won't state where they took them. But we know where they took them. It is fantastic to see the photographs people are getting.

Daniel McAfee, Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Gabriel McAuley's Report.

It has been a very quiet year. One grey was sighted at Largy Road, both from the d last summer with traps set but no success. However, a dead grey was sighted at Branch Rd./ Coast Rd. about a week later (road kill).

I attended several GRSG events over the year, including the Glenarm Forest walk in the Autumn which I felt was poorly attended and organised the yearly Quiz in Laragh Lodge which was a great success from both the reports received from attendees and from a fundraising aspect. I continue to repair and replace worn feeders as need be.

Gabriel McAuley, Deputy Chair and GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

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Gerard Mc Caughan's Report.

Monitoring Activities continue through the year as always. Thankfully we had no Squirrel Pox or any other setback. I attended several GRSG events and organised the Hide open days in April which are always well attended. I continue with my Equipment Caretaker role which keeps me busy through the year.

Gerard Mc Caughan, GRSG Red Squirrel Ranger.

Equipment Report.

We applied for and were successful with the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme 2022 again this year, which is provided by Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and administered by the Northern Area Community Network. With the aid of the Micro Grant, we have been able to maintain our equipment at a level that keeps all our many volunteers supplied.

The usual Annual Equipment Audit was conducted in January 2023 and was completed by the end of February.

We had to replace one of the two laptops that the group have, as the operating system was going out of date. This laptop is used by our members secretary to hold all membership records and needs to comply with current regulations on data security.

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

Squirreltober Report 2022.

This year, we had a very successful and mixed Squirreltober. It was mixed in many ways, the weather playing a big part, in general weather was warm and wet meaning that autumn was about two weeks or so later than previous years. The trees in the first week in November, were still holding on to their leaves making it difficult to spot Red Squirrels. This has been a bumper year for wild food which resulted in the squirrels abandoning our feeders to take full advantage of what natural food that was available. So, squirrel sighting on our walks and events have been down on previous years but we did have a few more natural chance sightings of squirrels running in the trees tops with lots of leaves making it a real challenge or as the reds dashed across the forest floors or across paths and road ways as our walks took place.

Attendance on our public walks was medium to fair this year compared to last year when we were over booked on all our events, this was because we were coming out of lockdowns and everyone just wanted to get out and about. Now that we are back to normal there may be a different focus on things. The wet weather may have been also a factor for people not coming out to explore the Glens on our Squirrel Safaris, those who did attend all gave great feedback even if Red Squirrels had not been seen.

Our calendar at planning stage was almost full but quickly grew within the first week, so much so that we were unable to fit everything in. We had two school events that ran over into November so that no one would miss out.

This year for the first time that National Red Squirrel week was held back into October. Historically held in the last week of September, this was the main reason that the GRSG started Squirreltober because "National Red Squirrel Week" just is not long enough to showcase our Red Squirrels here in the Glens. So Squirreltober was started so that our squirrels, our Glens, our volunteers, and our work could be highlighted and give people from all over, the opportunity to get out and explore the Glens with the chance to see a Red Squirrel or two or three. With National Red Squirrel in October and the GRSG Squirreltober events we were able to highlight the plight of the Red Squirrel.

We had our Squirrel Safaris, two Safaris with story walks, council meeting with the mayor to highlight the work done by the GRSG, school visits, school walks, radio interview, press cover in print and online, Facebook posts across the month and two talks in Corrymeela.

1st October 2022, Radio Ulster.

Our Chair, Daniel McAfee was interviewed on Radio Ulster's Ann Marie McAleese radio program. This was a great opportunity to kick start Squirreltober. Daniel and Anne Marie talked all about the Red Squirrels within the Glen and the work that we do to ensure their survival. They also talked about all the events that we had organised for the month of October across the Glens to help people get out there to try and spot reds and explore the Glens at the same time throughout Squirreltober. As a group, we would like other Red Squirrel Groups to also take on Squirreltober and arrange their own events to make the month of October a nationwide event.

1st October 2022, Glenarm Red Squirrel Safari



Liz O'Connor, Forest Guide and Gabriel McAuley, Vice Chair and Squirrel Ranger took the walk around the forest, unfortunately there was a very poor turn out for this walk and no squirrels were seen.



7th October 2022, Quiz Night, Laragh Lodge.

A great night was had by all and Gabriel McAuley, ably supported by his wife, Mary, provided us with many a challenge and head scratcher. A great night was had by all with lots of laughs.

8th October 2022, Talks to Corrymeela Community.

The group were invited to Corrymeela to give two talks one for children and one for adults. The children ranged from 6-15 years old with their parents in total about 20 children and 10 adults. We did our Power Point Presentation, showed our videos from our trail cameras, did a little squirrel craft and went for a wild life walk around the grounds of Corrymeela to see what we could find and what the squirrels would eat.



The second talk was to 25-30 adults. We gave a talk on the work we do in the Glens and how our work has helped reds areas across N. Ireland, we talked about the issues that still face reds and about the importance of Grey Squirrel control across the country. The overall view on grey control was positive



9th October 2022, Cottage Wood Cushendall, Red Squirrel Safari.

This walk was led by our Chair and Squirrel Ranger, Daniel assisted by Tom Naughton and Laurence McAlister. A small turn out but a great enthusiast group. Lots of plant and tree identified and lots of small birds were seen, unfortunately no squirrels. There was lots of interest in the work that the group does in the area.

We hope that those on the walk will return to the Cottage Woods to explore this great wood and park, one of the few within the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area that has Red Squirrels.



Inkcap Mushroom.



Beech Masts

11th October 2022, Talk in St Ciaran's PS, Cushendall.

Last week our Chair and Squirrel Ranger Daniel McAfee visited St. Ciaran's PS Cushendun. Daniel gave a talk about the local Red Squirrels in Glendun, showed some of the footage of reds and other wildlife we have within the Glens and explained about the work we the GRSG do and have done over the years. There were lots of very good question and great interest. It was fantastic to hear that it did not stop when Daniel left!!

The children did some fantastic art work and produced brilliant fact file posters. All put together to create brilliant class room displays!!

Seeing this all has made our day!!





These children are our future Glens men and women and education in our environment heritage is a must to spark an interest now that will grow and hopefully stay with them no matter where life takes them.

A big thank you to the staff at St. Ciaran's PS.

12th October, Outdoor Learning with two local primary schools.

Chair Daniel McAfee took eighty-four pupils and six staff from St. Patricks and St Brigid's PS along with Ballycastle Integrated PS on a Red Squirrel Safari of Ballycastle Forest. Unfortunately, no Red Squirrels were seen but with eighty-four kids that was to be expected. We covered lots of topics from tree and plant identification, seed distribution and of course Red Squirrel Conservation. There were a lot of interesting question asked off Daniel which he was delighted about. It is great to see our children so interested in the natural world. We did see a large Buzzard as it fly over the path as we walked in the forest.



13th October 2022, Field trip with Home Schooling Children.

Another first for the GRSG. Chair Daniel McAfee took a group of home-schooled children and their family on a Squirrel Safari. This was to be the first of two groups in the month. We had a fantastic walk the weather was great with the temperature being 16 degrees, very warm for this time of year. We did see a squirrel, at first it was for just sitting still, but then it put on a bit of a show as it made its way through the Larch trees everyone got a great view of it and how fast it was. We covered tree and seed identification, seed distribution and our local wildlife that call the woodlands and forestry's their home. A fantastic day.



15th October 2022, Cregagh Wood Hide open day.



Chair, Daniel McAfee with seven others attended the Hide open day. Unfortunately, with the volume of wild food in the woods there were no squirrels calling to the Hide but the woods are about two weeks behind in preparing for Winter. Bird activity was very low as well around the Hide with the only real bird hanging about being a Robin. It was noted by one of the locals who attended that their garden had also seen a drop-in bird activity in the last two to three weeks.

19th October 2022, Home School Children walk in Ballycastle Forest.

Second Group of home school children and families. A larger group than the first time. The same topics were covered and all enjoyed the walk, sadly no reds were seen on this visit but all will be back now they know where to look.

20th October 2022, Ballycastle Forest Safari.

Chair, Daniel McAfee took another group of thirty primary three pupils and six staff from St. Patricks and St Brigid's PS along with Ballycastle Integrated PS on a Red Squirrel Safari of Ballycastle Forest. They were split into two groups on the day with each group doing part of the Ballycastle Safari and the second group doing some forest school learning at the entrance of the forest. As it was a very warm day (17degrees) everyone was getting eaten my midges. We were all lucky to see a Red Squirrel as it crossed above use in the Beech Trees.



22th October 2022, Glenariff Forest Red Squirrel Safari, and Story Walk.

Walk lead by Liz O'Connor for the GRSG with Janice Witherspoon as the story teller. A great walk with a mix of story and forest facts. This walk was in partnership with the Storytelling Festival. There was a charge for this walk as part of the festival we received a donation. seven attended and it was well received.





23rd October 2022, Cregagh Wood Story walk.

Walk lead by Chair Daniel McAfee for GRSG and Story teller Janice Witherspoon. A different type of woodland visits for many on the walk. Sadly, no reds were seen but lots of topics were covered and lots of story's, a very enjoyable walk for all. We had fifteen in attendance.



Feedback from one of the attendees *"I had the privilege to take part in the forest walk with Glens Red Squirrel Group on 23rd October 2022 Sunday, as part of the Glens Storytelling Festival. I enjoyed so much the interesting stories of our forest guide (I forgot his name), who worked in perfect harmony with storyteller Janice Witherspoon. The stories of science, everyday stories, of people and nature, intertwined with folktales, folklore just arrived right into our heart. I am a storyteller from Hungary, and from what has been mentioned, I remembered a story about a beech tree. The guides of the walk generously let me share that story – end in spite of the pouring rain, everyone appreciated it. It has been an event of openness, sharing, community and of course, raising awareness of the precious red squirrels of the land.*

Maja Bumberák, Hungary, Budapest"



29th October 2022, Ballycastle Red Squirrel Safari.

Walk lead by Chair, Daniel McAfee assisted by Liz and Petra (Forest Service Educational Guides). A great walk to end Squirreltober, with fifteen in attendance, a mix of children and adults. We covered tree and seed identification, woodland wildlife, Red Squirrels, the work we do in the Glens and much more. In all five reds were seen by some, Daniel only saw four, as the others were lucky to see one cross the path while Daniel talked about the work we do in the Glens.

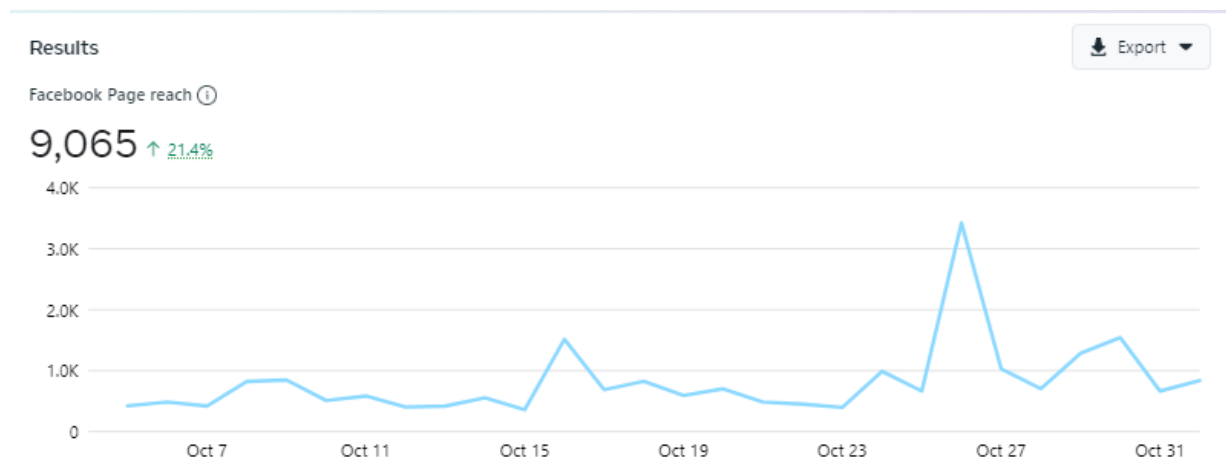






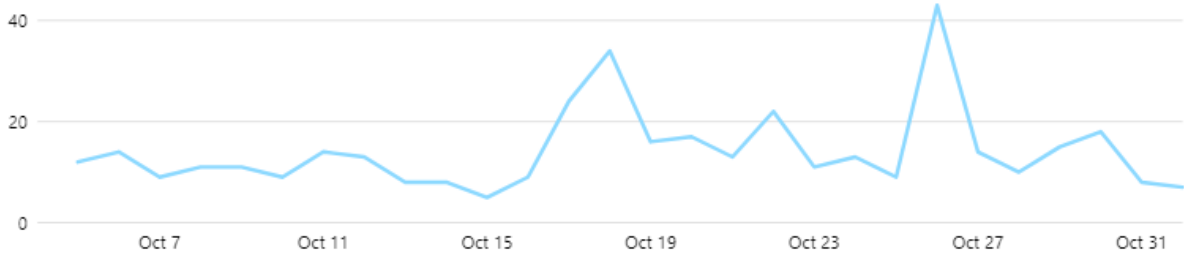
Over Squirreltober we had a Red Squirrel spotted by several people running along Castle Street in Ballycastle. We also had videos sent through of very young kits in Glendun. This is very late for young squirrels but with the weather being so mid it not surprising. We have had young reds in October before in Ballycastle Forest and in Glenarm Forest. We received videos from Glenariff Forest Park and photographs that people were able to snap while out in the Glens.

We posted over Facebook and here are some of the results for over October.



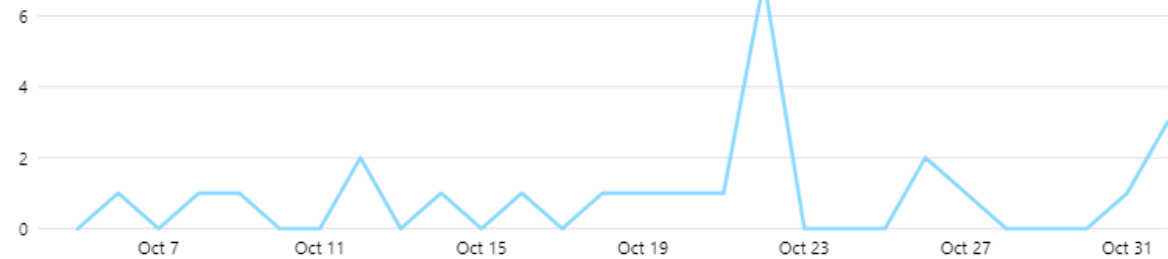
Facebook Page visits ⓘ

397 ↑ 93.7%



Facebook Page new likes ⓘ

25 ↑ 47.1%



Top 7 Most reached posts over October.

Recent content ↑↓	Type	Reach ⓘ ↓	Likes and reactio... ⓘ ↑↓	Sticker taps ⓘ ↑↓
Sun Oct 23, 10:00pm	Post	Boost post	4,243	28
Sat Oct 29, 10:14am	Post	Boost post	2,597	91
Sat Oct 15, 11:00pm	Post	Boost post	2,121	26
Tue Oct 25, 11:00pm	Post	Boost post	1,251	107
Wed Oct 19, 5:03pm	Post	Boost unavailable	969	32
Tue Oct 18, 7:51am	Post	Boost unavailable	834	31
Tue Nov 1, 7:21am	Post	Boost unavailable	776	9

Over Squirreltober we engaged with

279 children across local schools, home school network, talks and walks.
 112 adults across walks, talks, and schools.

1 live radio broadcast

Several Facebook pages e.g., Love Ballymena, Causeway Coast News.

Papers; News Letter, Belfast Telegraph, The Ballymena/Coleraine/Ballycastle Chronicle

Events advertised on Ulster Wildlife and the UK Squirrel Accord web site.

We visited five forests and woods within the Glens of Antrim.

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. Our GRSG volunteers who helped and keep feeders stocked over the year to help our reds and to make sure that our visitors get the chance to see Red Squirrels. Janice Witherspoon, The Storytelling Festival, Causeway Coast and Glen's Mayor, Ivor Wallace, SDLP Glens Councillor, Margret Anne McKillop, Pupils and Staff of St. Ciaran's PS Cushendun, St. Patrick's and St Brigid's PS, Ballycastle Integrated PS, Anne Marie McAleese's Your Place and Mine BBC Radio Ulster, Corrymeela Community, Laragh Lodge, The News Letter, Belfast Telegraph, The Ballymena/Coleraine/Ballycastle Chronicle, Ulster Wildlife, UK Squirrel Accord, Northern Ireland Forest Service and other groups who helped us out during the month from practical tasks to putting up our events on their Facebook pages, etc..

Hope to see you all again next year.

Forest Service Northern Ireland and GRSG Partnership.

Over the last number of years and 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 (Ballycastle, Breen, Ballypatrick, Glenariff and Glenarm) offer an opportunity for members of the public to access large areas to walk and run and the opportunity to meet its wildlife. This is where we, with our feeding sites give people the chance to see our native Red Squirrels that make the forestries their home.

This partnership has allowed us to highlight the fact that "Yes" we do have Red Squirrel in the Glens.

An issue we had found is that people did not know we had Red Squirrels in Northern Ireland let alone in the Glens but with our work with the Forest Service NI and within their Forestry's we are educating



the young and the not so young about NOT only Red Squirrels but about much of the plants and animals that call these areas their homes.

The Forest Service NI 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.

Thankfully our healthy Red Squirrel numbers are linked with the overall health of our Red Squirrels. 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 NI property's that we work in. We believe there are several reasons for this, one is because of the public's vigilance and forestry staff's vigilance as they are quick to report to us any greys they see. A second reason is because most of Forest Service NI properties in the Glens are home to Pine Martens. The presents of Pine Martens do have a negative impact on Grey Squirrel behaviour and abundance in an area, the concentration of Pine Martens in Forest Service NI properties vary from property to property but we do pick them up when monitoring and going about our work.

The Forest Service NI staff that we have made links with within the Glens area are a vital asset to the work we do and assisting us with that work. If it's 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 Guide, Liz O'Connor and Petra, who has 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 NI. We also must thank Jim Marshall. Jim has been key in our planning for setting up site in areas to ensure no works are planned that could impact on equipment, etc. We also feedback to Jim on any issues we may find on our weekly duties in the Forest Service NI 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 NI too. We also want to thank the men in Glenariff forestry yard, they are more than willing to help and they keep an eye on the reds in the yard as well, they all are very helpful and we are very grateful.

Over all we see this partnership going from strength to strength for the protection of Red Squirrels in the Glen 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. The Forest Service have let us know of new works in the forest and we were able to add more forests to our licenses agreement and hope to start work in them soon.



2022-23 Monthly Reports

May 2022.



Tom and Joe enjoying an event in Glenmona House, Glendun.

11th May 2022, Feeder Workshop in Glenmona.

Feeder work shop at Glenmona House Cushendun. The numbers attending was low but in saying that, 15 feeders were put together on the night.



July 2022.

4th July 2022, Cushendun Decides.

“Cushendun Split the Pot” at the Cushendun Church. We were lucky to have our small project selected called “Welcome to Our woods” We were awarded £500



The GRSG project was to provide two Pine Martin Den boxes, Bat boxes, Bird nest boxes, Information plaques as well as some feed for the Red Squirrels. The project will be carried out by the Glens Red Squirrel Group and volunteers willing to help with the erection of boxes.

August 2022.

6th August 2022, Red Bay Lifeboat Station 50th Anniversary Open day.

The Group was contacted by the RLNI and asked if we would like to provide an information and awareness stall. Raymie and Liz consequently set up a table, alongside other information providers, inside the RLNI station building.

There were thousands of people in attendance. A lot of support and interest was shown towards the aims of the GRSG. They were surprised by the number of passing public who were very aware of our

group and the positive work that we do to maintain a healthy Red Squirrel population in the Glens of Antrim.

The public were also very aware of the ongoing issues of Grey Squirrel control. This was clearly demonstrated by the fact that approximately one in five people who passed by the stall had a first-hand story to relate of having spotted Red Squirrels and knew of the issues that Grey Squirrels caused to both reds and the environment in general. We find this appreciation of the facts regarding greys very heartening. Many children and their parents were interested in learning more about Red Squirrels.

Raymie Watson.



Committee members Liz Weir and Raymond Watson on the information stand at Red Bay Lifeboat's Open Day in August as part of the Heart of the Glens Festival in Cushendall.

September 2022,

BBC Wildlife Magazine!!!

Great to see our very own Glensheshk man, Gerard McCaughan featuring in this month's BBC Wildlife magazine for his Red Squirrel Survival Trust Volunteer of the Year Award. Gerard was the 1st person in the UK to be presented with the David Stapleford Award.

Well done Gerard we at the GRSG thank you for all your hard work in the Glens and so do our Red Squirrels!

To see more about the award and Gerard being presented his award by Mark Henderson from the RSST, see link.

<https://www.rsst.org.uk/gerard-mccaughan-rsst-volunteer.../>

October 2022.

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

10th October 2022, Reception held in Mayor's Parlour.

The Mayor of the Causeway Coast and Glens Council, Alderman Ivor Wallace, held a reception in Ballycastle for the Glens Red Squirrel Group's Committee to recognise the "Volunteer of the Year" award received by Gerard Mc Caughan from the Red Squirrel Survival Trust.



The David Stapleford Trophy.



The Committee with Alderman Ivor Wallace

He also wanted to acknowledge the work that we do for Red Squirrels. He was very interested in our work and said that he did not realise the number of events and school visits that we undertake. He believes like us, that education is the way forward.

26th October 2022, Baby Red Squirrel seen in Cushendun.

Baby reds in October yes!! The Hamilton family were up close view of a family of kits while out walking in Cushendun. We have had baby reds in October in the past but it not that common. With the mild weather it caused some of our red females to have a third litter.

November 2022.

22nd November 2022, Photographer Jonny Collins visit.

Jonny Collins arranged to visit to get footage and photographs of Reds Squirrels in the Glens. Jonny has visited us several time over the last six / seven years for different projects “The Chronicle of the Glens” being just one of them. On this visit the reds did not disappoint and he was able to get some great shots. He even got to meet Peter, the squirrel at the gate. Johnny was happy with what he had got and we didn’t have to go any further than Ballycastle in all we seen six squirrels on the walk not all as happy to sit as Peter was.



25th November 2022, Erection in Cregagh Wood of Nest boxes and Information plagues.

We erected the Information signs; Bird Nest Boxes, Bat Boxes and a Pine Martin Den Box in Cregagh Wood from the grant that we were awarded in our Project “Welcome to our Woods” as part of “Cushendun Decides.”







January 2023.

9th January 2023, Antrim RSPB.

Our first talk of the year was for the Antrim RSPB group. Chair, Daniel McAfee attended and gave a talk to the group about the work we do here in the Glens. This is not the first time that we talked to the group, we talked to them a few years ago. It was good to give them an update and let them know how well we are getting on. There was much interest about the Hide and hopefully some of them will attend to see reds for themselves.



The Antrim Branch were delighted with the talk and said this on their Facebook page about the talk.

“Our first speaker of 2023 was Daniel McAfee from the Glens Red Squirrel Group, a grassroots conservation organisation established in 2008 to protect and maintain the population of native Red Squirrels in the Glens of Antrim. Daniel spoke passionately and engagingly about the work of the group which includes guided walks, educational events, monitoring of Red and Grey Squirrels and Grey Squirrel control in the areas where Reds are present.”

21st January 2023, Ballycastle Red Squirrel Safari.

This was a walk arranged to mark the formation of the Glens Red Squirrel Group. It was well attended with everyone getting to see a Red Squirrel. We also had a very, very friendly Blackbird who did not want the squirrel getting all the attention. Our Chair and Squirrel Ranger, Daniel McAfee, was able to point out the red that was feeding in the Larch along the forest path. It would have been easy to miss amount the branches and twigs making it a difficult subject to photograph, but John Mason was able to get some great photos.



February 2023.

5th February 2023, Gardeners Corner.

BBC Radio Ulster's Gardeners Corner, broadcast every Saturday morning and this morning it was coming from Glenmona House, Glendun. During the recording of one of the interviews, they spotted a Red Squirrel using our Red Squirrel Playground which we have in the gardens of Glenmona House. After a brief discussion about the reds in Glenmona, the program continued as planned.

17th February 2023, Media student visit.

Media student, Cora McGoldrick got in touch with us wanting to do a short interview and to see if we could point her in the right direction to see some local wildlife in the Ballycastle area. She was hoping to produce an item about the environment in Northern Ireland and its effect on people and if society was doing enough to protect and save it. We took a short walk up Ballycastle forest and she was able to get lots of small birds and was also able to see three Red Squirrels, which she was able to get on camera. We look forward to seeing the result.

March 2023.

4th March 2023, Ballynure Nature Day







Reflection on our work over the years from 2015/2016 to 2022/2023

Over this year the group have taken part in, and attended less events than pre pandemic but this is to be expected as things try and get back to normal.

This is a brief breakdown of the group's year from 2015 to 2023. These hours do not include hours that volunteers put into feeding, Grey Squirrel Control, monitoring, survey work 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

Total 141.5 hours.

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

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

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
Total 40hours			

2020-2021

Walks	5	Average 2-2.5 hours	Average total hours 12.5h
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Total 12.5h

2021-2022

Talks 2		Average 1-1.5hours	Average total hours 3
Walks 6		Average 2-2.5hours	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 1hour	Average total hours 1
Car boot sale		Average 3-4 hours	Approx. hours 25

Approx. 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 -1hour	Average total hours 10

Approx. hours 61.5 +

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. Forest Service Northern Ireland, National Trust, Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership, North Antrim Community Network, Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum, The Wood Land Trust, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Laragh Lodge Restaurant, Boyles Spar Ballycastle and Carnlough. Glenariff Improvement Group, Ulster Wildlife, NI Direct, Red Squirrel Survival Trust, William Hamill & Sons, Steels Feed Supplier and Ballyeamon Barn, Glens Garden Furniture, St. Ciaran's PS, St. Patrick's and St. Bridget's PS, Ballycastle integrated PS, and Cushendall RNLi.

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 was 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" red are doing. This frees up our many volunteers to do other Red Squirrel conservation work as well as helping to reduce the groups 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 had not been able to gather resources from our usual means and so these donations are helping us through these lean times.

Glens Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland - Charity number 102100

Annual return

Independent Examiner's Report to the Charity Trustees of the Glens Red Squirrel Group

This report relates to the accounts of the Glens Red Squirrel Group for the year ending 31st March 2023

Respective responsibilities of Charity Trustees and Independent Examiner

Charity Trustees

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Independent Examiner

It is my responsibility as the Independent Examiner to:

- Examine the accounts under section 65 of the Charities Act
- Follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Commission under section 65(9)(b)

of the Charities Act

- State whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

I have examined your charity accounts as required under section 65 of the Charities Act and my examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under section 65(9)(b) of the Charities Act.

My examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as charity trustees concerning any such matters.

My role is to state whether any material matters have come to my attention giving me cause to believe:

1. That accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 63 of the Charities Act
2. That the accounts do not accord with those accounting records
3. That the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act
4. That there is further information needed for a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination and have no concerns in respect of the matters (1) to (4) listed above and, in connection with following the Directions of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, I have found no matters that require drawing to your attention

Name: FRANCIS CLOSE

Relevant professional qualification or body: Former principal of Glenann Primary School
Cusherdall.

Address:

20 Mount Edwards Hill
Cusherdall
Co. Antrim BT44 0TQ

Date 5/7/2023

I certify this is an accurate and true statement of the Glens Red Squirrel Group Account.

Signed:  (FRANCIS CLOSE)