

# North West Red Squirrel Group

Northern Ireland · Charity number 107465

## Details

Status	Received
Registered	2020-04-27
Register	<a href="#">View on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland register</a>

## Contact

Address	12 Millgrove Park Eglinton Derry / Londonderry Bt47 3yu BT47 3YU
Phone	07769744726
Email	<a href="mailto:nwredsquirrelgroup@yahoo.com">nwredsquirrelgroup@yahoo.com</a>
Website	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/northwestredsquirrelgroup">https://www.facebook.com/northwestredsquirrelgroup</a>

## Activities

**Purposes:** The Group is established: a. For charitable aims and purposes only with the following objectives: i) To raise awareness of the protected local red squirrel. Herein after referred to as the 'area of benefit'. ii) To work with voluntary organisations, institutions, business and local residents, in a common effort, to protect and enhance the red squirrel population in the North West region of Northern Ireland and border areas iii) To control the grey squirrel, to prevent the spread of squirrel pox

**What the charity does:** The advancement of environmental protection or improvement

**How the charity works:** Education/training, Environment/sustainable development/conservation, Volunteer development

**Who the charity helps:** General public, Volunteers

## Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2024-12-31	£2,156	£2,194	£0	0

## Trustees

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Name	Role	Appointed
Mr Aaron James Murray		
Mrs Catherine Finlay		
Mrs Theresa Kelly		
Ms Andrea Patricia Mitchell		
Ms Christine Cassidy		
Pam		

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Accounts

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Receipts and Payments Accounts for the North West Red Squirrel Group for the year ended 31 December 2024					
	£	£		£	£
<b>Opening Bank Balance as at 31 December 2023</b>	2,517.48		<b>Payments:</b>		
<b>Opening Cash Balance as at 31 December 2023</b>	14.98	<b>2,532.46</b>	Insurance (2024 and 2025)	498.92	
			Miscellaneous Expenses	8.25	
<b>Receipts:</b>			Postage	3.80	
Subscriptions		390.00	Gift to Auditor	25.00	
Donations		695.80	Gift	15.00	
Sale Of Greys		214.50	SD Cards	101.35	
Sale Of Tails		136.00	Mileage Claims	263.00	
St Columb Park Events		382.40	Volunteer Thank You Event	291.00	
Culmore Community Partnership		70.00	Donation to Foyle Search and Rescue	20.00	
Probus Donation		40.00	Cable Ties	31.98	
Open Farm Brook Hall		30.00	Gripples	15.96	
Refund for Camera from Amazon		53.95	Baking Soda	3.00	
Members Contribution to Christmas Dinner		143.50	Squirrel Food	258.74	
			Batteries	16.95	
			Peanut Butter	2.75	
			Bin Bags	4.45	
			Electronic Weighing Scales	17.99	
			Bird Food	116.46	
			Cameras	360.33	
			Refreshments	139.00	2,193.93
			<b>Closing Bank Balance as at 31 December 2024</b>	2,479.70	
			<b>Closing Cash Balance as at 31 December 2024</b>	14.98	<b>2,494.68</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>4,688.61</b>			<b>4,688.61</b>
<b>Audited By: Lesley Mitchell BA (Hons), MSc, FCCA</b>					
<b>12 January 2025</b>					

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Accounts

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<b>Receipts and Payments Accounts for the North West Red Squirrel Group for the year ended 31 December 2023</b>					
	£	£		£	£
<b>Opening Bank Balance as at 31 December 2022</b>	1,693.82		<b>Payments:</b>		
<b>Opening Cash Balance as at 31 December 2022</b>	14.98	<b>1,708.80</b>	Insurance	195.03	
			Naturespy	1,399.84	
<b>Receipts:</b>			Postage	19.89	
Subscriptions		360.00	Litter Picking Equipment	757.75	
Donations		327.32	Benches Eglinton Mens Shed	480.00	
Sale Of Greys		150.00	Mark 1 Agency Clothing	135.00	
Sale Of Tails		56.50	Mileage Claims	262.88	
Quiz Nights		1,257.00	Volunteer Thank You Event	100.00	
Donations for Benches		512.00	Bins & Benches Cage Traps	238.73	
Marine Litter Capital Grant		136.75	LPC Accounts Book	10.00	
Marine Litter Capital Grant		621.00	Rainbow Rehoming Centre Cat Food	27.00	
DAERA		797.85	Squirrel Food	443.63	
Creggan Country Park Event		250.00	Batteries	161.38	
Eglinton Community Centre Event (Seed Swap)		70.00	Padlocks	16.78	
Pooches In The Park		140.00	Bin Bags	13.99	
C.C.P.		40.00	Electronic Weighing Scales	89.95	
Red Squirrel Day Event		30.00	Bird Food	18.47	
Payment From Pam (Peanuts)		43.00	Rope	99.99	
Naturespy Refund		699.92	Table Cloth	5.00	
			Nails	8.42	
			Cat Repellent	9.95	
			Poop Bags + Salt	4.00	
			Paint	24.00	
			Refreshments	146.00	4,667.68
			<b>Closing Bank Balance as at 31 December 2023</b>		2517.48
			<b>Closing Cash Balance as at 31 December 2023</b>		14.98
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>7,200.14</b>			<b>7,200.14</b>

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Annual report

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**North West Red Squirrel Group NIC. 107465  
Annual Report 1st January - 31st December 2023**

12 Millgrove Park  
Eglinton  
Derry/Londonderry  
BT47 3YU

**Constitution and Objectives**

The North West Red Squirrel group was set up and established in 2010 with the help of the Derry City Council and was constituted the following year in 2011. The group gained independence from the council in 2012 and has been operating independently since.

The objectives and aims of the group as stated in the group's constitution are:

The group is established:

- a. For charitable aims and purposes only, with the following objectives:
  - i. To raise awareness of the protected local red squirrel. Herein after referred to as the 'area of benefit'.
  - ii. To work with voluntary organisations, institutions, business and local residents, in a common effort, to protect and enhance the red squirrel population in the North West region of Northern Ireland and border areas.
  - iii. To control the grey squirrel, to prevent the spread of squirrel pox.

**Trustees and Committee Members**

The North West Red Squirrel Group had six trustees for the period that is being reported. They are Pam Hardeman, Christine Cassidy, Catherine Finlay, Andrea Mitchell, Aaron Murray and Theresa Kelly. Four of the trustees named above hold the positions of Chairperson (Aaron Murray), Vice-chairperson (Pam Hardeman), Secretary (Theresa Kelly) and Treasurer (Catherine Finlay). All the trustees named have had regard for the Charity Commission public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

## **Chairperson's report**

To the volunteers of the North West Red Squirrel Group,

As chairperson I would like to first thank everyone who is here in attendance at our AGM and to all members and volunteers of the group for all the work they have invested this past year. In our commitment to preserving and protecting red squirrel populations, your hard work and dedication to the cause has been invaluable. From organising awareness campaigns about the importance of our conservation work and in addition to the fund-raising events, your efforts have made a significant and important impact on the survival and preservation of the red squirrel in the North West. It is important for me to acknowledge the outstanding work of each volunteer who has dedicated their free time to engage with the public to highlight the importance of our conservation work and help raising money so that we can continue with our efforts.

Thank you for being the backbone of red squirrel conservation in the North West. I am immensely grateful for the time and effort you invest in making a lasting difference for our local red squirrel population.

Thank you and best regards

Aaron

## **Squirrel Update**

While there was no Ulster Wildlife Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey for 2023, volunteers still surveyed a number of woodlands throughout the year. To give an overview of the squirrel population in the North West we appear to have 2 areas with resident red squirrel populations, located in the Letterkenny Road and Eglinton areas (Muff Glen and Donnybrewer Forest). Most of our work focuses on the red squirrel population at Muff Glen, where we have supplementary feeding stations and cameras to monitor the red squirrels that visit the feeders. There was an extremely disappointing incident in the Mullenan area where trees were clear felled by the railway line at the start of the year. This area was considered a red squirrel stronghold area and reds had been surveyed there since 2015. We also surveyed a pine marten in this area in 2019 as part of the Ulster Wildlife Squirrel and Pine Marten surveys. Reds were still seen in the area a few weeks after the trees were removed, however a major part of their liveable habitat is no longer there. A camera and feeder were set up in the area in December for two weeks however no reds were surveyed.

While we appear to have stable red squirrel populations in Muff Glen and Donnybrewer forest, the population of red squirrels we had on the Cityside is under threat. In the past few years we have lost a few areas that contained red squirrel populations. The main reason for the loss of these populations has been habitat loss and destruction, along with the subsequent disturbance (Railway Line and City Cemetery / Southway). The other reason is replacement by grey squirrels, for example in Culmore. Unfortunately grey squirrel control

efforts were put on hold for health reasons in this particular area. As the grey squirrel population increased, they pushed red squirrels out of the area and replaced them. This should be used as an example that red and grey squirrels cannot coexist in the same area and that grey squirrel control remains important in red squirrel conservation.

Grey squirrels are more abundant in the North West following similar trends to previous years. Although grey squirrels have been observed in Muff Glen throughout the year, we believe that there is not a resident population in the forest. From the surveys volunteers conducted there are confirmed resident populations of grey squirrels in Ballykelly Forest, Gransha Woods, St Columbs Park, Prehen Woods, Culmore and Burntollet. It is unknown what the population change of the grey squirrel, however there was a slight increase in the number of grey squirrels dispatched by the group this year (230) compared to last year (207). The numbers dispatched the past two years are lower than 2019, 2020 and 2021 so this could show that the grey squirrel population is decreasing, however this is just going by the numbers of grey squirrels dispatched by group volunteers.

It has been a very positive year for pine marten in the North West. This year we surveyed pine marten in 3 separate areas. One of these areas was at Muff Glen in February. We think however that this pine marten was only passing through the area as it was only briefly seen camera and has not been observed since. During the summer we recorded 2 pine marten on camera at the same time. This was significant as it was the first time as a group we have seen more than 1 pine marten at a time. Based on the behaviour we think they were kits which is another major positive as it would indicate we have a breeding population of pine marten. During the summer, after reports from a member of the public that a red squirrel was seen in the Loughermore area, a camera and feeder were set up. Cameras and feeders have been set up in the Loughermore area for 5 months where pine marten visiting the feeder on a regular basis. A red squirrel was also surveyed here, confirming the reported sighting from the member of the public. The red squirrel however only visited the feeder for a few days and has not been seen since. There are a few possible reasons for this, it may have only been passing through and does not reside in the forest. Another possibility is that the red squirrel and pine marten were visiting the same feeder (albeit at different times). The red squirrel picked up on the marten's scent and changed its behaviour and stopped visiting the feeder. A third possibility is that the red was predated by the pine marten in the area. It is important to remember that the pine marten is a natural predator of the red squirrel. An interesting thing to point out is that during this time no grey squirrel has been on camera. This hopefully shows that the pine marten in the area are acting as a biological control against grey squirrels and helping to control their numbers.

### **Events and fundraising**

Below are a list of events and fundraising that the group held or attended

#### **Group Meetings:**

AGM 18th January - White Horse Hotel

1st March - White Horse Hotel

3rd May - White Horse Hotel

21st June - White Horse Hotel

6th September - White Horse Hotel

15th November - White Horse Hotel

**Litter Picks:**

4th March and 15th April at Muff Glen

20th May, 24th July and 23rd September Castle River, Mill Path Eglinton

**Meetings with other conservation organisations:**

Ulster Wildlife Visit to North West on 6th April

Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum Meeting 18th November - Edengrove Presbyterian Church, Ballynahinch.

**Events:**

The Gathering Eglinton Community Hall 24th February

Enagh Youth Forum 28th June Muff Glen

Pooches in the Park, Judges Road 16th July

Creggan Country Park 23rd August

Red Squirrel Awareness Week 7th October outside Millennium Forum

**Quiz Nights:**

3rd, 10th 17th and 24th October held at the Eglinton Cricket Clubhouse

Fundraising events like in previous years prove to be a major help in the operation of our group. With the money raised from these, especially the quiz nights, it helps us to buy things like equipment and food. In previous years we would often have a raffle to help raise money at events, however it would at times prove difficult to deliver the prizes to the winners. This year we decided to use a tombola instead of a raffle. This proved to be much more efficient than the raffle so we plan on continuing this for future events.

**Grants:**

**Benches**

Application with Live Here Love Here to have benches set up at Muff Glen. Unfortunately our application for the benches was rejected due to the Council withdrawing funding. We did however manage to get benches set up throughout the forest through the help of local Councillor Declan Norris and other sponsors. The sponsors were Claire at Green Cat Bakery, John Deery at MIM Engineering Co. and Bernard McGlinchey. Three benches with plaques showing who provided the funding were set up in Muff Glen and we have received very positive feedback from members of the public.

**Litter Picking Equipment**

After the major flooding events the NW experienced in 2017 lots of debris was washed down and collected at the far end of the river at Muff Glen. As a group we decided to apply for litter picking equipment with the Marine Litter Capital Grant, through Live Here Love Here. With this grant we purchased equipment such as waders, folding trolley, litter pickers. The idea was to clean up the river at Muff Glen and areas in Eglinton. We then organised a number of volunteer litter picking events initially at Muff Glen and subsequently at the Castle River.

These litter picking events proved to be successful not only due to the amount of rubbish lifted but also for the volunteering opportunities it provides so this is something we should continue to do in the future.

## **Cameras**

Live View Cameras:

Browning Recon Force Edge x 4

Browning Security Box x 4

More Browning cameras were ordered in to replace the ones that were malfunctioning. It is fair to say that we have not have the best of luck with the Browning cameras as we seem to be consistently having issues with them breaking down in one way or another. We have sent back several cameras under warranty. When we initially purchased Browning camera back in 2021 we thought that higher spec cameras would last longer than what we have experienced. We may have to look at other options trail cameras as the Browning cameras are becoming a bit too problematic.

## **Grey Squirrel Control Equipment From Trapman**

Squirrel Trap x6

Trap Dividers x4

Obtaining grey squirrel control equipment to replace older and/or misplaced traps

## **Complications & problems**

The major disappointment we had this year was the tree felling by the railway line in Mullenan. The area was owned by a local farmer and with the permission from NIEA cleared the conifer trees along the river. Although this was something out of our control it was very disappointing news when we heard about it. The area had a resident population of red squirrels. Something that may be beneficial would be surveying of this area to see if reds still present (a year on from clearance of trees). Another aspect would be potentially working with land owners in the area that have forest on their land.

Lack of cooperation with the city council, again, particularly in grey squirrel control is another issue we have faced. When attending the NI Squirrel Forum meeting in November, it was clear that the other NI squirrel groups were in active conservation and cooperation with their councils. We were told that under EU law it is the responsibility of Councils to control Invasive Alien Species (IAS) on council land, something that the Derry City and Strabane District Council avoid.

Another issue we encountered was footage at Muff Glen of a cat attacking a red squirrel in one of our feeders. In the weeks prior to this incident there were cats captured on camera. It is not unusual to have cats, foxes, dog or other potential predators show up on camera. It is not certain what happened to the red squirrel in this incident, from the photos captured it most likely preyed upon by the cat. We asked CCDNI to conduct a search of the area for a carcass, however nothing was detected. We brought this incident up with the other squirrel

groups at the NISF meeting and the consensus was that the feeder we were using was not ideal for red squirrels as they have limited escape options if a predator comes along. As a result we have made changes to the feeders we now use. Another incident we had at Muff Glen was an injury to one of our volunteers in November. While undertaking work in the forest the volunteer unfortunately slipped and resulted in a dislocated and broken ankle. Thankfully emergency services were able to be contacted and provide assistance. This incident meant that we have reviewed the risk assessment and safety measures we had in place at that time when members of the group are volunteering, especially when in areas of poor phone reception.

Unfortunately no red squirrels were surveyed in the Culmore area in 2023. It marks the first time since 2015 that no reds were observed either from trail cameras or visual surveys. The last red squirrel recorded on camera in this area was in April 2022. Unfortunately a break in the grey squirrel control efforts in the lead meant that the population increased and encroached into the areas the red squirrels were living and displaced them.

### **Future Outlook & Conclusion**

While there have been some setbacks this year the important thing to take away is that we still have red squirrel populations in the North West. When it comes to grey squirrel control perhaps a more targeted approach could be taken so that it focuses in areas that currently have red squirrels (e.g. Muff Glen, Letterkenny Road) or areas where reds have been surveyed previously (e.g. Culmore). This would allow us to concentrate more of these important interface areas and help with the efficiency of volunteering time.

The major positive from this year was the pine marten so this could be a potential focus for volunteers for the future. The fact we have a resident, breeding population is something we have hoped for to help in controlling the local grey squirrel population. Further surveying of the area would help give us more information on their range and potentially how many individuals we have as individual pine martens have different markings on their 'bibs'. Along with monitoring we could possibly set up nest boxes for the pine marten. The habitat the pine martens were surveyed in is not ideal for them as it was plantation forest. Setting up a nest box could help nursing mothers and kits and help survivability during the winter.

Depending on volunteer numbers and wishes we could be conducting more regular surveying of woodlands outside Muff Glen. This would give more volunteering opportunities for members and also provide with more information of what species are in which woodlands. An example being at Donnybrewer forest. We surveyed here in February and had nothing on camera. We decided to survey again later on in the year in late November/early December in which red squirrels were captured on camera. It raises the question should we be surveying areas a few times a year (so we are not just surveying 2 weeks out of the year). This year Ulster Wildlife will be conducting their Northern Ireland Squirrel and Pine Marten Surveys, so participating in this survey will be a major focus for us this coming year and help give more volunteering opportunities for our members and the public.

Name:

Aaron Murray

Position:

Chairperson

Date:

- 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Signature:

*Aaron Murray*

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Annual return

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17 Granchester Park  
Eglinton  
Co Londonderry  
BT47 3XR

24 January 2024

**To Whom It May Concern:**

**Independent Examiner's Report**

I have carried out an independent examination of the accounts pertaining to the year ended 31 December 2023 and believe them to be a fair reflection of the North West Red Squirrel Group's financial affairs for the year.

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**Lesley Mitchell BA(Hons), MSc, FCCA**

**Dated:** 24 January 2024

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Accounts

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<b>OPENING BANK BALANCE</b>	<b>£1,148.77</b>	<b>CASH</b>	<b>£14.35</b>
<b>MONIES IN</b>		<b>MONIES OUT</b>	
SALE OF GREYS (CASH)	£142.00	INSURANCE ( DIRECT DEBIT )	£214.27
SUBSCRIPTIONS ( CASH AND BANK TRANSFER )	£350.00	TRAVEL EXPENSES	£30.00
DONATIONS CHEQUES	£240.00	BIRD FOOD	£29.65
SAFARI IN MUFF GLEN CASH DONATIONS	£64.00	MARK ONE CLOTHING (CARD)	£58.20
GRANT DAERA -	£740.03	SQUIRREL FOOD	£537.60
GRANT LIVE HERE LOVE HERE	£200.00	GIFT FOR AUDITOR	£15.00
QUIZ NIGHTS	£818.00	BATTERIES	£171.50
EGLINTON SHOW	£44.40	BINOCULARS	£829.28
EGLINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE STALL	£99.00	REFRESHMENTS	£191.80
REFUND POSTAGE	£3.20	ADVERT FOR EGLINTON SHOW MAGAZINE	£25.00
DONATION BOX SCPH	£16.96	PRIZES FOR EGLINTON SHOW	£23.61
RED SQUIRREL DAY	£54.50	LITTER PICKERS	£35.64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,772.09</b>	POSTAGE	£10.85
		CABLE TIES AMAZON (CARD)	£18.95
		BATTERY CHARGER ENELOOP	£29.99
		BIN LINERS	£4.20
		PAPER CUPS	£1.50
TOTAL INCREASE 2022	<b>£545.02</b>		
		<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£2,227.04</b>
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	<b>£1,693.82</b>	CASH	<b>£14.98</b>

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Annual report

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**North West Red Squirrel Group NIC. 107465**  
**Annual Report 1st January - 31st December 2022**  
12 Millgrove Park  
Eglinton  
Derry/Londonderry  
BT47 3QL

### **Trustees**

The North West Red Squirrel Group had six trustees for the period that is being reported. They are Pam Hardeman, Christine Cassidy, Catherine Finlay, Andrea Mitchell, Aaron Murray and Theresa Kelly. Four of the trustees named above hold the positions of Chairperson (Aaron Murray), Vice-chairperson (Pam Hardeman), Secretary (Theresa Kelly) and Treasurer (Catherine Finlay). All of the trustees named have had regard for the Charity Commission public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

### **Constitution and Objectives**

The North West Red Squirrel group was set up and established in 2010 with the help of the Derry City Council and was constituted the following year in 2011. The group gained independence from the council in 2012 and has been operating independently since.

The objectives and aims of the group as stated in the group's constitution are:

The group is established:

- a. For charitable aims and purposes only, with the following objectives:
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### **Chairperson's Report - Summary of the group's activities for 2022**

As chairperson I would like to thank all the volunteers and committee members who dedicate their free time and put in a lot of hard work for the group. At the end of last year's report I had mentioned about continuing in engagement with the public through social media, safari walks and through information stalls that would be back up and running at events being held in 2022. Thankfully events began to run again after a few years' absence and volunteers gave up their free time to attend these events on behalf of the group. As a result, we were able to help spread awareness of red squirrel conservation and raise money for the group. It also mentioned about continuing to monitor the red squirrel and pine marten populations in the North West. Again, it was with the help of the volunteers that made this possible and helped the group achieve its aims set out from last year. The time and work that the volunteers are putting in is invaluable and is helping the survival of the red squirrels in the North West.

### **Squirrel Update**

Our red squirrel populations are more concentrated compared to the grey squirrel population in our area of work. The 3 populations we have are in the Eglinton area, the Letterkenny Road area and Culmore. From the squirrel and pine marten surveys we conducted on behalf of Ulster Wildlife, red squirrels were surveyed in Muff Glen Forest, Donnybrewer Forest (both in the Eglinton area), Brookhall Estate (Culmore), two private properties on the Letterkenny Road and along with the Foyle Valley Greenway. We have had a history of surveying red squirrels at these locations in the past, so this hopefully demonstrates that there are established red squirrel populations in all of the areas mentioned.

Unfortunately this year was the first in a while where we did not see red squirrels when surveying at the Derry City Cemetery. There are two main reasons for this. Construction work and expansion of the cemetery has meant that the Southway woodland area (where red squirrels were surveyed in 2019) has unfortunately been removed. This woodland area would have provided a corridor and refuge for the red squirrels to travel from the Letterkenny road area to the cemetery. The other reason was the difficulty in working with the Derry City and Strabane District Council in trapping grey squirrels in the area. Even though it is the duty of the city council to help control invasive species on their property, the council has made it difficult and has opposed in working with the NWRSG to help control the grey squirrels at the City Cemetery. As a result the grey squirrels have been able to establish themselves in the area and have replaced the red squirrels that have been there the past few years.

During the Ulster Wildlife surveys we managed to find two areas with pine marten. The areas were Loughermore Forest (Myrtle Road) and Loughermore Forest East and are about 4 miles apart from each other. The pine marten at Loughermore Forest East was visiting the feeder on a regular basis so this could be part of the territory of the pine marten appearing on camera. The Loughermore area continues to be the most successful area we have in surveying pine marten so it could be another area for us to focus our surveying on.

Full results from the squirrel and pine marten surveys can be found at the end of the report in figure 1 and 2.

### **Muff Glen Update**

Muff Glen continues to be the main area of focus for the group to try and protect the remaining red squirrels (we believe that there are around 10 in the forest). Throughout the year we have had several grey squirrel invasions. We would dispatch a number of greys and see their numbers decline on the cameras only for more to pop up a few weeks later. We also believe that both the red and grey squirrels present in Muff Glen and surrounding areas bred late in the year. We were seeing juvenile red squirrels on camera in late August/early September plus we were dispatching several

young grey squirrels even as late as November. We also had trouble trapping grey squirrels in Muff Glen, we went a period of almost 3 months without trapping a grey squirrel (10th July until 26th Sept). From the end of September until the end of the year we had more success in trapping grey squirrels. From speaking to the volunteers for other NI squirrel groups in late November they also seemed to have difficulty in dispatching greys for a while. A potential reason for this could be the abundance of food in the late summer/ early Autumn and therefore not going into the traps and eating the bait. Once the natural food reduced the greys were maybe more inclined to go into the traps and get the bait hence the increase in the number of greys we were trapping.

See figure 3 and 4 for breakdown of squirrel sightings and grey squirrel dispatch numbers for Muff Glen.

### **Grey Squirrel Update**

As per the objective in our constitution, grey squirrel control remains a vital component of red squirrel conservation. The main methods we use to dispatch grey squirrels are by using the spring loaded Kania trap and by shooting.

Grey squirrels are still widespread throughout the North West and following similar trends to previous years, the grey squirrel is more widespread in the North West compared to the red squirrel. As a result the group traps and dispatches grey squirrels in a number of sites and areas. The total number of grey squirrels dispatched by NWRSG volunteers for 2022 was 207. This was lower than the number of greys the group dispatched the previous year at 285 in 2021. Comparing this with previous years (568 greys in 2020 and 324 greys in 2019) this is the second year in a row that we have dispatched fewer grey squirrels than the previous year. This could be as a result of years of the thorough grey squirrel control efforts that the volunteers have been doing since 2017. Another could be that there have been relatively few 'new' areas that we have been trapping. Typically the areas that we control grey squirrels we have been doing so for a number of years.

Full details for the grey squirrel dispatch work can be found in figure 5 at the end of the report.

### **Events and Fundraising**

Fundraising has always been an important part of the volunteer work of the group as it helps generate money. This year we have been able to hold more fundraising opportunities as society begins to open up again after the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. For 4 weeks the group was able to raise money from the Eglinton pub quiz nights held at the Happy Landing. The dates of these quiz nights were 11th, 18th, 25th Jan and 2nd Feb. These quiz nights proved to be a great success and helped raise a lot of money for the group.

Below were a number of other events that we attended and set up information stalls:

- 23rd Jan National Red Squirrel Appreciation Day - Muff Glen Safari with Conservation Detection Dogs NI demonstration by Caroline Finlay - really good demonstration but poorly attended
- 13th March Eglinton Market - Information stall and raffle held
- 21st May NISF Sustainability Fair -rescheduled from earlier in the year
- 27th June Limavady High School - Muff Glen Safari with Conservation Detection Dogs NI demonstration by Caroline Finlay
- 3rd Sept Eglinton Annual Show (first held since 2019) - total wash out so not a lot of people visited stall
- 15th Oct Muff Glen Safari for Red Squirrel Awareness Week 10-16th Oct - poorly attended
- 26th November St. Francis Primary School NISF meeting at St. Francis Primary School in Lurgan - good way to meet up with other red squirrel conservation volunteers and hear how

they are getting on with their work. The school also had a red squirrel enclosure and hide so we were able to go and see this.

In terms of group meetings we continued to use Zoom to host the meetings. Below shows the dates of when group meetings were held

AGM held on 18th Jan (held at Eglinton Community Hall)  
13th April (Held via Zoom)  
14th Sept (Held via Zoom)  
5th Oct (Held via Zoom)

Volunteers also attended the Ulster Wildlife Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey Workshop 26th April via Zoom.

### Grants

The group allied for additional equipment in the form of trail cameras, live traps and combs. The Browning cameras we had previously ordered were not working properly, particularly draining the batteries of all power and failing to keep the correct time and date. With the RAPID Micro Capital Grant the group asked for funding to purchase the following:

- 4x Browning Recon Force Edge Trail Cameras
- 4x Browning Camera Security Boxes
- 6x Trapman Squirrel Traps
- 4x Restrictor Trap Combs

The total amount would total to £936.98. The grant would pay 85% of this amount (£796.43) while the group would pay the remaining 15% (£140.55) from its own resources.

We applied for this equipment under the project of surveying the squirrel populations in the NW and when necessary, control the grey squirrels in the areas that they appear on camera.

Another grant that the group applied for was funding from the Live Here Love Here Marine Litter Grant Scheme 22/23. This grant is funded by The Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEARA) and managed by Live Here Love Here, a programme managed by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The grant was used to secure clean up equipment that would be used to pick up litter and other debris after the flooding in Muff Glen. See details of the grant application below:

### Items/amounts you requested

Item	Requested	Offered
SEKEY FOLDING WAGON CART	£119.99	£119.99
NIGHT WADERS & POND GLOVES X 4	£259.88	£259.88
DUNLOP BUDGET WELLIES X 8	£120.00	£120.00
ECO RECYCLED STRONG BIN BAGS X 4 ROLLS	£47.96	<b>REJECTED</b>

SPEAR & JACKSON FORK X 2	£65.98	£65.98
PROFESSIONAL PRUNING SHEATHED SAW	£81.38	£81.38
HELLY HANSEN LIFE JACKETS	£121.76	£121.76
ECOVER ALL PURPOSE CLEANER	£7.33	£7.33
	<b>£824.28</b>	<b>£776.32</b>

Details of the group's finances will be provided by the treasurer as part of the AGM meeting. See figure 6 for full breakdown of finances.

### **Complications and problems**

We have had trap interference and equipment stolen in St Columbs Park House and Gransha woods and as a result we had to stop setting traps at these locations. This negativity affects our conservation work as we stop trapping in these areas and consequently the grey squirrel population increases. Our aim is to contact private landowners that live nearby here and set up traps instead. We hope that this will stop members of the public damaging or stealing the group's equipment.

Unfortunately we have not made progress with the City council in relation to grey squirrel control. It was mentioned in last year's report that we risked losing the red squirrels at the city cemetery as a result of the council not helping us in trapping greys on their land. Unsurprisingly as a direct result of the lack of grey squirrel control and the expansion of the cemetery, the red squirrels have left this area in spite of our best efforts.

There was the unfortunate news that BBC plan on making cuts to BBC Radio Foyle. Radio Foyle has in the past provided a great way to get exposure and talk about the red squirrel conservation work that we do. It would be a pity if we were to lose the chance to get on local radio and talk about the work we do.

### **Conclusion**

Overall it has been another successful year for the NW Red Squirrel Group. We managed to attend and set up our information stalls at a number of events throughout the year. In addition, the pub quiz nights were set up again which proved to be a great source of fundraising for the group. Also the red squirrels have remained in the same areas as the previous years, with the exception of the city cemetery though this is through no fault of our own. We also found a new area with pine marten in Loughermore Forest East. When conducting the squirrel and pine marten surveys in the future we should continue to include this area to survey. For the year ahead I believe it is important to continue to ask the council for permission to control grey greys on the land and in particular the city cemetery. When attending the NISF meeting in November other squirrel groups mentioned about getting their local council on board and that it is the duty of the council to help monitor and control invasive species. We hope to be able to work with them in the future and to help get the red squirrels back to the city cemetery.

Thanks and regards

**Name:**

*Avon Murray*

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**Position:**

*Chairperson*

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**Date:**

*18<sup>th</sup> January 2023      18/01/2023*

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**Signature:**

*AMurray*

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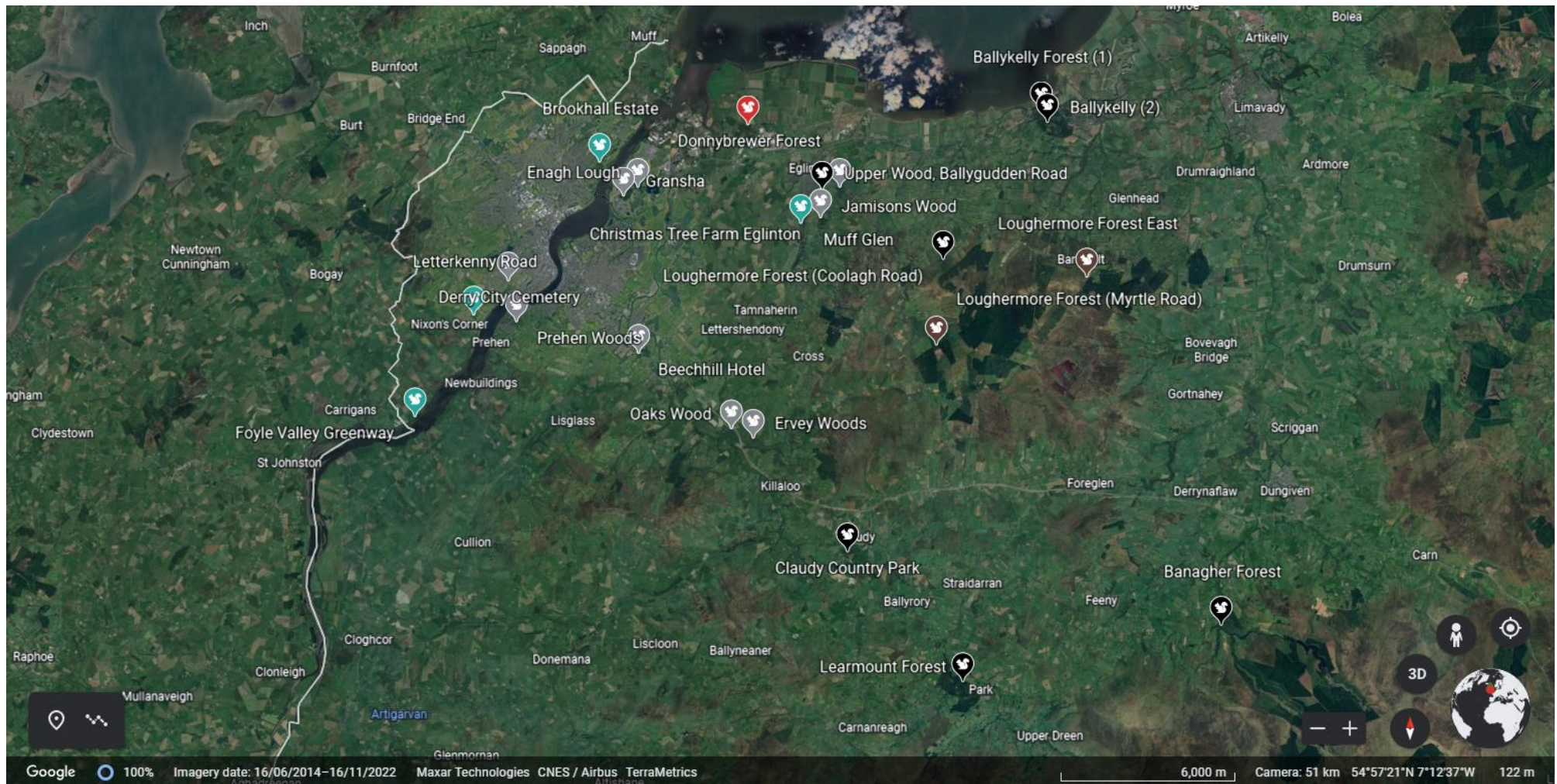


Fig.1 Screenshot from Google Earth to show the survey locations for the squirrel and pine marten surveys conducted by volunteers.

**Key:**

Red Squirrel Icon- Red Squirrel Surveyed      Black Squirrel Icon- Nothing surveyed      Grey Squirrel Icon- Grey squirrel surveyed

Green Squirrel Icon- Both red and grey squirrels surveyed      Brown Squirrel Icon- Pine marten surveyed at location

Fig. 2 Table of results for the 2022 squirrel and pine marten surveys conducted by volunteers in the North West

Surveyor name: NW Red Squirrel Group

Woodland name	Irish grid ref	X	Y	Start date	End date	Species (RS, GS, PM or 0)	Date of recording
Claudy Country Park	C 54032 06848	254032	406848	7/8/2022	22/8/2022	0	N/A
Banagher Glen Forest	C 67059 04416	267059	404416	25/06/2022	11/07/2022	0	N/A
Learmount Forest	C 58184 02402	258184	402402	4/6/2022	18/6/2022	0	N/A
Loughermore East Forest	C 62155 16083	262155	416083	4/6/2022	18/6/2022	PM	PM (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18)
Foyle Valley Greenway	C 39011 11409	239011	411409	8/5/2022	21/5/2022	RS (x2), GS	RS (10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20) GS (14, 15, 17, 20)
Donnybrewer Forest	C 50400 21700	250400	421700	18/5/2022	1/6/2022	RS (x2)	RS (18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1)
Enagh Lough	C 46600 19400	246600	419400	2/5/2022	17/5/2022	GS	GS (5)
Jamisons Wood	C 52900 19400	252900	419400	2/5/2022	17/5/2022	0	N/A
Beechhill Hotel	C 46700 13700	246700	413700	3/5/2022	17/5/2022	GS	GS (5, 15, 16)
Christmas Tree Farm Eglinton	C 52900 18400	252900	418400	7/5/2022	21/5/2022	GS (x2)	GS (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21)
Ballykelly Forest (1)	C 60700 22200	260700	422200	18/5/2022	3/6/2022	0	N/A

Ballykelly Forest (2)	C 60800 21800	260800	421800	18/5/2022	3/6/2022	0	N/A
Derry City Cemetery	C 42100 16000	242100	416000	1/7/2022	15/7/2022	GS	GS (3)
Coach House Letterkenny Road	C 39000 14800	239000	414800	21/5/2022	4/6/2022	RS (x2)	RS (21, 22, 23)
Letterkenny Road	C 40900 14900	240900	414900	1/7/2022	15/7/2022	RS, GS	RS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) GS (2, 7)
Oaks Wood	C 49900 11100	249900	411100	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	GS (x3)	GS (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
Ervey Woods	C 50700 10800	250700	410800	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	GS	GS (6)
Loughermore Forest, Coolagh Road	C 57300 16600	257300	416600	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	0	N/A
Loughermore Forest , Myrtle Road	C 57000 14100	257000	414100	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	PM	PM (7)
Upper Wood, Ballygudden Road	C 53600 19500	253600	419500	13/7/2022	30/7/2022	GS	GS (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)
Muff Glen Forest	C 52221 17004	252221	417004	1/5/2022	15/5/2022	RS (x2), GS (x2)	RS (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) GS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15)
Gransha Woods	C 46100 19100	246100	419100	22/8/2022	5/9/2022	GS	GS (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
Prehen Woods	C 42300 14600	242300	414600	8/8/2022	22/8/2022	GS	GS (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22)
Brookhall Estate	C 45297 20152	245297	420152	1/8/2022	15/8/2022	RS (x2), GS (x2)	RS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15) GS (4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15)

## Red and Grey Squirrel sightings Muff Glen Entrances Jan to Dec 22

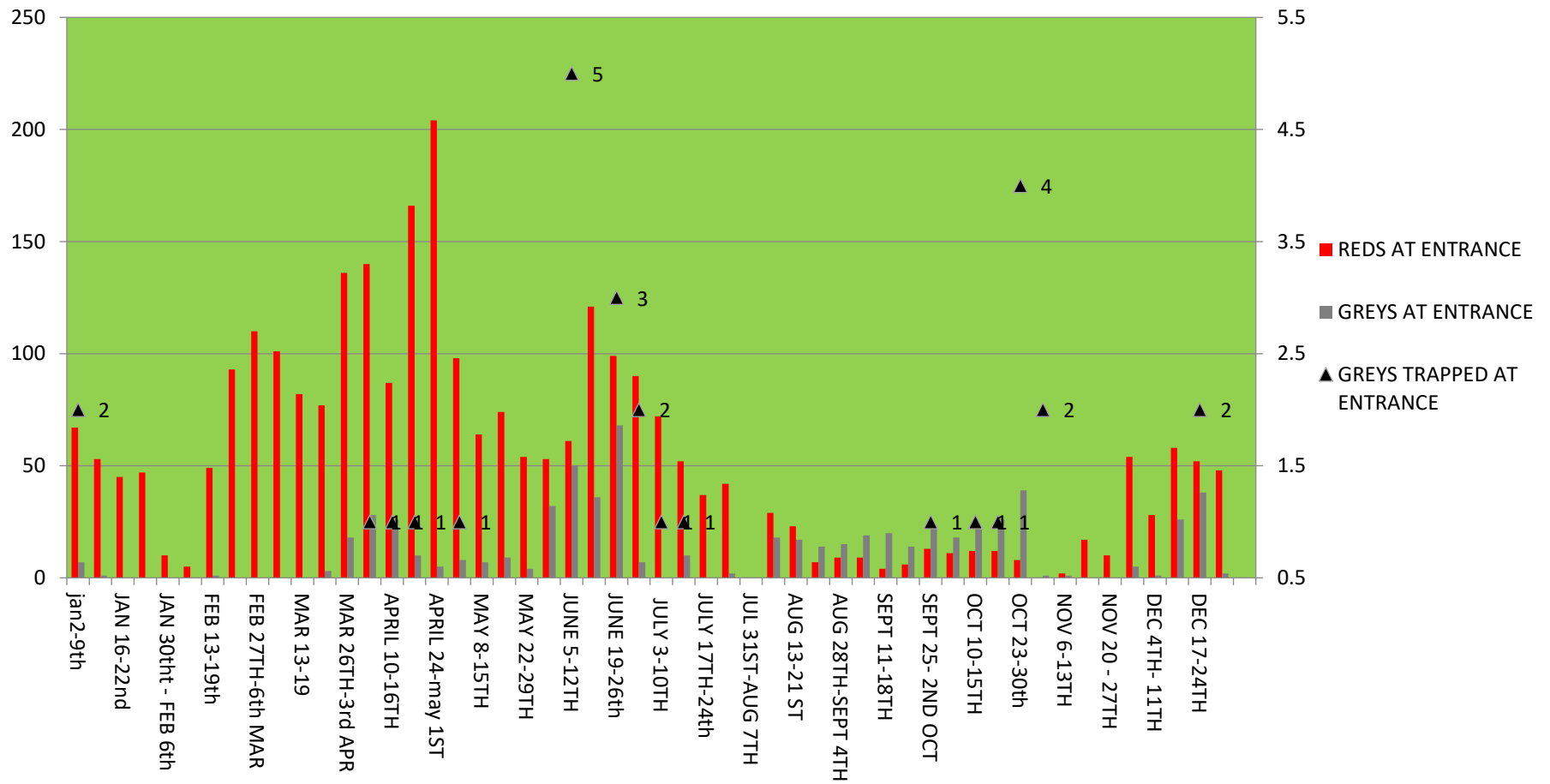


Fig 3. Graph showing the red and grey squirrel sightings at the Edenreagh Road entrance of Muff Glen Forest in 2022 on a weekly basis. Also shows the number of grey squirrels dispatched.

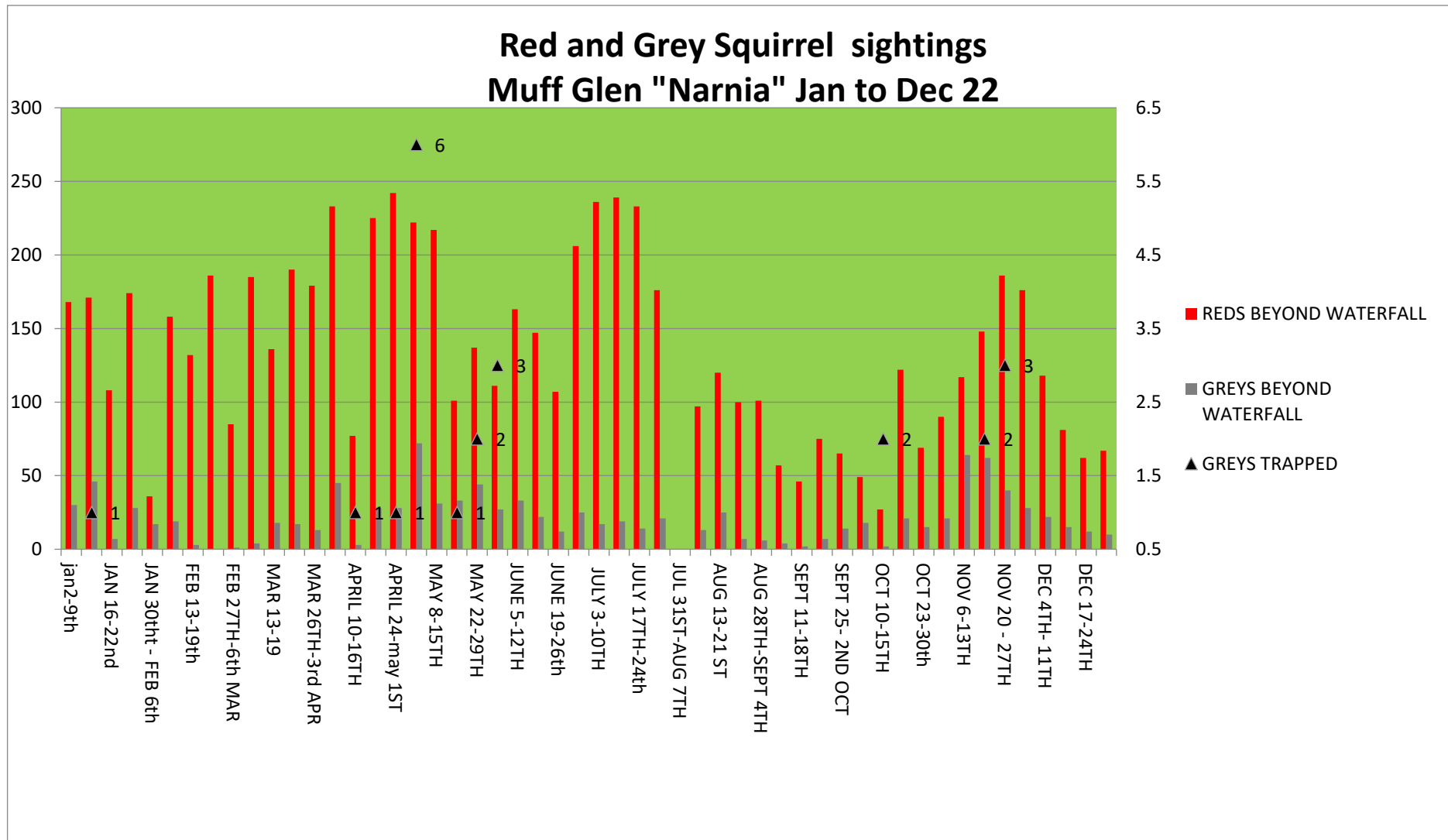


Fig 4. Graph showing the red and grey squirrel sightings at the far end of Muff Glen Forest in 2022 on a weekly basis. Also shows the number of grey squirrels dispatched.

Fig 5. Table showing the grey squirrel dispatch work conducted by NW Red Squirrel Group Volunteers in 2022

SITE	GREY CULL 2022		VOLUNTEER	GREYS CULLED
MUFF GLEN	51		PAM	54
MILLGROVE PARK	18		RONNIE	51
BALLYGUDDEN RD	14		AARON	34
ST CANICES	2		IRENE	23
DUNBOYNE	1		THERESA	19
DONNYBREWER	1		KENNY	7
ENAGH	9		NOEL	5
CLOONEY ROAD	7		EAMON	5
BAYVIEW	9		SEANA	4
DEANFIELD	1		PAUL	3
SCPH	8		CIARAN	2
DRUMAHOE	4			
ARDLOUGH	6			<b>207</b>
ARDMORE	8			
OAKS WOOD	3			
PREHEN	10			
BARONSCOURT	3			
TALBOT PARK	2			
COACH HOUSE	2			
LETTERKENNY ROAD	2			
CEMETERY	3			
FARLOW WOOD	15			
SEA COAST ROAD	17			
ROE VALLEY	5			
CLAUDY	6			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>207</b>			

Fig 6. Table showing the expenditure and income for the group in 2022.

<b>OPENING BANK BALANCE</b>	<b>£1,148.77</b>		<b>CASH</b>	<b>£14.35</b>
<b>MONIES IN</b>			<b>MONIES OUT</b>	
SALE OF GREYS (CASH)	£142.00		INSURANCE ( DIRECT DEBIT )	£214.27
SUBSCRIPTIONS (CASH AND BANK TRANSFER)	£350.00		TRAVEL EXPENSES	£30.00
DONATIONS CHEQUES	£240.00		BIRD FOOD	£29.65
SAFARI IN MUFF GLEN CASH DONATIONS	£64.00		MARK ONE CLOTHING (CARD)	£58.20
GRANT DAERA -	£740.03		SQUIRREL FOOD	£537.60
GRANT LIVE HERE LOVE HERE	£200.00		GIFT FOR AUDITOR	£15.00
QUIZ NIGHTS	£818.00		BATTERIES	£171.50
EGLINTON SHOW	£44.40		BINOCULARS	£829.28
EGLINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE STALL	£99.00		REFRESHMENTS	£191.80
REFUND POSTAGE	£3.20		ADVERT FOR EGLINTON SHOW MAGAZINE	£25.00
DONATION BOX SCPH	£16.96		PRIZES FOR EGLINTON SHOW	£23.61
RED SQUIRREL DAY	£54.50		LITTER PICKERS	£35.64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,772.09</b>		POSTAGE	£10.85
			CABLE TIES AMAZON (CARD)	£18.95
			BATTERY CHARGER ENELOOP	£29.99
			BIN LINERS	£4.20
			PAPER CUPS	£1.50
TOTAL INCREASE FOR 2022 <b>£545.02</b>				
			<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£2,227.04</b>
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	<b>£1,693.82</b>		CASH	<b>£14.98</b>

**North West Red Squirrel Group**

Northern Ireland - Charity number 107465

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# Annual return

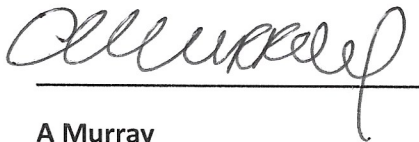
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## North West Red Squirrel Group

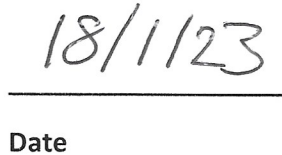
Financial Statements for the  
Year ended 31 December 2022

### Certificate of Approval

We believe the attached accounts to be a true and fair reflection of the North West Red Squirrel Group's financial affairs for the year to 31 December 2022. We approve the accounts and confirm that we have made available all relevant records and information for their preparation.



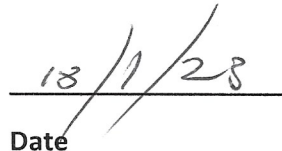
A Murray  
(Chairperson)



Date



C Finlay  
(Chairperson)



Date

### Independent Examiner's Report

I have carried out an independent examination of these accounts and believe them to be a fair reflection of the North West Red Squirrel Group's financial affairs for the year to 31 December 2022.



N Virtue  
(Independent Examiner)



Date