

# Red Squirrels United: The good, the bad and the ugly!

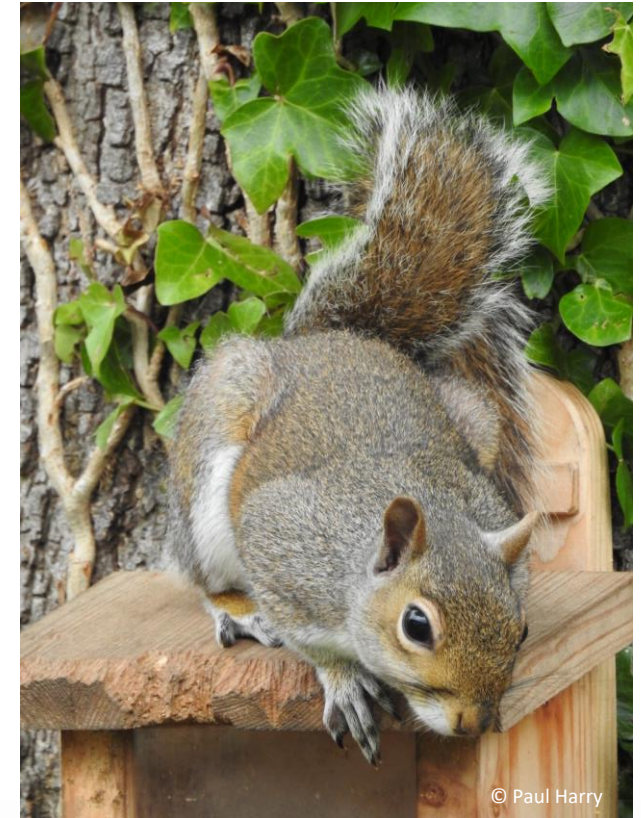
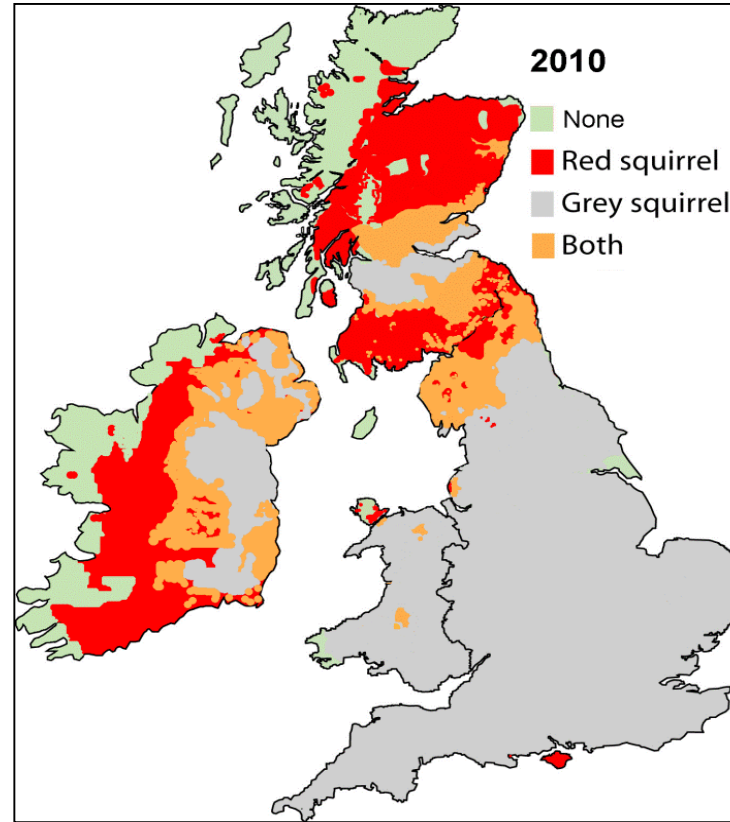
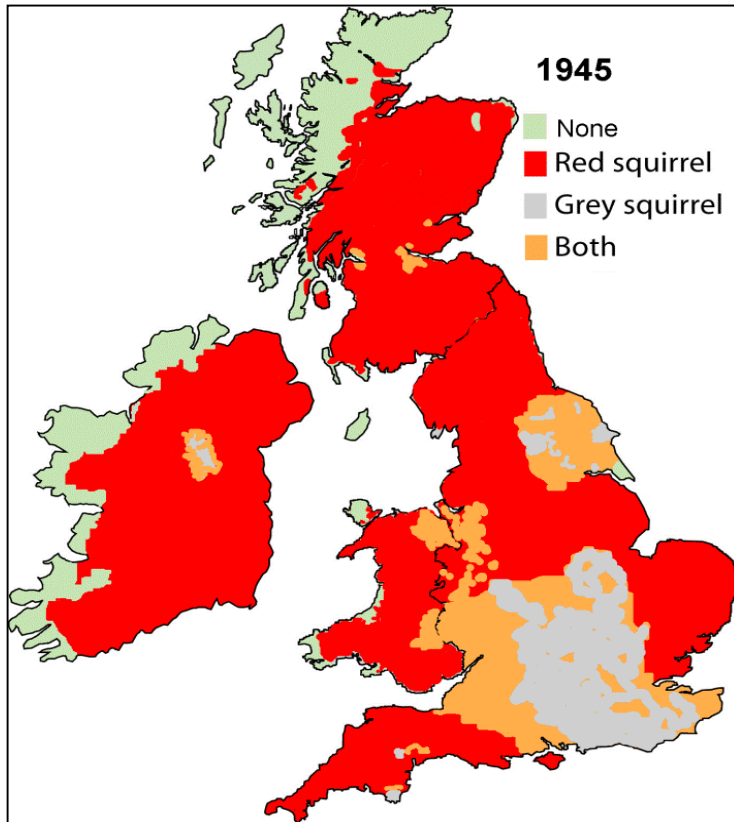
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The Wildlife Trusts

LIFE14 NAT/UK/000467



# Squirrels in the UK



Red and grey squirrel distribution in the British Isles in 1945 and 2010. Copyright RSST



# Red Squirrels United: Overview

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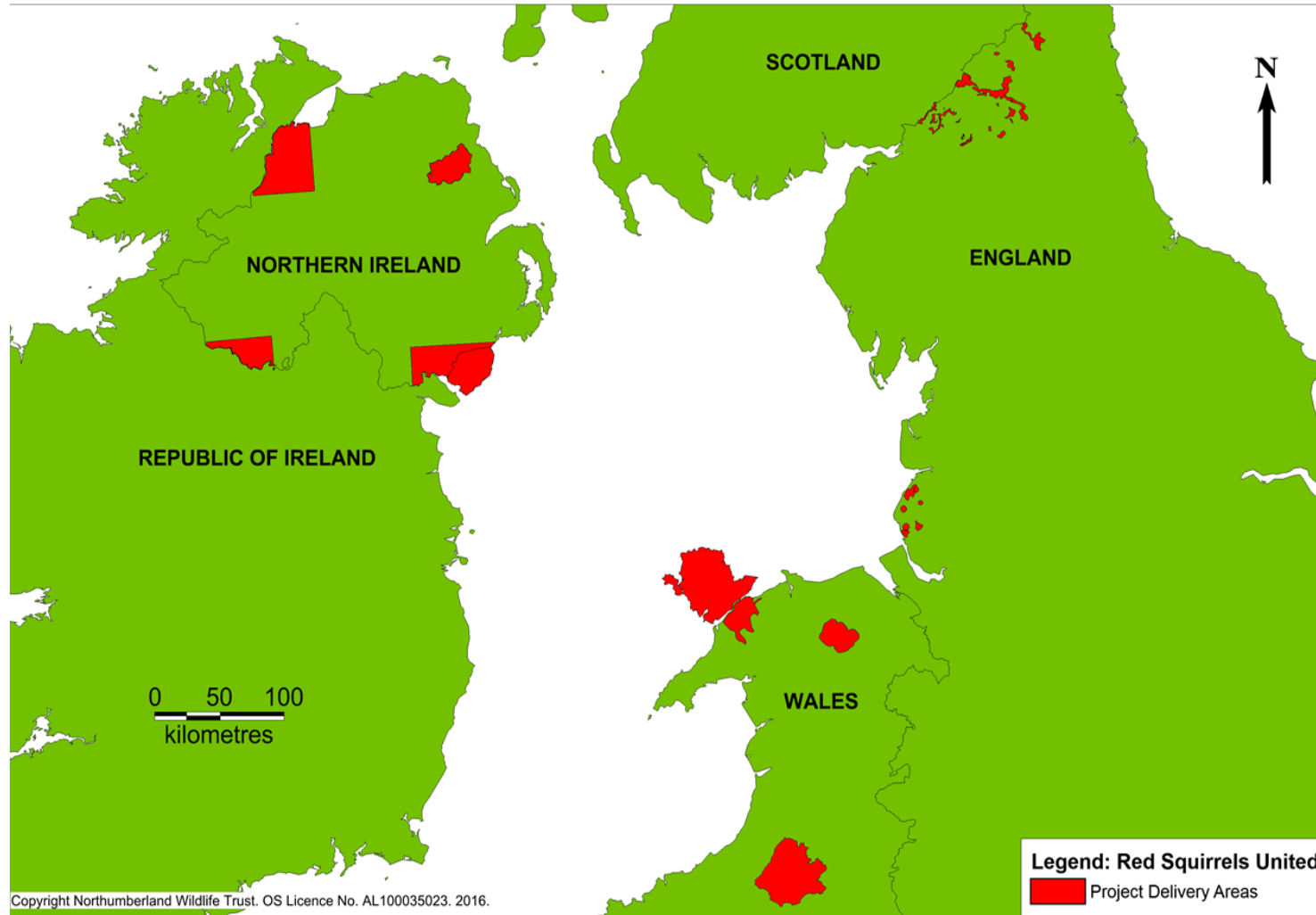


- 🌰 A UK-wide network working together to secure the future of our red squirrels uniting conservationists, volunteers and academics
- 🌰 Partnership of eight organisations led by The Wildlife Trusts
- 🌰 A scientifically robust programme of conservation, protecting nine main stronghold red squirrel populations





# Conservation areas



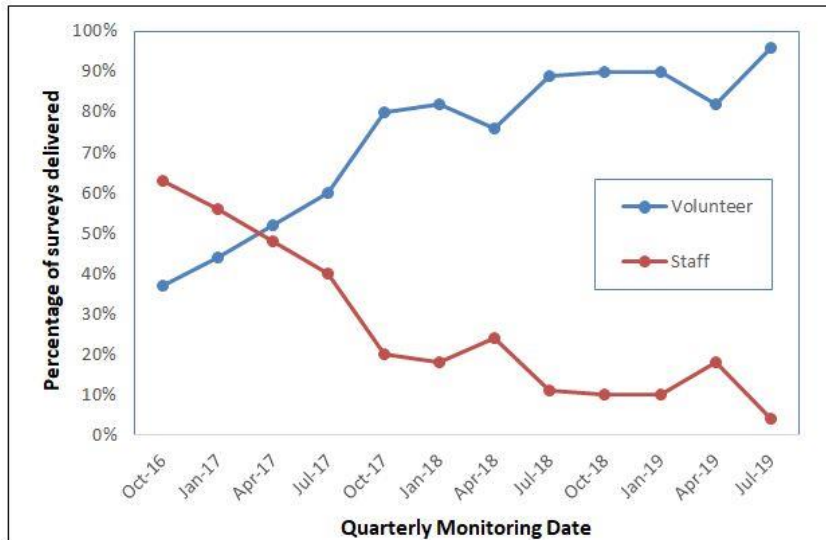
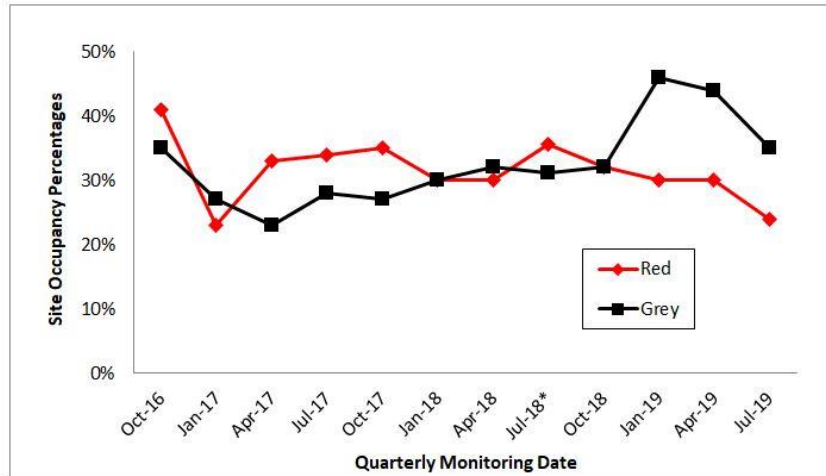
# Red Squirrels United: Aims

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- 🌰 Tackle barriers to Invasive Alien Species (IAS) colonisation prevention
- 🌰 Maximise the impact of grey squirrel control or eradication
- 🌰 Build community resilience
- 🌰 Aid the development of comprehensive IAS management frameworks



# Monitoring for red and grey squirrels: Kielder Stronghold

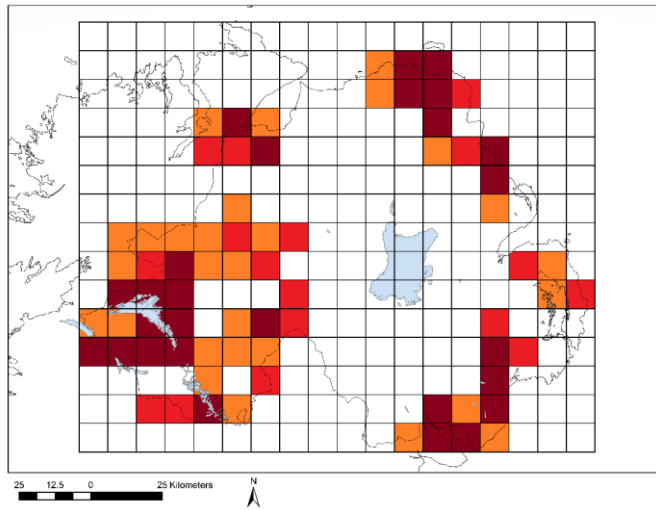


- 595 surveys completed Oct 2016 – Jul 2019
- 33 different volunteers participated
- 433 surveys carried out by volunteers, amounting to 3,464 volunteer hours
- Volunteer delivery increased from 37% in October 2016 to 96% in July 2019 (surpassing the expected result target of 75%)
- Main issue around how to respond to detection of greys across vast areas of forest with limited resources

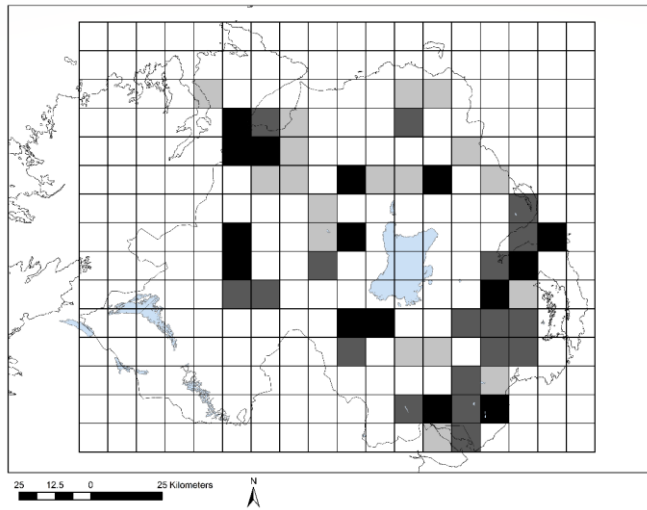


# Squirrel and Pine Marten distribution: N Ireland

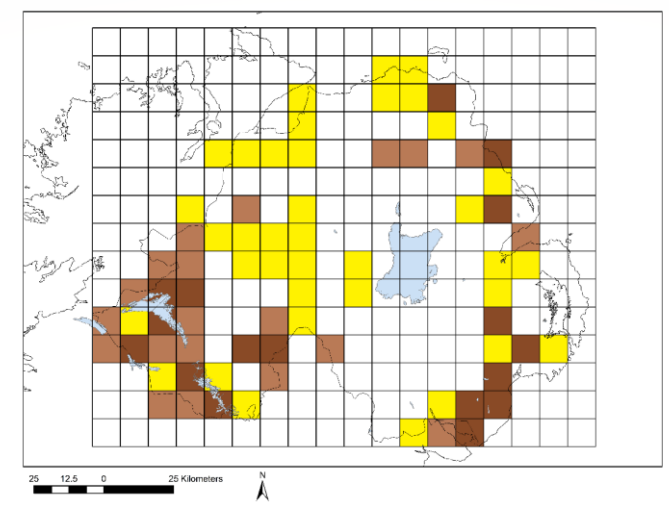
## Survey results 2017-2019



Red Squirrel



Grey Squirrel

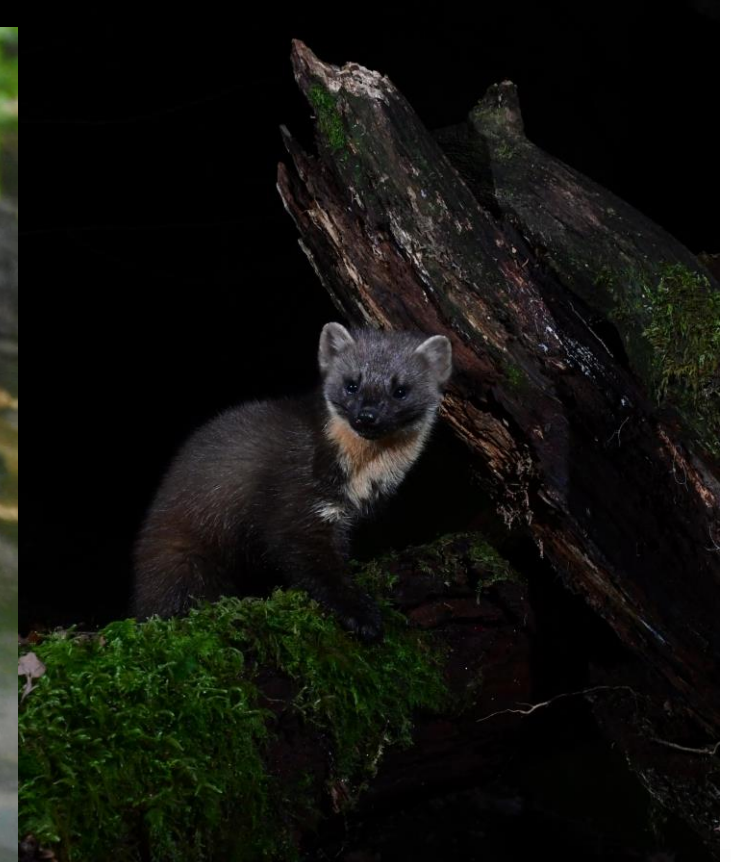


Pine Marten





# Preventing grey squirrel colonisation

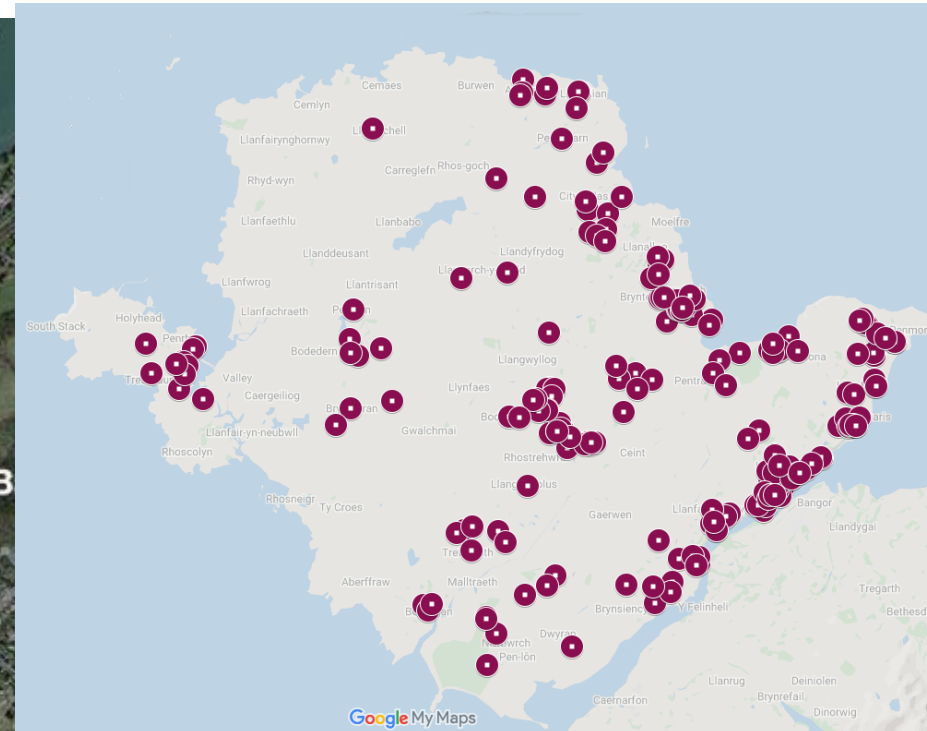


Tackling barriers to IAS colonisation



# Maintaining grey squirrel free areas

- 🌰 Island of Anglesey declared grey squirrel free in 2013
- 🌰 More than 230 garden & woodland feeding stations across the island
- 🌰 Monitor grey squirrel incursion and general visual health of reds



# Squirrelpox virus

- 🌰 Squirrelpox virus detected autumn 2017
- 🌰 First cases in wild Welsh red squirrels
- 🌰 Stopped all use of feeders on Anglesey & Gwynedd

## WILDLIFE DISEASE

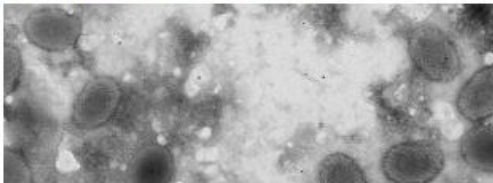
### Confirmation of squirrelpox in Welsh red squirrels

WE wish to report the first laboratory confirmed cases of disease caused by squirrelpox virus (SQPV) in wild red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) from Wales.

Following a long-term grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) management



**Fig 1: Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), with facial lesions resembling those of squirrelpox, found dead in Treborth Botanical Gardens, mainland Wales**



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### Fears of Anglesey and Gwynedd red squirrel virus outbreak

6 October 2017

Share



People are being asked to keep a look out for sick squirrels on Anglesey and in Gwynedd.

It comes after a red squirrel was found to have died from squirrel pox virus in Treborth Botanic Garden, Bangor.





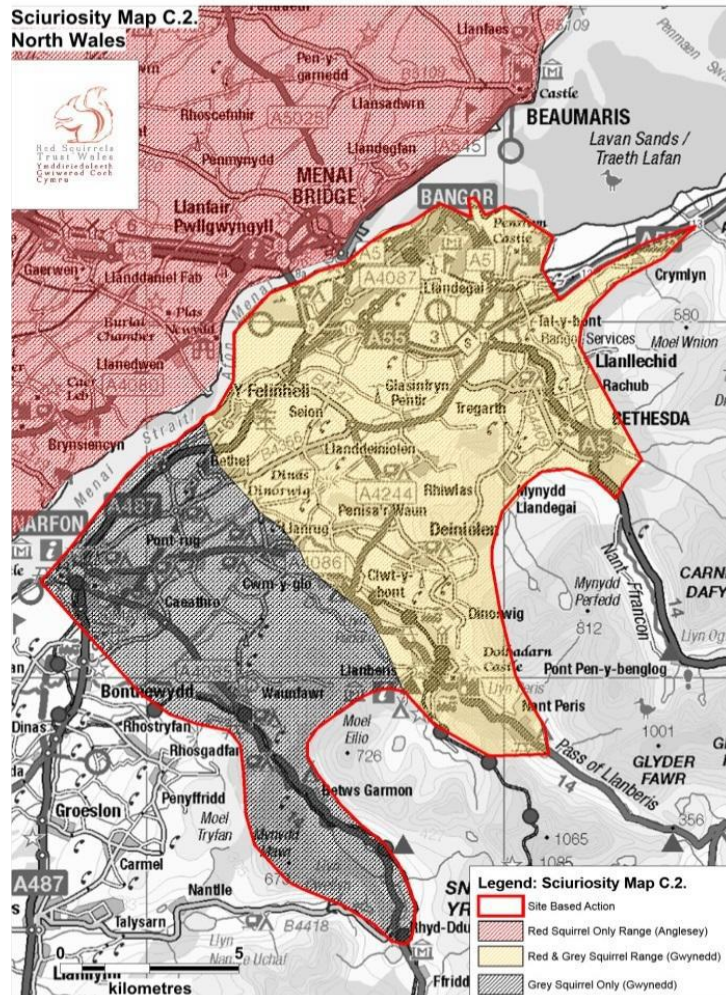
# Detection Dogs

- 🌰 Trained to detect dead red squirrels
- 🌰 Dogs can search an area up to the size of a football pitch in less than 1 hour!
- 🌰 Also training detection dogs in Northern Ireland





# Grey squirrel management: Northern Gwynedd



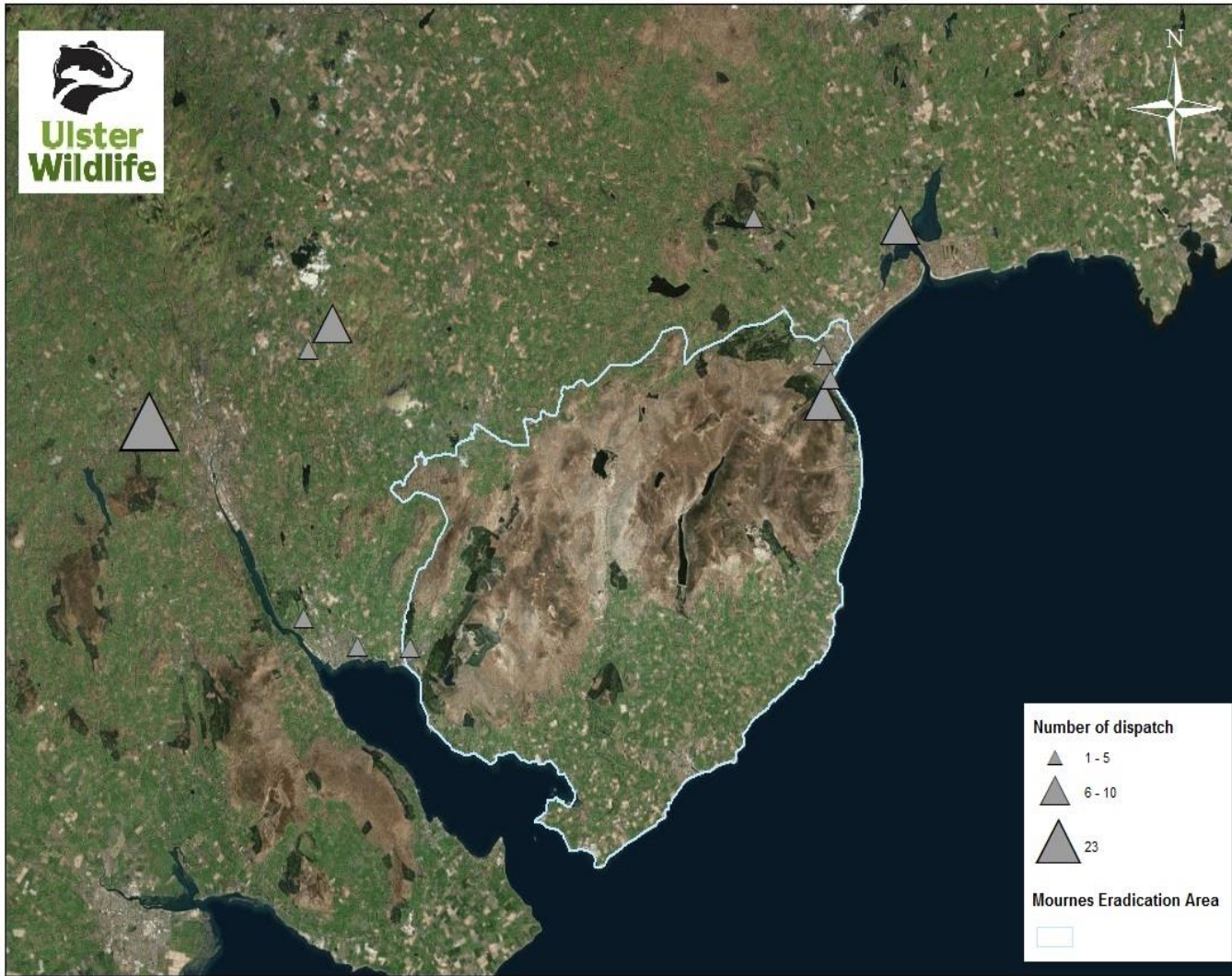
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- 🌰 Eradicate grey squirrels from 1,500 hectares of woodland in Gwynedd
- 🌰 Intensive trapping undertaken by 4 full time/seasonal contractors plus volunteers
- 🌰 Increased levels of community awareness across northern Gwynedd



Maximising impact of grey squirrel control or eradication

# Grey squirrel management: Mourne Mountains



- 🌰 Grey squirrels scarce in Mourne Plains
- 🌰 Responsive shooting and trapping
- 🌰 Early warning system in place
- 🌰 Community groups monitor & address incursion



Maximising impact of grey squirrel control or eradication



# Kania 2000 trap



Photo 4. The Kania 2000 attached to a standard squirrel trap, two springs hold the two traps close together to avoid escapes.

With the squirrel restrained at the back of the trap using the trap comb as above. Arm the spring trap and attach it securely using the springs or bungee cords to the cage trap. The door can then be locked open using a wooden dowel, and the trap comb released. The squirrel should likely run toward the spring trap and be dispatched cleanly. The spring trap housing can be modified to have a Perspex window which encourages the squirrel to run toward the light, but this is not entirely necessary.



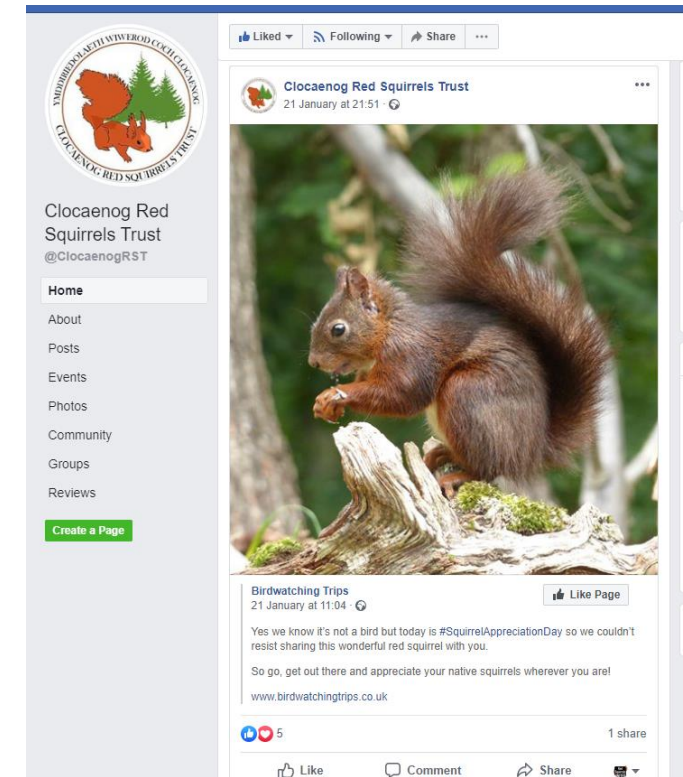
Photo 5. The Kania 2000 with the back cut out of the housing and Perspex window inserted to encourage the squirrel to run toward the light.





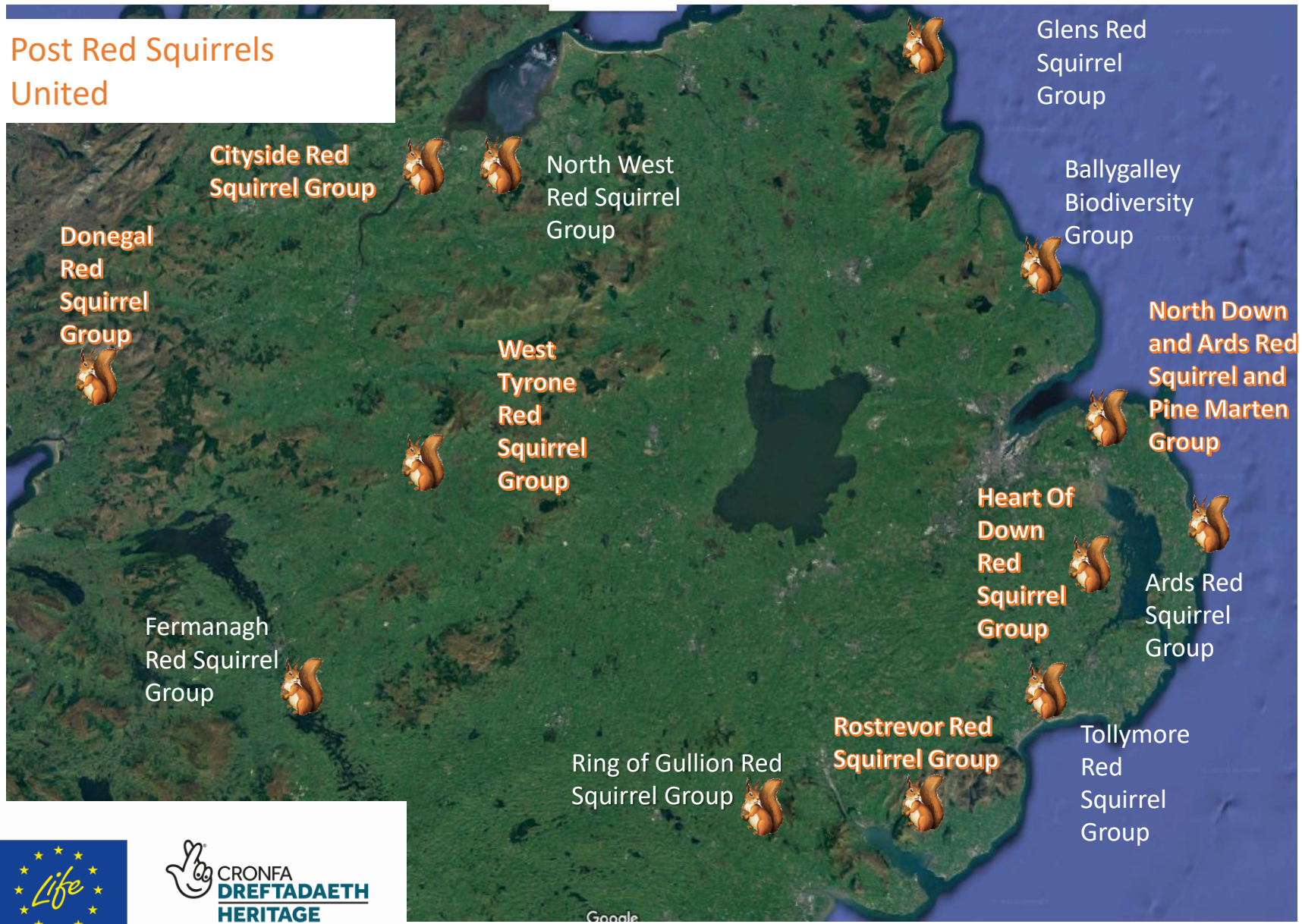
# Building community resilience

- 🌰 Established Clocaenog Red Squirrels Trust
- 🌰 Red Alert: Lancs and Merseyside constituted





## Post Red Squirrels United



Building community resilience

# Building community resilience

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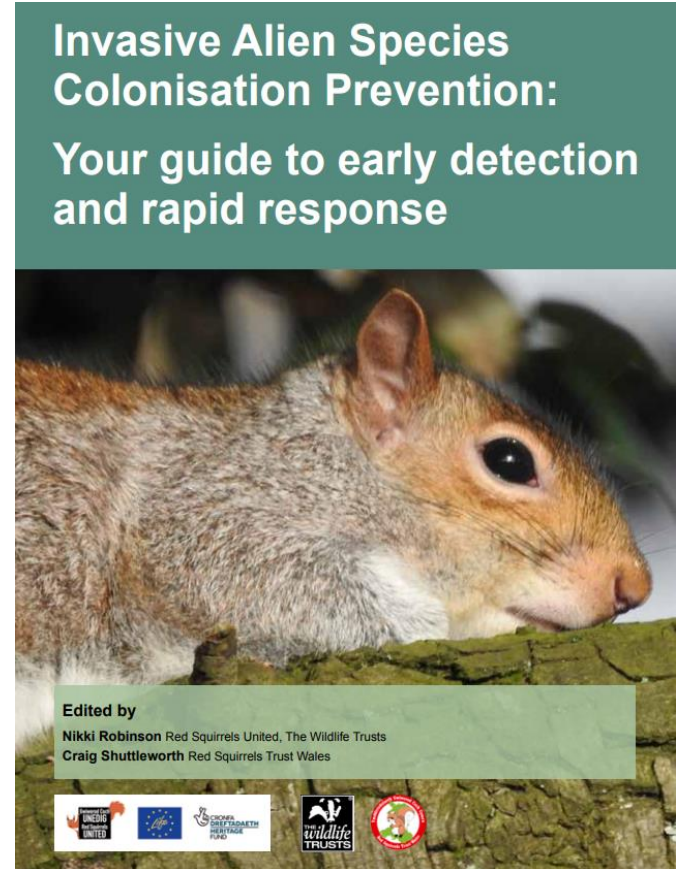
- 🌰 Approximately 125 households participating in urban Trap Loan Scheme (TLS) in Merseyside
- 🌰 15 volunteers engaged in grey squirrel control through TLS
- 🌰 145% increase in Merseyside TLS members since start of project
- 🌰 Network of grey squirrel control volunteers in each project area of Merseyside
- 🌰 Rural TLS in place in mid-Wales since 2014
- 🌰 Approximately 119 volunteers participating in TLS in mid-Wales
- 🌰 100 volunteers engaged in grey squirrel control through TLS





# Community empowerment, engagement and awareness

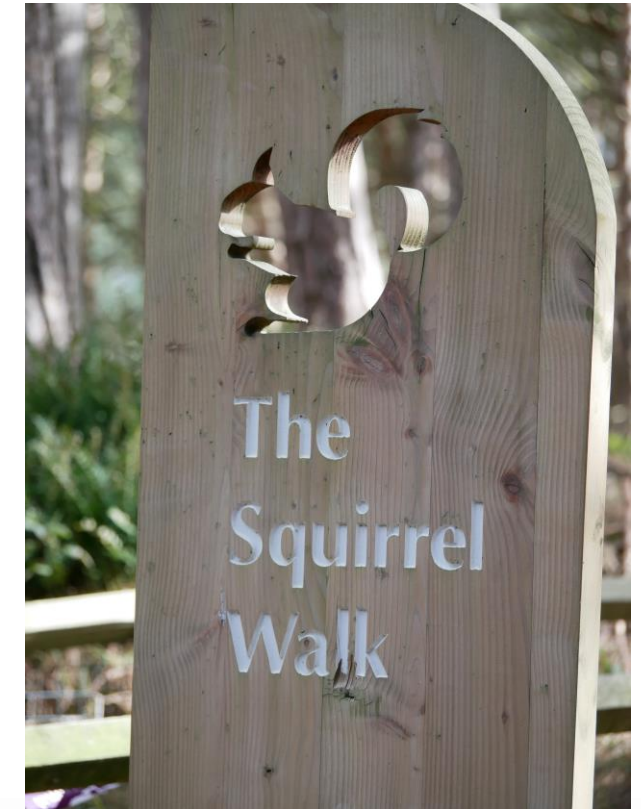
- More than 250 training events
- 15 videos
- Nine webinars
- Best practice guides
- Strong regional & national press coverage
- 600 community engagement events engaging more than 60,000 people
- Regular newsletters, blogs and annual reports



Building community resilience

# Knowledge sharing and best practice

- 🌰 Annual Knowledge Fairs
- 🌰 Knowledge sharing and lesson learning
- 🌰 Networking opportunity
- 🌰 Participants from across Europe
- 🌰 Attended by more than 400 people



Aiding the development of comprehensive IAS management frameworks



# Liaison with broader IAS community

- 🌰 Disseminating project findings
- 🌰 Knowledge sharing and best practice
- 🌰 Project exchange visits
- 🌰 Cross project working



Aiding the development of comprehensive IAS management frameworks



# In a nutshell... key achievements

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- 🌰 Red Squirrels United generated total benefits of £11.5 million for red squirrel conservation based on impacts on ecology, volunteers and tourism
- 🌰 Volunteers contributed more than 44,000 hours with an equivalent value of £865,000
- 🌰 Welsh Government committed to reviewing forestry legislation
- 🌰 Strong legacy for community groups
- 🌰 Red squirrel populations remained stable and increased distribution across some project areas



# Lessons learnt

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- 🌰 Strong community support for proactive invasive mammal detection and removal
- 🌰 Projects need to empower volunteers with skills, equipment and protocols
- 🌰 Self sustaining local volunteer groups were established – This provides a strong post project legacy
- 🌰 Bespoke local management approaches to invasive species facilitates regional variation
- 🌰 We successfully shared lessons with EU & other international projects
- 🌰 It takes time to build a partnership!





# What next?

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- 🌰 RSU website remains live for next five years [www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk](http://www.redsquirrelsunited.org.uk)
- 🌰 Funding secured from National Lottery Heritage Fund in mid-Wales for a further three years
- 🌰 Partnership of northern Wildlife Trusts (Cumbria, Lancs, Northumberland) seeking further funding
- 🌰 Red Squirrels Trust Wales in partnership with Natural Resource Wales and Clocaenog Red Squirrel Trust granted development funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop project protecting red squirrels and pine marten across North Wales
- 🌰 Modelling data collected by Newcastle University & public attitudes research outputs collected by Forest Research will be used to inform future IAS management programmes
- 🌰 Ulster Wildlife will use RSU model to develop appropriate responses to other IAS projects locally
- 🌰 Development of Irish Red Squirrel strategy





# Thank you for listening

