





<b>Grey squirrel <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i></b>	
<b>Description</b>	<p>Medium-sized tree squirrel (20-25cm long), bushy tail (15-20cm). Upper fur mainly grey with gingery-brown along the back, flanks, tail, limbs and feet; undersides white. Melanic forms occur. Also, erythristic forms with red-brown backs that can lead to confusion and misidentification with red squirrels (image right).</p> 
<b>NI Status</b>	<p>Abundant throughout Northern Ireland and is still expanding its range. Ongoing efforts, concentrated in red squirrel hotspots to limit its distribution and spread. Present in largely broad-leaved forest or parkland. Can use mature hedgerows and gardens. Known to be scarce in Co. Fermanagh, reason unknown, not caused by human intervention. For current distribution visit <a href="#">NBN Atlas Northern Ireland</a>.</p> 
<b>Pathways</b>	<p>Introduced from USA to approximately 30 sites in England and Wales between 1876- and 1929, from Canada to 3 sites in Scotland between 1892 and 1920, and from England to 1 site in Ireland in 1911 and from there progressed throughout the island to its current range in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.</p>
<b>Aim</b>	<p>Control the current wild population, minimise expansion of the species range in N.I. and to eradicate in the wild where possible. Prevent establishment in new areas, especially areas that are the preserve of red squirrel populations.</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contain and locally reduce the abundance of grey squirrels with control being carried out in high priority areas around red squirrel strongholds and their buffer zones.</li> <li>2. Reduce the impacts on red squirrel populations and on sensitive woodland habitat and forestry services.</li> <li>3. Focus control in selected areas to maintain priority red squirrel populations and prevent further population expansion.</li> <li>4. Reduce distribution across N.I. by 50% by 2030.</li> <li>5. Widespread restoration of native red squirrel populations.</li> </ol>
<b>Prevention</b>	
<b>Border and pathway actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014 it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the environment. This includes the release of animals taken into captivity for welfare reasons.</li> </ul>



	<p>distribution data and visualise it as customisable maps, via the National Biodiversity Network Atlas Northern Ireland (<a href="https://northernireland.nbnatlas.org/">https://northernireland.nbnatlas.org/</a>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing surveillance is undertaken to a varying extent by numerous statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations involved in red squirrel <i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> conservation, which includes the control of grey squirrels.</li> <li>- The overarching group is the UK Red Squirrel Steering Group (UKRSG). In addition, the UK Squirrel Accord is an organisation that consists of 32 leading woodland, timber industry and conservation organisations in the UK committed to the effective and targeted control of grey squirrels.</li> <li>- The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum and other squirrel fora hold representatives from a wide range of stakeholders, including government, public bodies, wildlife trusts, conservation organisations, local voluntary squirrel groups, woodland managers, charities, private companies and private landowners.</li> <li>- Relevant Government agencies such as DfI Roads/Rivers, AFBI, Forest Service and Northern Ireland Environment Agency record the presence of invasive non-native species as a part of their work and will then initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> <li>- Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g. Wildlife Trusts) undertake surveys and report incidental sightings of invasive non-native species and will then initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> <li>- All N.I. Councils to also record and report presence of invasive non-native species on their estates and initiate management measures for WSS on their own sites.</li> </ul>
<b>Rapid response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Response to sightings of grey squirrels in new areas, or re-emergence in previously occupied areas is dependent on the action of local organisations involved in grey squirrel control, e.g. local squirrel groups.</li> <li>- Although The LIFE funded Red Squirrels United project officially ended in October 2019, the legacy of the project has established an early warning system for Northern Ireland by the creation of many new volunteer groups across the country. As yet, there is no project lined up to follow on, but the new volunteer groups currently undertake the majority of the surveillance, rapid response and control work.</li> </ul>
<b>Long-term management</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grey squirrels are controlled to protect red squirrels and forestry</li> <li>- Support national squirrel fora and the UKRSG to promote the management of grey squirrels in existing and new ranges through encouragement of local and regional coordinated management at the landscape-scale to conserve red squirrels and to reduce damage to woodland.</li> <li>- Support the UKRSG which builds on national efforts by working across borders to provide a shared focus at N.I., G.B. and Ireland level.</li> </ul>	





For further information:

Northern Ireland Environment Agency  
Biodiversity and Conservation Science  
Unit Clare House  
303 Airport Road West  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED

Tel: 028 9056 9558

Email: [invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:invasivespecies@daera-ni.gov.uk)

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



An Agency within the Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**