

Red Squirrel

DESCRIPTION

Red Squirrels are most often found in coniferous woods. Red Squirrels feast on hazelnuts by cracking the shell in half. You may also find pine cones that have been nibbled, leaving what looks like an apple core behind. Squirrels make a rough nest, called a 'drey', of twigs, leaves and strips of bark in the fork of a branch, high in the tree canopy.

75% (around 121,000) of the UK red squirrel population is found in Scotland. In the north, strong populations still exist in areas as yet uncolonised by grey squirrels. Red squirrels can also be found in some parts of central Scotland as 'pocket' populations and, although much reduced from their former range, can still be found in many parts of southern and south-western Scotland.

Protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, red squirrels are classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

DISTRIBUTION MAP



THREATS

Once common across the country, Red Squirrels have declined rapidly since the 1950s. Threats include competition from grey squirrels, squirrelpox virus, habitat fragmentation and road kill.



© Neil McIntyre

ACTION REQUIRED

1. Habitat improvements
2. Grey Squirrel control
3. Support the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels partnership project - involving Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and the Scottish Land and Estates (SLE)

FURTHER READING

<http://www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk/>

MSP SPECIES CHAMPION



Aileen McLeod MSP

Member for: South Scotland
Party: Scottish National Party

Tel: 0131 312 7765
enquiries@swt.org.uk
www.swt.org.uk