CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

RED SQUIRREL/*SCIURUS VULGARIS*

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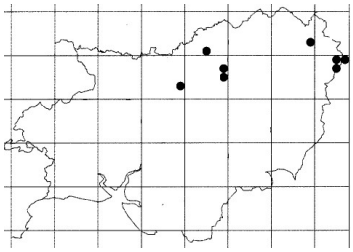

Conservation objectives:
• Maintain and enhance the remaining red squirrel population in the county.

What you can do to help:
• Report all sightings of red squirrels to the county mammal recorder n.matthew@ccw.gov.uk
• If you manage woodland in areas where red squirrels are known – seek advice on management for the species

Further information:
www.squirrelweb.co.uk
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

The word squirrel originates from Greek meaning 'shade tail' – giving us an image of an animal that uses its tail as a parasol!

Ecology
The red squirrel is Britain's only native squirrel. Its severe decline in recent times is linked to the spread of the grey squirrel, which was introduced from North America in the late nineteenth century. Grey squirrels are better able to utilise food resources (e.g. acorns) in broadleaved woodland and tend to displace red squirrels within about 15 years of their arrival in an area. Consequently the red squirrel has now disappeared from most of southern Britain.

In Wales the red squirrel is now mainly confined to a small number of large conifer plantations, where it feeds on a variety of small seeds, fruits, buds, shoot tips, bark, lichen and fungi. In contrast grey squirrels are less well adapted to feeding in conifer forests, which can allow red squirrels to survive there. However, pockets of large-seeded broadleaves within conifer forests can support grey squirrels, and threaten the survival of any resident reds.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire
Although once common throughout Carmarthenshire, recent red squirrel sightings are now sporadic and highly localised. Most post-1990 records have come from Tywi and Irfon Forests in north Carmarthenshire and adjacent Powys. Recent survey work suggests that red squirrel population density is low at each of these sites; grey squirrels are apparently widespread throughout the county.

Legal status
The red squirrel is listed on Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and Appendix III of the Bern Convention.

Why is it in decline?
* Spread of grey squirrels.
* Habitat loss and fragmentation within forests, through the felling of feeding areas and woodland linking suitable habitat.
* Disease (parapox virus spread by greys).

What is being done locally
* 2-year Mid Wales Red Squirrel project underway
* *UK Strategy for Red Squirrel Conservation* prepared.
* Species Recovery Programme initiated by English Nature.
* *Red Alert* campaign launched to raise awareness and coordinate conservation projects.

Where you may see red squirrels
Crychan Forest and several conifer blocks in north Carmarthenshire. The picnic site at the Sugar Loaf on the A483 has provided a number of records.

Cyngor Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council
Bioamrywiaeth Cymru Biodiversity Wales
Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government