

Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

Areas and status: Found in Scotland, Northern England and North Wales (Anglesey) with important isolated populations also found on the Isle of Wight and Poole Islands. Significant declines in distribution since introduction of non-native grey squirrel from 1876. There are estimated to be only 140,000 red squirrels left in Britain, with over 2.5 million greys.

Woodland type: Conifer Forest, Upland Broadleaved Woodland, Lowland Broadleaved Woodland, PAWS.

Preferred habitat niches:

Where possible, maintain a continuous proportion of the forest or woodland composed of stands of trees of seed bearing age. Ensure that a proportion of species other than Sitka spruce are present in conifer plantation forests. Ensure that no large-seeded broadleaf tree species (i.e. beech, hazel, horse chestnut, oak, sweet chestnut or walnut) are planted in forests and buffer zone areas where there are very few already (note this does not apply to the Isle of Wight where there are no grey squirrels). Red squirrels build large nests, called dreys, often in the forks of tree trunks. They are usually solitary, only coming together to mate. Reds range widely, especially when looking for mates.

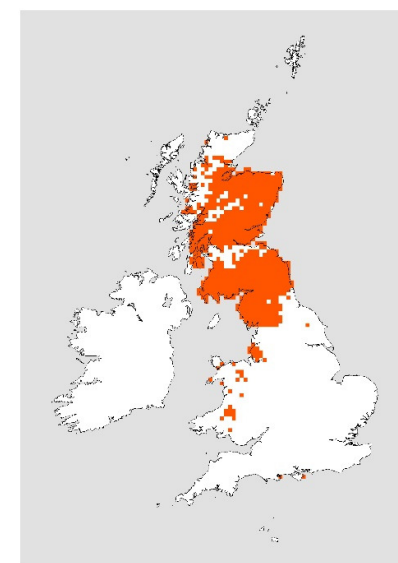
Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Throughout the whole of the UK, the red squirrel is still under threat from long term habitat loss and change, and from competition and potential grey squirrel incursion and disease transmission and it is predicted that their numbers will continue to decline, at least in mainland UK, without specific habitat management.



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Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Thin/selective fell/rotational coppice	Promote conditions to encourage seed production by thinning and delaying the felling of large crowned trees. Favour Scots pine, Lodgepole pine, Norway spruce, firs and yew, birch, rowan, willow, aspen, and alder. Suitable species for the shrub layer include hawthorn, dog rose and guelder rose. Diversify woodland structure to provide a year round food source by encouraging a combination of young, thicket and mature stages. Where possible avoid felling between February and September and particularly between February to the end of June to allow the first litter to disperse. Where surveying is possible trees should be checked for presence of dreys a maximum of three weeks prior to felling.
Grey squirrel control	For the red squirrel to survive it is essential that land managers in red squirrel areas undertake or allow an appropriate level of well-targeted grey squirrel control on their land. This should be focused on broad-leaved woodlands and wooded corridors, as these are the main dispersal and incursion routes used by grey squirrels. It is recommended that advice is sought from the Forestry Commission prior to a control programme being undertaken.
PAWS restoration	Full restoration to native woodland may not always be appropriate in a red squirrel stronghold. Do not replant with more than 5% large seeded broadleaves, as these will encourage grey squirrels (Note: does not apply to the Isle of Wight).
Woodland Creation	The planting of large seeded broadleaves such as oak and beech, is strongly discouraged, as this will encourage grey squirrels. In particular, avoid creating such woodland where it is likely to provide an incursion corridor for greys from a buffer zone, or land out with it, to a stronghold. An exception to the above is enlargement of ancient and semi-natural woodland as this is often desirable for a range of landscape and conservation reasons.



Source: RSNE (N. England) and NBN Atlas occurrence download at <http://nbnatlas.org> (accessed Jan 2019)