



**North West Red Squirrel Group NIC. 107465**  
**Annual Report 1st January - 31st December 2022**  
12 Millgrove Park  
Eglinton  
Derry/Londonderry  
BT47 3QL

### **Trustees**

The North West Red Squirrel Group had six trustees for the period that is being reported. They are Pam Hardeman, Christine Cassidy, Catherine Finlay, Andrea Mitchell, Aaron Murray and Theresa Kelly. Four of the trustees named above hold the positions of Chairperson (Aaron Murray), Vice-chairperson (Pam Hardeman), Secretary (Theresa Kelly) and Treasurer (Catherine Finlay). All of the trustees named have had regard for the Charity Commission public benefit requirement statutory guidance.

### **Constitution and Objectives**

The North West Red Squirrel group was set up and established in 2010 with the help of the Derry City Council and was constituted the following year in 2011. The group gained independence from the council in 2012 and has been operating independently since.

The objectives and aims of the group as stated in the group's constitution are:

The group is established:

**a.** For charitable aims and purposes only, with the following objectives:

- i.** To raise awareness of the protected local red squirrel. Herein after referred to as the 'area of benefit'.
- ii.** To work with voluntary organisations, institutions, business and local residents, in a common effort, to protect and enhance the red squirrel population in the North West region of Northern Ireland and border areas.
- iii.** To control the grey squirrel, to prevent the spread of squirrel pox.

### **Chairperson's Report - Summary of the group's activities for 2022**

As chairperson I would like to thank all the volunteers and committee members who dedicate their free time and put in a lot of hard work for the group. At the end of last year's report I had mentioned about continuing in engagement with the public through social media, safari walks and through information stalls that would be back up and running at events being held in 2022. Thankfully events began to run again after a few years' absence and volunteers gave up their free time to attend these events on behalf of the group. As a result, we were able to help spread awareness of red squirrel conservation and raise money for the group. It also mentioned about continuing to monitor the red squirrel and pine marten populations in the North West. Again, it was with the help of the volunteers that made this possible and helped the group achieve its aims set out from last year. The time and work that the volunteers are putting in is invaluable and is helping the survival of the red squirrels in the North West.

### **Squirrel Update**

Our red squirrel populations are more concentrated compared to the grey squirrel population in our area of work. The 3 populations we have are in the Eglinton area, the Letterkenny Road area and Culmore. From the squirrel and pine marten surveys we conducted on behalf of Ulster Wildlife, red squirrels were surveyed in Muff Glen Forest, Donnybrewer Forest (both in the Eglinton area), Brookhall Estate (Culmore), two private properties on the Letterkenny Road and along with the Foyle Valley Greenway. We have had a history of surveying red squirrels at these locations in the past, so this hopefully demonstrates that there are established red squirrel populations in all of the areas mentioned.

Unfortunately this year was the first in a while where we did not see red squirrels when surveying at the Derry City Cemetery. There are two main reasons for this. Construction work and expansion of the cemetery has meant that the Southway woodland area (where red squirrels were surveyed in 2019) has unfortunately been removed. This woodland area would have provided a corridor and refuge for the red squirrels to travel from the Letterkenny road area to the cemetery. The other reason was the difficulty in working with the Derry City and Strabane District Council in trapping grey squirrels in the area. Even though it is the duty of the city council to help control invasive species on their property, the council has made it difficult and has opposed in working with the NWRSG to help control the grey squirrels at the City Cemetery. As a result the grey squirrels have been able to establish themselves in the area and have replaced the red squirrels that have been there the past few years.

During the Ulster Wildlife surveys we managed to find two areas with pine marten. The areas were Loughermore Forest (Myrtle Road) and Loughermore Forest East and are about 4 miles apart from each other. The pine marten at Loughermore Forest East was visiting the feeder on a regular basis so this could be part of the territory of the pine marten appearing on camera. The Loughermore area continues to be the most successful area we have in surveying pine marten so it could be another area for us to focus our surveying on.

Full results from the squirrel and pine marten surveys can be found at the end of the report in figure 1 and 2.

### **Muff Glen Update**

Muff Glen continues to be the main area of focus for the group to try and protect the remaining red squirrels (we believe that there are around 10 in the forest). Throughout the year we have had several grey squirrel invasions. We would dispatch a number of greys and see their numbers decline on the cameras only for more to pop up a few weeks later. We also believe that both the red and grey squirrels present in Muff Glen and surrounding areas bred late in the year. We were seeing juvenile red squirrels on camera in late August/early September plus we were dispatching several

young grey squirrels even as late as November. We also had trouble trapping grey squirrels in Muff Glen, we went a period of almost 3 months without trapping a grey squirrel (10th July until 26th Sept). From the end of September until the end of the year we had more success in trapping grey squirrels. From speaking to the volunteers for other NI squirrel groups in late November they also seemed to have difficulty in dispatching greys for a while. A potential reason for this could be the abundance of food in the late summer/ early Autumn and therefore not going into the traps and eating the bait. Once the natural food reduced the greys were maybe more inclined to go into the traps and get the bait hence the increase in the number of greys we were trapping.

See figure 3 and 4 for breakdown of squirrel sightings and grey squirrel dispatch numbers for Muff Glen.

### **Grey Squirrel Update**

As per the objective in our constitution, grey squirrel control remains a vital component of red squirrel conservation. The main methods we use to dispatch grey squirrels are by using the spring loaded Kania trap and by shooting.

Grey squirrels are still widespread throughout the North West and following similar trends to previous years, the grey squirrel is more widespread in the North West compared to the red squirrel. As a result the group traps and dispatches grey squirrels in a number of sites and areas. The total number of grey squirrels dispatched by NWRSG volunteers for 2022 was 207. This was lower than the number of greys the group dispatched the previous year at 285 in 2021. Comparing this with previous years (568 greys in 2020 and 324 greys in 2019) this is the second year in a row that we have dispatched fewer grey squirrels than the previous year. This could be as a result of years of the thorough grey squirrel control efforts that the volunteers have been doing since 2017. Another could be that there have been relatively few 'new' areas that we have been trapping. Typically the areas that we control grey squirrels we have been doing so for a number of years.

Full details for the grey squirrel dispatch work can be found in figure 5 at the end of the report.

### **Events and Fundraising**

Fundraising has always been an important part of the volunteer work of the group as it helps generate money. This year we have been able to hold more fundraising opportunities as society begins to open up again after the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions. For 4 weeks the group was able to raise money from the Eglinton pub quiz nights held at the Happy Landing. The dates of these quiz nights were 11th, 18th, 25th Jan and 2nd Feb. These quiz nights proved to be a great success and helped raise a lot of money for the group.

Below were a number of other events that we attended and set up information stalls:

- 23rd Jan National Red Squirrel Appreciation Day - Muff Glen Safari with Conservation Detection Dogs NI demonstration by Caroline Finlay - really good demonstration but poorly attended
- 13th March Eglinton Market - Information stall and raffle held
- 21st May NISF Sustainability Fair -rescheduled from earlier in the year
- 27th June Limavady High School - Muff Glen Safari with Conservation Detection Dogs NI demonstration by Caroline Finlay
- 3rd Sept Eglinton Annual Show (first held since 2019) - total wash out so not a lot of people visited stall
- 15th Oct Muff Glen Safari for Red Squirrel Awareness Week 10-16th Oct - poorly attended
- 26th November St. Francis Primary School NISF meeting at St. Francis Primary School in Lurgan - good way to meet up with other red squirrel conservation volunteers and hear how

they are getting on with their work. The school also had a red squirrel enclosure and hide so we were able to go and see this.

In terms of group meetings we continued to use Zoom to host the meetings. Below shows the dates of when group meetings were held

AGM held on 18th Jan (held at Eglinton Community Hall)  
13th April (Held via Zoom)  
14th Sept (Held via Zoom)  
5th Oct (Held via Zoom)

Volunteers also attended the Ulster Wildlife Squirrel and Pine Marten Survey Workshop 26th April via Zoom.

### Grants

The group allied for additional equipment in the form of trail cameras, live traps and combs. The Browning cameras we had previously ordered were not working properly, particularly draining the batteries of all power and failing to keep the correct time and date. With the RAPID Micro Capital Grant the group asked for funding to purchase the following:

- 4x Browning Recon Force Edge Trail Cameras
- 4x Browning Camera Security Boxes
- 6x Trapman Squirrel Traps
- 4x Restrictor Trap Combs

The total amount would total to £936.98. The grant would pay 85% of this amount (£796.43) while the group would pay the remaining 15% (£140.55) from its own resources.

We applied for this equipment under the project of surveying the squirrel populations in the NW and when necessary, control the grey squirrels in the areas that they appear on camera.

Another grant that the group applied for was funding from the Live Here Love Here Marine Litter Grant Scheme 22/23. This grant is funded by The Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DEARA) and managed by Live Here Love Here, a programme managed by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. The grant was used to secure clean up equipment that would be used to pick up litter and other debris after the flooding in Muff Glen. See details of the grant application below:

### Items/amounts you requested

Item	Requested	Offered
SEKEY FOLDING WAGON CART	£119.99	£119.99
NIGHT WADERS & POND GLOVES X 4	£259.88	£259.88
DUNLOP BUDGET WELLIES X 8	£120.00	£120.00
ECO RECYCLED STRONG BIN BAGS X 4 ROLLS	£47.96	<b>REJECTED</b>

SPEAR & JACKSON FORK X 2	£65.98	£65.98
PROFESSIONAL PRUNING SHEATHED SAW	£81.38	£81.38
HELLY HANSEN LIFE JACKETS	£121.76	£121.76
ECOVER ALL PURPOSE CLEANER	£7.33	£7.33
	<b>£824.28</b>	<b>£776.32</b>

Details of the group's finances will be provided by the treasurer as part of the AGM meeting. See figure 6 for full breakdown of finances.

### **Complications and problems**

We have had trap interference and equipment stolen in St Columbs Park House and Gransha woods and as a result we had to stop setting traps at these locations. This negativity affects our conservation work as we stop trapping in these areas and consequently the grey squirrel population increases. Our aim is to contact private landowners that live nearby here and set up traps instead. We hope that this will stop members of the public damaging or stealing the group's equipment.

Unfortunately we have not made progress with the City council in relation to grey squirrel control. It was mentioned in last year's report that we risked losing the red squirrels at the city cemetery as a result of the council not helping us in trapping greys on their land. Unsurprisingly as a direct result of the lack of grey squirrel control and the expansion of the cemetery, the red squirrels have left this area in spite of our best efforts.

There was the unfortunate news that BBC plan on making cuts to BBC Radio Foyle. Radio Foyle has in the past provided a great way to get exposure and talk about the red squirrel conservation work that we do. It would be a pity if we were to lose the chance to get on local radio and talk about the work we do.

### **Conclusion**

Overall it has been another successful year for the NW Red Squirrel Group. We managed to attend and set up our information stalls at a number of events throughout the year. In addition, the pub quiz nights were set up again which proved to be a great source of fundraising for the group. Also the red squirrels have remained in the same areas as the previous years, with the exception of the city cemetery though this is through no fault of our own. We also found a new area with pine marten in Loughermore Forest East. When conducting the squirrel and pine marten surveys in the future we should continue to include this area to survey. For the year ahead I believe it is important to continue to ask the council for permission to control grey greys on the land and in particular the city cemetery. When attending the NISF meeting in November other squirrel groups mentioned about getting their local council on board and that it is the duty of the council to help monitor and control invasive species. We hope to be able to work with them in the future and to help get the red squirrels back to the city cemetery.

Thanks and regards

**Name:**

*Avon Murray*

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**Position:**

*Chairperson*

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**Date:**

*18<sup>th</sup> January 2023      18/01/2023*

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**Signature:**

*AMurray*

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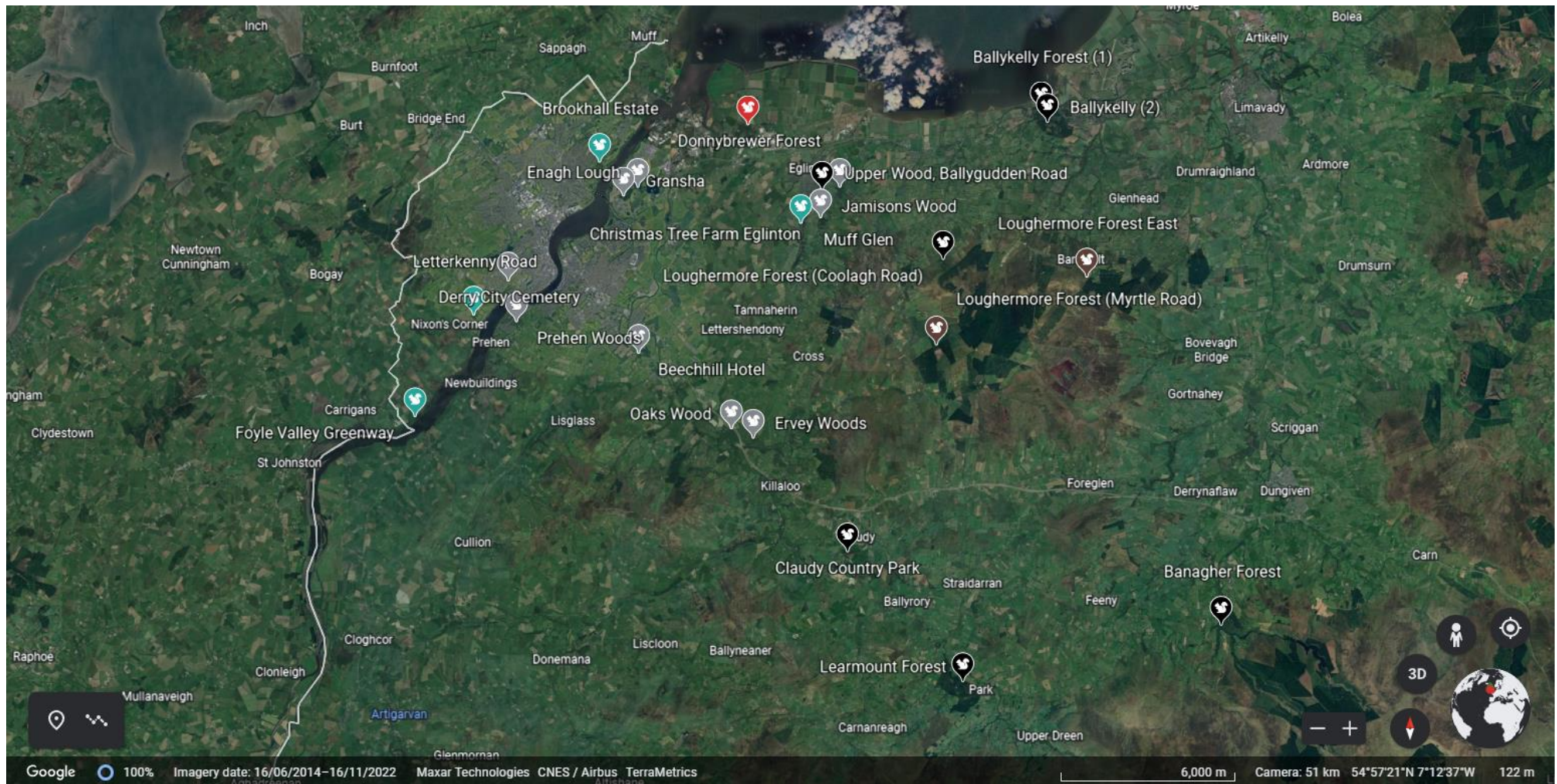


Fig.1 Screenshot from Google Earth to show the survey locations for the squirrel and pine marten surveys conducted by volunteers.

**Key:**

Red Squirrel Icon- Red Squirrel Surveyed	Black Squirrel Icon- Nothing surveyed	Grey Squirrel Icon- Grey squirrel surveyed
Green Squirrel Icon- Both red and grey squirrels surveyed	Brown Squirrel Icon- Pine marten surveyed at location	

Fig. 2 Table of results for the 2022 squirrel and pine marten surveys conducted by volunteers in the North West

Surveyor name: NW Red Squirrel Group

Woodland name	Irish grid ref	X	Y	Start date	End date	Species (RS, GS, PM or 0)	Date of recording
Claudy Country Park	C 54032 06848	254032	406848	7/8/2022	22/8/2022	0	N/A
Banagher Glen Forest	C 67059 04416	267059	404416	25/06/2022	11/07/2022	0	N/A
Learmount Forest	C 58184 02402	258184	402402	4/6/2022	18/6/2022	0	N/A
Loughermore East Forest	C 62155 16083	262155	416083	4/6/2022	18/6/2022	PM	PM (6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18)
Foyle Valley Greenway	C 39011 11409	239011	411409	8/5/2022	21/5/2022	RS (x2), GS	RS (10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20) GS (14, 15, 17, 20)
Donnybrewer Forest	C 50400 21700	250400	421700	18/5/2022	1/6/2022	RS (x2)	RS (18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1)
Enagh Lough	C 46600 19400	246600	419400	2/5/2022	17/5/2022	GS	GS (5)
Jamisons Wood	C 52900 19400	252900	419400	2/5/2022	17/5/2022	0	N/A
Beechhill Hotel	C 46700 13700	246700	413700	3/5/2022	17/5/2022	GS	GS (5, 15, 16)
Christmas Tree Farm Eglinton	C 52900 18400	252900	418400	7/5/2022	21/5/2022	GS (x2)	GS (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21)
Ballykelly Forest (1)	C 60700 22200	260700	422200	18/5/2022	3/6/2022	0	N/A

Ballykelly Forest (2)	C 60800 21800	260800	421800	18/5/2022	3/6/2022	0	N/A
Derry City Cemetery	C 42100 16000	242100	416000	1/7/2022	15/7/2022	GS	GS (3)
Coach House Letterkenny Road	C 39000 14800	239000	414800	21/5/2022	4/6/2022	RS (x2)	RS (21, 22, 23)
Letterkenny Road	C 40900 14900	240900	414900	1/7/2022	15/7/2022	RS, GS	RS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) GS (2, 7)
Oaks Wood	C 49900 11100	249900	411100	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	GS (x3)	GS (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18)
Ervey Woods	C 50700 10800	250700	410800	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	GS	GS (6)
Loughermore Forest, Coolagh Road	C 57300 16600	257300	416600	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	0	N/A
Loughermore Forest , Myrtle Road	C 57000 14100	257000	414100	3/6/2022	18/6/2022	PM	PM (7)
Upper Wood, Ballygudden Road	C 53600 19500	253600	419500	13/7/2022	30/7/2022	GS	GS (13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30)
Muff Glen Forest	C 52221 17004	252221	417004	1/5/2022	15/5/2022	RS (x2), GS (x2)	RS (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) GS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15)
Gransha Woods	C 46100 19100	246100	419100	22/8/2022	5/9/2022	GS	GS (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
Prehen Woods	C 42300 14600	242300	414600	8/8/2022	22/8/2022	GS	GS (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22)
Brookhall Estate	C 45297 20152	245297	420152	1/8/2022	15/8/2022	RS (x2), GS (x2)	RS (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15) GS (4, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15)

## Red and Grey Squirrel sightings Muff Glen Entrances Jan to Dec 22

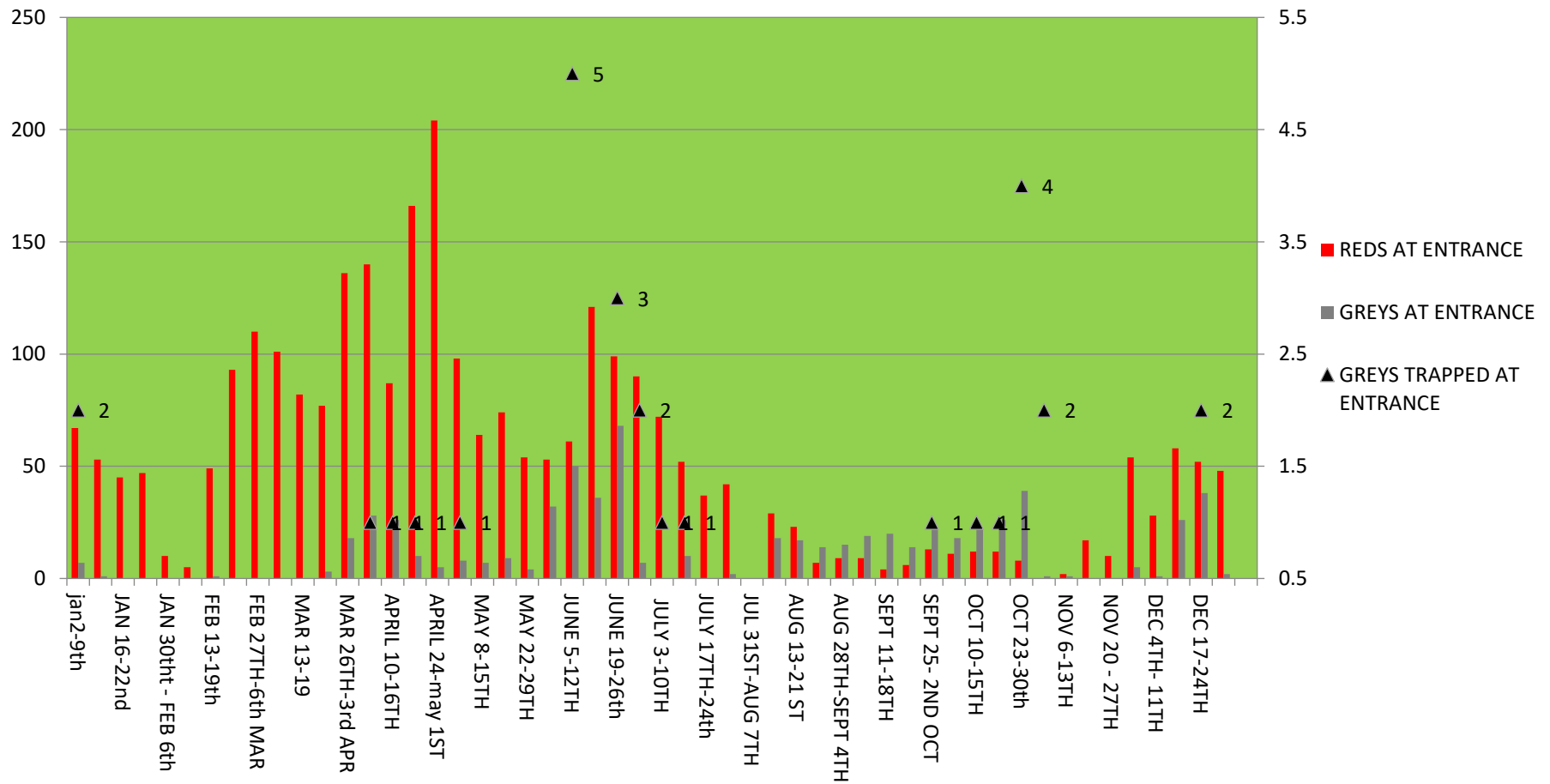


Fig 3. Graph showing the red and grey squirrel sightings at the Edenreagh Road entrance of Muff Glen Forest in 2022 on a weekly basis. Also shows the number of grey squirrels dispatched.

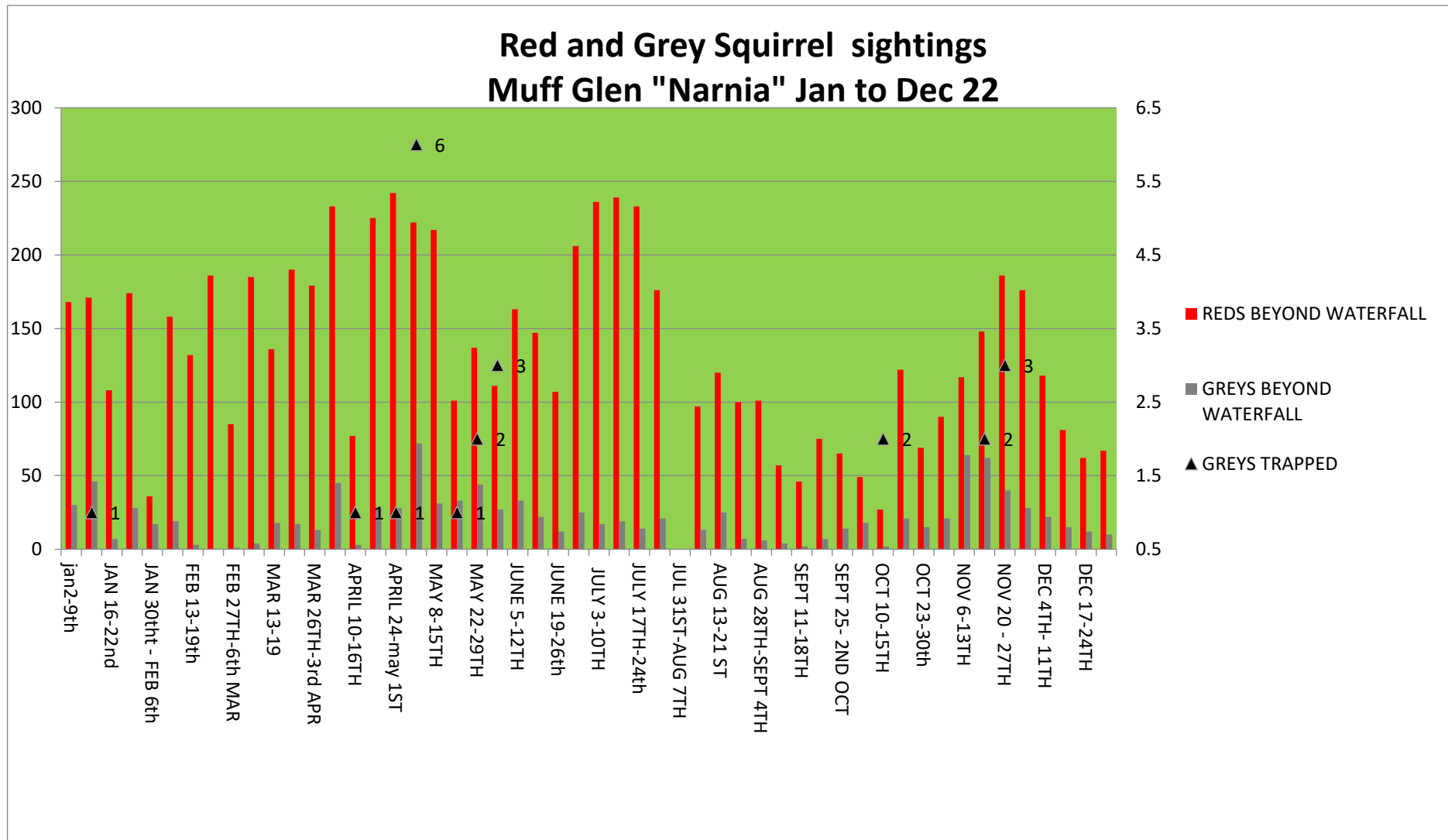


Fig 4. Graph showing the red and grey squirrel sightings at the far end of Muff Glen Forest in 2022 on a weekly basis. Also shows the number of grey squirrels dispatched.

Fig 5. Table showing the grey squirrel dispatch work conducted by NW Red Squirrel Group Volunteers in 2022

SITE	GREY CULL 2022		VOLUNTEER	GREYS CULLED
MUFF GLEN	51		PAM	54
MILLGROVE PARK	18		RONNIE	51
BALLYGUDDEN RD	14		AARON	34
ST CANICES	2		IRENE	23
DUNBOYNE	1		THERESA	19
DONNYBREWER	1		KENNY	7
ENAGH	9		NOEL	5
CLOONEY ROAD	7		EAMON	5
BAYVIEW	9		SEANA	4
DEANFIELD	1		PAUL	3
SCPH	8		CIARAN	2
DRUMAHOE	4			
ARDLOUGH	6			<b>207</b>
ARDMORE	8			
OAKS WOOD	3			
PREHEN	10			
BARONSCOURT	3			
TALBOT PARK	2			
COACH HOUSE	2			
LETTERKENNY ROAD	2			
CEMETERY	3			
FARLOW WOOD	15			
SEA COAST ROAD	17			
ROE VALLEY	5			
CLAUDY	6			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>207</b>			

Fig 6. Table showing the expenditure and income for the group in 2022.

<b>OPENING BANK BALANCE</b>	<b>£1,148.77</b>		<b>CASH</b>	<b>£14.35</b>
<b>MONIES IN</b>			<b>MONIES OUT</b>	
SALE OF GREYS (CASH)	£142.00		INSURANCE ( DIRECT DEBIT )	£214.27
SUBSCRIPTIONS (CASH AND BANK TRANSFER)	£350.00		TRAVEL EXPENSES	£30.00
DONATIONS CHEQUES	£240.00		BIRD FOOD	£29.65
SAFARI IN MUFF GLEN CASH DONATIONS	£64.00		MARK ONE CLOTHING (CARD)	£58.20
GRANT DAERA -	£740.03		SQUIRREL FOOD	£537.60
GRANT LIVE HERE LOVE HERE	£200.00		GIFT FOR AUDITOR	£15.00
QUIZ NIGHTS	£818.00		BATTERIES	£171.50
EGLINTON SHOW	£44.40		BINOCULARS	£829.28
EGLINTON COMMUNITY CENTRE STALL	£99.00		REFRESHMENTS	£191.80
REFUND POSTAGE	£3.20		ADVERT FOR EGLINTON SHOW MAGAZINE	£25.00
DONATION BOX SCPH	£16.96		PRIZES FOR EGLINTON SHOW	£23.61
RED SQUIRREL DAY	£54.50		LITTER PICKERS	£35.64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,772.09</b>		POSTAGE	£10.85
			CABLE TIES AMAZON (CARD)	£18.95
			BATTERY CHARGER ENELOOP	£29.99
			BIN LINERS	£4.20
			PAPER CUPS	£1.50
<b>TOTAL INCREASE FOR 2022 £545.02</b>				
			<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£2,227.04</b>
CLOSING BANK BALANCE	<b>£1,693.82</b>		CASH	<b>£14.98</b>