

ISSUE 33

NOVEMBER 2016

# SQUIRREL

[www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

Published by the European Squirrel Initiative



The Pine Marten:

## Saint or sinner



**Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank all our many friends who have given their support and raised funds for ESI over the last 12 months. We have topped up our fighting funds and are ready to push forward with several projects in the coming year.**

We recently received a legacy and in this edition you will note that we have developed a form to make this an easier process for anyone else considering this form of charitable giving. We are currently finalising a new website and if you want to find out more information about legacies then there will be some interesting facts and figures included. We will let you know when the website is up and running.

Over the last year or so, we have noticed that some public sector officials seem to be concerned about the public perception issue of grey squirrel control and worried about a backlash. You would think that we are beyond such

worries, but this could be due to rotation or retirement of staff and new staff coming into post and to counteract any concerns we decided to run our public perception survey after a 5 year holiday.

I am delighted to report that awareness about the grey squirrel problem remains at broadly the same high level as before and support for grey squirrel control is still high. The full results are published later in the magazine and you will notice that support for grey squirrel control has dropped from the high we achieved in 2011. This is in line with our observations of public sector support, the low profile of the Red Squirrel

Survival Trust which seems to have morphed into the UK Squirrel Accord and the many comments that we have received that the UK Squirrel Accord is all about red squirrels.

We will address this issue over the coming year and plans are in place to raise the profile of the grey squirrel as the most significant threat to our future broadleaved woodland biodiversity and how its removal will benefit our future generations in terms of our woodlands and their flora and fauna, including the red squirrel.

**Andy Wiseman**  
*ESI Chairman*

## In Brief...

### **3 year old boy attacked whilst feeding grey squirrels in a park in Cornwall.**

Cornwall council are to put up signs advising against feeding squirrels after a mother reported that her three-year-old boy was nastily bitten by a scurry of grey squirrels fighting over food. He was feeding one squirrel out of his hand when all of a sudden 6 more appeared from a hedge and tried to snatch the food, unfortunately the child needed hospital treatment to puncture wounds sustained on his hand. He was making a good recovery but she wanted to warn others of the dangers of close encounters with these wild animals.

## Jigger Writes...

### **THE SECOND INVASION**

On the country estate where I work, we have two invasions of squirrels. The first one this year has been dealt with, bringing the catch down from 30 a week to zero.

As my trap inspection is quicker in between invasions, I have time to repair traps, sort out wasps' nests and pull up ragwort.

As I write this, in September, the second invasion is on its way, as if on cue. The catch goes from zero up to 30 in a fortnight, and at the moment is full on.

The Hall garden is a hot spot! It is several acres of short grass, cob and walnuts, warm exotic trees, all making a squirrel heaven.

I favour peanut butter as a bait which most animals love. I have had to stop this in the gardens, as the terriers who reside at the Hall, one in particular named Betsy, will brave a snap on the nose to lick the plate clean!

So I am not a grey squirrel lover. If I was a squirrel, I would want to be a red one.

*Jigger is a vermin controller at an estate in Suffolk.*



# SQUIRREL

If you would be interested in advertising in Squirrel please contact  
Emily.Simmonds@kendallscom.co.uk  
**+44 (0)2476 992360**

European Squirrel Initiative  
26 Rural Innovation Centre,  
Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire,  
CV8 2LG.

Tel: +44 (0)2476 992360

Email: [info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org](mailto:info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

# ESI Update - by Andrew Kendall, ESI

As you will see reported extensively in this edition of Squirrel, ESI hosted a symposium entitled "Pine Marten – saint or sinner". This took place in June and was held at the offices of the CLA to whom we are extremely grateful for allowing us to hold the event there.

There has been much debate and discussion over the potential role of pine marten in controlling grey squirrels and as an organisation which likes to base its decisions on the best science we felt that it was appropriate to draw together a range of experts to debate the subject and put the case for – and indeed against – the pine marten.

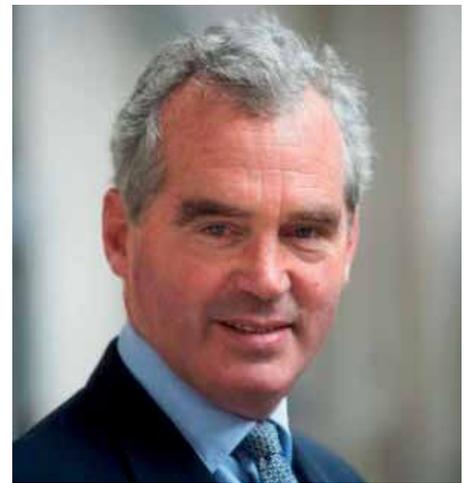
There was no doubt that the views within ESI were many and varied and on page 5 you will see ESI's position on pine marten.

The symposium was another example of how ESI takes an important issue effecting the control of grey squirrels and positions itself as a leader in the debate. Last year ESI organised a very successful conference on non-native species and, as we heard in

August the grey squirrel is now on the list of 'union concern' making it one of the species that is subject to the new EU non-native species Regulation. This places further restrictions on grey squirrels and imposes a greater level of responsibility on the government to prevent their spread.

In recent months ESI has been involved in working closely with BASC in establishing a number of trial sites where landscape control of grey squirrels is exercised through shooting. ESI has committed funding for this project so that the scheme will be rolled out across larger geographical areas of the country where landscape control is needed.

ESI continues to support research and innovation and is looking at



Andrew Kendall has been involved with ESI since its founding in 2002, and is responsible for the day to day operation of the charity.

new methods of squirrel control and making existing trapping methods more effective. In recent editions of Squirrel you will have read about ESI challenging the Forestry Commissions approach to control. This work continues along with challenging other organisations who fail to live up to their hype and their responsibilities.

## ALBI-TRAPS LIVE CATCH ANIMAL TRAPS FOR PEST CONTROL AND CONSERVATION

Comprehensive range designed and developed with gamekeepers and pest controllers



### SQUIRREL TRAPS

- SINGLE LIVE CATCH
- MULTI LIVE CATCH
- ELGEECO LIVE CATCH & BIRD FEEDER
  - KANIA
- SPRINGER TRAPS
- POISON HOPPERS



Thank you for supporting  
UK manufacturing

T: **01953 605983**  
E: [sales@albiomanufacturing.com](mailto:sales@albiomanufacturing.com)  
W: [www.albi-traps.com](http://www.albi-traps.com)



# Strong public awareness of grey squirrel threat

**Awareness of the threat posed by grey squirrels to our native red squirrel remains high amongst the British public according to a recent ESI national survey.**

Over 71% of the population is aware that the grey squirrel is responsible for the decline to almost extinction of the native red squirrel.

The survey organised by ESI and conducted on our behalf by NEMS market research also showed that almost 63% of the population agreed that the invasive alien grey squirrel should be controlled in some way to protect the red squirrel population.

The Omnibus survey which questioned 1,000 representative individuals across the United Kingdom, revealed that over 63% would support the total removal of all grey squirrels using a non-lethal method linked to fertility control.

"These are very encouraging results," said Andy Wiseman, ESI

chairman, "They show the high level of awareness across the population of the threat posed by the grey squirrel and an understanding that grey control is the only viable solution to saving our native red squirrel."

The survey, which is the eighth to be conducted by ESI since 2004 showed a consistent level of awareness of the threat posed by the grey squirrel with the percentage ranging from 59% in 2004 to 74% in 2009.

The area where there was the greatest level of support for grey squirrel control was in parts of the country where the red squirrel is present such as the north of England and the Scottish borders where 80% were in favour of grey control to save the red squirrel although there was a strong showing of

**Over 71%**  
of the population is aware that the grey squirrel is responsible for the decline to almost extinction of the native red squirrel

**Over 63%**  
would support the total removal of all grey squirrels using a non-lethal method linked to fertility control

**80%**  
in the north of England and the Scottish borders were in favour of grey control to save the red squirrel

76% in the south of England.

'The message here is that those in government and its agencies responsible for grey control should listen to the people and be more confident in robustly dealing with the grey problem,' added Mr Wiseman.

## ESI Launches legacy campaign

**In common with many other leading charities ESI is launching a legacy campaign to help secure longer term funding for the charity.**

Building on the receipt of a legacy earlier this year ESI has decided to broaden its fundraising activity by asking people to remember the charity in their will.

For many charities, this income stream is the largest contributor to their funds and becomes a vital element in their ability to carry out their objectives.

'ESI has achieved a great deal in the 15 years since it was set up, however we believe that in order to ensure the long term future of the charity and for it to continue its work we need to build a more secure and lasting financial footing for the organisation,' said Andy Wiseman ESI Chairman, 'To that end we have decided to launch a legacy campaign and we will shortly be distributing

leaflets to our supporters and others who we feel might be interested in helping our work.'

'If you are yet to make a will, or would consider a codicil which is easily added to your current will, then please consider a gift to ESI. Our new leaflet will give you more information together with a codicil form. It will make a difference and your support will live on in our work,' he added.

The new leaflet (pictured) giving details on the campaign is now available. It will also be possible to download the leaflet from the ESI website [www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org).

For further information or to request a leaflet please email [info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org](mailto:info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org) or telephone 02476 992360.





# Countryfile exposes the grey squirrel threat – thanks to the ESI

**At last, the threat of the grey squirrel is being increasingly recognised thanks to the raising of its profile by the ESI. The BBC Countryfile programme gave the issue excellent coverage in its programme in early October.**

The ESI continues to lobby on the impact that grey squirrels are having on our landscape and why pulling in the expertise from land managers, forest managers, conservationists, researchers and academics is a great way of influencing positive change.

For those of you who missed the the Countryfile programme; here is a flavour of its content

The Squirrel Pox virus - carried by the grey squirrel is killing the indigenous red squirrel –one of our rarest wooded mammals - and threatening its fragile numbers which has fallen to 150,000 from a high of 3m, said Dr Craig Shuttleworth, the director of the Red Squirrel Trust in Wales and the scientific advisor to ESI.

Talking to the BBC Countryfile programme recently, Dr Shuttleworth pointed out that as well as being found mainly in Scotland they are now only found in pockets in the UK or places like Anglesey where there has been an active plan to get the reds back. Anglesey now has 700 red squirrels from a starting point of 40.

He also told the programme that



greys are also a real threat to our British woodland costing around £10m a year in damage and warned that the release of pine martens needed to be viewed with caution.

“Of course greys need to be controlled but we need to know more about what else the native predator from many decades ago might eat or scare as well as the greys,” he said. “The landscape is completely different to when pine marten were here before so we don’t know what effect they will have on other species. It’s a very complex ecological system that we

don’t fully understand,” explained Dr Shuttleworth, who is a trained humane killer of greys, and who said that much more action was needed to rid the rodent rather than rely on the introduction of the pine marten. Headline writers has certainly done science no favours on this topic,” he said.

EU funding has been available to shoot greys recognising that numbers must be controlled if woodland is to be safeguarded and if the reds are to stand any chance of repopulation in the future.



## ESI Pine marten symposium

**As the organisation campaigning to control grey squirrels in the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the rest of Europe ESI felt there was need for a scientifically based discussion on the potential role of pine marten and, whether through natural spread or by re-introduction they were having an impact on red and grey squirrel populations**

In order to assess more fully the scientific arguments, in June, ESI organised a symposium to bring together key players in this debate including scientists, representatives of conservation organisations, landowners, foresters, government agencies, sporting interests and others. The well attended symposium was chaired by Andy Wiseman, ESI chairman, and was addressed by Dr Emma Sheehy from the School of Biological Sciences University of Aberdeen, Professor Xavier Lambin an ecologist from the University of Aberdeen, Dr Craig Shuttleworth, ESI scientific advisor and honorary research fellow at Bangor University, Dr Jenny MacPherson from the Vincent Wildlife Trust and Dr David Tosh from the School of Biological Sciences, Queen's University Belfast.



The symposium represented a variety of opinion whose views ranged from pine marten supporters to those who felt that their spread or re-introduction would be disastrous for the countryside.

It was generally agreed that more research is required into the effects of large scale re-introduction of pine marten. Such research would lead to a better understanding of what impact an increase in numbers would have on pine marten populations and the ecosystem. It is known that grey squirrel populations significantly decline in the presence of Pine Marten but more research is required to understand why this occurs.

Another important point of discussion was having an exit strategy, if a mammal seen by some as a hero suddenly becomes a villain-how will the balance change if or when they become common again, and how any detrimental effects can be controlled?

David Tosh, a conservation biologist, said we have to understand the mechanisms responsible for the grey squirrel crash. Are we sure it's because of the pine marten? He drew comparisons with sea eagles, hen harriers and red kites which were perfect examples



in Ireland where re-introductions of predators had led to conflicting challenges for the success of the programmes. 'We must tread carefully,' he said.

Dr Jenny MacPherson from the Vincent Wildlife Trust explained the work that was going on in Wales where 20 pine marten had been translocated from Scotland in autumn 2015. Rigorous assessment of their re-introduction was taking place by Natural Resources Wales. As part of the re-introduction process the Vincent Wildlife Trust conducted face to face discussions with locals and hosted community events so that everyone got the chance to understand why the project was going ahead and were able to ask questions.

'It was felt important that everyone was on board, and had the chance to

take part in properly assessing the impact of the reclusive pine marten,' explained Dr MacPherson.

Results from a study in Ireland revealed that there was a 'population crash' of grey squirrels, coupled to a parallel revival of the red squirrel population, when an abundance of the native predators were present. According to Dr Emma Sheehy who completed her PhD on the role of the pine marten in the Irish squirrel population, the question is, how many of these mammals are needed to impact the grey squirrel numbers.

Again according to Xavier Lambin Professor of Ecology at Aberdeen University there is still much uncertainty on the relationship between pine marten density and the grey squirrel. 'Re-introducing species to deliver economic benefits – for example wolves and lynx in Switzerland to control over abundant ungulates to generate eco-tourism, may well benefit one subset of locals at the same time as costing another group,' he said, stressing the need to be very careful not to encourage illegal re-introductions.



Dr Craig Shuttleworth, ESI scientific advisor and honorary visiting research fellow at Bangor University drew parallels with the wolf population re-introduction in North America, highlighting the danger of premature definitive claims of positive impacts on ecosystems made without a full understanding of the complicated nature of the forests systems and the raft of pressures that act upon a species. He went on to say that the media has popularised credible accounts of red squirrel recovery coinciding with pine marten recolonization and he felt this was an over simplified message influenced by the limited nature of scientific studies undertaken to date, and while the pine marten is categorised as a 'native species' it would be over simplistic alone to 'let nature take its course' and ignore potential conflicts and the implementation of measures to address these.

Addressing some of the concerns which emerged during the symposium Dr Shuttleworth went on to say that if introduced, it would be sensible to

manage pine marten expansion which would include protocols to remove or control pine marten to protect property or safeguard vulnerable wildlife.

The panel of speakers agreed that returning a native species doesn't automatically trigger an ecological balance. Hence there was strong determination to establish and maintain a programme of collaboration with all interested parties, enabling the role of the pine marten to be much better understood. It was also acknowledged that while pine marten appear to have a significant impact on grey squirrel populations the reason for this was yet unclear and that pine martens as a means of controlling grey squirrels would be more suitable in certain parts of the country than others.

Following the symposium ESI felt that it was necessary to continue with further research and has committed further funds. In addition to reflect the broad views expressed within ESI it has produced its own position paper which can be found on page 7 of this magazine.

## The Grey Squirrel Management Handbook By Charles Dutton



### ORDER

Number of books \_\_\_\_\_ £15.00 per book = £ \_\_\_\_\_

Plus Postage & Packaging per book\* £ \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your cheque payable to:

**European Squirrel Initiative** and post it with this form to: **East Bank House, Tide Mill Way, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1BY.** (Your book(s) will be despatched within seven days)

If you have any queries about your order you can call us on **+44 (0)1394 386919** or email us at **mail@europeansquirrelinitiative.org**

Postage and packing: **£5.00.**

\*For more than one book please contact us using the details above for a quote for p&p.



www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org  
Reg Charity: England and Wales: 1105920  
Scotland: SCO39806



## European Squirrel Initiative the Pine Marten – a position?

**The European Squirrel Initiative (ESI) has been actively involved in the potential role of the pine marten to control grey squirrels for a number of years. It was one of the funders of Emma Sheehy's early work and it has watched the developments within Ireland and Scotland with interest.**

ESI is a broad church with the aim of controlling grey squirrels in order to protect our trees, parks, forests and woodland ecosystems from one of the world's worst alien invasive species (IUCN). This will benefit many species but, notably, will stop the local extinctions of our native red squirrel and allow the reds to recolonise their range in Britain.

ESI supporters include foresters, landowners, land managers, conservationists, tree lovers and scientists. Within ESI there is a spread of opinion as to the potential benefits of the reintroduction of pine martens for the purpose of reducing grey squirrel numbers. ESI has always taken the view that its position will be guided by evidence and science and to that end it organised a symposium in London on the 14th June 2016 at which a range of scientists presented their views.

The views and current research presented by those scientists varied and there was a consensus that additional

study was essential. Nevertheless, all agreed that there is compelling evidence indicating that grey squirrel populations in some areas have dramatically declined in the presence of the pine marten. However, there was no definitive indication as to why this should happen.

Whilst there is evidence that pine marten eat grey squirrels (and red squirrels), it is as yet unclear as to how significant this predation of grey squirrels might be. It may be the main impact or other effects of pine marten on grey squirrels may be more important and/or additional. The presence of pine marten may 'scare' grey squirrels and therefore prevent them from colonising or breeding but, again, future research would be welcome.

Therefore, whilst recognising that there is clear evidence that grey squirrel numbers significantly decline when pine marten populations reach a certain level, it is also recognised that concerns remain regarding potential negative impacts on other fauna such

as wild birds, poultry or game.

Part of the concern is that, as pine martens are heavily protected, there must be mechanisms in place to control populations should they get out of control or if there is a "problem animal" that is causing significant collateral damage. The control mechanism must be easily accessed, simply and quickly applied.

Consequently, the current ESI position is to support further releases of pine marten on a local and specifically targeted basis providing adequate protocols and controls are in place to enable the researchers and landowners to control problem animals and stop any unintended collateral damage or other consequences.

ESI does not support any illegal releases of wildlife and does not support the widespread release of pine martens whilst current studies are assessing the overall effects and until we better understand the likely trade-offs.



# International News



## ESI supports squirrel research in Italy



In North Italy, control of and research on invasive alien squirrel species often goes hand in hand.

Much of this research is co-funded by ESI. At the moment there are three ongoing projects coordinated by the University of Insubria, Varese (under supervision of Luc Wauters and Adriano Martinoli, Department of Theoretical and Applied Sciences) sustained with ESI funds.

In collaboration with the Moredun Institute, Edinburgh and Veterinary Sciences of the University of Milan, Italian researchers are finalizing the results of a wide-scale screening for the occurrence of Squirrel Pox Virus (SQPV) in grey squirrels in North Italy. For a second project, a PhD fellow of Insubria University, Francesca Santicchia is currently at Michigan University, USA to carry out

analyses to measure chronic stress in both native Eurasian red squirrels and in alien grey squirrels from different populations in Italy. Stress is measured in a non-invasive way, by extracting glucocorticoid metabolites from squirrel faeces (so-called faecal glucocorticoid metabolites or FGM) collected during capture-mark-recapture studies. The hypothesis is that the presence of the alien competitor increases levels of chronic stress in sympatric red squirrels. In a recent paper the American and Italian researchers validated the methods used to measure FGM concentrations in the red squirrel (Dantzer B, Santicchia F, van Kesteren F, Palme R, Martinoli A, Wauters LA, 2016. Measurement of fecal glucocorticoid metabolite levels in Eurasian red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*): effects of captivity, sex, reproductive condition, and season. *Journal of Mammalogy*

97(5):1385–1398. DOI:10.1093/jmammal/gyw095).

A third project involves another alien squirrel species: Maria Vittoria Mazzamuto, former PhD fellow and now post-doc at Insubria University used ESI funds to purchase radio-collars for both red squirrels and Pallas's squirrels (*Callosciurus erythraeus*). She studied the home range size and overlap in woodlands where the two species co-occurred and in other woods where only one of the two species was present to investigate whether the presence of the alien species affected the space use and habitat selection of our native red squirrels. A paper about this studied has been submitted to the top scientific journal *Biological Invasions* and is currently under revision. The major findings will be presented in the next issue of the ESI newsletter.

## ESI welcomes new legislation



Invasive species, including the grey squirrel, came under new controls from

3 August, as a result of a new European Union Regulation.

The measure, which published a list of "Union Concern", includes the grey squirrel. The regulation imposes restrictions on the species and they cannot be imported, kept in captivity, transported and allowed to reproduce or be released into the environment. "We are delighted that the EU and indeed the British government have further recognised the threat to the environment that grey squirrels cause," said Andy Wiseman chairman

of The European Squirrel Initiative. The regulation reinforces existing UK legislation as under the Wildlife and Countryside Act it is already illegal to release grey squirrels into the wild.

"While this regulation does not impose any requirement to eradicate or control these animals here in the UK, it will help ensure that in those parts of Europe where the grey squirrel is not present, it will ensure that governments are now under an obligation to prevent their spread", added Mr Wiseman.

"The regulation will also help to remind people of the threat that grey squirrels pose to our native flora and fauna, as well as the huge cost that invasive species cost the EU, estimated to be in excess of 12 billion euros a

year". The EU Invasive Alien Species (IAS) Regulation (1143/2014) came into force on a 1 January 2015. The regulation imposes strict restrictions on a list of species known as "species of Union Concern". These are species whose potential adverse impacts across the European Union are such that concerted action across Europe is required. The first list of 37 species – 23 animals and 14 plants – was approved at a meeting of EU Member States in December 2015.

The European Commission published the implementing regulation (2016/1141) that will bring this list into force in an Official Journal on 14 July, so the list came into force on 3 August.

# ESI attends the UK's largest forestry event



## ESI was present at this year's three-day APF exhibition - at Ragley Estate, Warwickshire.

Thanks go to Confor for hosting ESI in their marquee which enabled Charles Dutton's new handbook on grey squirrel control to be on sale along with other ESI merchandise.

This handbook published earlier this year reviews and compares methods of controlling grey squirrels; how to identify tree damage and where you might expect to find damage in the woods. It also provides information on equipment

needed, how to use it and a guide on current legislation. It also includes case studies from three estates which have carried out long term control. It also looks at the wider environmental issues and silviculture – growing trees that squirrels don't strip bark from, such as cherry, conifers, ash and lime for example. It also suggests that eradication of any invasive species must be carried out on a landscape scale basis.

A vital tool for anyone controlling this rodent!

## ESI gives Forestry evidence

ESI has submitted evidence to the recent Environment, Food and Rural Affairs committee into the state of Forestry in England.

With the forestry sector contributing some £1.7 billion a year to the economy and indirectly supporting 43,000 jobs, the committee asked how effectively current government policies achieved the following objectives:

- Increase the level of tree cover and improve management of private and public forests
- Enhance woodland protection, including of ancient forests, with economic exploitation, including developing woods as an energy source;
- Provide a strategic framework, including fiscal and regulatory regimes, to support forestry businesses;
- Provide grants and advice through the CAP and the Rural Development Programme, and any successor programme that incentivise the sector to deliver multiple economic and environmental benefits;
- Ensure there is the right research, including management of pests and diseases, which is well integrated into policy development

### Here's a flavour of what ESI said:

- Grey squirrels pose the biggest threat to England's lowland

woodlands.

- This has resulted in changing planting patterns with many landowners now not planting broadleaved trees.
- The economic and environmental cost is significant.
- Government financial support for planting is being wasted as there is no long term or ongoing requirement or support for grey squirrel control. It must lead by example.

### The threats:

By far the most pressing issue for lowland forestry is that of grey squirrels and failure to eradicate them means that broadleaved planting for timber is seriously affected.

They cause irreparable damage to broadleaved trees such as beech, oak and sycamore, resulting in degraded timber quality. This leads to the death and/or wind snapping of the tree above the wound, causing gross deformation and in older trees, the loss of the entire tree.

In 1983, a Forestry Commission survey showed that 87% of assessed beech stands and 85% of sycamore stands showed squirrel damage, while



oak, poplar, ash and birch had also fallen prey to the grey squirrel.

The cost - to the British economy is an estimated £40 million per year according to a study published by the international scientific organisation CABI, for DEFRA, the Scottish government and the Welsh Assembly. It also estimated that the total cost of invasive non-native species was £1.8 billion a year. Many woodland owners now hesitate to plant vulnerable species of tree because they fear their destruction, leading to a degradation of woodland biodiversity and further reducing food availability to other woodland species.

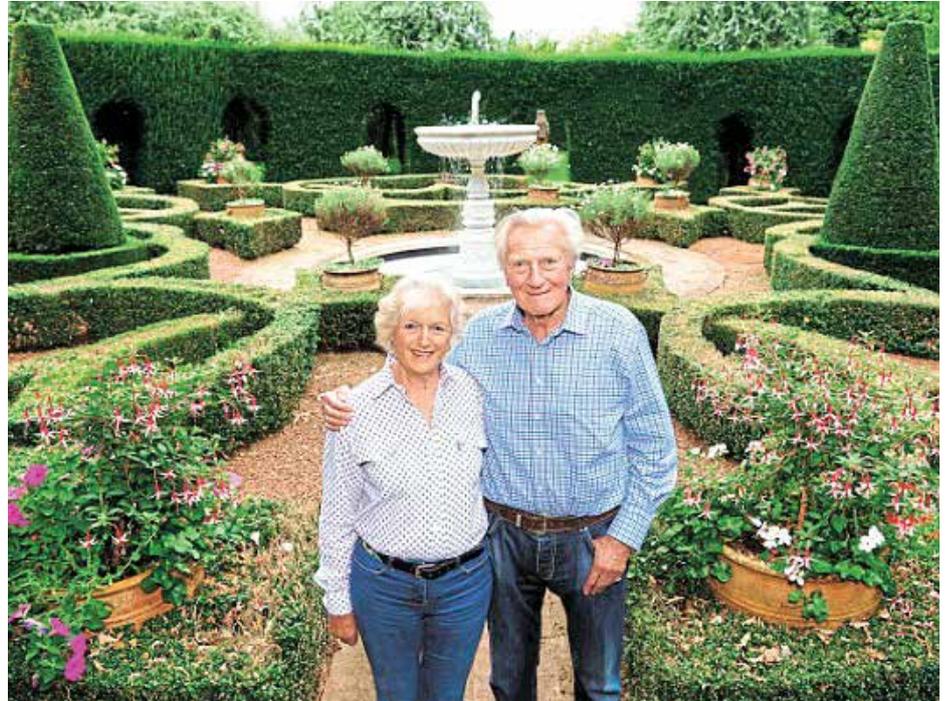
### The solution

- Eradication of grey squirrels from mainland UK through various existing methods and developing new ones and effective fertility control.
- Government needs to lead by example, help funding research and provide incentives to landowner's local authorities to control them on their property
- Forestry and agricultural grants should be conditional on effective grey squirrel control.

# ‘We shot 350 squirrels – absolutely awful things!’

As a known supporter of ESI Lord Heseltine recently appeared in the media speaking of a cull of 350 grey squirrels to protect his 40 acre arboretum at his Thenford garden in Oxfordshire.

Lord and Lady Heseltine have spent nearly 40 years transforming a neglected wilderness into one of England’s greatest gardens. With a 1,400 acre estate and an impressive arboretum with 3,000 trees and shrubs they are keen to protect it for future generations. Squirrel damage is a huge problem both to the trees and the wildlife and Lord Heseltine described them as ‘public enemy number one’. When the damage caused became apparent they embarked on controlling grey squirrels by shooting them. Since the successful cull they have seen the trees recover and smaller birds and wildlife return to the garden. The coverage in the national press once again helps to highlight the problem and promotes the necessary control of the grey squirrel.



## WHAT THE PRESS HAVE BEEN SAYING ABOUT EATING SQUIRREL

### A forgotten British ingredient

**Squirrels continue to be being added to restaurant menus up and down the country.**

The Jugged Hare, a gastropub in London’s Barbican is one which has a reputation for serving excellent game dishes, and claim that grey squirrels are one of the most popular items. People are reportedly pre ordering them before they turn up: the only problem it seems for many restaurants is the sourcing them and they are actively encouraging farmers, landowners and gardeners to bring them in.

The Wild Meat Company claims that squirrels ‘were our number-one selling item last year’ Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall has put them on the menu of his River Cottage canteens and last year, at a food event called Taste of London, a Michelin-starred chef championed squirrel as the

forgotten British ingredient he’d most like to see back in kitchens. One Edinburgh restaurant owner has described it as the ‘ultimate ethical food’ and one of London’s finest Indian restaurants is serving up squirrel curry.

Not that there is anything new eating squirrel. In America, where the grey squirrel originates, stew made from the rodents used to be as common as sweet potato pie. In the UK, the animals used to be fairly widely eaten, especially during times of hardship which changed after the Second World War as more prosperous Brits turned their focus to more readily available supermarket foods.

But it looks as though Squirrel



is coming back as a certain novelty factor as people are showing a growing interest in unusual game. And like all game, squirrels are very lean, so they are good for people with health problems. There are also ethical benefits and free range too.

Squirrels are low in food miles and there are stacks of them. Surely it is wasteful of us not to eat them especially as they are a danger to our native red squirrel population. Even George Monibot, the environmental and political activist heading up the rewilding initiative is encouraged not only by the eating of the millions of squirrels but also rabbits, pigeons, and deer killed every year which very often end up in landfill.

# EUROPEAN SQUIRREL INITIATIVE CHRISTMAS CARD



[www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

Reg Charity: England and Wales: 1105920 Scotland: SCO39806

## ORDER

Number of packs \_\_\_\_\_ £3.50 per pack (of 10) = £ \_\_\_\_\_

Plus Postage & Packaging (see below) £ \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for £ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post code \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your cheque payable to:

**European Squirrel Initiative** and post it with this form to: **26 Rural Innovation Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG.**

(Your cards will be despatched within seven days)



If you have any queries about your order you can call us on \_\_\_\_\_ or

email us at [info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org](mailto:info@europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

The cards are available in packs of 10 and cost £3.50 per pack plus postage and packaging. Card size 171mm x 121mm

Postage and packing: 1-3 packs - add £2.79 4-6 packs - add £3.35

7-9 packs - add £3.95 10+ packs - add £5.75

## MAKE A DONATION

*giftaid it*

I enclose a cheque donation for £ \_\_\_\_\_ payable to European Squirrel Initiative  
Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made (tick all boxes that you wish to apply)

today  in the past 4 years  in the future

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Please notify the charity if you: Want to cancel this declaration. Change your name or home address. No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains tax. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, ask your local tax office for leaflet IR65.

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Forename(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Please add me to the mailing list. I would like to receive future copies of Squirrel free of charge by email / by post.  
(Delete as necessary, email being the least expensive method of distribution for the charity)

Once completed please return to 6 Rural Innovation Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG.  
[www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org) Registered Charity: England and Wales: 1105920 Scotland: SCO39806

## FREE SUBSCRIPTION



**This newsletter is written and distributed free of charge to anyone interested in squirrel issues.  
Please give generously to help us continue with our vital conservation work.**