

Community led grey squirrel control

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What's the problem?

1970-2010s Native red squirrels at serious risk of localised extinction.

Led by habitat loss & impacts of invasive species ie Eastern Grey Squirrels.

Competition from greys for resources.

Diseases carried by greys impacts on reds.

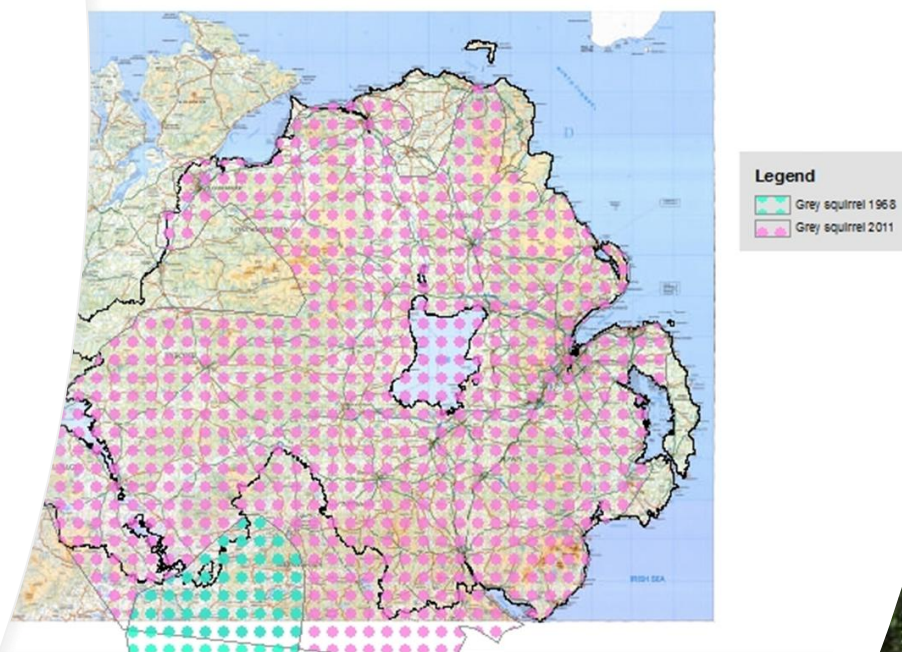
Isolated populations and slow recolonisation lost areas.

No funding available.

- By 2011 the greys had made it across most of NI, and shortly after they had made it into much of other areas



Spread of grey squirrels in Northern Ireland



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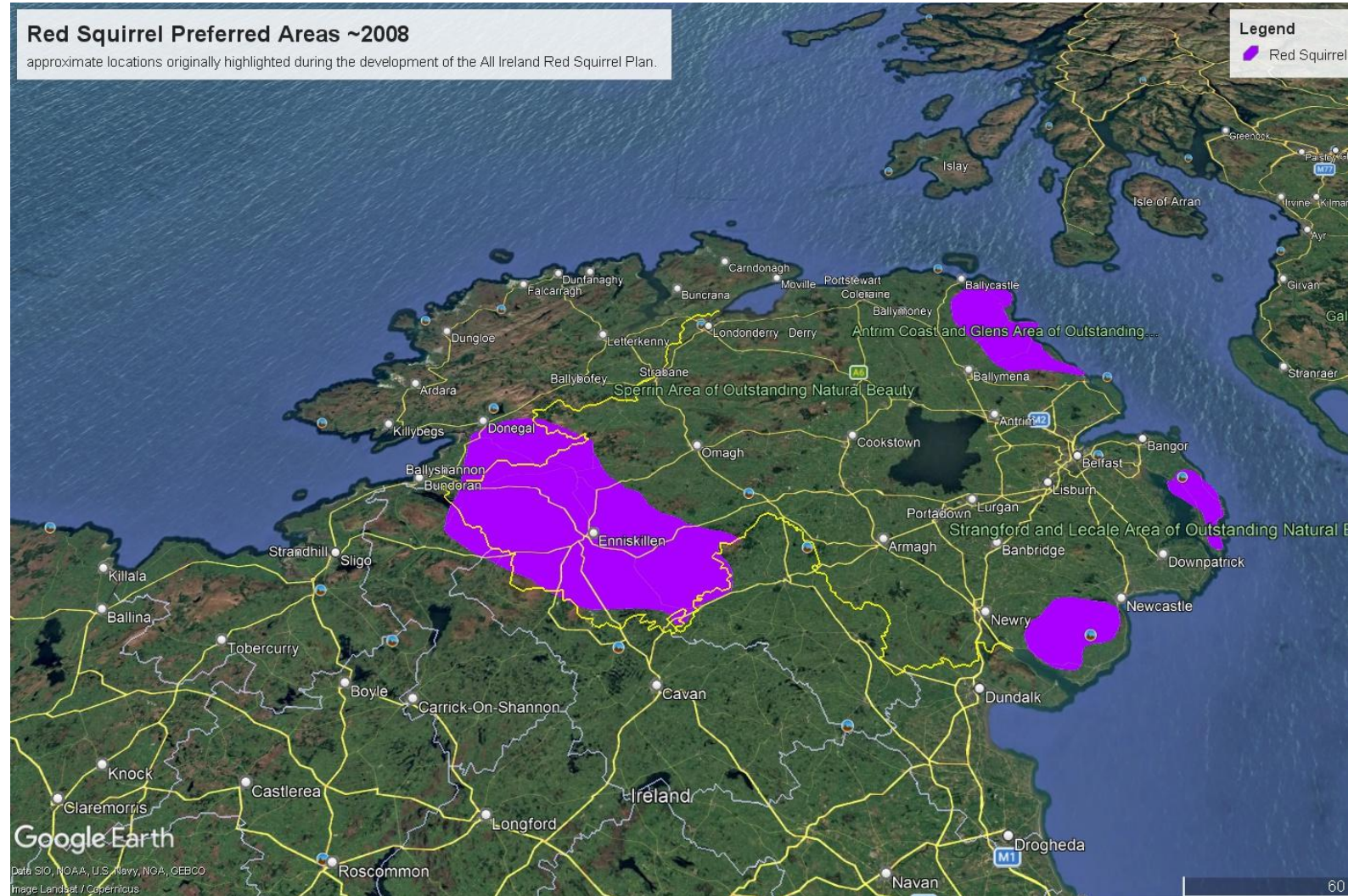


A red squirrel is climbing a tree trunk, facing left. The tree bark is textured and brown. The squirrel has a reddish-brown body and a large, bushy tail. The background is a soft-focus forest.

Solutions

- Mid 2000's spontaneous formation of 3 community groups at three forest service sites (Belvoir, Tollymore & Glens of Antrim).
- Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum (NISF) formed by EHS early 2000s
- All Ireland squirrel conservation plan 2008
- Red squirrel preferred areas – scientifically identified.
- Massive expansion of the volunteer base
- 2015-18 Red Squirrels United – EU LIFE/National Lottery Funding
- Pine marten

Solutions



A close-up photograph of a red squirrel climbing a tree trunk. The squirrel is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing left. Its body is reddish-brown, and its tail is large and bushy, with a lighter, almost white tip. The tree bark is rough and textured, with some moss or lichen visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a forest setting.

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Only works where you have people who have capacity to help.

Where do you have permissions with sensible access?

Need a natural leader ideally evolved from the members not an NGO or Government Agency.

Need jobs to suit all ages and abilities.

Balancing the workload – flexibility

Training and qualifications

Finance

Insurance

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Best practice and guidance

- I developed with the NISF Standard Operating Procedures for Grey Squirrel Control, incorporating the legal stuff, proper methods, H&S and record keeping
- Guides on disease control, tree choice.

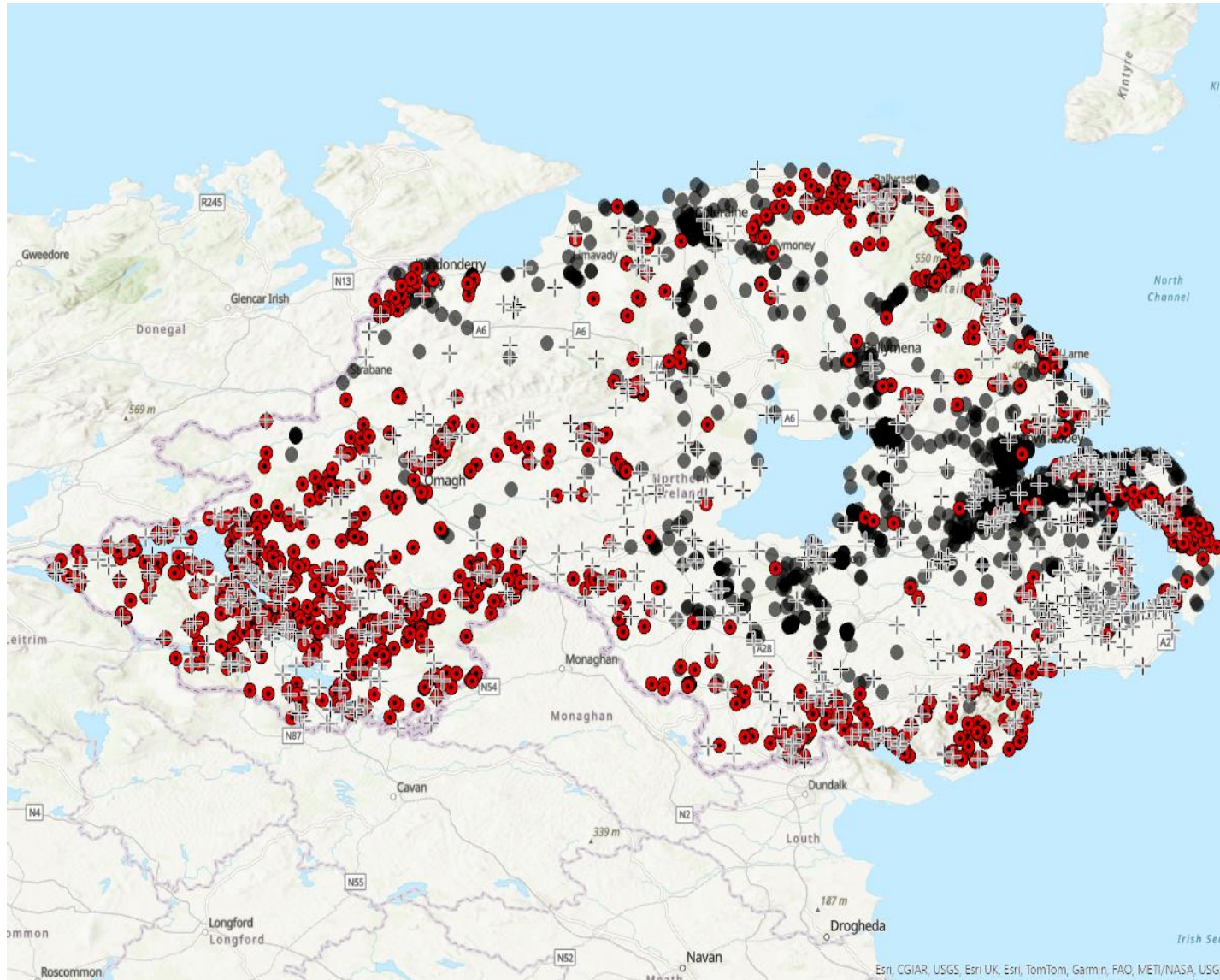


Problems

- Volunteer fatigue
- Costs – bait, insurance etc
- Access
- Public interference/objection
- Equipment availability – namely the Kania 2000 trap



The enemy of your enemy is your friend?



We have been aided by the pine marten revival. Nature fighting back against a non-native and it may come to a point that pine marten start to have a more negative impact on reds. This is ~ the last 10 years sighting data.

The pine marten is doing a fantastic job in the rural environment. But the urban centres are a different story.



What do you see?

Successes

