

Press release

16th July 2015

Pine Martens – the solution?

Recent research showing that high populations of pine martens could lead to a reduction in grey squirrel numbers has been welcomed by the European Squirrel Initiative, one of the country's leading squirrel conservation charities.

Field work carried out by Dr Emma Sheehy & Dr Colin Lawton at the University of Galway has shown that the presence of a high density pine marten population coincides with dramatic declines in grey squirrel abundance, leading, in some cases to the reappearance of native red squirrels.

“ESI welcome this research and the encouraging results, however we also recognise that there is a need for greater scientific understanding and firm evidence to illuminate how and to what extent, different densities of pine martens impact on grey squirrels.” commented ESI chairman, George Farr.

“Pine martens are indigenous to certain parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland but their population is not widespread. While we are open to all forms of grey squirrel control, we have some reservations over the potential impact of collateral damage on other fauna as a result of reintroducing pine martens before further scientific work has been carried out,” Mr Farr added.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

High-resolution photos are available to accompany this release.

The European Squirrel Initiative:

The grey squirrel, *Sciurus caroliensis*, a native species of North America, was introduced to England from the late 19th century, until 1938 when it became illegal to import or keep the species in captivity.

The European Squirrel Initiative was founded in June 2002 by a group of concerned conservationists and foresters. The organisation seeks the restoration of the native red squirrel and the protection of the natural environment by removing the impact of the alien grey squirrel in Europe.

Its role is to:

- Persuade conservation bodies and governments of the absolute necessity of ridding Europe of the grey squirrel.
- Continue to commission research into the impact of the grey squirrel on local ecosystems.

For more information visit the ESI website: www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org

Issued by Kendalls on behalf of the European Squirrel Initiative.

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