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Press release

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Squirrel charity welcomes new Invasive Alien Species Legislation

Invasive species, including the grey squirrel, came under new controls from 3 August, as a result of a new European Union regulation, in a move which has been welcomed by leading squirrel charity the European Squirrel Initiative.

The measure, which published a list of "Union Concern", includes the grey squirrel which, originally from America, is recognised as one of the world's worst invasive species. 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.

ENDS



Notes to Editors:

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 on behalf of the European Squirrel Initiative by Kendalls.

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