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Threat to squirrels

Nov 23 2005

by Ffion Jackson, North Wales Weekly Newspapers series

THE threat to remaining red squirrel populations was highlighted at a meeting of conservationists, foresters, landowners and government agencies last week.

Anglesey is considered one of the last strongholds of the red species thanks to work by local conservationists to eliminate the grey population.

Organised by the European Squirrel Initiative, the meeting heard experts from throughout Wales describe the extent of the damage being done to Wales' dwindling red squirrel population by the alien grey squirrel.

Lord Livsey of Talgarth said: "Effective control of the grey squirrel is the only option.

"The time for action is now and we should challenge the government to take this matter seriously and commit resources to developing an effective way of removing grey squirrels from Wales and the rest of the UK."

The Welsh red squirrel numbers have dwindled to less than 1,000 and populations are now largely restricted to only three areas in Wales, including Anglesey.

Work being carried on in Anglesey is successfully eradicating the greys in order to make a safe haven for red squirrels on the island.

However, the picture is somewhat different in the rest of Wales where the grey squirrel is encroaching on the remaining red squirrel areas.

Dr Craig Shuttleworth, who runs the Anglesey Red Squirrel project, outlined how red squirrels are now successfully being reintroduced into several island woodlands following the eradication of the greys.

He said: "Although the threat from the grey squirrel is being tackled on the island, it is imperative that government agencies start to manage the forests where the red squirrels are found in a manner that is much more sympathetic to the needs of the species."

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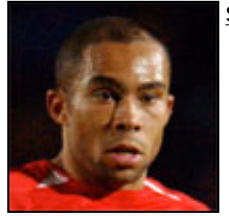


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