Changes in the impact and control of the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis)* as determined from regional surveys in Great Britain

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Abstract

The grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) was introduced to approximately 30 sites in England and Wales from the USA between 1876 and 1929, to three sites in Scotland from Canada between 1892 and 1920, and to one site in Ireland in 1911 (Middleton, 1931). Soon after its introduction damage to trees due to seasonal bark stripping activity by grey squirrels was reported (Middleton, 1931). Despite the formation of the National Anti-Grey Squirrel Campaign' in 1931, aimed at exterminating the 'pest', grey squirrel populations continued to increase and expand in distribution.

Research suggests that damage is triggered by high numbers of squirrels, but particularly when high numbers of juveniles enter the population in early summer (Gurnell, 1989, Kenward et al., 1996). By 1967 it was recognised that eradication was no longer feasible and, to limit the risk of bark stripping damage, populations should be reduced just prior to and during the damage period (Mayle et al., 2007, Pepper and Currie, 1998, Rowe, 1967).

Surveys in state and private forests since 1952 have monitored grey squirrel distribution and impacts. Two of these (1983 and 2000) also gathered information on control efforts used to minimise damage. We report on the results of these surveys and changes in relation to changes in squirrel distribution, along with efficacy of control efforts.

Keywords: grey squirrel, bark-stripping, damage,

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