



The Wildlife Trust for
Lancashire
Manchester &
North Merseyside

Urban Trap Loan Scheme

Why do we need to control grey squirrels?

Red squirrel numbers have been declining in the UK over the last century since the introduction of the grey squirrel. The population here in North Merseyside and West Lancashire is now one of only 17 reserves in the north of England. Grey squirrels are the main threat to the survival of our native red squirrel. They outcompete red squirrels for resources and as they live at higher densities, food availability for the red squirrel is reduced and reds are eventually replaced. Grey squirrels also carry the squirrel pox virus – a disease to which they are immune, but which is fatal to red squirrels. In 2008 and 2009 we lost 80% of the red squirrel population on the Sefton Coast to an outbreak of squirrel pox virus introduced by greys.

Lancashire Wildlife Trust carry out grey squirrel control for red squirrel conservation throughout north Merseyside and west Lancashire. To be effective, this needs to be carried out in the urban areas as well as the woodlands. Parks and residential gardens could provide valuable habitat for red squirrels. LWT, with support of local volunteers, co-ordinate an urban trap loan scheme to remove grey squirrels from gardens. This is to protect areas where reds are already in gardens, such as Formby and Crosby, but also with the aim of returning reds to the parks and gardens where they have been lost. But this requires support from communities. By agreeing to trap grey squirrels in your garden you are directly supporting our continued effort to conserve the local red squirrel population and helping red squirrels once again become a common sight in the area.

How does the urban trap loan scheme work?

- LWT passes householder details to local volunteer contact
- Local volunteer will make contact with the householder and arrange a convenient time to drop off a trap. They will explain how the trap works and also supply a guideline sheet with all relevant information and contact details for LWT staff and volunteers
- Householder monitors the trap in the garden
- When grey squirrel is trapped, householder phones local volunteer who will come and collect it

We only use humane live-capture traps that are specifically designed for squirrels. If a red squirrel is accidentally caught in the trap it can easily be released unharmed. There are precautions that can be taken to minimise the risk of catching red squirrels or other species that the local volunteer will discuss with you.

It is vitally important that we trap in the most humane fashion, and it is a legal requirement not to let any animal suffer unnecessarily. To prevent a squirrel being in a trap too long, you must check the trap frequently, at least twice daily and ideally 3-4 times daily if you have red squirrels visiting your garden. It is easiest to site the trap somewhere in your garden so you can see it through the windows of your house. If you are unable to check the trap, you can close the door or bring it inside to prevent something from being trapped.

Our responsibility

Grey squirrels are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. This means it is illegal to release a grey squirrel, or allow it escape, once it has been trapped. It is therefore our duty to humanely euthanise the animal.

Any Problems?

If you would like any further information or have questions, please contact the Red Squirrel Officer on red.squirrel@lancswt.org.uk or 07590745862.