

Glenkens Red Squirrel Group

Even though the figures tell a slightly different story as of late, all has been relatively quiet as regards grey sightings, for the first time the summer show season passed without report of a grey sighting and several good reports of reds came forward. The only reports of greys have been on FCS land with which I am still awaiting permission to enter and place feeders with trail cameras, prior to trapping for which I have to obtain a further permission. But I must ask where are the FCS rangers?

The one slight hiccup this year was an exaggerated report of dead reds being found at Barwillhanty Estate near Parton, report was of ten dead reds which on speaking with estate gamekeeper was grossly exaggerated. Stephanie (SSRS) is now working with the estate I think?

Unfortunately a single dead red was found on a neighbour's lawn: this was dispatched to Edinburgh and thankfully no sign of pox as this is only a rivers width from the Island Block - there was concern!!

The figures for Glenkens area have declined year on year since the big catches of 2015 but now seem to have levelled off: 2015 450 greys; 2016 44greys; (2017 41greys; 2018 to date 48. However we are now including two extra estates, one never trapped previously and the other not trapped since 2015.

In stark contrast to 2015 when Glenkens had no funds, we are now doing quite well thanks to hard work rattling the collection box at shows, donations from estates and private folk who just wanting to support us, plus equipment supplied by SSRS and of course the Galloway Glens lottery grant. Equipment wise we have 12 trail cams and a shiny new thermal imager which I am still getting to grips with! You could say it is far different to the days when we just about collected enough cash to buy ten traps and a bag of maize!!!!

At last we have managed to recruit (press gang!!) 3 new volunteers which I place far more importance on than equipment. Two are mother and son (Fiona and Kirk): Kirk is a professional photographer heavily involved in the whisky industry! So not sure if I want him taking photos or providing samples. There is a bit of a theme here as Rob Matley's (volunteer) daughter manages a distillery!!!!

In 2019 with lottery support we will be attending as many schools, groups scouts guides and so on as possible spreading the word as far as we can, the contact we have had with the public has become more positive and I think we have fewer people attending shows etc that have no idea of the plight of our reds. Sharon and Fiona will be heading our schools and groups presentations and are currently working towards rolling it out. Stephanie, Alexa, Jim and several others amongst our squirrel brotherhood have offered to help and many thanks to all.

On a personal note I had a period earlier this year where I was “laid up” unable to walk etc I took to the key board and completed several articles which I was lucky enough to get into print. One was trying to encourage game keepers and shoots to become more involved with grey control: this appeared to go down well with most people!!! apart from one!

A second was to highlight the lack of funding for the guardians of our southern boundary: it may not have helped but people have seen it and are thinking!
It even featured in the Galloway News!

My latest offering is a few paragraphs in an article of a very upmarket Field sports magazine: they wanted to speak to a down to earth rough as they come squirrel trapper - don't know why they chose me!

The future for Glenkens PARC is looking good and extension to include Gatehouse area can only be for the good of our REDS! Even if we have to put up with PG more!!