

Grey Squirrels

Questions and Answers



Q: *Grey squirrels have been living in Scotland for as long as anyone can remember, they belong here don't they?*

A: No! Grey Squirrels were deliberately released into Scotland from North America in the 1890s. They are not a part of our native wildlife.

Q: *So what? That hardly matters does it?*

A: Unfortunately it does. Grey squirrels are classed as an [invasive, non-native species](#). This means they represent a direct threat to Scottish biodiversity by their negative impact on native plants and animals (with the devastating decline of the native red squirrel being the best example). Indeed this threat is so grave that grey squirrels are regarded by the United Nations as being [one of the top 100 most invasive species on the planet](#).

Q: *What exactly is the problem here – surely nature will take its course?*

A: If nature had been allowed to take its course, the grey squirrel would not be here in the first place. The fact is our native plants and animals are simply not equipped to cope with the grey squirrel as they did not evolve alongside it. It has few predators and it is a voracious feeder, not only of fruit and nuts but also on bird's eggs and nestlings - **it is not vegetarian**.

Q: *Ok, so grey squirrels are bad news for Scottish wildlife but that doesn't really impact me directly does it.*

A: It is not just our native wildlife that is suffering at the teeth and claws of grey squirrels. They also have a negative economic impact on the timber industry and our forests by [stripping the bark from trees](#) (killing many in the process). This damage has been estimated by the Forestry Commission and others to run into millions of pounds annually and a direct threat to thousands of jobs.

Q: *Wow, I had no idea grey squirrels caused so much damage.*

A: It is not just forestry, it is also property. Grey squirrels like many other rodents are just as happy living in our houses as we are. They can infest loft and roof spaces, chew through electric cables (starting fires), roof timbers and even water pipes. Damage can run into thousands of pounds. That is why they are classed as vermin and under [Section 14 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981](#) it is illegal to release them if caught, they must be killed.

