



Tails from the forest.

Rhian Mai Hubbart. A volunteer of the Red Squirrel Mid Wales Partnership.



I began volunteering for the Mid Wales Red Squirrel Partnership at the beginning of 2018 after approaching Becky Hulme of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales about volunteering opportunities. I am a wildlife photographer with an interest in conservation. I have always been fascinated by the Red Squirrel.

I must admit my knowledge of red squirrel back then was basic, but through the work I have been doing my knowledge of the species has grown, alongside my passion for wildlife and interest in conservation.

My first trip out was with Becky Hulme who showed me the patch of forestry I would be monitoring. Together we set up feeders and trail cameras in areas of the forest where we found chewed cones, an indication of some kind of squirrel presence. I was assured that it would take time for any results and we may not get reds. I didn't let that deter my excitement over the possibility.

It was time to check the cameras. I eagerly went around the forest with my map of dotted camera locations, swapping the SD cards over, cleaning the cameras and topping up any feeders that were low. When I got home the cards were filled with images. I couldn't go through them quick enough hoping to catch my first glimpse of a red squirrel but sadly no squirrels, they were full of birds and mice!





REDS

Just 3 weeks after setting up the cameras I was able to see my first red. This red had a distinctive blonde tail making it more identifiable. I couldn't believe my luck in getting results so soon after setting the cameras up. This result was from a ground camera, the camera being attached to the base of a tree.

They say what goes up must come down, and after the high of having red squirrels on camera I was deflated to later see a number of greys too in the forest. Some of the feeders had to come down to prevent the greys and reds sharing the same food source and the risk of any squirrel pox contamination.



Camera Name 50°F10°C ●

04-18-2018 10:34:47

Above. My first documented image of red squirrel.



Above: Red Squirrel on feeder.
Below: Red Squirrel captured with ground camera





What's in the woods?



Camera Name 44°F6°C ●

04-12-2018 15:11:37

Roe Deer have been spotted on two of the trail cameras on a number of occasions.

Volunteering with the Mid Wales Red Squirrel Partnership has given me opportunities to learn more about conservation and about the species. I have been able to attend events and network with other squirrel folk.

I am a proud volunteer and the work I do brings me joy. Spending time in the woods working with the cameras is something I hope to continue for many years. I am optimistic with time and patience I will see a red squirrel in my patch without the use of the cameras. I look forward to sharing my red squirrel journey.