

What every MP who cares for their voters should know about why the planned law to ban the rehabilitation of squirrels in the UK is causing such big social unrest:

1. Grey squirrels, due to their skills to adapt to damaged environment, are for millions of the UK citizens often the only mammal people can see every day and the only opportunity to interact with wildlife.

2. The current system of licences for the release of grey squirrels does not cause any negative economic or ecological impact and it brings huge social benefits.

3. Grey squirrels are released only in the areas where no other squirrel species are present [Natural England 2010-2018].



4. **Release takes place only in areas belonging to private people, with the landowner's permission** [Natural England 2010-2018]. **Private landowners who agree (for many years) to have grey squirrels released on their land are the best to judge whether released animals cause damage to their property or if they are economically/ecologically beneficial to the forest areas belonging to them.**

5. **Although the numbers of released grey squirrels is low and completely meaningless to the population of 2.3 - 3 mln (there are about a few hundred squirrels rehabilitated and released each year), the rehabilitation process itself engages, to various degree, hundreds of thousands of citizens including children, people with disabilities and the elderly.** Considering the fact that, as we mentioned earlier, grey squirrels in the most of the UK territory are the only mammals able to survive in the damaged environment, taking away the right to rehabilitate injured grey squirrels from the rehabilitators will cause not only social discontent but will also leave thousands of people without their favourite way to spend free time / get socially involved (and the criminalisation of people who will disagree with this harmful law – please imagine a disabled person whom the judge will have to punish for helping an injured squirrel; it will greatly undermine the trust in the UK legal system).

6. **The most recent research by BTO and NE clearly states that the presence of grey squirrels positively correlates with the presence of the most vulnerable bird species** [Newson et al. 2009, Bonnington et al. 2014].

Main References:

1. Bonnington, C., Gaston, K.J. & Evans, K.L. (2014) Relative Roles of Grey Squirrels, Supplementary Feeding, and Habitat in Shaping Urban Bird Assemblages. PLoS ONE, 9: 1
2. Natural England: <https://www.gov.uk/.../non-native-species-apply-for-a-licence...>
3. Newson, S.E., Leech, D.I., Hewson, C.M., Crick, H.Q.P. & Grice, P.V. (2009) Potential impact of grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* on woodland bird populations in England. Journal of Ornithology, 151: 211-218