

# **Tollymore Red Squirrel Group**

## **Report on the groups activities May to November 2010**

The group was represented along side Glens Red Squirrel Group at May Day in Portglenone Forest, Co. Antrim at a display on Red Squirrel conservation. It was a well organised and attended event and there was a lot of interest in the 'red squirrel tent'.

In June a member of the group, along with Forest Service personnel, travelled to Omagh. Co Tyrone for the Breathing Places 'Wild Day' event. This large event attracted 5-600 visitors who showed great interest in red squirrel conservation and in the red squirrel only supplementary feeder we had on display there.

Also in June members of Glens Red Squirrel Group visited with members of Tollymore Red Squirrel Group at Tollymore Forest Park. The visitors enjoyed a 'Red Squirrel Detective Walk' and were delighted to see red squirrels using one of the feeders in the larch wood.

In July members of the group along with Forest Service staff took part in Mammal Day in Belfast Zoo, this events promotes and raises awareness of native species; our focus was on red squirrel conservation. It was a wonderful sunny day which brought in crowds of people in families, summer schemes etc. There was a continuous flow of people to our stand - all interested in the red squirrel.

In August a member of the group received an email from Craig Shuttleworth of Red Alert complimenting the group on the contents of the 'Red Squirrel Conservation' handbook, which the group had helped produce with the help and support of Mourne Heritage Trust.

Red Squirrel day was held in early October in Tollymore Forest Park. This year the group volunteers were assisted by Forest Service staff, Sam and Iona two trainee foresters from Aberdeen University, Jon, Donna and Declan from NIEA, Danielle Begley the Biodiversity Officer with Down District and Newry and Mourne Councils, Myriddin Ruddock of Unicorn Containers, who have been helpful in the development of the McComb Red Squirrel Supplementary Feeder. There was also staff from Mourne Heritage Trust and Mike McClure from Tollymore Mountain Centre who lent their support. But the star of the day was Tufty the giant red squirrel who appeared courtesy of NIEA and Danielle Begley. A special big thank you to them.

The red squirrel detectives walk, due to demand, developed into three walks with almost one hundred people taking part. The participants on each of the walks managed to see two to three red squirrels. This was exciting for the walkers as usually the red squirrels make themselves scarce when there is a crowd in their habitat and are reluctant to make an appearance.

Over 560 people attended Red Squirrel Day which was a great success, thanks to all who helped and supported the conservation of the red squirrel.

In late October the group applied to HM Customs for charitable status.