

Red Squirrels, Feeding, Traffic and Rope bridges Advice

Red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) were first introduced to Jersey in the 1800s and are now considered to be a native species. As the only species of squirrel found in the Island, red squirrels do not suffer the same fierce competition from grey squirrels as on mainland England. Jersey's populations are nevertheless of conservation concern in the face of habitat loss, disease, predation and accidental road injury. Red squirrels are protected by the Conservation of Wildlife (Jersey) Law 2000. This protection extends to their young and den when in use. They are also listed as a species of European concern under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats.

Breeding

Red squirrels will typically begin their breeding season in January. Mating can also take place in February/March and kittens are born approximately 40 days later. A litter is usually made up of 2-3 kittens. If the seasonal conditions are good, squirrels can mate again in the summer months

Feeding and Nesting

Squirrels mainly eat seeds, but also nuts, fungi, bird's eggs, berries and young plant shoots. The majority of their active time is spent looking for food. Any excess food is hidden away in nooks and holes in trees. The squirrel will rely on these hidden stores for when food is scarce, however they do not always remember where the food is hidden! Gardens can also provide a food source for squirrels if they are well linked to suitable woodland. A large tree or dense hedgerow can provide a link for a squirrel to move from one place to another.

**Leave ivy on trees ~ in most cases it does not harm the tree and squirrels specifically
choose ivy covered trees to hide in and build their nests.**

Ivy is also an important food source and refuge for many birds and insects

Supplementary Feeding

The Jersey population is supported by supplementary feeding by the general public in the community, many of whom have squirrel feeders in their gardens. These should be placed, out of the reach of cats and should be cleaned regularly. If feeding squirrels, it is best to give them a varied diet such as Hazelnuts (in shells), sweet chestnuts, sunflower seeds, apples and carrots (any other local fruit & vegetables). It is very important peanuts and sunflower seeds are not offered exclusively at squirrel feeders as they can cause ill health. Feeding squirrels, especially in the summer months can help provide food for the young. Red squirrels do not hibernate, but are less active in winter time, therefore supplementary feeding can also provide a valuable food source in these colder months. Red squirrels will come to ground when foraging for food, dispersing, or looking for a mate. It is also important that squirrel feeders are not located in a position that will entice squirrels from woodland, across a road.

Unfortunately they do not have road sense and many are killed each year on the roads. Often squirrels ignore rope bridges, there needs to be habitat connectivity on both sides of the road (although some bridges are very successful). Drivers can ignore speed limits and squirrels are very nervous crossing these busy roads. When deciding on where to place your squirrel feeder, you first need to observe your squirrels and decide the best position to place the feeder so the squirrel does not have to cross a busy road and can feed safely.

Wildlife Corridors

Squirrels typically live in woodland but are also dependent upon hedgerows and tree lines to commute from one area to another. Creating woodlands and corridors of hedge and tree lines is the best way to help squirrels as well as a wide range of wildlife. Wildlife corridors are used all year round for foraging, commuting, roosting and sheltering. The more diverse in composition a hedgerow is the more species it is likely to support due to a diversity of flowering and fruiting times, in general native hedge plants support more species than non-native. A recommend list tree and hedge planting mixes suitable for Jersey can be purchased via the Jersey Cheap Tree Scheme.

Please contact Jersey Trees for Life: - projects@jerseytreesforlife.org / www.jerseytreesforlife.org for further information.

Slow down

The biggest threats to red squirrels locally are road traffic accidents and disease. In the autumn, when the leaves have fallen from the trees the sightings of squirrels are more common, sadly so are the reports of casualties. Extra care should be taken when driving, especially on the country roads and green lanes to avoid this threat to our squirrels.

Traffic Calming Measures

Signs can be used especially in areas known as 'blackspots' where squirrels are repeatedly being knocked down. Often official road signs are ignored by road users so community created signs created by local school children or homemade MIGHT be more effective - there are many examples around the Island. Please contact planning@gov.je to find out if permission is needed to erect temporary signs and make sure that the sign you are erecting is on private land.

On private or parish roads rumble strips can be used to calm traffic. Another measure could be movable, temporary structures such as raised planters, which are placed appropriately to narrow the lane making the vehicles slow down to give way to oncoming traffic. The location of these planters should be varied along the length of the road to reduce the potential for speeding. Please view [Jersey Roads by ownership](#) to find out which authority the road is managed by.

Rope Bridges

Rope bridges have been used in some parts of the Island with varying success. Squirrels will only use rope bridges if they are hidden by canopy – to protect them from birds of prey and other predators – otherwise they will just run across the road. Logistically there are often difficulties in getting a bridge firmly attached via crossing trees at the right height. Often the trees are not substantial enough to take the weight at that height of the rope, so telegraph poles need to be sunk and the actual ropes attached to them instead. This of course can incur expense and will require hiring a cherry picker along with traffic management during the works. Any rope bridge constructed needs to be at least 18 feet above the carriageway. It must carry third party liability insurance and be inspected regularly to prove it is kept in good repair. Bridges should be made of plastic rope, they won't degrade and snap like jute ones. Three-quarter to 1.5 inch diameter rope is suitable.

Placing of something above the carriageway (a main road) needs a licence under the terms of the highways (Jersey) Law 1956 from the highway authority. If placing something above a parish byroad the Connétable is the highway authority and has the power to issue the licence. Again they can only give permission for something that is at least 18 feet above the carriageway.

Please view [Jersey Roads by ownership](#) to find out which authority the road is managed by and contact the Parish Hall or dfi@gov.je (for main roads) to apply for a licence to erect a bridge. If you are considering placing a squirrel bridge or have any queries, please contact: - Jersey Trees for Life: email - projects@jerseytreesforlife.org

We highly recommend you record your squirrel sightings, feeder locations and rope bridge locations, so we can continue to build a picture of where they are in the Island. To record squirrel sighting please visit the Jersey Biodiversity Centre <http://jerseybiodiversitycentre.org.je/> or use an app called iRecord available by visiting irecord.org.uk/app.

Any sick, injured, or dead squirrels should be reported to the [JSPCA](#) on 724331.

