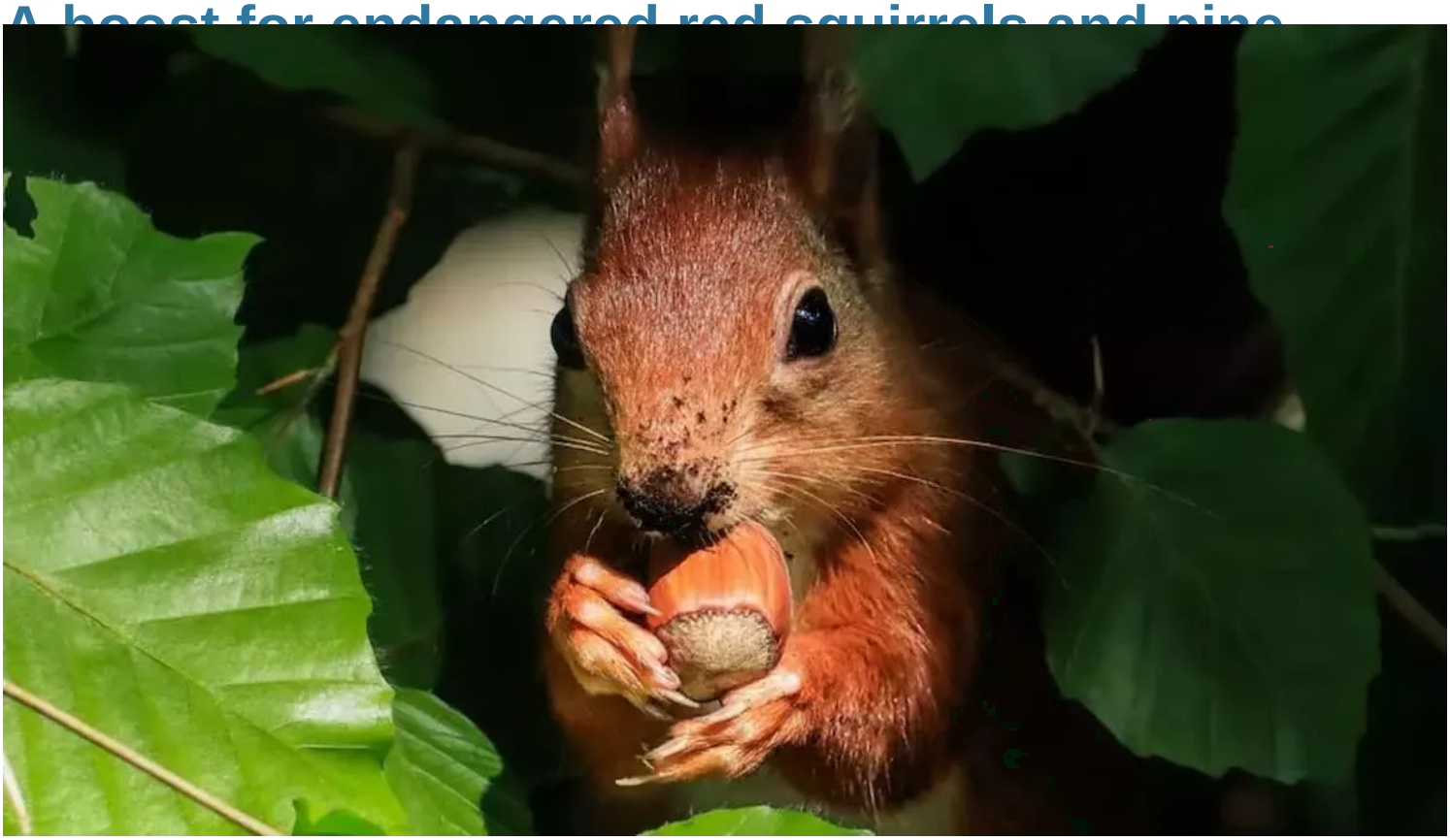
A boost for endangered red squirrels and pine



Credit Hugh Rowlands

We’re helping restore the balance of nature and boost the populations of two native species in North Wales.

Red squirrels and pine martens have been in decline in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy and Denbighshire for decades.

Now, with the help of a £523,400 investment from us, the Magical Mammals project is introducing more of the animals back into the wild.

Over the next five years, the project – a partnership between the Red Squirrels Trust Wales and Clocaenog Red Squirrels Trust – will work with locals on vital conservation work. Participants will learn new skills and connect with nature through activities such as building pine marten enclosures and looking after the animals before they’re released.

> By expanding existing populations in this area, we’re helping both these native species to get better established and thrive.
>
> *Dr Craig Shuttleworth from the Magical Mammals project*

Populations under threat

Red squirrels in North Wales are threatened with extinction by the spread of the North American grey squirrel. Greys carry the squirrelpox virus, which is lethal to reds. And because the grey is bigger, it out-competes red squirrels for food.

By releasing more captive-bred red squirrels into North Wales' forests, the Magical Mammals project will help boost their overall numbers and increase the species' chance of long-term survival.

The introduction of the pine martens – bred for wild release by zoos including Colwyn Bay's Welsh Mountain Zoo – will similarly help reverse that species' decline. And because its diet includes small mammals, it will also help control grey squirrel numbers.

A pine marten standing on the branch of a tree

Bela the pine marten.

Dr Craig Shuttleworth from the Magical Mammals project said: "North Wales is home to the bulk of the Welsh red squirrel population and to small numbers of pine martens. By expanding existing populations in this area, we're helping both these native species to get better established and thrive."

Drew Bennellick, Head of Land and Nature Policy at the Heritage Fund, said: "Red squirrels are one of our most charismatic native mammals, but sadly many people across the UK will never have the privilege of seeing one enjoying its natural surroundings. Reds are clinging on in very few locations around the UK, but where they are, people are passionate about finding ways to support their survival so that future generations might also enjoy seeing them too."

Overwhelming support

Dr Shuttleworth said local response to the project has been overwhelming.

"The support from local social and community organisations for our conservation work is incredible. It's mainly because of this that we're able to provide some fantastic opportunities for people to get involved with the project and engage with the natural world. Their enthusiasm is truly inspiring."

Two people in a woodland attaching a pine marten feeding box to a tree

Installing a pine marten feeding box. Photo: Clocaenog Red Squirrels Trust.

More natural heritage

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