



Grey Squirrel Activity and Impact Assessments

This methodology is to be used by grey squirrel control group volunteers or landowners to assess levels of grey squirrel activity and impact within woodlands. It is necessary that this standard methodology and recording format is used in order to reduce bias and make the assessments robust and repeatable.

The first survey in a woodland will record all impacts seen. Subsequent annual surveys will ONLY record fresh damage from the current year.

A representative line transect will be walked through each woodland, avoiding rides and open ground and stopping every 100 meters in order to survey trees.

Squirrel Activity and Impact will be recorded as follows:

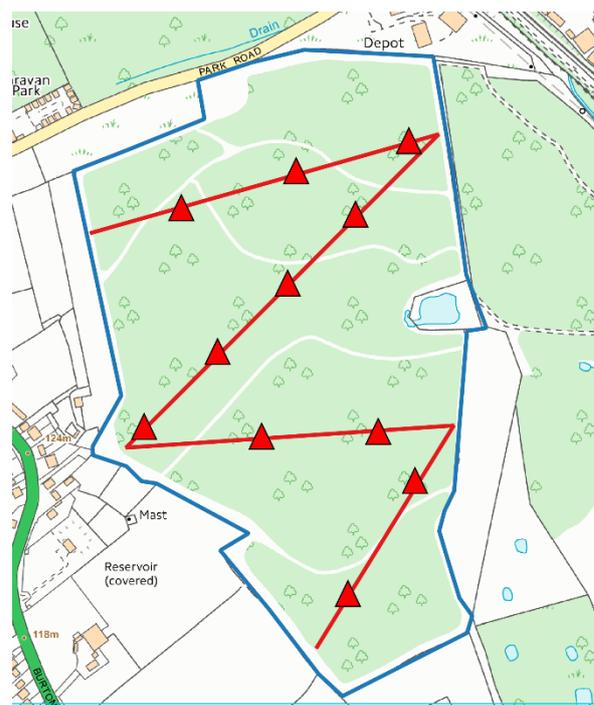
- Tree species
- Location of damage on the tree
- Approximate age of damage (first year only)
- Severity of damage (1-5 scale – see Annex 1)
- Squirrels seen
- Dreys seen
- Squirrel feeding sites seen

At each stop, the closest five trees will be surveyed and their species and condition recorded. Signs of squirrel activity will be surveyed in the surrounding 30m from each stop. A standard recording form will be used for each survey undertaken. This can be seen in Annex 2.

The severity of damage will be recorded for each tree using a standard format (Annex 1). Tree species, location of damage and squirrel activity will also be recorded. This data will allow damage severity and activity for each woodland to be calculated, ensuring efficacy of the control group to be monitored annually. Using this standardised method will reduce the risk of bias during surveying.

The map opposite shows an indicative line transect through a woodland site, taking a representative sample across the whole woodland.

One survey stop per hectare is required, with a minimum of three stops in any woodland. The woodland opposite is 11 hectares, therefore it includes 11 survey stops.





Surveys will be carried out in the winter months as this is the optimum time to survey for squirrel damage. During this time there are no leaves on the trees and limited ground vegetation, which will make negotiating dense woodland stands easier for the surveyor, as well as increasing visibility into the canopy.

Surveying grey squirrel damage in this manner is inherently subjective. Whilst a scoring method will be used (Annex 1), the score given against levels of damage may differ between personnel. Care will be taken to follow the methodology with rationale given for scores where appropriate.

Summary

1. One stop per hectare of woodland is required to give a representative sample, with the closest five trees surveyed for damage and the surrounding 30m for activity, per stop. A minimum of three survey stops is required in any woodland (even for woodlands less than 3 hectares in size).
2. The Activity and Impact assessment pro-forma provided in Annex 1 is to be used to assess the activity and damage in each woodland. The results should be recorded using the survey sheet provided (Annex 2).
3. Photographic evidence is to be provided as part of the survey for each woodland.
4. Record the route of travel through the woodland so that annual surveys can be repeatable. It is not necessary to record the same trees as they may be removed during woodland management operations. However following a similar route will reduce bias in future surveys.



Annex 1

Damage Assessment Severity Scale & Location of Damage:

1.

2.

0 – Total absence of damage

1 – Coin sized flakes of bark removed from the tree

2 – Hand sized areas of bark removed from the tree

3 – Stripped area large enough to kill <50% of the canopy

4 – Stripped area large enough to kill >50% of the canopy

5 – Stripped area large enough to kill entire canopy



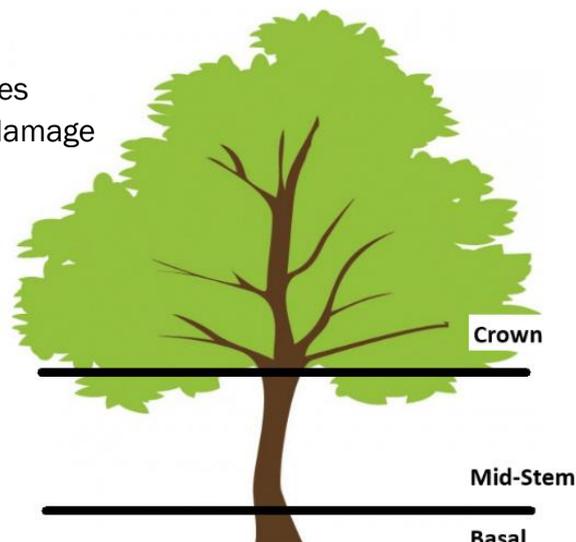
3.

4.

5.



The diagram opposite illustrates each section of a tree where damage can occur, this information is recorded in the survey sheet (Annex 2).





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Annex 2
Squirrel Activity and Impact Assessment Recording Sheet

Annex 3: Estimating Age of Damage



Fresh Damage <1 Years old

Damage is obvious, often with bright colour.
Bark chippings are often found at the base of the tree
No healing has occurred at the edges of the wound



Damage 2-3 years old

Bright colour has subsided
Some healing has started to occur at the edges of the wound
No bark chippings evident at the base of the tree



Damage >3 years old

Dull colour to the wound
Healing is evident at the edges where the bark is trying to 'roll'
over the wound area
No bark chippings evident at the base of the tree