

## Primary school red squirrel project:

### Engaging pupils in real-world research

Through the mechanism of the Royal Society [Partnership Grants Scheme](#), and supported by Dr Philip Cox, a [Royal Society APEX grant](#) recipient, and the [Primary Science Teaching Trust](#), we are hoping to engage schools across the UK to take part in a new initiative to engage young people and their teachers with real world research. The project will involve up to 20 primary schools (or middle schools) looking at the biodiversity of red squirrel populations across the UK.

#### Overview

Dr Philip Cox's project will explore the differences between the red and grey squirrels that live in Great Britain and will uncover the reasons for the dramatic decline of the native red squirrel population over the last 150 years.

*"By doing this, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the interaction between these two species, which we hope will lead to better appreciation of the conservation strategies currently being enacted to preserve red squirrels in Great Britain and the important role the public can play in supporting these efforts."*

The schools involved in this project are working in parallel to collect and identify samples of food items to send to Dr Phil Cox at York University. The significance of this research lies in the context of educating and training the next generation of scientists who will understand the impact that climate change is having on our environment and the biodiversity of different species.

The students will be working with local STEM partners and Dr Phil Cox will provide overall supervision of the project, engaging with the teacher and students virtually or in person where feasible.

#### Outcomes

- By undertaking this study into the factors affecting squirrel anatomy, students will be contributing to a genuine research programme undertaken by the University of York.
- Students will gain a greater understanding of the factors affecting species that are local to them, hopefully encouraging a lifelong interest in their local environment.
- The project has excellent curriculum links throughout the National Curriculum, and staff at the Primary Science Teaching Trust have provided teaching materials related to this project. By engaging with genuine research, it will hopefully inspire pupils to pursue a career in Science.
- As a teacher, the project provides examples for many curriculum areas helping to scaffold learning. Through working in collaboration with each other, their STEM partners and with the support of Dr Phil Cox, they will have an excellent opportunity for CPD.
- Schools will be able to develop long lasting relationships with STEM partners.
- Through the Royal Society Partnership Grant, schools will have ownership of equipment such as camera traps to allow other practical work beyond and in addition to this project.