

Sciurus vulgaris LINNAEUS, 1758



Distribution

World: Palaearctic from British Isles in the west, south to Mediterranean, the Caucasus (where introduced), southern Urals and Altai mountains in central Mongolia, to north-east China. Found on Sakhalin Island off east coast of Russia and most northerly Japanese island of Hokkaido.

Europe: common throughout Europe. Introductions from continental Europe to Britain in the 19th and 20th centuries have led to mixed populations. Extinct in most of southern Britain except for island populations; scattered populations in central and northern England and Wales; still common in Scotland and Ireland. Denmark: introductions in the 19th and 20th centuries have led to mixed populations. Portugal: absent for 400 years, but recently moved back into northern part of country from Spain. Also introduced into Lisbon from Spain in 1993.

Geographic variation

Up to 40 subspecies have been described, although taxonomic positions uncertain. Very variable coat colour. Dorsal colour ranges from grey to red, brown and black. The colour of the tail, feet and ear tufts may be the same or may contrast with the back. Distinct red, brown and black colour morphs can be found. Some populations bimorphic or trimorphic. The distribution of morphs tends to be stable except where introductions have occurred, such as in Britain and Denmark.

Red squirrel

AL	Ketri	LT	Paprastoji vovere
BG	Обикновена катерица	LU	Kaweechelchen
CZ	Veverka obecná	LV	Vāvere
DE	Eichhörnchen	MK	Верверица
DK	Egern	MT	-
EE	Orav; Tava-orav	NL	Eekhoorn
ES	Ardilla roja	NO	Ekorn
FI	Orava	PL	Wiewiórka pospolita
FO	Íkorni	PT	Esquilo-vermelho
FR	Ecureuil roux	RO	Veverița
GR	Σκίουρος	RU	Обыкновенная белка
HR	Europska vjeverica	SE	Ekorre
HU	Közönséges mókus	SI	Navadna veverica
IR	Iora rua	SK	Veverica stromová
IS	Rauðíkorni	TR	Avrupa sincabi
IT	Sciattolo comune	YU	Веверица

Habitat

Forests, parks and gardens from sea-level up to 2200 m (tree line) in the Alps. Tree seeds from both broad-leaved and conifer species are the main food resource throughout their range; fungi are locally important. Forest fragmentation strongly affects demography and genetic diversity, resulting in lower densities, dispersion and genetic variation.

Population status

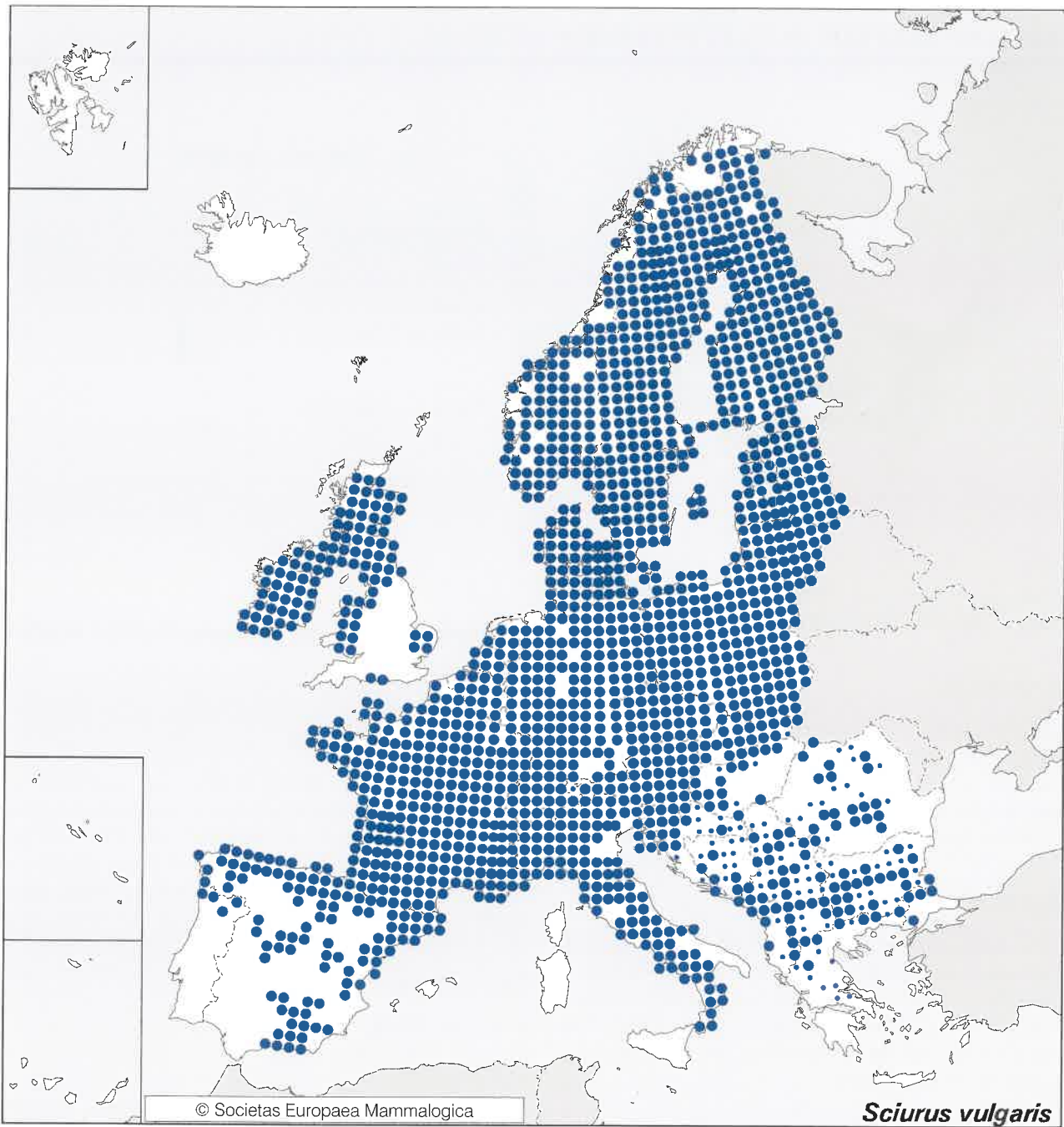
Common throughout most of its range. Populations declining in Britain where it is being replaced by the introduced grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*; similar situation in northern Italy, especially near Torino. Endangered in Britain and vulnerable in Europe. Population density varies geographically and also shows large annual fluctuations in response to tree seed crop availability. Densities vary from 0.1 to 1.5 ind./ha. A series of years with poor tree seed crops may lead to a population decline. At high densities (*c.* 1/ha.) reproduction and emigration are density-dependent.

International legal & conservation status

Bern Convention, Appendix III.
IUCN Red List, Lower Risk – near threatened.

Other information

Hunted for fur, food or sport in parts of its range. Can be a pest locally when population densities are high



because it strips the bark from conifer trees, or feeds heavily on conifer buds.

Literature

- Currado *et al.* (1987)
- Degn (1973)
- Gurnell (1987) – review
- Wauters *et al.* (1994)
- Wauters & Lens (1995)
- Witalfsky (1978) – review

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