



Interesting Case from our web site www.fairfield-vets.co.uk



"Red" - Red Squirrel, Thoughts on Indigenous Wildlife



Whilst playing golf in Scotland earlier in the year I had an unexpected surprise. After hooking my tee shot into the woods on the 7th hole (not unexpected!) I ventured into the undergrowth to search for my ball when I came upon a red squirrel, the first time I have ever seen one in the wild!

By chance I had my camera in my bag and was able to capture the image above. As an added bonus I also managed to find my ball!

Our native red squirrel has largely disappeared from its natural range in the UK over the last 50 years. This is mainly as a result of the spread of the introduced grey squirrel which is better able to live in most broadleaved and mixed woodland areas. In addition to displacing the native species they frequently cause damage to woodlands by stripping bark from the main stem and branches of trees. Despite this they remain a popular feature in many woodland parks and gardens and consequently it is not practical to attempt to eradicate grey squirrels in areas where they are already established.

Active trapping and other control methods do occur in areas where there is significant bark stripping damage or where the red squirrel is considered at risk of competition or contracting the fatal pox virus. Consequently, red squirrels are protected under the law whereas it is illegal for anyone to release a grey squirrel once captured.

In the Galapagos islands, where the local economy is almost entirely dependant on the preservation of indigenous species to attract tourists, there is a much more aggressive approach to conservation.

Over the years the giant tortoise has become extinct on a number of the smaller islands partly through overgrazing by goats. This threat to the unique flora and fauna of this archipelago has meant that hunters are encouraged through financial reward to eradicate certain species including goats, rats and even blackbirds!

Having recently returned from these fantastic islands I can bear witness to the success of these conservation strategies as evidenced by the tremendous opportunity to see very close up a wide variety of unique animal and avian species.

Photos of my recent excursion will appear on our website.....if and when my luggage finally turns up!

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk

You won't care how much we know - until you know how much we care