

PHYLOGEOGRAPHY AND POST-GLACIAL HISTORY OF THE EUROPEAN SQUIRREL, *SCIURUS VULGARIS*

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The red squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*, has declined dramatically in Europe during the last century. However, phylogeographic data covering its entire distribution area, which provide the basis to identify the evolutionary significant units of this species and to establish an effective conservation strategy on a European scale, are still missing.

We sequenced parts of the mitochondrial DNA gene (D-Loop and cytochrome b) of *S. vulgaris* from Southern, Central, Eastern and Western Europe, including locations from the Alps, Apennines, the Balkans and European Russia, in order to assess genetic variation and differentiation of this species across its European distribution. The data collected is used to infer past demographic changes and reconstruct the history of the species since the last glacial maximum. Finally, these data will be used to define conservation units of populations of the red squirrel and provide practical recommendations for its management in order to prevent further decline.