

EASTERN FOX SQUIRREL

Sciurus niger



Range

Fox squirrels are large tree squirrels. Due to their ability to adapt to a wide range of forest habitats they are Texas' most common squirrel. Their greatest numbers occur in open upland forest with a mixture of oak and nut trees. Fox squirrels are an important game animal but their fondness for corn and pecans often cause them to be considered pests by farmers.



Mammals

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Appearance

Length: 21 inches

Weight: 1½-2 lbs.



Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, arboreal, crepuscular, omnivore

Diet: Acorns and other **mast**, buds, fruit, fungi, insects, amphibians and the inner bark of trees.

Home range: 8-32 acres

Lifespan: Up to 15 years

Squirrels are usually active early in the morning and late in the afternoon. Fox squirrels nest in holes in trees or build leaf and twig nests. Squirrels bury nuts for winter food. They relocate the nuts by smell.

Habitat

Fox squirrels prefer **upland hardwood** forests containing nut producing trees. They're found in the forests and along the rivers and streams in the eastern two-thirds of Texas and the eastern half of the United States.

Now You Know!

- › Squirrels find only a portion of the nuts they bury and are important in planting many species of nut trees.
- › A single squirrel can bury several thousand pecans over the course of 3 months.
- › Fox squirrels like the open woods created by man while their cousin, the gray squirrel, prefers the thick woods found in East Texas and along river bottoms.
- › Fox squirrels got their name from their gray and red fur coat that resemble that of a gray fox.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: 10 to 11 months

Mating season: Fox squirrels usually have 2 breeding seasons and litters a year. Breeding season peaks in January and February and again in May and June.

Gestation: 42-49 days The young are **weaned** in 2 months and on their own in 3 months.

No. of young: 3 to 4 young are born naked, blind and helpless. They remain in the nest 7 to 8 weeks.

More Fun Facts!

Squirrels' long bushy tails are used for a variety of purposes. They can be wrapped around a squirrels face to keep them warm, used as an aid in balancing when they run along tree limbs, or spread and used as a parachute if the squirrel should fall. With a little practice, watching a squirrels tail movements gives you a clue to their mood. Quick jerks of the tail signal that they are nervous or upset.

Fox Squirrels & Man

Fox squirrels are often found in city parks containing large oak trees or around bird feeders at peoples homes.

Fox squirrels are an important game animal in many states including Texas. Proper forest management techniques can help squirrel populations. These include leaving older nut producing trees that are important for food and den sites. Corridors of trees between unlogged hardwood forests allow squirrels safe pathways to food and mates.