

eastern fox squirrel *Sciurus niger*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The fox squirrel's head-body length is 10 to 15 inches. It has rust-yellow body fur with light-yellow belly fur. The tail is very long and bushy.

BEHAVIORS

The fox squirrel may be found statewide in Illinois. This mammal lives in forest edges, woodlots, fencerows and oak tree clusters. The fox squirrel is also an inhabitant of cities. It is not commonly found in any area with gray squirrels. The fox squirrel consumes fruits, tree buds, hickory nuts, acorns, walnuts, Osage orange fruits, corn, flowers, leaves, fungi and insects. The type of food eaten depends on the season and availability. It will store foods if any are available in ample supply. This mammal is active early in the morning and late in the evening, in trees and on the ground. This squirrel is known to swim. It does not hibernate but may sleep for several consecutive days in winter. It may build a leaf nest or use a tree cavity or manmade nest box for shelter and raising young. The fox squirrel makes a series of sounds, but the "bark" is the most commonly used. There are two mating seasons, one in early winter and one in late spring. Females two years old and older produce two litters per year. Females about one year old usually breed once in a year. Two to four young are born after a gestation period of about six weeks. Young nurse for about two months.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

edge

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