

red squirrel *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The adult red squirrel is a medium-sized rodent with a tail that is much shorter than the combined length of its head and body. A mixture of cinnamon, brown and black hairs cover most of the body and tail. During the summer a dark, orange stripe down the middle of its back is noticeable. The belly fur is white or gray, and the feet have gray fur.

BEHAVIORS

The red squirrel may be found in the northeastern one-fourth of Illinois along the Kankakee River from Kankakee eastward, north to Will County and south along the Iroquois River. It lives in dense pine forests or dense hardwood forests with a thick understory. The red squirrel feeds on tree buds, leaves, flowers, fungi, acorns, bark, berries, hickory nuts, pine nuts, walnuts, insects and the seeds of other trees. Tree cracks and crevices serve as storage space for extra food. This squirrel is most active in the early morning and late evening throughout the year. It is known to be a good swimmer. It makes several different calls with the scolding call the easiest to describe. The red squirrel builds a leaf nest or lives in a tree cavity. It mates in late winter and summer. One litter of about five young per year is produced. Young are helpless at birth. Their eyes open about four weeks after birth. Adult size is attained in about three months.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

coniferous forests; upland deciduous forests

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none