

## March Hiker Activity – Squirrel Search



### Instructions:

1. Pass out binoculars and remind the students to handle them with care. **Adapt this activity for indoor use by peering out windows instead of walking outdoors.**
2. Introduce students to the squirrel information included below.
3. Search the Habitat for squirrels and their nests (called **dreys**). Note: the Habitat includes the area up to the pavilion.
  - LOOK for bundles of leaves and twigs in the forks of tree branches. Squirrels will also nest in tree cavities.
4. Search the Habitat for signs of squirrel activity.
  - LOOK for "squirrel litter" such as nut shells below deciduous trees.
  - LOOK for evergreen branches with the tips chewed off. Squirrels will remove the tips of branches to reach the pine cones at the end.
5. Please let the Habitat committee know what you find and/or observe.
6. Refill bird feeders and remove weeds/litter as time allows. Plant material may be discarded in the woods.
7. Comments and photos for use on the Habitat website may be sent to [m.hauer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:m.hauer@sbcglobal.net).

### Supplies:

- Binoculars and field guides (retrieve from library)
- Squirrel information pages

**Please feel free to offer suggestions for improving this activity.**



## **SQUIRREL IDENTIFICATION**

### **Four species of tree squirrels live in Ohio**



#### **Eastern Grey Squirrel**

Average adult weighs one pound.  
Their fur may be greyish or black.



#### **Eastern Fox Squirrel**

Adults may weigh up to two pounds, making this the largest squirrel in North America.  
They like to eat seeds, buds, fruits, insects, eggs and lizards.  
They spend more of their time on the ground than most other tree squirrels.



#### **Red Squirrel**

Adults may weigh up to 12 ounces.  
Also known as the pine squirrel, because it gathers great piles of pinecones for food. It mainly eats seeds and nuts but will also eat mushrooms. It is known to impale mushrooms on twigs and branches, letting them dry in the sun before storing them to eat later.



#### **Southern Flying Squirrel**

Average adult weighs less than 2.5 ounces.  
This squirrel glides through the air thanks to a loose fold of skin extending from the back of the front legs to the front of the back legs. It uses its broad tail like a rudder to help it steer and land safely. Flying squirrels can be found throughout Ohio, but spotting one is difficult because they are so small and they do not spend much time on the ground.

## **Squirrel Facts**

Squirrels use their tails for balance and for protection against the elements.

Squirrels plant lots of trees! They bury nuts and acorns and use their keen sense of smell to find and eat them during the winter months. Any not eaten during the winter sprout and grow in the spring.

Squirrels do not hibernate in winter though they may stay in their nest for days at a time when weather is bad.

A squirrel will break the shell of a nut with its teeth, then clean the nut by licking it or rubbing it on its face before it is buried. This action applies a scent to the nut which helps the squirrel find it later, even under a foot of snow.

The sweat glands of a tree squirrel are located on their feet, between the foot pads and on their paws between the toes. When hot or excited a squirrel will leave wet tracks on a dry surface.

*Sources: Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, Wikipedia, Squirrels.org*