

Fall 2019 Nature Notes



Nuts about Squirrels!!



Squirrel Fun Facts:

- There are over **200 species** of squirrels worldwide, including tree, ground, and flying squirrel groups.
- Many make **nests in tree branches or hollows, some burrow in tunnels**, and many hibernate in winter.
- Female squirrels give birth to **2-8 babies per litter, and may have several litters in a year**. The babies are born blind and dependent, and stay with the mother for 2-3 months.
- Squirrels can **eat nuts, leaves, roots, seeds, flowers, berries, eggs, insects, fungi, and small animals** like baby birds.
- They can communicate through **whistles, chatter calls, chirps, barks**, and other noises to distinguish between alarm calls and other calls. They also use scent and visual cues (like twitching their tails) to communicate.
- Squirrels have a **good sense of smell** to help them find their hidden nuts and seeds, and to detect which are ripe or rotten. Any that are missed may develop into new trees.

Southwestern Ohio Squirrels –

There are 4 species native to Ohio, **flying squirrels are the most common**, although they are not often seen because they are nocturnal.

Southern Flying Squirrel –

The most common and smallest Ohio squirrel species, they prefer coniferous-deciduous mixed forest. They are nocturnal, so often go unseen, and are distinguished by their “gliding membrane”.



Red Squirrel –

Enjoy coniferous forests, and store their cones in piles (called ‘midden’s, up to 30 ft. across!) instead of burying them like their larger cousins.



Eastern Fox Squirrel –

Largest Ohio species, prefer woodlots adjacent to agricultural fields, and large, mature forests.



Eastern Gray Squirrel –

Prefer large expanses of wooded areas, they make leaf nests or tree dens. They are more social than other species.



Middletown White Squirrels –

Middletown has a unique population of white squirrels. These squirrels are not albino (note the dark eyes, not red), they are a color variant of the **gray squirrel**. These squirrels would not survive in the wild, but with humans removing predators they are able to sustain a rare population here.

