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 ‘middle’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.

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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.