

School-to-Nature



There are two classes of squirrels: ground squirrels and tree squirrels. Ground squirrels include marmots, groundhogs, prairie dogs and chipmunks. Tree squirrels include fox squirrels, red squirrels, gray squirrels, and two species of flying squirrels. Flying squirrels do not actually fly, but extra skin stretching from leg to leg allows them to glide from tree to tree.

The Grey Squirrel is the most common in Wisconsin, and on conservancy lands, is the gray squirrel. It lives in wooded areas but leaves the woods to forage for food, often at backyard bird feeders. These squirrels have a diverse diet of nuts, seeds, fruits, fungus, sap, insects, and bird eggs.

The gray squirrel builds its den of twigs in tree branches, inside hollow tree trunks or in empty bird nests. They sleep in the nests for days or weeks in winter when temperatures are low or weather is very bad. Squirrels will have one or two litters of young per year, depending on their age and if there is a good food supply. They have 1 to 4 young that are born hairless, pink and blind, but they grow quickly.

Squirrels are most active at dawn and dusk when searching for food. They can jump upwards 5 feet, and across 7 feet. Squirrels will not drop down more than 9 feet to a bird feeder. Their ankles can turn 180 degrees to face any direction when climbing.

Predators are: humans, hawks, weasels, raccoons, bobcats, foxes, house cats as well as wild cats, snakes and owls.

Are you old enough to remember Rocky the Flying Squirrel cartoons? You can find Rocky on Google and YouTube.

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