



MAMMALS

DELMARVA FOX SQUIRREL

ABOUT

The Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger cinereus*) is one of ten recognized subspecies of fox squirrels. Like all “fox” squirrels, the Delmarva has a full and fluffy tail. It is frosty silver to slate gray in color with a white belly. It grows up to 30 inches long, which includes its 15-inch tail. This species is quiet and retiring, unlike the common gray squirrel, and can be very difficult to find. Despite being the largest tree squirrel it will run away from any confrontation, and being less agile in trees, will usually run along the ground from one tree to another rather than leaping through the branches. The Delmarva lives in mature woods of mixed pine and hardwoods, along streams and marshland, or near agricultural land. It requires Loblolly pines, oak, maple, hickory, and beech trees to provide its food and shelter. Delmarva squirrels occasionally build nests of leaves, but during the summer months prefer to nest in the cavities of these trees. In addition to eating nuts and seeds, the Delmarva also eats tree buds, flowers, fungi, insects, and fruit in the spring and pinecones in the summer and early fall. The Delmarva mates in late winter, with the female giving birth to a litter of 1-4 young around 44 days later. She cares for the young by herself until they are weaned and will fight to protect her nestlings, but will lose some to raccoons, possums, and rat snakes.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Delmarva Fox Squirrel population once ranged throughout the peninsula of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and southern Pennsylvania, but is now endangered – only occurring naturally in parts of Maryland. In the early 1900s, populations of this species had decreased, mostly due to habitat loss from agricultural and residential development, but also because of encounters with vehicles, hunters, and predators like foxes, raptors, and weasels. Their natural woodland homes have fallen to logging and development and thus fragmented, forcing the fox squirrel to compete for food and nesting sites with the gray squirrel. In 1967, the Delmarva Fox Squirrel was listed as endangered and a reintroduction program was started. These efforts have resulted in a growth of population, and the recovery team has introduced populations throughout the Eastern Shore of Maryland and parts of Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Between 1969 and 1971, thirty of this species were relocated to Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia and into habitat surrounding the historic Assateague Lighthouse. That population now numbers 300.

For more detailed information visit: <http://refugeassociation.org> or www.fws.gov.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Between 1969 and 1971 how many Delmarva Fox squirrels were relocated?

- a) 30
- b) 300
- c) 67
- d) 1900

Answer is A.

