

MAMMALS

NORTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL

ABOUT

The endangered Northern Flying Squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus fuscus*) is a small nocturnal mammal. Although both species are found in West Virginia, it is larger than the common Southern Flying Squirrel. It weighs between 3.2-5.2 ounces (90-148 grams) and measures 10.25 to 12 inches (260-305 millimeters) in total length. It has a long, broad, flattened tail, large dark eyes and thick, silky fur. The fur is light brown to reddish brown and its belly fur is mostly white. The folds of skin between the ankles and wrists, combined with the broad tail allow the squirrel to glide (not fly) from tree to tree. Their diet includes lichens, fungi they find above and below ground, as well as seeds, buds, fruits, nuts and insects. At about a year old, the female has a litter of 1-6 young after a gestation of 37-42 days. The young are born blind and furless and are nursed for about 2 months.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Northern Flying Squirrel has been protected under the Endangered Species Act since 1985. The main threat to the animal is loss of habitat (high elevation red spruce forest) through logging and development. As a result of extensive logging there is less red spruce forest in West Virginia today than there was before the timber boom around the turn of the last century. However, at higher elevations there is a resurgence of red spruce forest, although it will take many years before this forest will be mature enough to afford the squirrel a suitable habitat. Most of the locations of the Northern Flying Squirrel are within the protected Monongahela National Forest and are found in areas above 2860 feet (872 meters). Their numbers have increased from 10 recorded in 1985 to 779 in 1996.

For more detailed information visit www.wvdnr.gov.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

In which protected area is the Northern Flying Squirrel most prolific?

- a) Yellowstone Park
- b) Yosemite National Park
- c) Bluestone National Scenic River
- d) Monongahela National Forest

Answer is D.

