

# Gray squirrel

*Sciurus carolinensis*

The gray squirrel is the most common squirrel in Pennsylvania, with the largest populations occurring in the north-central part of the state.

**Habitat**  
 large areas of mature, dense woodlands with mast-producing trees



← 18 - 20 Inches →

keen eyesight, detect movement well

silver-gray fur with rusty color throughout

good sense of smell

white belly

broad, bushy tail, helps keep balance

**Predators**  
 Hawks, owls, foxes and tree-climbing snakes occasionally kill young squirrels, but adults are not easily taken.

**Tracks**  
 Five toes front and back. Larger hind feet aid in agility. Claws apparent in track. Bounding movement.

**Diet**  
 Gray squirrels eat mast, which is the fruit of forest trees and shrubs. Favorites include acorns, hickory nuts, walnuts and beechnuts. Other foods are berries, mushrooms, pine seeds, corn (only the germ at the base of the kernel is eaten), and dogwood, wild cherry and black gum fruits.



**Reproduction**  
 Squirrels can be reproductively active throughout much of the year, with peaks in summer breeding occurring from May-July, and peaks in winter breeding occurring in January and February. Following a 44-day gestation period, females bear litters of 4-5 young. The young are usually raised in tree dens and nursed by their mother for 5-7 weeks. Some gray squirrels bear a second litter in July or August.

**? Shelter**  
 Grays live in nests and dens. They build leaf nests in trees near good food supplies in both summer and fall. The leaf nests are about 12x16 inches and built of twigs, leaves, grass, bark and other plant materials. Tree dens are often cavities where limbs have broken off or in deserted woodpecker holes, usually 40-60 feet off the ground. Leaf nests are cooler than tree dens.

