

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Look for it now in Southwest Ohio!

3/20/2021



Eastern Gray Squirrel
by Dave Woehr, Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist



Orphaned Eastern Gray Squirrel
by Shannon Pennington, Nature Nurses Wildlife Rescue



Albino Eastern Gray Squirrel, Warren Co. Armco Park
by Dave Woehr, OCVN

Eastern Gray Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

By Shannon Pennington

One of the first signs of spring for state-permitted wildlife rehabilitators is when we start getting phone calls from the public about squirrel babies that have fallen from trees. Strong spring winds, tree-trimming, and even gutter-cleaning can result in displaced babies. Squirrel mothers have very strong maternal instincts and will do everything they can to retrieve their babies if they get separated from the nest; we can help them reunite with their young by keeping the babies warm, playing a special [squirrel distress call](#), and observing from afar. The mother will usually return and will carry her babies away in her mouth, one at a time, to an alternate nesting site. An orphan's best chance at survival is in the wild with its parents! If reunification fails, contact a [permitted wildlife rehabilitator](#) for help (it is illegal to raise wildlife without a permit).

You may be noticing more adult squirrel activity lately in your yards and at our parks. As spring progresses, natural food sources for wildlife will become more plentiful, and squirrels will feed on a variety of things including flower buds from trees. The nuts they buried in fall will be less attractive now, which means those can now grow into trees for future squirrel generations to enjoy!

To learn more about this species, visit [page 11 of Ohio Division of Wildlife's Mammals of Ohio Field Guide](#).

FUN FACTS

- Ohio has seven squirrel species: eastern grays, reds, fox squirrels, flying squirrels, thirteen-lined ground squirrels, groundhogs, and eastern chipmunks.
- As with all rodents, squirrels' front teeth never stop growing. They need to chew on things like nuts, branches, and even bones or antlers to keep their teeth worn down.
- Squirrels have four fingers on their front feet and five fingers on their back feet.
- Squirrels can turn their back feet 180 degrees, allowing them to climb down trees head-first.
- Squirrels have two litters of pups a year, one in March-April, and the other in August-September.
- Black (melanistic) squirrels and white (leucistic and albino) squirrels are genetic variations of the eastern gray squirrel.
- You can see albino gray squirrels at [Warren County Armco Park!](#)