

Red Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Sciuridae. Also called pine squirrel, chickaree, barking squirrel, mountain boomer. There are 25 subspecies recognized, including the local subspecies *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus ventorum*.

Description:

Typically the back is rusty olive brown with a red tint, the head and legs are grayer and the ventral surface is white. In summer adults have a black stripe running along the side between the brown back and white belly. There is a prominent white ring around the eye.

Total length: 280-350 mm; tail length: 95-150 mm; Weight: 140-250 g



Distribution:

Atlantic to Pacific coasts, and from Alaska to isolated mountain ranges in Arizona and New Mexico and as far south as Carolina in the East and Illinois in the Midwest. Common at mid to high elevations along the Wasatch Front, and locally in the valleys where trees have been planted.

Ecology and Diet:

Red squirrels live primarily in coniferous forests but also occupy mixed conifer and deciduous stands. Primary food source is conifer seeds but they also eat insects, birds' eggs, small vertebrates and mushrooms.

Life History:

Breeding coincides with the spring thaw and may start as early as mid-January and can extend into late September. They are especially noisy during the breeding season, when they chase each other through tree branches making a distinctive call that sounds almost like the buzz of cicadas.

Gestation lasts 33-35 days and the young are fully weaned and independent in 7-8 weeks. Litters range from 2-5 offspring and there is usually only one litter per year.

Reference: Young 1999.