

1. GRAY SQUIRREL

Sciurus carolinensis

(Fields, forests, where people gather)

The eastern gray squirrel is perhaps the most common (non-human) mammal. It is also among the most entertaining to observe: scurrying up and down trees with the help of its claws, jumping from branch to branch, and balancing on park trash cans assisted by a long,

fluffy tail. As herbivores (plant eaters), squirrels feed on an abundance of acorns, seeds and new leafy growth, but they often become scavengers, enjoying the remains of human food. Their large, leafy nests are unmistakable high in the trees. (How many can you find?)



1

2. FLYING SQUIRREL

Glaucomys volans

(Forest, near water)

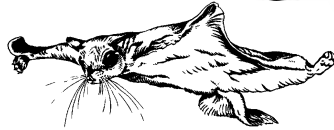
This small tree squirrel is roughly the size of a large mouse. It is not commonly known because of its nocturnal habits. If seen, it is easy to identify by its relatively large, round eyes, the loose fold of skin extending along the sides from the wrist of the front leg to the ankle of the hind leg, and a long, flattened, furry tail. Contrary to its name, the flying squirrel does not fly, but rather glides, slanting downward, to another tree or the ground. By extending its legs out to the sides, this squirrel is able to form a planing surface.

Hickory nuts and acorns are a staple food source. Nuts with smoothly-gnawed round or elliptical openings are a sign of a flying squirrel's night work. Seeds, berries and mushrooms are also included in the fare. In winter and early spring the squirrel may also eat tree buds.

Look closely at some of the older trees. Holes, as small as one inch, may open into a flying squirrel den. Cavities created by woodpeckers are choice den sites.



2



3. EASTERN CHIPMUNK

Tamias striatus

(Near structures, masonry walls, rocks)

Scurrying along rock walls, sidewalks, or abandoned concrete structures, the eastern chipmunk or "chippie" will appear and depart quickly...

so look carefully. Chipmunks disappear into burrows that they build along these rock walls. A chipmunk is a really small ground squirrel: flattened



3

hairy tail, reddish brown, five dark stripes, alternating with two light, buff colored stripes.

Chipmunks feed on fruits (berries), nuts, new buds of plants and leftover crumbs from human snacks. They store food in cheek pouches.

4. MUSKRAT

Odontra zibethicus

(Near water)

Often mistaken for a beaver, this semi-aquatic rodent is most active at night, but it is not uncommon to see one during the day. The muskrat has dense, shiny, dark brown (usually lighter on the sides) waterproof fur, and large, webbed hind feet like those of the beaver.

The tail is unique—long, blackish,

If you don't see chipmunks, you may hear them. Their vocal repertoire includes a loud chip (hence their name) repeated at short intervals, as well as a startled, trilling sound used to warn their neighbors of your presence.

flattened on the sides. Its total body length (body and tail) is between 16-25 inches. The tail is a useful rudder for navigating slow-moving water in the park's lakes, ponds, marshy areas, and the River Des Peres. You won't see the opening to a muskrat burrow. It is 6-12 inches below the water level.

Muskrats feed on the bulbs, roots, stems, and leaves of plants growing in or near the water. Occasionally, they include the park's crayfish or frogs in their diet.



4



5

5. WOODCHUCK

Marmota monax

(Open fields, forest edge)

Less common, but certainly present, is the woodchuck, also known as a groundhog. In open fields they are unmistakable given their large body size (16-25 inches). They have small, rounded ears, a stubby, furry tail, and a grizzled dark brown, yellowish-

gray coat. Feet and tail are usually darker than the rest of the body. They are most observable when they come out to graze on grasses, clovers and wildflowers. Sometimes they stand on their hind legs to reach a tasty leaf or to look around.

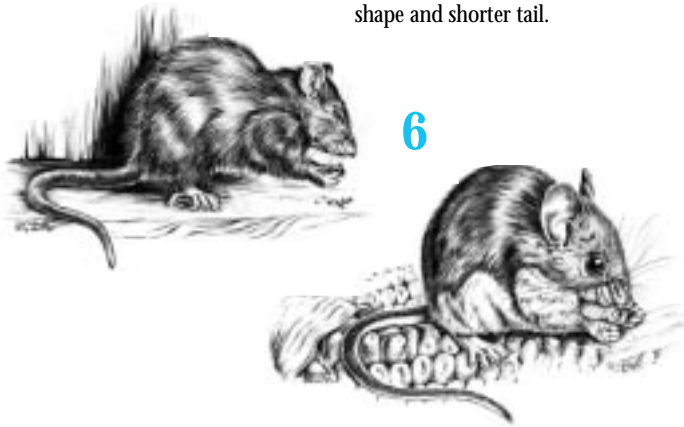
6. MOUSE AND RAT

(Field, forest, near water)

It's unlikely you will see them, but rats and mice (e.g. *Peromyscus* sp.) are common in the park. They seek shelter beneath leaves, grasses or other ground cover. If you are very lucky, you may see them darting about beneath leaf litter searching for small seeds and berries.

The Norway rat, *Rattus norvegicus*, has been introduced to habitats throughout the world and Forest Park is a rich habitat for this creature.

Another group of rodents, known as voles (*Microtus* sp.), are also found in the park. While people often confuse them with a type of mouse, they have a more rounded body shape and shorter tail.



7. EASTERN COTTONTAIL RABBIT

Sylvilagus floridanus

(Fields, near edge of shrub, forest)

While they are commonly seen in the morning or early evening feeding upon grasses, clover and broadleaf weeds in the park's manicured lawns, the eastern cottontail rabbit prefers the safe cover of brush and trees. They are often seen near the edge of forest and thicket. The coat of reddish

brown with a wash of gray, offers fine camouflage and the white, cotton-ball tail readily identifies a cottontail rabbit. Their nests, lined with fine grasses and plucked rabbit fur, are little more than shallow excavations usually near the base of trees or shrubs.



9

10. RED AND 11. GRAY FOX

Vulpes vulpes and *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*

(Forest, field, near water)

Because these animals are solitary and secretive, they are seldom seen. Both are dog-like in appearance with elongated, pointed muzzles. Tails are heavily furred. Approximate body lengths are 25-35 inches. The red fox has an unmistakable reddish-yellow coat. The gray fox is distinguished from the red fox by a gray, coarse coat and black-tipped tail. The gray fox

is also slightly smaller. Foxes have been sighted in or near forests and thickets, and trotting across open fields. They are usually sighted in early morning or late evening, when their prey is most active. Foxes are primarily carnivorous, feeding upon rabbits, mice and rats and an occasional bird (and occasional Zoo ducks or poultry)!



10

13. OPOSSUM

Didelphis virginiana

(Forest, field, near water)

Drive carefully along the park's roads at dusk and at night. The opossum, North America's only marsupial, is most active then. This nocturnal animal is scavenging for its nightly meal, selecting from "picnic leftovers," carrion, fresh berries growing in the park, or anything that is available. We know opossums for their adaptation of involuntarily

playing dead when frightened. Since most predators prefer fresh meat, the adaptation helps protect the opossum by fooling predators. It is little defense against oncoming cars, however, that frequently frighten the opossums. Unfortunately playing dead does not deter an oncoming car, and opossums are commonly killed in roadways.



13

14. HUMAN

Homo sapien

(Throughout the park)

The most noticeable park mammal, the human, is primarily a daytime visitor. It stands upright on two legs and lacks fur over most of its body except the head. Humans are social mammals, but are seen both alone and in groups. They are easily observed along the park's paved areas in large, four-wheeled vehicles. Loud, rhythmic sounds often emanate from these painted steel beasts. They are also sighted on narrower pavement, riding two-wheeled vehicles or gliding along with wheels attached to their feet.

Humans have no wings but occasionally ride into the air in giant balloons. During winter, they may slide down the hill by the Art Museum on pieces of molded plastic. They build big fires to keep warm. Many visit buildings in the park. Ironically, they often visit the Zoo to view wildlife from around the world, while they remain remain unaware of the abundant wildlife in the park's natural areas.

14

