
Squirrels of Alberta



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1st Edition



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Why Squirrels?

I started working with red squirrels when I was a graduate student and I quickly fell in love with them because they are tough animals with so much personality. What was unexpected about working with squirrels is that other people were curious about my work. As soon as I mentioned that I worked with squirrels, I would hear tales of squirrels wreaking havoc or doing cute things.

Years later, I am now a professor and I have chosen to continue working with squirrels because of this passion that people feel about them. Squirrels share so much of our lives - they live in our backyards, burrow in the fields along our roads, they appear on mountaintops when we're enjoying the beauty of our national parks. They are a group of species that help us connect more closely with nature wherever we are in this beautiful province of Alberta.

I hope this ID guide will help you learn more about the 14 species of squirrels in Alberta and that it will inspire you to connect more closely with nature in the process.

If you want to read updates about squirrel projects, you can check out my website: ABMammals.ca

Dr. Jessica Haines, July 2023

Squirrel Conservation

Endangered squirrels? That's right! Some squirrels are at risk of extinction. In this ID guide, you will see the Conservation Status of each species: this summarizes which species are at risk of extinction in Alberta. In collaboration with Nature Alberta, we are collecting data to help us learn more about this charismatic group of species.

How can you help?

You can contribute to conservation by submitting observations of any squirrel species through iNaturalist:

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/squirrels-of-alberta>



New to iNaturalist? Check out this guide to citizen science on the Nature Alberta website:

<https://naturealberta.ca/citizen-science/>



Chipmunks

Least Chipmunk

Neotamias minimus



How to Identify

- White and black stripes on face and back
- Small body with a long tail

Habitat

- Forested and mountain areas in Alberta

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Red-Tailed Chipmunk

Neotamias ruficaudus



How to Identify

- White and black stripes on face and back
- Small body with a long tail
- Similar to least chipmunk with a redder tail/body

Habitat

- Only occurs in Waterton-West Castle area in southwestern Alberta

Conservation Status

- Sensitive: this species is not yet at risk of extinction, but may become at risk without further action

Yellow-Pine Chipmunk

Neotamias amoenus



How to Identify

- White and black stripes on face and back
- Small body with a long tail
- Similar to least chipmunk with a redder body

Habitat

- Forested or bushy habitats in mountains in western/southwestern Alberta

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Ground Squirrels

Columbian Ground Squirrel

Urocitellus columbianus



How to Identify

- Reddish face and feet
- Light underside, grey speckled back and tail

Habitat

- Alpine meadows

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Franklin's Ground Squirrel

Poliocitellus franklinii



Photo by Richard Schneider

How to Identify

- Grey head and tail
- Long, bushy tail
- Brown or reddish-brown speckled back

Habitat

- Dense vegetation in forests or grassland

Conservation Status

- Undetermined: we don't know much about this species, but it could be at risk of extinction

Golden-Mantled Ground Squirrel

Callospermophilus lateralis



Photo by Jessica Haines

How to Identify

- White and black stripes along back
- No stripes on face
- Reddish shoulders, grey back and tail

Habitat

- Mountainous areas

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Richardson's Ground Squirrel

Urocitellus richardsonii



How to Identify

- Also known as gophers
- Light grey or brown in colour
- Short tail

Habitat

- Open habitats in grasslands and foothills

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Thirteen-Lined Ground Squirrel

Ictidomys tridecemlineatus



How to Identify

- Brown and tan or white stripes and spots on back and head
- Tan-coloured fur with darker tail

Habitat

- Grasslands and open habitats in foothills

Conservation Status

- Undetermined: we don't know much about this species, but it could be at risk of extinction

Marmots and Woodchucks

Hoary Marmot

Marmota caligata



How to Identify

- Grey back with a light chest and belly; light cheeks, dark around ears; white on muzzle and forehead
- Tail and hind limbs are darker brown or reddish

Habitat

- Mountains and foothills

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Woodchuck

Marmota monax



Photo by Ronda Groom

How to Identify

- Also known as groundhogs
- Grey back, dark grey-brown tail; underside and legs can vary from grey to reddish brown
- Typically has a dark forehead and greyish cheeks

Habitat

- Lowland areas such as forests and fields

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Yellow-Bellied Marmot

Marmota flaviventris



Photo by Karim Gharbi

How to Identify

- Red chest and belly, rest of body is red and grey
- White-grey on muzzle and forehead
- Dark brown on ears and cheeks

Habitat

- Mountains and foothills

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Tree Squirrels

Eastern Grey Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis



Photo by Mila B.



Photo by Katja Schulz

How to Identify

- Long, fluffy tail and large body size
- Colour varies: sometimes grey-brown with a lighter underside, sometimes black

Habitat

- Urban areas in Alberta, primarily lives around Calgary

Conservation Status

- Alien: Originally from central and eastern North America but introduced to Alberta

Northern Flying Squirrel

Glaucomys sabrinus



How to Identify

- Large eyes for better night vision as it is nocturnal
- Brown or grey fur
- Skin flap on side allows them to glide between trees

Habitat

- Forested areas across Alberta
- Sometimes visit bird feeders in urban areas at night

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

Red Squirrel

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus



How to Identify

- Reddish fur except for lighter bellies
- Long, fluffy tail

Habitat

- Forested areas across Alberta

Conservation Status

- Secure: this species is doing well in Alberta

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