



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Douglas Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Douglas Squirrel (*Tamiasciurus douglasii*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/douglas-squirrel-tamiasciurus-douglasii/

By colliiek2

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Squirrels used to ‘bad mouth’ my dog from their seemingly safe tree branch. What they didn’t know is that the dog liked to climb trees.

There is a good chance that one of those squirrels was a Douglas squirrel which is one of the smaller tree squirrels in Oregon. This rodent’s range extends southward from British Columbia coniferous forests through northern California including eastern edges of Oregon. It is native to British Columbia.



Douglas Squirrel (courtesy of ODFW)

Physical Appearances

The coat colors will vary depending on region and season but are usually brown with rusty orange on the chest and under tail. It will grow up to about 12-14 inches total (7-inches for the body, 5-inches for the tail).

They also have orange-colored front teeth that never stop growing and can overgrow if not constantly controlled.

When active

Douglas’ squirrels are active during the daylight hours year around and known for their highly vocal (noisy) sputterings and scoldings. They use a system of calls during courtship, when defending territory, and as an alarm.

The dog didn’t like it one little bit.

Habitat

Douglas’ squirrels will spend most of their time climbing trees, looking for food, and watching (or scolding) predators. Home range for tree squirrels can extend one-half to 10 acres.

Squirrels are fairly safe in trees where their only predators might be owls and hawks. They are excellent climbers and jumpers with powerful claws for gripping tree bark and tails to help them balance.

The tail is multifunctional working to help them climb and leap around trees, but also to serve as an umbrella and warm blanket. They also communicate to other squirrels using their tails like a flag.

On the ground, squirrels are protected by their well-developed hearing, smell, and eyesight. These senses along with whiskers around their noses, chins and eyes help them sense their environment.

Even then they can become prey for raptors, coyotes, bobcats, domestic cats and dogs (that are fast enough to catch them...unlike my dog). They are not afraid of humans.

Food

Tree squirrels consume plant materials such as seeds, nuts, buds, berries, leaves and twigs. They are opportunists and will eat fungi, insects, eggs, and nestlings. They serve as key distributors for fungi sores which develop mycorrhizal beneficial relationships with conifer tree roots.

Squirrels will also store food and recover it when needed. Storage sites include animal burrows, hollow trees, stumps, flowerpots, abandoned cars, wood piles, and buildings.

Winter nests are always created in or near a food storage site. These nests typically are made from leaves, twigs, bark, moss and other soft materials, and sometimes insulation.

Reproduction

Tree squirrels rear two litters of young each year. The first litter is produced in early spring or summer, and the second is produced in August through September. The second litter may overwinter with the mother.

Those teeth!

They will chew on solid object such as twigs, sticks, wires, and hoses to help clean and trim their teeth. The dog is not always to blame for the leaky hose. Who knew?

REFERENCES:

- Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Squirrels, Chipmunks, and Marmots (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/squirrels-chipmunks-and-marmots>)
- Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/species-facts/tree-squirrels#> and <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species/tamiasciurus-douglasii>)
- Anamalia, Douglas squirrel (<http://animalia.bio/douglas-squirrel>)
- The Western Gray Squirrel and other Squirrels in Washington (<https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/01024/wdfw01024.pdf>)