

neg returned by Sam  
Apr 5-43.

Sent Merrill - March 28-43

for Journal

SQUIRRELS -- North and South.  
by  
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3 neg. 2 - desert squirrels  
1 - Portland-ground squirrel

Oregon is the home of many different kinds of squirrels. Like people, they differ a great deal as to where they live and the amount and kind of food they eat. Some prefer the farm lands of western Oregon, others the deserts to the East. Many inhabit forests or dwell in mountainous regions.

The ground squirrel, or gray digger, is a common resident about farms. He always burrows in our field, and some live on the banks above the Willamette. When the grain is matured and the hazel and walnuts are ripe, these squirrels like to store up a good supply in their homes. Since they are more interested in agriculture, it is an economic problem for many people. When they become too abundant, the farmer has had to use poison, traps, and guns to protect his crops.

While in Arizona, we made a study of the little desert ground squirrel that is only about half the size of the Oregon gray digger. As these squirrels dig many holes in the sandy soil where no vegetables are raised, they were not destructive like their northern relatives. They seemed to be hunting wisps of green grass or weeds, and we saw them climbing up the creosote bushes in March when the leaves were beginning to sprout and feed on these.

When in Tucson, we used to watch several of these little desert ground squirrels that were not out early in the morning or late in the evening. They are very light colored with short tails and small, round ears. They do not live by the same rule as their northern cousins. If the winter weather is not severe, they do not spend much time sleeping. At our home in the North, we have noticed that in mid-summer the ground squirrels have had plenty to eat and become very fat, and they go into hibernation very early. In other words, they disappear when there are yet many days of good weather.

The way we got acquainted with these little desert bob-tails was to put some bits of bread, lettuce, and carrots. Since we kept one particular place well supplied, they visited this every day and soon learned that it was the best restaurant they had ever discovered. While these desert squirrels were naturally afraid of people, one of them seemed to reach the conclusion that we were

harmless, and he did not seem to be afraid of us. He was perhaps one of the young males that had not learned of the danger of getting too familiar with strangers. We set up the camera and soon he accepted that, too, as harmless. At one time he climbed up on the little creosote bush, curious to see what we were doing.

One day when Irene was sitting near the bush with some food in her hand, he scrambled right up as if she was holding out on him. She was afraid he might get avaricious, so she put gloves on. Every day he became tamer, and I had a chance to get good pictures. While she was sitting quietly, he came right up to get a piece of lettuce from her hand. The best picture I got was when she was sitting at the side of his bush and he jumped on her glove, not to bite but to get all the food and jump back in the bush.

Of the different desert squirrels that we met, this was the only one that was really tame. Since the northern ground squirrel is injurious to crops and has been shot a good deal, he is much wilder and harder to approach.

The tamest squirrels that we have seen are the golden-mantled ground squirrels in the National Parks. They know they are protected and make the most of it. They are tamer than chickens on a farm. They don't wait for an invitation to climb all over one and search his pockets. Like the canny chipmunks, they are wary outside the Parks, but over friendly inside.

Among the handsomest squirrels are those tree-climbers that have broad tails and can leap from branch to branch. They have a hoarse bark and build large nests of twigs and leaves in which to rear their young. They also use hollows in tree trunks as dwelling places. They are often called silver-gray squirrels.

The red or pine squirrel is usually the commonest one in many regions of the country. They are smaller than the gray squirrel and are always found in the timbered areas. The home nest is usually in a tree cavity or an old woodpecker's nest. The red squirrel has gained a reputation as a robber of bird nests and some naturalists think it is the most carnivorous of our squirrels.