SHERMAN’S FOX SQUIRREL

*Sciurus niger shermani*

**Order:** Rodentia  
**Family:** Sciuridae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G5T3/S3  
**U.S. Status:** none  
**FL Status:** Special Concern

**Description:** A large (23 - 28 in. = 600 - 700 mm) tree squirrel with highly variable dorsal fur color ranging from nearly all black (uncommon) to silver, with variations of black over silver and silver over black. Underside is tan. Head is generally black; ears and muzzle are often white. Tail is long, nearly the length of the head and torso. Nests are usually in oak trees and are constructed of oak leaves and Spanish moss.

**Similar Species:** Gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) is smaller (less than 19 in. = 500 mm). Subspecies include the Mangrove Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger avicennia*), which occurs southwest of Lake Okeechobee and south of the Caloosahatchee River, and the Southeastern Fox Squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*), which does not occur in peninsular Florida.

**Habitat:** Sandhills (high pine), pine flatwoods, and pastures and other open, ruderal habitats with scattered pines and oaks. Depends on a variety of oak trees for seasonal food and nest material. Longleaf pine cones and seeds are important foods.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Active year-round.

**Florida Distribution:** East of the Aucilla River. Overall range includes about half of the state, but habitat is very patchy within this range. Squirrel certainly occupies less than 10% of state.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Peninsular Florida (excluding southwestern portion) north to central Georgia.

**Conservation Status:** Although present in several conservation areas, Sherman's fox squirrel has been eliminated from much of its former habitat as a result of conversion to pine plantation, row crops, or development.

**Protection and Management:** Encourage prescribed fire on public and private lands. Burn habitat every two to five years (April - July if possible) to control shrubby vegetation and maintain park-like conditions.

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