

## SOUTHEASTERN FOX SQUIRREL

*Sciurus niger niger*

**Order:** Rodentia  
**Family:** Scuriidae  
**FNAI Ranks:** G5T5/S3  
**U.S. Status:** none  
**FL Status:** none



**Description:** Large tree squirrel, 17 - 27 inches total length (45 - 70 cm) with a bushy tail. Fur color range can include grizzled brown, rusty brown, black, or silver, often with face darker than the rest of the body. Some individuals entirely black or entirely silver.

**Similar Species:** Gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) is smaller (less than 19 in. = 500 mm), more gray. The Big Cypress fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger avicennia*) is a subspecies that occurs southwest of Lake Okeechobee and south of the Caloosahatchee River. Based on genetic studies, subspecies *shermani* is no longer considered valid and is now included in *S. niger niger* (Austin et al. 2018).

**Habitat:** Sandhill, upland pine, and mesic flatwoods.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Year-round.

**Florida Distribution:** Statewide, south to the Caloosahatchee River along the Gulf Coast and Palm Beach County along the Atlantic Coast.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Southeastern Coastal Plain from Virginia south to southern Florida.

**Conservation Status:** Although present in many conservation areas, the southeastern fox squirrel has been eliminated from much of its former habitat as a result of conversion to pine plantation, row crops, golf courses, and development.

**Protection and Management:** Avoid removal of mature oaks within open, savanna-like pine forests. Fire return intervals should be five years or less.

**References:** Brown 1997, Greene and McCleery 2017b, Hall 1981, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Koprowski 1994, Whitaker 1996.



A grizzled brown individual. © Michael Weisensee



A black and gray individual. © Cheri Phillips