

## SOUTHERN FLYING SQUIRREL (*Glaucomys volans*)

### **Description**

The southern flying squirrel has grayish to brownish fur on its back with blackish under fur. The underside/belly is white. Its broad flattened tail is brownish gray on top and paler gray underneath. It is distinguished from other squirrels by its very nocturnal nature and a loose fold of skin that extends from the outside of the wrist on the front leg to the ankle on the hind leg. When the legs are outstretched, this skin is used to glide from a high perch to a lower tree or the ground. It has long tactile whiskers, prominent ears, and large black eyes. Its total length is 8 to 11 inches, and its tail is 3 to 5 inches long. The southern flying squirrel is the most "carnivorous" of the squirrels eating plant and animal foods. Throughout the rest of the year it also feeds on insects in spring; nuts, seeds, and fruits.

### **Distribution**

The southern flying squirrel inhabits most of the eastern United States. In Nebraska, it is found only in the extreme eastern and southeastern parts of the state.

### **Habitat**

Southern flying squirrels inhabit heavy, deciduous forested areas that contain mast-producing trees. Often, they prefer an area with an abundance of dead standing timber and oak, walnut, and hickory trees. They may also be found in old orchards. They make small dens in old woodpecker nest cavities or other hollows 20 to 30 feet from the ground.

### **Status**

Global: G5-Secure. Federally not listed. State Threatened. Nebraska: S1-Critically Imperiled. There is much about these squirrels that is not presently known. They are difficult to study because of their nocturnal habits. Threats include loss of habitat and loss of cavity-bearing and mast-producing trees. In Arkansas, a seed-tree harvest regime, particularly without retained overstory hardwoods, produced a level of disturbance and resource depletion that was too severe for flying squirrel persistence.

### **Management**

As of 1991, there were 100 nest boxes at 5 locations in southeastern Nebraska in an attempt to determine status and distribution. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission plans to do more research on southern flying squirrel habitat availability, movements, home range, and mortality.

### **More Information**

<http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/flysqu.asp>