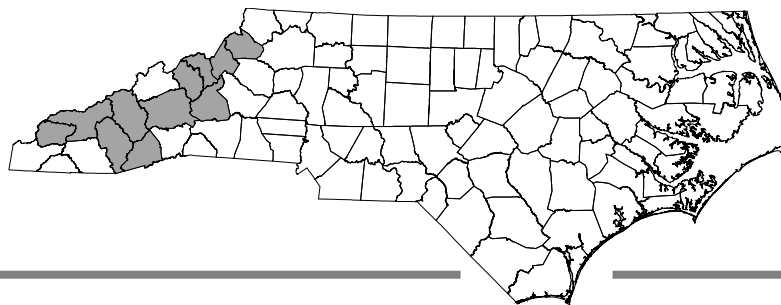


---

# Carolina northern flying squirrel

*Glaucomys sabrinus coloratus*

Endangered (July 1, 1985)



**Description:** This nocturnal squirrel is medium-sized, 10-12 inches (26-30.5 cm) in total length, with a broad, flattened tail, prominent large black eyes, and dense silky fur. The patagia, a large fold of fully haired skin, runs from the front legs to the hind legs and enables the squirrel to glide, a characteristic of this genus. The squirrel is brownish or grayish on the back, with a whitish underside. Juveniles have slate gray backs. Northern flying squirrels are larger than Southern flying squirrels (*G. volans*), and have hairs on the stomach that are gray at the base, while those of the Southern flying squirrel are whitish from tip to base.

**Life History:** Is omnivorous, subsisting on lichens, hypogeous fungi as well as seeds, buds, fruit, staminate cones, catkins, tree sap, and insects.

**Habitat:** Favors the ecotone between coniferous (red spruce and Fraser fir) and mature northern hardwood forests (beech, yellow birch, maple, hemlock, red oak, and buckeye). Also inhabits northern hardwood with hemlock in the absence of spruce and fir. Prefers moist forest with widely spaced, mature trees and moderate to thick evergreen understory, and large numbers of dead snags. Elevations are usually above 4500 ft (1400 m), or narrow, north-facing valleys above 4000 ft. (1200 m). Dependence on fungi may be a factor in restricting species to cold, moist, high elevations. In winter, squirrels inhabit tree cavities in older hardwoods, particularly yellow birch (*Betula*

*alleghaniensis*). Leaf and twig nests (“drey” nests) are used primarily in summer and are usually found in the limbs of spruce trees. Colonies aggregated in island-like distribution.

**Distribution:** A Southern Appalachian subspecies, it is isolated in localities in Avery, Buncombe, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Mitchell, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey counties.

**Threats:** Habitat destruction from logging, clear cutting, certain forest management practices, and recreational development has adversely affected populations, in some cases by allowing displacement by more aggressive *G. volans* in areas where the two species’ ranges overlap. Infection by the parasitic nematode, *Strongyloides*, carried by the Southern flying squirrel, is also a threat.

**Management Recommendations:** Preservation of high elevation forests and bogs, including both spruce-fir stands and adjacent zones of northern hardwood vegetation.

*Sources: Cooper et al. 1977, Murdock pers. com., Terwilliger et al. 1995, USFWS 1992a, Weigl 1987.*

