High Risk in all regions of the Okanagan

Limited population with significant potential to spread in the region

Eastern Grey Squirrel

Sciurus carolinensis

DESCRIPTION

- Eastern grey squirrels are identifiable by their dark to pale grey backs that may be brushed with cinnamon on hips, feet, and head
- Ears are buff to grey to white, and its tail is white to pale grey

In the South Okanagan, they can be confused with the larger Eastern Fox Squirrel (also an introduced species) which has a long, bushy tail and variable colouration. However, the common name 'fox squirrel' refers to the yellowish-red, fox-like colour that is common in this species.

R. Howie

Eastern Grey Squirrel

HABITAT

Eastern grey squirrels have taken up residence in the deciduous woodlands of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, and have now made their way into the Southern Interior, primarily in the Okanagan Valley. In the Okanagan, they have adapted to residential properties, living in low elevation deciduous and coniferous forests.

LOOK-A-LIKE

Eastern Fox Squirrel
(Sciurus niger)
Generally, Eastern grey squirrels can be told apart from Eastern fox squirrels by their white tipped fur and white or grayish belly.

Pixabay

Eastern Fox Squirrel

IMPACT AND RISKS

- Economically, Eastern grey squirrels cost homeowners repairs due to digging up of lawns and gardens, chewing through electrical wires, eaves and shingles, and nesting in roofs, attics, and chimneys.
- These squirrels will also chew into the bark of fruit and nut trees and vines, reducing productivity.
- Eastern grey squirrels deplete populations of native squirrels through competition and disease, and displace native birds of their nesting habitat, eating the birds' eggs and nestlings.
- They also compete with native mice and voles.

PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

To prevent their spread, landowners can consider the following measures:

- Don't feed or relocate squirrels
- Keep all compost, garbage and pet food covered
- Use squirrel-proof bird feeders

TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL

At this time there is no official treatment and disposal protocol in BC.

B. Handfield

Eastern Grey Squirrel

C. Berry

Eastern Grey (Black phase) Squirrel, Kelowna

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