

## Frequently Asked Questions: Eastern Grey Squirrels

### Q. What is an alien species?

A. An alien species is a non-native or introduced species that is transported to a new region where it becomes established. Also called invasive or introduced species.

For further information on alien species please visit the ministry website:

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/aliensp/>

### Q. How can you tell the difference between the Eastern Grey Squirrel and the Native Red Squirrel?

A.

#### Eastern Grey Squirrel Physical Characteristics:

- Large body, twice the size of the native Red Squirrel
- Large, fat, bushy tail
- Tail curls over head when resting
- Grey or black in colour



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#### Native Red Squirrel Physical Characteristics:

- Body, head, and tail are olive brown or rusty red
- Less bushy tail than grey, sometimes tipped with black
- Tail does not curl over head when resting
- White eye-ring
- Approximately half the size of the Eastern Grey Squirrel

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**Q. Why are Eastern Grey Squirrels a problem on Vancouver Island?**

**A.** They cause damage to homes, gardens, and farms by:

- Digging up lawns and eating garden bulbs
- Chewing on wire, removing shingles and shakes, and chewing through eaves to nest in attics, roofs and chimneys
- Damaging nut trees and depleting nut production (hazelnuts and walnuts)
- Removing bark from trees

They are a threat to our native species because they:

- Compete with and displace native Red Squirrels
- Transfer disease to Red Squirrels
- Compete with native birds for tree cavities and bird feeders; eat bird eggs and nestlings
- Damage Garry Oak trees by stripping bark and eating acorns; eat the bulbs of Camas flowers

**Q. What are other signs Eastern Grey Squirrels may be in the area?**

**A.** Eastern Grey Squirrels often nest in dreys, located on tree branches, typically made of leaves and twigs. See image below:



**Q. If I report a squirrel sighting will the Ministry of Environment harm the animal(s)?**

**A.** Ministry of Environment will not harm the animal(s). The purpose of the contact information is for the public to report Eastern Grey Squirrel sightings, allowing the Ministry of Environment to determine their distribution on Vancouver Island.

**Q. What is the ultimate goal of this outreach? How will it help in the future?**

**A.** The ultimate goal of this outreach is to educate the public that the Eastern Grey Squirrel is a non-native species and can have either grey or black colouring. Another main goal of the public outreach is to encourage the public to report sightings of Eastern Grey Squirrels. These reports will allow the Ministry of Environment to obtain an accurate distribution of Eastern Grey Squirrels on Vancouver Island and minimize their future spread.

**Q. How can the landowners, community, and naturalist groups help?**

**A.** The Landowners, community, and naturalist groups can help by:

- Reporting sightings of Eastern Grey Squirrels on their property or elsewhere on Vancouver Island; north of Duncan, west of Sooke, in Lake Cowichan or Cobble Hill area, or on the Gulf Islands
- Not feeding or relocating Eastern Grey Squirrels
- Controlling access to garbage, compost, and bird feed
- Using a squirrel-proof bird feeder or adding squirrel deterrent to bird feed
- Count number of individual Eastern Grey Squirrels and report to the Ministry of Environment
- Observe **when** during the year Eastern Grey Squirrels are present (seasonal or year-round)
- Report presence of **both** the native Red Squirrel **and** the introduced Eastern Grey Squirrel in the same area, helpful in researching their interaction.

## **Landowner Q & A**

### **Q. What can the landowner do?**

#### **A. Basic Management Practices:**

- Do not feed the Eastern Grey Squirrels
- Do not relocate the Eastern Grey Squirrels
- Control access to garbage, compost, and bird feed
- Purchase squirrel deterrent for bird seed to repel squirrels and still attract birds
  - Available online
  - OR use ground cayenne pepper mixed in with the bird seed
- Use squirrel-proof bird feeders

How to get rid of Eastern Grey Squirrels on the landowner's property:

- Hire a trapper that will remove the Eastern Grey Squirrels
- Buy a trap and trap the squirrel(s) yourself
  - Locations to buy traps: local hardware or feed store
  - Size of trap: 7" x 8" x 24"
  - Traps also available online
- Call a pest company

### **Q. Does Ministry of Environment cover the expenses to remove Eastern Grey Squirrels from landowner's property?**

**A.** Ministry of Environment does not provide funding to remove Eastern Grey Squirrels from the landowner's property; the landowner can follow the above management procedures to remove the Eastern Grey Squirrels.

### **Q. How can the Ministry of Environment help?**

**A.** The Ministry of Environment can help by providing landowners with management procedures and potential solutions for Eastern Grey Squirrel removal.

### **Q. What size of trap does the landowner buy?**

**A.** The size of trap suitable to capture Eastern Grey Squirrels is 7" x 8" x 24".

### **Q. What do I use as bait in the trap?**

**A.** Peanut butter or peanut butter with unshelled peanuts placed on the trap pan of the trap. Also, dried corn (available at local feed store), walnuts, or hazelnuts can be used as bait.

## Q. What are the regulations on hunting/trapping Eastern Grey Squirrels?

A. Eastern Grey Squirrels are under Schedule C of the Wildlife Act, which states that they can be captured or killed anywhere, at any time, in B.C. You do not need a permit or Provincial hunting license to kill Eastern Grey Squirrels.

### i. Trapping

#### (a) Live Traps

- A trapping permit is not required for live trapping on private property (with permission of the landowner)
- It is illegal to relocate live-trapped Eastern Grey Squirrels beyond 1 km in Region 1 (i.e., Vancouver Island, associated islands, portions of mainland) without a permit
- Humane euthanasia methods must be used

#### (b) Killing Traps

- You are not required to have a permit to use killing traps for Schedule C non-native wildlife, if you use a size smaller than a #330 conibear and set at a distance greater than 200 m from a dwelling
- A provincial permit is required to use a killing trap within 200 m of a dwelling
- Killing traps should **only** be used where there is **no** evidence of native Red Squirrels occupying the area where the trapping is to occur; if not sure, use the live trap method so caught Red Squirrels can be released
- Killing Traps: “Kania” Trap, Victor Snap Trap (set in Cubby Box nailed to tree, baited with unsalted peanut butter)

### ii. Hunting

- A permit or Provincial hunting license is not required to hunt/kill Eastern Grey Squirrels
- You must follow all applicable federal, provincial, and municipal regulations restricting and controlling the use of firearms, hunting and trapping methods
- Federal Firearms Licensing for the possession and use of firearms apply
- 0.22 caliber single projectile firearm with long rifle bird shot can be used in shotgun areas only
- Contact your Municipal Bylaw Officer for further information on discharge of firearms within local government areas

## **IF YOU TRAP EASTERN GREY SQUIRRELS:**

- Trap wildlife with respect
- Do not harass, disturb, or expose to a lot of people
- Check the trap daily and rebait if necessary
- Do not leave the trap open if there is no one to check the trap on a daily basis, to ensure that no trapped wildlife is neglected
- If you have trapped a squirrel, check the pictures and physical characteristics listed above to ensure you have a trapped an Eastern Grey Squirrel not a native Red Squirrel or see the information on the brochure:  
[http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/van-island/wildweb/pdf/alien\\_sp\\_alert\\_brochure291009.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/van-island/wildweb/pdf/alien_sp_alert_brochure291009.pdf)
- Do not relocate the Eastern Grey Squirrel