



Grey Squirrel



Latin: *Sciurus carolinensis*
Irish: *Iora Glas*

Size: Approximately 25cm, with a tail length of 20cm

Months seen: All year

Habitat: Woodlands, parks, gardens.

Home: They build their dreys, or nests, using twigs, bark, leaves, grass and moss. These are enclosed in the wintertime to provide more shelter from strong winds and bad weather.

Food: The grey squirrel mainly eats nuts and seeds. Its front teeth grow continually. In order to prevent them getting too long, they need to constantly nibble on something to grind them down. They also chew on the bark of young trees which can often be fatal for the plant, and will raid vegetable patches, orchards and bird feeders.

Features: The grey squirrel has a brown/grey coat with a white belly.

Squirrels bury nuts and acorns during the autumn so they will have enough food during the winter when it is scarce. They are diurnal, or day-time animals and spend a lot of time on the ground. During the summer and autumn, they spend more time in the trees gathering food for the winter.

The breeding season for squirrels starts in January and continues until the end of June, and it is during this period that they are most frequently seen. A litter usually consists of 3-7 young, born blind and furless. Like the red squirrel, most grey squirrels do not survive their first winter.

The grey squirrels in Ireland originally came from the deciduous woods of the north-eastern United States and Canada. They were introduced to Ireland in 1911 and today are found in most counties. They pose a big threat to the native red squirrels as they out-compete them for food and territory, and carry a disease that will kill them.

