



SQUIRREL

ANIMAL ID

SEASON INFORMATION

HUNTING TIPS

Often thought of as the gateway to hunting, pursuing squirrels can be one of the best ways to increase your hunting prowess. These forest wildlife species are at the bottom of the food chain, meaning they have great escape skills. You'll have to work on stealth and cunning to be a successful squirrel hunter. But don't get frustrated if one escapes you because there is likely another over the next hill.

IDENTIFICATION

Iowa has two species of tree squirrels available for hunting. The larger fox squirrel can be distinguished by its "fox" like red coat. This species is often associated with more open timber or woodlots. It will reach a body size of up to two pounds. The smaller and sometimes more skittish gray squirrel is associated with larger blocks of more mature timber.



Fox Squirrel

Both are considered cavity nesters, making dens in hollow trees and occasionally building a nest from leaves packed

into a tree fork. These drays are usually adequate but in extreme colds sometimes will not provide enough protection.

Breeding begins in mid-January and again in June allowing for plenty of fall opportunities.

IOWA SQUIRREL SEASON INFORMATION

Squirrel hunting regulations appear in the *Iowa Hunting & Trapping* regulations online and from license retailers.



SHOOTING HOURS:	No restrictions
BAG LIMITS:	Daily limit 6; possession limit 12
LOCATIONS:	Entire state is open to hunting
LICENSE AND FEES:	Small game license & habitat fee

PLACES TO HUNT:

- **HUNTING ATLAS** shows all areas in the state open to public hunting, type of wildlife likely found in the area, open seasons and any restrictions. www.iowadnr.gov/hunting
- Iowa Habitat Access Program (**IHAP**) allows hunter access to private land in exchange for habitat improvement on the site. www.iowadnr.gov/ihap

HUNTING TIPS

GUN CHOICE:

Popular options include .410 shotguns or .22 rifles, depending upon skill level. Smaller in stature than larger shotguns, the .410s reduced recoil is welcomed as squirrel hunting may allow for many shots throughout the day. Small loads (7/8 once) and small shot (7 1/2-9s) are preferred. Others like the .22 caliber rifle in either the short or long version. Accompanied with a scope this short distance accurate gun can allow for a different style of hunting that also makes for a “cleaner” kill.

Be aware of squirrel’s socially protective nature. If one squirrel sees a potential predator they will “bark” sending all squirrels into cover, not to return until they hear other squirrels feeding. This means a hunter must move slowly and with purpose when hunting. Simply walking through the woods will result in a long walk.

Take a friend along. Squirrel hunting in pairs can improve success. When feeling threatened, squirrels will often slide to the backside of a tree where it cannot be seen. If hunter # 1 can be the focus of the squirrel while hunter # 2 slips around to the back of the tree, hunter # 2 will be in position for a clear shot when the squirrel flees to the backside of the tree to hide from hunter # 1.

WHEN TO HUNT:

Squirrel hunting is a very enjoyable early fall sport. Early morning provides great opportunities in the early fall. Cool nighttime temperatures will get the squirrels out to feel the warm early morning rays of sun. Cooler temperatures will also keep some insects at bay. Evening hunting can be just as productive as feeding can increase prior to sunset.



Gray Squirrel

WHERE TO HUNT SQUIRRELS IN IOWA:

Squirrels are found throughout the state in any area that provides forested habitat. Look for areas with large oak trees and hickory groves.

Areas with larger trees will provide denning trees. Squirrels will cover about a 1-2 acre area.

Excellent eyesight and hearing means that a hunter’s skills will need to be honed for better success. Camouflage clothing is preferred but not required. A keen ability to move slowly and quietly through the woods is a necessity.

Squirrels can be lured out with calls, but location is probably the most important factor when finding squirrels.

Take advantage of the early fall leaves to help conceal your location. As leaves fall from trees squirrels can see farther through the woods. Also crunchy leaves are not a hunter’s friend.

SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE:

- Always be careful if shooting up into trees. Rifles can travel great distances.
- Take good shots as wounded squirrels will quickly retreat into holes and will not be recoverable.
- Do not leave squirrel remains visible to others in parking areas.
- Rifles should be sighted in prior to hunting for greater accuracy. Do not shoot at signs for practice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
on where to hunt in your local area,
contact your regional DNR wildlife biologist.