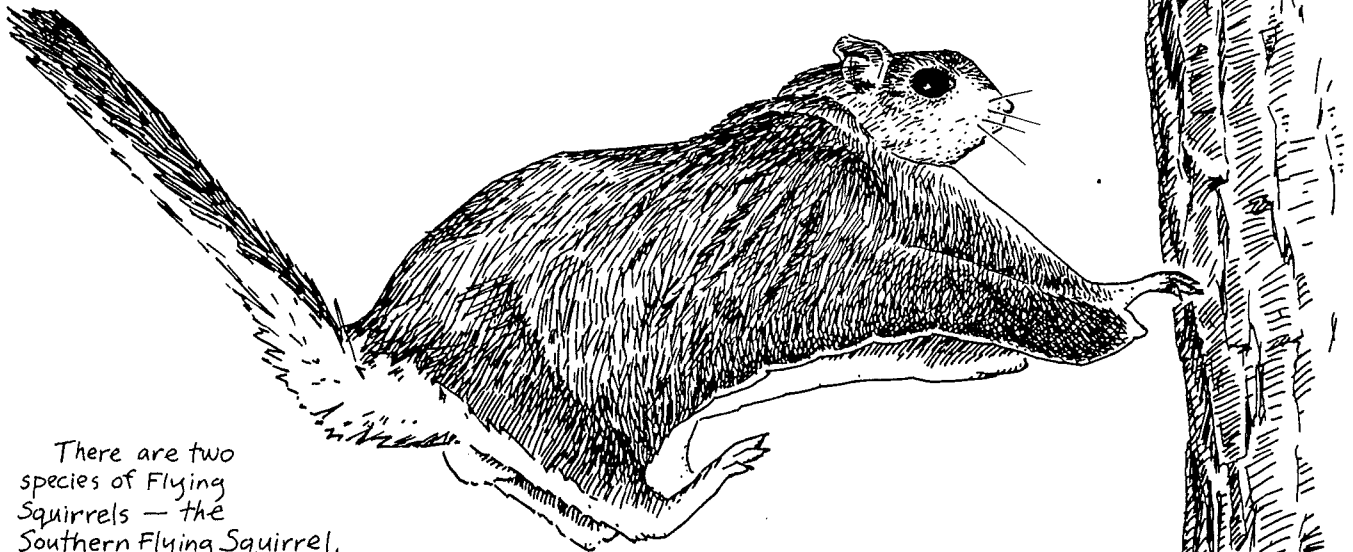


River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

FLYING SQUIRRELS



There are two species of Flying Squirrels — the Southern Flying Squirrel, *Glaucomys volans* (shown in the drawing), found in the mature hardwood forests of southeastern Minnesota, and the Northern Flying Squirrel, *Glaucomys sabrinus*, found primarily in the coniferous belt of northern Minnesota.

Both Flying Squirrels should be called gliding squirrels, since they do not fly, but glide. Unlike bats, which are true flyers, Flying Squirrels cannot maintain or increase altitude. They do maneuver very well during their descent from high in a tree, and can dodge obstacles, change course, and with a fast upward flip of the tail break their speed and come to a smooth stop at the base of a distant tree.

Flying Squirrels have fur-covered membranes which extend between the front and hind feet. This membrane is extended when the animal glides.

A further aid and control in gliding is the flattened tail. The fur is soft and silky, and the eyes are large and well adapted to night vision. They usually have their homes in old woodpecker holes, or other cavities in trees. Sometimes their nests are made of leaves. Flying Squirrels are very nocturnal and therefore rarely seen.

The Southern Flying Squirrel is grayish-brown in color on the back and sides. The belly is pure white. It may have two litters of three or four in a season, the first in May or June. -text by Orwin A. Rustad