

[From Spring 1995]

## **Delmarva Fox Squirrel Nest Box Survey**

The Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel box check was conducted on the night of January 17th. In addition to Chincoteague Refuge staff and volunteers, individuals from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Endangered Species Division, Virginia Museum of Natural History, Virginia Natural Heritage Program, and the Virginia District Game Biologist assisted in the box check. Although milder than normal temperatures made for a pleasant evening in the woods, squirrel box usage was substantially lower as a result. Only 20% of the boxes checked contained squirrels, compared to 36% the previous year. A majority of boxes did contain squirrel nests even though they were not occupied at the time of the survey. A total of 15 Delmarva fox squirrels were found, compared to 59 last year, with two escaping before they could be examined. Two of the squirrels that were checked had been ear-tagged in previous years. In addition to squirrels, boxes were utilized by a flicker and four nesting screech owls. No gray squirrels were found this year.

A number of boxes have been removed or will need to be moved in the future, due to the southern pine beetle infestation of the tree. The most obvious areas affected are the Wildlife Loop and the Woodland Trail. Many of the trees in these areas will be cut to allow regeneration of the understory and oak saplings will be planted. This will provide the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel and other wildlife species with a more diverse habitat and food source in the future.

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