

[From Summer 1996]

## **Delmarva Fox Squirrel Trapping a Success!**

The 1996 Delmarva fox squirrel trapping period was the most successful yet. Initiated in 1994, trapping success has continued to improve each year. A total of 21 fox squirrels were captured this year during the trapping period which concluded in April. This was almost double last year's total of 11 squirrels.

Trapping is conducted as part of the mark-recapture study used to provide information on population trends, reproductive success, and general health of the fox squirrels. It is used in conjunction with the squirrel nest box check which takes place each winter. During both the box check and trapping, squirrels are weighed, reproductive status is determined, and observable signs of health are checked. If the squirrel has never been captured before, numbered tags are placed on its ears. Ear tag numbers are recorded for squirrels which have been tagged previously.

Twelve of the 21 squirrels trapped were already tagged. Half of these tagged squirrels had been captured on the 1996 nest box check in February; the other half were tagged in previous years.

The Woodland Trail was the most successful trapping area with 11 squirrels. The Headquarters and White Hills areas were also productive, with four squirrels and three squirrels, respectively. No squirrels were captured on the Wildlife Loop. This area had been prime fox squirrel habitat prior to the pine bark beetle infestation. The trees destroyed by the beetles were cut and burned or removed to allow for natural regeneration. In addition, water oak saplings and small loblolly pines were planted in the area to decrease the time needed until the Wildlife Loop can again be good squirrel habitat. To date, over 2000 water oak, loblolly pines, flowering dogwoods, southern red oaks, and persimmon seedlings and saplings have been planted throughout the cut areas by refuge staff and volunteers.

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