

[From Winter 1999]

## **Look Out!!**

"Uh Oh!! Run!! Hurry!! Hide!! They're back. Oh no - there are more of them than last year! Humph! She caught me -help!" Twenty minutes later - "Do you like my new jewelry? The earrings are definitely me, but I'm not sure about this collar. I would have picked a different color."

Can you imagine what the endangered Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrels (DFS) must think after being captured, ear tagged and radio collared? Starting in the spring of 2000, you may see DFS running around with radio collars. The interns and I (and any other warm body that wants to help) will be capturing DFS and placing radio collars on 20 of them. All squirrels will receive ear tags, and squirrels at the Woodland Trail study site will receive passive integrated transponders (PIT) tags and ear tags.

Ear tags are a semi-permanent marking device currently used to mark squirrels. Being able to identify squirrels and know how many times they have been captured will help us in determining population, and other vital information.

PIT tags are about the size of a grain of rice and are injected under the skin of the squirrel. Basically we give them a shot. The PIT tag is read with a reader (it looks like an iron) that triggers the tag to send back an individual identification number. PIT tags have not been used on the refuge prior to this study, but have been successfully used in other studies.

They have several advantages over ear tags. They are permanent (with a life span of 99 years), their rate of loss is much lower than ear tags, and they cannot be torn out.

So what is the point of all this? This study will attempt to determine the impact of timber harvest on the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel. No, we will not be cutting down trees. The trees were cut down from 1994 to 1996 to control the infestation of the southern pine bark beetle (SPB). This study will be looking at the effects the control measures had, or are having, on the DFS. The objectives of this study are to: 1) develop population estimates of the DFS on the refuge, 2) estimate DFS habitat use of the SPB damaged areas, 3) compare effectiveness of PIT tags and ear tags as marking device for the DFS, and 4) develop management recommendations for CNWR regarding the DFS.

Sound like fun? We will be conducting nest box checks in January and live trapping in March and April. Lots of volunteers are needed to assist in the box checks. It takes a minimum of 12 people each night, and there will be three to four box checks conducted. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kendra Willett at 757-336-6122 or e-mail at:

[Kendra\\_Willett@fws.gov](mailto:Kendra_Willett@fws.gov)

Box checks are tentatively scheduled for every Wednesday in January. See you in the New Year.

Kendra Pednault-Willett

Biological Technician, CNWR