

Siberian Chipmunk

Scan for more
information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Tamias sibiricus*

Native to: North European Russia, China, Korea and Japan

Habitat: Woodland with understorey

The Siberian chipmunk is a small striped squirrel with a long bushy sandy grey tail, sandy grey fur and two black stripes running from head to tail.

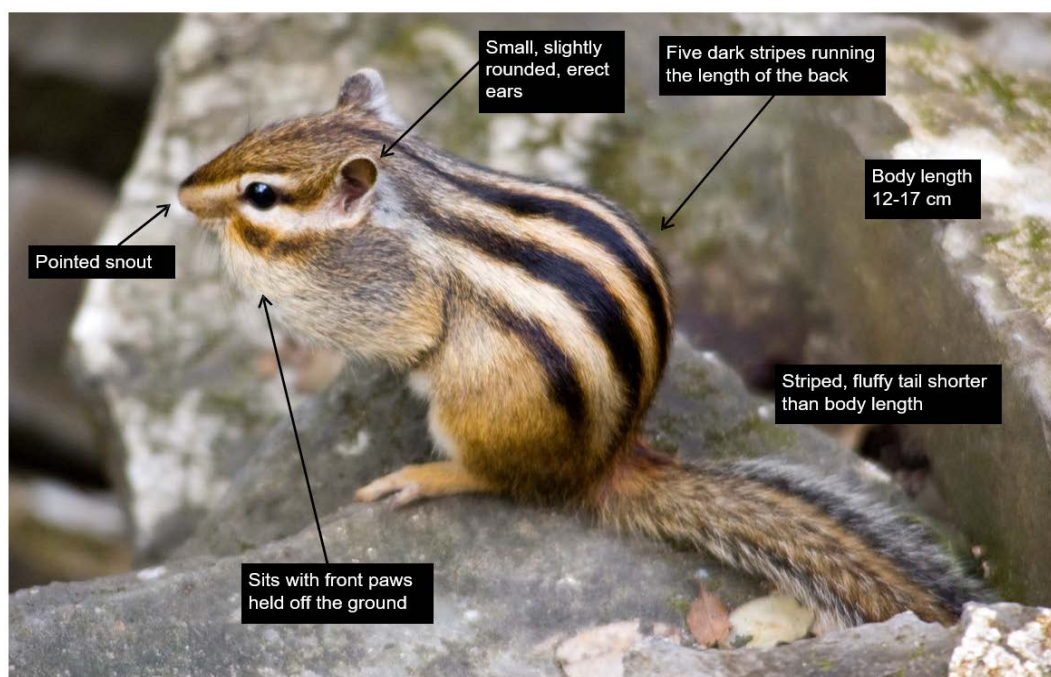
It was introduced into Europe as a pet in the 1960s. Since then, individuals have escaped or been deliberately released from captivity. So far, isolated wild populations have been recorded in woodlands, suburban forests and urban parks in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands. Siberian Chipmunk is not present in Northern Ireland.

If introduced to Northern Ireland it would likely compete with native rodents and may have a local impact on ground-nesting birds. Where established the Siberian chipmunk can also cause significant damage to crops, gardens and orchards and it is a potential host for various infectious diseases, such as Lyme disease or rabies, and parasites.

Under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is offence to intentionally keep; breed; transport to, from or within Northern Ireland, use or exchange Siberian chipmunk; or to release it into the environment.



Key ID Features



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>

Identification throughout the year

The Siberian chipmunk does not vary in colouration during the year. In the wild, chipmunks hibernate from late autumn to early spring.

Distribution

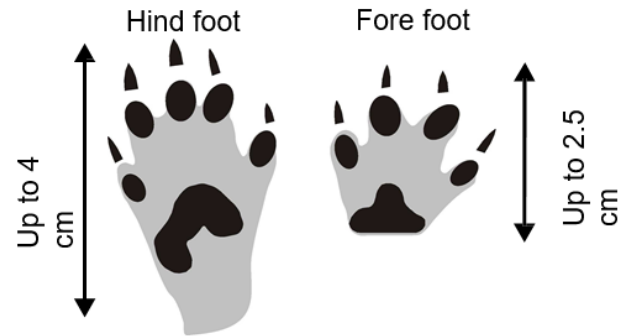
Siberian chipmunks have escaped from captivity in small numbers however these have been caught and accounted for. There are no known feral populations of Siberian chipmunk in Northern Ireland.

Field Signs

Female chipmunks make a loud, repeated “chip” call during the early spring and early summer to attract a mate.

Tracks and field signs very similar to other squirrels and should not be relied upon for identification.

Tracks are small with four toes on their forepaws and five toes on hind paws. Tracks show pointed claws at the end of toes.



Similar Species

Grey squirrel

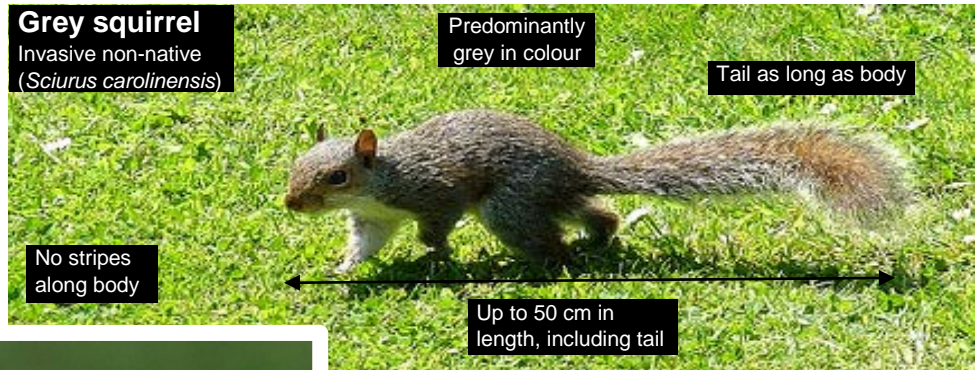
Invasive non-native
(*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Predominantly
grey in colour

Tail as long as body

No stripes
along body

Up to 50 cm in
length, including tail



Edible Dormouse

Non-native
(*Glis glis*)

More rounded
snout

Total length
14-20 cm

Grey in colour

Rounded body



Siberian chipmunk

Invasive non-native
(*Tamias sibiricus*)
For comparison



References and further reading:

Brown, R, Lawrence, MJ and Pope J (2004)
“*Animals Tracks Trails and Signs*”. Hamlyn
Photos from: Andi W, Christine Kaucher, Ian
White.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Adapted for Northern Ireland
Environment Agency 2020