

ARIZONA EDVENTURES

Mount Graham Red Squirrel



The Mount Graham Red Squirrel is an endangered subspecies of the American Red Squirrel. It is a small squirrel, measuring about 8-12 inches in length. The Pinaleno Mountains of Arizona, which include Mount Graham, are home to the only population of these squirrels, which have been listed as endangered since 1987. After a population peak in 1998-2000, when the number of squirrels was estimated as high as 549, their numbers have since rapidly declined. During that time, fire and insect infestations destroyed much of the squirrels' prime habitat in the mixed-conifer and spruce-fir forest. Drought, poor cone crops, and competition with the introduced Abert's squirrel are additional factors contributing to their decline. With population estimates down to just 214 Mount Graham Red Squirrels in 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service implemented an emergency action to trap four of the squirrels to live at the Phoenix Zoo as a refuge population in case a catastrophic wildfire ever occurs on Mount Graham. Despite their name, these squirrels are typically a rusty gray color with a white underbelly. They have a prominent white eye ring and the tail is gray with white flecks. Their diet consists mainly of seeds, acorns, conifer cones, mushrooms and other fungi.