



On Stone by W.E. Hitchcock

Orange-bellied Squirrel.

Drawn from Nature by J.J. Audubon, F.R.S.E.L.S.

Litho Printed & Col^d by J.T. Bowen, Philad^a

SCIURUS SUB-AURATUS.—BACH.

ORANGE - BELLIED SQUIRREL. — GOLDEN - BELLIED SQUIRREL.

PLATE LVIII.—MALE AND FEMALE

S. Magnitudine, S. migratorium superæns, S. Carolinensi cedens ; supra cinereus flavido-undatus, subtus saturate aureus, cauda corpore longiore.

CHARACTERS.

Size intermediate between the Northern gray and the little Carolina squirrel ; tail longer than the body ; colour, above, gray, with a wash of yellow ; beneath, deep golden yellow.

SYNONYME.

GOLDEN-BELLIED SQUIRREL, Sciurus Sub-auratus.—Bachman, Mon. Genus Sciurus, p. 12.

DESCRIPTION.

In the two specimens now before us, which are very similar in size and markings, there is no appearance of the small anterior upper molar found in several other species of this genus. We conclude, therefore, that it either does not exist at all, or drops out at a very early period ; and accordingly set down this species as having only twenty teeth, viz. :

$$\text{Incisive } \frac{2}{2} ; \text{ Canine } \frac{0-0}{0-0} ; \text{ Molar } \frac{4-4}{4-4} = 20.$$

The upper incisors are of moderate size ; their colour is deep orange brown ; the lower incisors are a little paler ; head, of medium size ; ears short and pointed, clothed with hair on both surfaces. The body seems more formed for sprightliness and agility than that of the small Carolina Squirrel, and in this respect comes nearest to the northern gray squirrel. The tail is long, and nearly as broad as that of the last named species.

COLOUR.

The whole upper surface gray, with a distinct yellow wash. The hairs which give this outward appearance are grayish slate colour at their base, then broadly annulated with yellowish, then black, and near the tips annulated with yellowish-white; sides of the face and neck, the whole of the inner side of the limbs, feet, and the under parts, deep golden yellow; on the cheeks and sides of the neck, however, the hairs are obscurely annulated with black and whitish; the ears are well clothed on both surfaces with tolerably long hair of the same deep golden hue as the sides of the face; hairs of the feet mostly blackish at the root, some obscurely tipped with black; hairs of the tail, black at the root, and the remaining portion bright rusty yellow; each hair annulated with black three times; the under surface of the tail is chiefly bright rusty yellow; whiskers, longer than the head, black.

DIMENSIONS.

						Inches.	Lines.
Length of head and body,	-	-	-	-	-	10	6
“ of tail, (vertebræ,)	-	-	-	-	-	9	2
“ including fur,	-	-	-	-	-	12	0
“ of palm to end of middle fore-claw,	-	-	-	-	-	1	7
“ of heel to point of middle nail,	-	-	-	-	-	2	7
“ of fur on the back,	-	-	-	-	-	0	7
Height of ear posteriorly,	-	-	-	-	-	0	5
Breadth of tail with hair extended,	-	-	-	-	-	8	6

Weight $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs.

HABITS.

During the winter season the city of New-Orleans is thronged by natives of almost every land, and the Levee (which is an embankment extending along the margin of the river) presents a scene so unlike anything American, that as we walk along its smooth surface we may imagine ourselves in some twenty different countries, as our eyes fall upon many a strange costume, whose wearer has come from afar, and is, like ourselves, perchance, intent on seeing the curiosities of this Salmagundi city. Here a Spanish gentleman from Cuba, or a Mexican, next a pirate or thief, perhaps, from the same countries; all Europe is here represented, and the languages of many parts of the world can be heard whilst walking even half a mile; the descendants of Africa are here metamorphosed

into French folks, and the gay bandanna that turbans the heads of the coloured women, is always adjusted with good taste, and is their favourite head-dress.

But the most interesting figures are the few straggling Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians, who bring a variety of game to the markets, and in their blankets, red flannel leggings, moccasins and bead finery, form a sort of dirty picturesque feature in the motley scene, and generally attract the artist's eye : many of these Indians have well formed legs and bodies, and their half-covered shoulders display a strength and symmetry indicating almost a perfect development of the manly form—their sinews and muscles being as large as is compatible with activity and grace. Whilst conversing with one of these remnants of a once numerous race, it was our good fortune to see for the first time the singular and beautiful little Orange-bellied Squirrel which the Indian hunter had brought with him along with other animals for sale, having procured it in the recesses of the forest on the borders of an extensive swamp.

Rarely indeed does the Orange-bellied Squirrel leave its solitary haunts and quit the cypress or sweet-gum shades, except to feed upon pecan-nuts, berries, persimmons, or other delicacies growing in the uplands ; and it does not hoard up the small acorn from the swamp-oak until late in the autumn, knowing that the mild winters of Louisiana are seldom cold enough to prevent it from catching an unlucky beetle from time to time during the middle of the day, or interfere with searches for food among the dry leaves and decaying vegetable substances in the woods. Besides, early in the year the red-maple buds will afford a treat to which this little squirrel turns with as much eagerness as the horse that has been kept all winter upon hay and corn, dashes into a fine field of grass in the month of May.

The hole inhabited by the present species is generally in some tall tree growing in the swamp, and perhaps sixty or one hundred yards from the dry land, and the animal passes to it from tree to tree, or along some fallen monarch of the woods, over the shallow water, keeping his large eye bent upon the surrounding lands in fear of some enemy ; and, in faith, he runs no little risk, for should the red-shouldered hawk, or the sharp-shinned, dart upon him, he is an easy prey ; or, on a warm day, a snake, called the "water moccasin," curled up in his way, might swallow him, "tail and all." But good fun it must be to see the sportsman following in pursuit, splashing and floundering through the water, sometimes half-leg deep, and at others only up to the ankles, but stumbling occasionally, and making the "water fly ;"

so that when he *has* a chance to pull trigger, he is certain to snap *both* barrels!

Of the breeding of this species we know nothing, nor can we say more of its habits, which are yet to be farther investigated.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

We have not heard of the occurrence of this species farther north than Louisiana, and think it probable its range will be found to extend west and south of that state into Texas, and perhaps Mexico.



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Sciurus sub-auratus, Orange-bellied Squirrel [Pl. LVIII, male and female]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 2, 67–70. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322563>.

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