SCIURUS MUSTELINUS.—AUD. and BACH.

WEASEL-LIKE SQUIRREL.

PLATE CLII.—MALE. Fig. 1.

S. Cervicæ longissima; caudâ corpore longiore; pilis curtis, rigidis, compressis, teretibus; omni corporis parte nigerrima.

CHARACTERS.

Neck, very long; tail, longer than the body; hair, short, rigid, adpressed, and glossy; the whole body, jet black.

SYNONYME.

SCIURUS MUSTELINUS—WEASEL SQUIRREL. Aud. and Bach., Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phil., Oct. 5, 1841, p. 32.

DESCRIPTION.

The unusually long neck of this species, together with its long slender body, and smooth lustrous hair, give it somewhat the appearance of a weasel, and suggested to us the specific name.

Ears, of moderate size, and nearly naked, there being only a few hairs on the borders; feet, covered with very short hairs, which only reach to the roots of the nails; tail, long, not bushy, moderately distichous.

COLOUR.

The hairs, in every part of the body, are deep black from the roots to the tips, and the surface is glossy.

DIMENSIONS.

	Inches.	Lines.
Length of head and body - - - - -	10	
“ tail, - - - - -	13	
From shoulder to point of nose, - - - - -	3	10
Tarsus, - - - - -	2	5
Height of ear posteriorly, - - - - -		6

HABITS.

The Weasel-like Squirrel feeds in the woody portions of California, on acorns, the seeds of the pines and other trees, and makes its nest in the oaks or nut-bearing pines of that country, which, from their broad spreading branches and dense leafy boughs, afford it security against the hunter, as with equal cunning and agility it hides itself, when alarmed, amid the evergreen foliage, and except when surprised on the ground or near the earth, and shot instantly, can seldom be killed. There is no more tantalizing game, in fact, and as the branches interlock at a moderate elevation from the ground, the animal easily goes from one tree to another, and so swiftly that it is not often to be traced in its course of flight along the boughs.

We are unacquainted with the time of this animal's breeding, but presume it brings forth about four or five young at a birth. The young of all species of squirrels with which we are familiar, are born blind, and remain without sight from four to six weeks. This is an admirable provision of nature for their safety, as were they able to use their eyes at an earlier period, they would doubtless be tempted to quit the security of the nest and venture on to the branches, before they had gained strength enough to preserve their footing, and would thus probably fall to the earth and be killed.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

The specimen from which our figure and description were made was procured in California. We have no authority for stating its northern or southern range, but consider it a western species—by which we mean that it is not found east of the Rocky Mountain chain.

GENERAL REMARKS.

From its thin covering of hair, being nearly destitute of the soft fur usually clothing the squirrels, this species may be considered as belonging to a moderate or warm climate. It differs widely from all the other species of Black Squirrel (as well as all black varieties of Squirrel), in our country. It has shorter and coarser hair than *S. capistratus*, and is destitute of the white nose and ears of that species, with none of the white tufts invariably found in *S. niger*; and has a smaller body, although a much longer tail than *S. Auduboni*, without the white, yellow, and brown annulations in the hair which characterize that species.

Fig 1

Fig 2

Drawn on Stone by W^m E. Hitchcock

Fig 1 Weasel-like Squirrel

Fig 2 Large Louisiana Black Squirrel

Drawn from Nature by J.W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col^d by J.T. Bowen, Phil

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Sciurus mustelinus, Weasel-like Squirrel [Pl. CLII, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 258–259. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322557>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/108515>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322557>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/322557>

Holding Institution

Duke University Libraries (archive.org)

Sponsored by

Duke University Libraries

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not provided. Contact Holding Institution to verify copyright status.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.