



Drawn on Stone by R. Tremblay

Richardson's Columbian Squirrel,
Male & Female.

Drawn from Nature by J.J. Audubon FRS, FLS.

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SCIURUS RICHARDSONII.—BACH.

RICHARDSON'S COLUMBIAN SQUIRREL.

PLATE V.—MALE AND FEMALE.

S. cauda corpore brevior, apice nigro; supra griseus, subtus sub-albidus, S. Hudsonico minor.

CHARACTERS.

Smaller than Sciurus Hudsonius; tail shorter than the body; rusty gray above, whitish beneath; extremity of the tail black.

SYNONYMES.

BROWN SQUIRREL, Lewis and Clarke, vol. iii., p. 37.

SCIURUS HUDSONIUS, var. B. Richardson, Fauna Boreali Americana, p. 190.

SCIURUS RICHARDSONII, Bachman, Proceedings Zool. Soc., London, 1838, (read Aug. 14, 1838.)

SCIURUS RICHARDSONII, Bach., Mag. Nat. Hist., London, new series, 1839, p. 113.

“ “ Bach., Silliman's Journal.

DESCRIPTION.

The upper incisors are small and of a light yellow colour; the lower are very thin and slender, and nearly white. The first or deciduous molar, as in all the smaller species of pine squirrel that we have examined, is wanting.

The body of this diminutive species is short, and does not present that appearance of lightness and agility which distinguishes the *Sciurus Hudsonius*. Head less elongated, forehead more arched, and nose a little more blunt, than in that species. Ears short; feet of moderate size; the third toe on the fore-feet but slightly longer than the second; claws, compressed, arched, and acute; tail shorter than the body. Thumb nail broad, flat, and blunt.

COLOUR.

Fur on the back, dark plumbeous from the roots, tipped with rusty brown and black, giving it a rusty gray appearance. It is less rufous than *Sciurus Hudsonius*, and lighter coloured than *Sciurus Douglassii*.

Feet, on their upper surface rufous; on the shoulders, forehead, ears, and along the thighs, there is a slight tinge of the same colour. Whiskers, (which are a little longer than the head,) black. The whole of the under surface, as well as a line around the eyes and a small patch above the nostrils, bluish-gray. The tail for about one-half its length presents on the upper surface a dark rufous appearance, many of the hairs being nearly black, pointed with light rufous. At the extremity of the tail and along it for about an inch and three-quarters, the hairs are black, a few of them slightly tipped with rufous. Hind-feet, from the heel to the palms thickly clothed with short adpressed light-coloured hairs; palms naked. The sides are marked by a line of black, commencing at the shoulder and terminating abruptly on the flanks; this line is about two inches in length, and four lines wide.

DIMENSIONS.

Length of head and body	-	-	-	-	-	6 $\frac{1}{3}$ inches.
Tail (vertebræ)	-	-	-	-	-	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ do.
Do., including fur	-	-	-	-	-	5 do.
Height of ear posteriorly	-	-	-	-	-	$\frac{3}{8}$ do.
Do., including fur	-	-	-	-	-	$\frac{5}{8}$ do.
Palm and middle fore-claw			-	-	-	1 $\frac{3}{8}$ do.
Sole and middle hind-claw	-	-	-	-	-	1 $\frac{7}{8}$ do.

HABITS.

The only knowledge we have obtained of the habits of this species, is contained in a note from Mr. TOWNSEND, who obtained the specimen from which the above description was taken. He remarks: "It is evidently a distinct species. Its habits are very different from the *Sciurus Hudsonius*. It frequents the pine trees in the high ranges of the Rocky Mountains west of the Great Chain, feeding upon the seeds contained in the cones. These seeds are large and white, and contain a good deal of nutriment. The Indians eat a great quantity of them, and esteem them good.

"The note of this squirrel is a loud jarring chatter, very different from the noise of *Sciurus Hudsonius*. It is not at all shy, frequently coming down to the foot of the tree to reconnoitre the passenger, and scolding at him vociferously. It is, I think, a scarce species."

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

LEWIS and CLARK speak of the "Brown Squirrel" as inhabiting the banks of the Columbia river. Our specimen is labelled, Rocky Moun

tains, Aug. 12, 1834. From Mr. TOWNSEND'S account, it exists on the mountains a little west of the highest ridge. It will be found no doubt to have an extensive range along those elevated regions.

In the Russian possessions to the Northward, it is replaced by the Downy Squirrel, (*Sc. lanuginosus*), and in the South, near the Californian Mountains, within the Territories of the United States, by another small species.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The first account we have of this species is from LEWIS and CLARK, who deposited a specimen in the Philadelphia Museum, where it still exists. We have compared this specimen with that brought by Mr. TOWNSEND, and find them identical. The description by LEWIS and CLARK (vol. iii., p. 37) is very creditable to the close observation and accuracy of those early explorers of the untrodden snows of the Rocky Mountains and the valleys beyond, to Oregon.

"The small brown Squirrel," they say, "is a beautiful little animal, about the size and form of the red squirrel (*Sc. Hudsonius*) of the Atlantic States and Western lakes. The tail is as long as the body and neck, and formed like that of the red squirrel; the eyes are black; the whiskers long and black, but not abundant; the back, sides, head, neck, and outer parts of the legs, are of a reddish brown; the throat, breast, belly, and inner parts of the legs, are of a pale red; the tail is a mixture of black and fox-coloured red, in which the black predominates in the middle, and the red on the edges and extremity. The hair of the body is almost half an inch long, and so fine and soft that it has the appearance of fur. The hair of the tail is coarser and double in length. This animal subsists chiefly on the seeds of various species of pine and is always found in the pine country."

Dr. RICHARDSON, who had not seen a specimen, copied in his excellent work, (*Fauna Boreali Americana*, p. 19,) the description of LEWIS and CLARK, from which he supposed this species to be a mere variety of the *Sc. Hudsonius*. We had subsequently an opportunity of submitting a specimen to his inspection, when he immediately became convinced it was a different species.

The difference between these two species can indeed be detected at a glance by comparing specimens of each together. The present species, in addition to its being a fourth smaller,—about the size of our little chipping squirrel (*Tamias Lysteri*)—has less of the reddish brown on the upper surface, and may always be distinguished from the other by the blackness of its tail at the extremity.



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Sciurus richardsonii — Bach., Richardson's Columbia Squirrel [Pl. V, male and female]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 1, 41–43. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322560>.

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