Conservation Corner by James Cummins **Executive Director** of Wildlife Mississippi

admired as a squirrel hunter course, his father being a was my Grandfather Cum- conservation officer, I'm mins. He had excellent eye- sure he didn't take too many. sight and was a crack-shot with a .22 rifle. I remember should know the biology him talking about hunting of the animal he or she is the Big Black River swamp managing or pursuing. By in Montgomery County and knowing this, one should talking about how many

One person who I always squirrels he harvested. Of

Every conservationist gain not only more appre-

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ciation for the species, but other mast trees. also understand what is needed for better management of the species (i.e. habitat, seasons, bag limits and other issues).

From mid-October until deer season in late-November, the squirrel is the ruler of Mississippi's forests. Squirrel season for 2017 will end on February 28. The two types of squirrels in the Magnolia State are the Eastern gray squirrel and the fox squirrel.

The gray squirrel or cat squirrel, as it is sometimes called for its cat-like cry, weighs about a pound and is usually 15 to 20 inches in length. The unique development of the tail in the gray squirrel allows the animal to direct its flight as it searches for food. It also serves as a parachute and a signaling device in times of danger. Usually 4 to 6 gray squirrels are born in a litter. The gray squirrel prefers mature bottomland hardwoods such as oak, hickory, beech and

The fox squirrel weighs up to 3 pounds and reaches a length of about 19 to 25 inches. Its color is reddishyellow with alternate bands of black and orange on the tail. However, it is the fox squirrel that has a black color phase that is found in parts of Mississippi. Fox squirrels are late risers. This is one way they are unlike grays, which rise at daylight. The fox squirrel doesn't get up until about the second hour of daylight, but they sometimes feed until noon. Two to five squirrels are born in each litter (two litters per year).

Like my grandfather, squirrel hunting is one of my favorite types of hunting - I just wish his feist, Big Boy - was still alive. Hunting with a squirrel dog is great fun.

I like to get out at daylight and hunt for about the first 3 hours. An ideal situation would be the morning after a soft rain. And, of course, the

wind should not be blowing. most of all have a safe hunt, Squirrels don't move much and always take a kid with during wind or rain; this you. dampens their senses that James L. Cummins is ex-

protect their survival. ecutive director of Wildlife When squirrel hunting, Mississippi, a non-profit, never take a shot that could conservation organization be unsuccessful, such as founded to conserve, restore long shots and definitely and enhance fish, wildlife don't shoot into nests. This and plant resources throughcan kill them and they may out Mississippi. Their web not fall out of the nest. But site is www.wildlifemiss.org.



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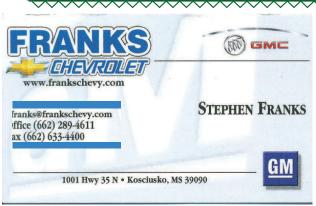
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