



A day in the life of Scurrie T. Squirrel

*A story for children and their grownups about the natural life
in Pocono woodlands ... protected by Pocono Heritage Land Trust*

By Carol Hillestad

For Pocono Heritage Land Trust

Shh! It's still dark in the fall woodland. Morning creeps in among the shadows later now. Why is it so quiet? Ah, yes, many birds have gone south. No twittering at sunrise, these days.

High in the forest canopy, someone stirs. Warm and safe in a twiggy, leafy nest lined with moss and thistle-down, one eye blinks open, then another.

Two lively, shiny black eyes. Scurrie T. Squirrel is awake.

Time to get to work! Scurrie's first litter of baby squirrels was born in the spring. They were tiny little things at first, pink and naked, but then their fur began to grow — and a few months later all four of them left the nest and set out on their own.

Even without her babies to worry about, Scurrie is always on the alert. The world is a dangerous place for a squirrel! Hawks and weasels, raccoon, and bobcats and foxes, and

DOG!

Scurrie smells its meaty breath, and its leathery collar, and, and, and — ah! It's OK! This dog is attached to a human walking the trails far below. In these woodlands, dogs don't run loose, chasing and scaring and making a busy little squirrel's heart beat fast.

Leaving her cozy thistle-down bed, Scurrie scabbles along her branch to the tree trunk. Her back feet twirl around to hold onto the rough bark, so she can scramble down her tree upside down, head

Continued on reverse

SCURRIE IS LUCKY.

She lives in a woodland protected by Pocono Heritage Land Trust. The land trust works to keep woodlands natural, providing food, clean air and water, shelter, and enough space to thrive for hundreds of native animals like Scurrie — bears and deer, eagles and owls, frogs, salamanders, insects, and plants. Tracts of undisturbed forest, such as the Kurmes Preserve, Upper Paradise Preserve, Jonas Mountain, and others owned and managed by PHLT, are good for humans, too, protecting drinking water and pure air.

The eastern grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), native to eastern North America, plays an extensive and essential role in forest regeneration. That's because many of the uneaten nuts and seeds squirrels plant will sprout next spring, continuing the cycle of life.





A day in the life of Scurrie T. Squirrel

Continuing from front

first, stopping and sniffing and spying for trouble all the way.

She lands in the leaves with an oomph, sits up on her haunches and has a look around. All clear! Instinct tells her winter is coming, and a buffet of good things to eat is all around. Scurrie sets about burying acorns, hazelnuts, and walnuts. Then in the cold, dark winter when nothing grows, she will find them — by smell and by remembering where she put them. Yum! She finds all kinds of seeds in the cones of cedar, hemlock, pine and spruce, and stashes them away, too.

The healthy forest where Scurrie lives has many old trees, and she bounds from tree to tree, flicking her tail, visiting them all, like old friends giving out treats. Trees that are too young won't produce food for her until they grow up.



And even grownup trees won't produce lots and lots of seed-cones every year. But most years, Scurrie finds and hides thousands of nuts and seeds – many more than she will need for the long winter.

In these woodlands, humans don't kill trees with chainsaws, or smother the life-giving land with concrete and asphalt, or ruin the water by pouring smelly things on the ground or in the creek.

In this animal-friendly woodland, Scurrie isn't alone. Dozens of other squirrels are hard at work, and the forest is full of squirrely chatter. If Scurrie notices someone watching her, she pretends to bury her nut or seed — and then goes off to bury it somewhere more secret! And if anyone notices a red-tailed hawk circling or a coyote creeping, they cry out a warning!warning!warning!

The light is getting low. Scurrie scratches herself – first one ear, then the other. Ah, that feels good after a day at work on the forest floor. Tired, and happy to climb back up into her snuggly bower in the treetop, this little grey squirrel settles down to sleep.

When the snow comes, she'll be ready.



POCONO HERITAGE LAND TRUST

ABOUT CONSERVING LAND

Founded in 1984, Pocono Heritage Land Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the natural and cultural heritage of the Pocono region by conserving land and inspiring people to care for, enjoy and explore their natural world. PHLT works cooperatively with landowners to preserve their property and leave a legacy of protected natural habitats, healthy forest, clean waterways and open space for future generations.

You can help Pocono Heritage Land Trust protect land for the future. Learn about membership and volunteer opportunities at www.phlt.org.

PLEASE DONATE to preserve important lands and natural resources in the Poconos, for generations to come.

- \$25** provides supplies for one trash cleanup day, or one planting of wildflower seeds for meadow habitat restoration.
- \$50** buys tools for managing invasive plants on volunteer days.
- \$150** prints 500 trail brochures to guide visitors on preserves.
- \$500** builds a streamcrossing bridge to improve trail access.
- \$1,500** covers the cost of an appraisal, the first step in acquiring new land for preservation.
- \$3,000** funds construction of a sign kiosk on a new preserve.
- \$5,000** enables development of a new nature trail network, including trail marking, clearing, signage and maps.

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