



The Franklin's ground squirrel (*Spermophilus franklinii*) is a state-threatened species protected by the Illinois Endangered Species Act that lives along the Sangamon Valley Trail (SVT). This colony is the largest concentration of Franklin's ground squirrels known to exist in the state.

The City of Springfield will be implementing measures along Archer Elevator Road, from Wabash Avenue to Greenbriar Drive, to conserve and protect the ground squirrels before, during and after construction. **But to ensure the squirrel's continued survival in Springfield, we need your help!**

# CALL TO ACTION

## Help Conserve the Franklin's Ground Squirrel in Southwest Springfield

### WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

The populations of Franklin's ground squirrel have dwindled approaching levels of concern. Sangamon County, the Springfield Park District, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Friends of the Sangamon Valley, and the University of Illinois Springfield have done conservation work along the Sangamon Valley Trail and Centennial Park. To support their investment and limit the impact to the ground squirrel as a result of the project, the City will carry out various mitigation and conservation measures.

Franklin's ground squirrels disperse the seeds of many plant species, and as a prey animal they have an impact on predator populations, including the red-tailed hawk, red fox, badger, coyote, striped skunk, and long-tailed weasel. **It is remarkable that the Franklin's ground squirrel has been able to survive in a rapidly developing part of Springfield. Let's help our special neighbors!**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- **Look out and slow down** - When you are commuting along Archer Elevator Road, be sure to keep an eye out for Franklin's ground squirrels. Adhering to the posted speed limit will decrease the likelihood of collision with ground squirrels (and other wildlife) and will in turn increase the ground squirrel's chance of survival. These ground squirrels are most active during bright sunny days.
- **Spread the word** - Educate your family, friends and neighbors about the presence of our state-threatened Franklin's ground squirrel in southwest Springfield and how they can help protect the species.
- **Provide Support** - Support local habitat conservation projects by the Springfield Park District.



## IDENTIFICATION

- The Franklin's ground squirrel is similar in size to the gray squirrel, but its tail is not as bushy.
- The back is rusty brown, flecked with black.
- The head is gray, with a broad nose and small, set-back ears.
- Adult males weigh just over a pound.
- Listen for their whistling alarm call.

## THREATS

- Listed as a threatened species in Illinois due to prairie and savanna habitat loss as a result of agricultural and urban expansion.
- Habitat fragmentation causes physical and genetic isolation of populations.

## LIFESPAN

- Males live one to two years.
- Females three to five years.

## DIET

- Franklin's ground squirrels are omnivorous, eating plant material, berries, insects, bird eggs, and carrion.

## HIBERNATION

- Adults hibernate from late August/early September until mid-April in central Illinois.

## HABITAT

- They are found along the open parts of the Sangamon Valley Trail and less likely to use sections where trees canopy over the trail.
- They live in underground dens and burrows and spend only 10% of their time above ground.
- They prefer dense undisturbed vegetative cover of tallgrass, mid-grass and cool season grasses, as well as sparse shrub and tree cover, that are short enough to allow it to see over while standing upright on its hind legs.
- They are also found in fencerows and field edges and have also been observed foraging in the agricultural field on the west side of Archer Elevator Road, south of Iles Avenue.

## REPRODUCTION

- The ground squirrels begin mating immediately in mid-spring, and an average of seven young are born in below-ground dens during June.
- Juveniles are often found above ground by mid-July. They must grow to adult size rapidly and gain enough weight to survive the long hibernation.



Adapted from:  
"Help us conserve the Franklin's ground squirrel: in and around Centennial Park and along the Sangamon Valley Trail," Springfield Park District.

FRANKLIN'S GROUND SQUIRREL



## FRANKLIN'S GROUND SQUIRRELS

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL



EASTERN CHIPMUNK



THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL

