

Siberian Chipmunk

Species Description

Scientific name: *Tamias sibiricus*

AKA: Gwiwer resog Siberia (Welsh)

Native to: North European Russia, China, Korea and Japan

Habitat: Woodland with understorey

The Siberian chipmunk, is a small squirrel living mainly in woodlands and forest, and active during the day. It is 18-25 cm long, of which the tail comprises one third. As with other chipmunks, it has brightly coloured fur which on the back is brown-grey to ochre yellow. It has large cheek pouches and small ears, slightly rounded at the tips. It has four light and five dark longitudinal stripes along its sides and a light brown tail with broad black lines on both sides and narrow white edges.

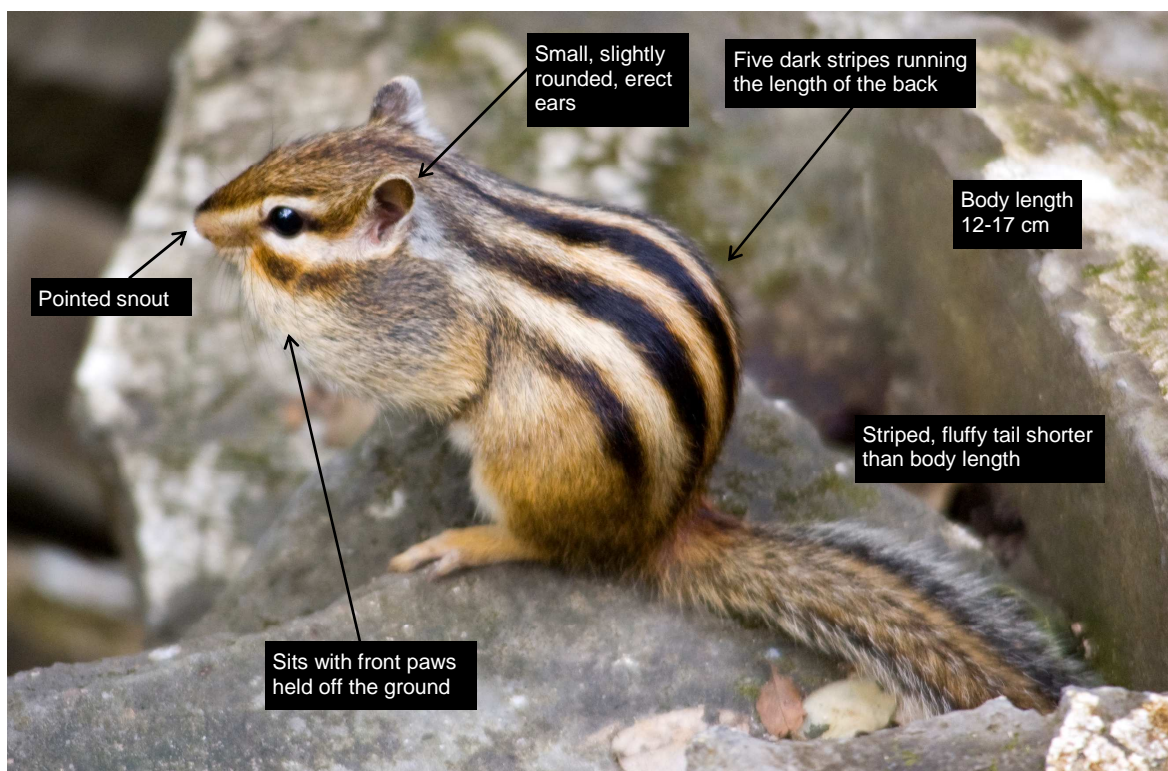
A significant population of Siberian chipmunks has become established in Western Europe, notably Brussels and Paris, following escapes from captivity.

Wild populations of Siberian chipmunk may compete directly with native woodland species in particular, red squirrel, wood mouse and bank vole, as well as having a potential impact on ground and burrow nesting birds. Within its home range Siberian chipmunk has an impact on grain crops. While not currently present in the wild in Great Britain, the Siberian chipmunk is widely kept as a pet. Should this species become established, through accidental or deliberate release, it could have similar impacts to those seen in other countries.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



Identification throughout the year

The Siberian chipmunk does not vary in colouration during the year. In the wild, chipmunks hibernate from late autumn to early spring.

Distribution

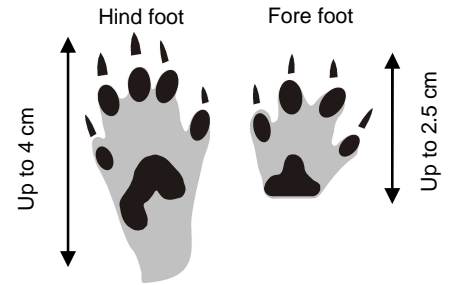
Siberian chipmunks have escaped from captivity in small numbers however these have been caught and accounted for. There are no known feral populations of Siberian chipmunk in the UK at present (2009).

Field Signs

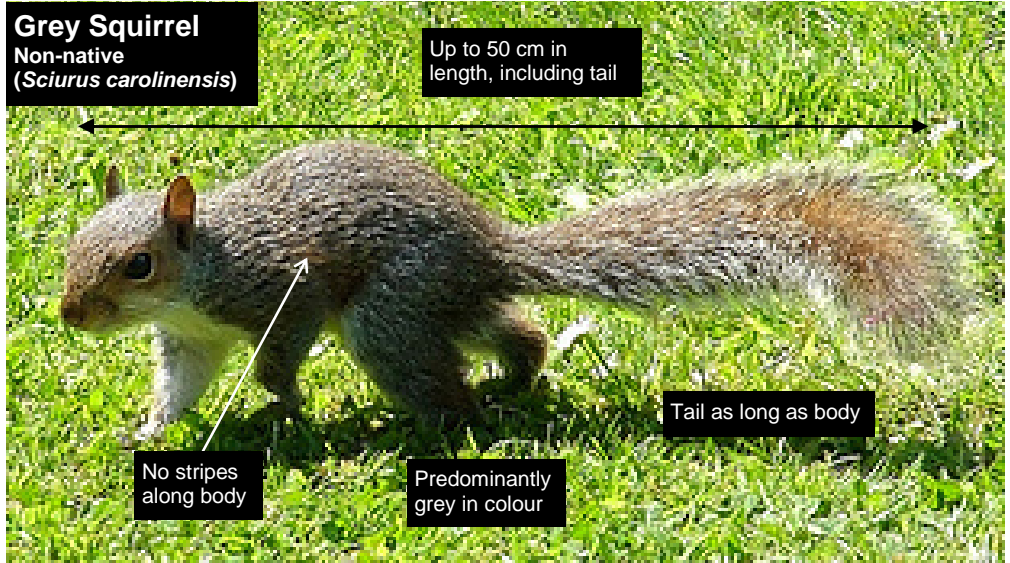
Female chipmunks make a loud, repeated "chip" call during the early spring and early summer to attract a mate.

Tracks and field signs very similar to other squirrels and should not be relied upon for identification.

Tracks are small with four toes on their forepaws and five toes on hind paws. Tracks show pointed claws at the end of toes.



Similar Species



References and further reading:

Brown, R, Lawrence, MJ and Pope J (2004) "Animals Tracks Trails and Signs". Hamlyn