

Name _____



What Is a Squirrel's Life Cycle Like?

Squirrels are small, energetic animals that go through several stages in their life cycle. Like all mammals, they begin their life as babies born from their mothers. The average squirrel lives around 6 to 12 years in the wild, depending on its species and environment. Some squirrels, like the eastern gray squirrel, may live even longer

in places with few predators and plenty of food.

Squirrels start their life as kits, which are baby squirrels. When they are born, kits are tiny, blind, and hairless. They are completely dependent on their mother for warmth, food, and protection. The mother squirrel builds a safe nest, called a drey, high up in a tree or in a secure place to keep her babies safe. She feeds them milk for the first six to eight weeks of their lives.

After about two months, the young squirrels begin to grow fur and open their eyes. This is the juvenile stage, where they start to explore the world outside the nest. During this time, the mother teaches them important survival skills, such as climbing, finding food, and avoiding predators. Juveniles are curious and playful, often chasing each other through trees as they practice climbing and jumping.

By the time they are three to four months old, young squirrels are ready to live on their own. They leave the nest to find their own territory. This marks the beginning of their adult stage. Adult squirrels spend most of their time gathering food, building nests, and avoiding predators. They are also responsible for helping the environment by spreading seeds and nuts, which can grow into new trees.

Squirrels reproduce once or twice a year, ensuring their population stays healthy. The life cycle begins again with new kits born in nests. Although many squirrels face challenges like predators and harsh weather, their clever behaviors and adaptability help them survive in various environments.