

SNEAK A PEEK INSIDE...

Field Guide to Mammals

at Rice Creek Field Station

State University of New York at Oswego



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Eastern Chipmunk

Tamias striatus

Characteristics

Weight: 75 - 90 g

Total Length: 100 - 180 mm

Tail Length: 80 -130 mm

Dental Formula: $1/1, 0/0, 1/1, 3/3 = 20$

Eastern chipmunks have reddish-brown and grayish fur. There are five black and two white stripes on the back that stop before the tail area. Black and white stripes also located above and below the eye. The ears are rounded, and the tail is hairy but not bushy. The forefoot has four toes and the hind foot has five. The cheeks can expand to carry food.

Reproduction and Development

Lifespan: 4- 8 Years

Maturity Age: Females 6 Months, Males 8 Months

Breeding Season: February - April & June - August

Gestation: 34 Days

Litter Size: 2-5 Young

Eastern chipmunks have a polygamous mating system, but generally wait to breed until they are a year old. There have two litters per year, and the offspring are born blind and hairless. They are weaned at 6 weeks, and leave two weeks later at 8 weeks old.

Habitat

Distribution: Eastern United States to Southeastern Canada

Eastern chipmunks live mainly in wooded areas, and river valleys. They prefer beech and maple forests while avoiding swamp areas. They make burrows in the ground, stumps, logs, or rocky outcrops. Chipmunks often live around barns and sheds. Their home ranges averages 900-1500 m².

Behavior

Eastern chipmunks normally stay within 25 m of their burrow. They have strong vocal communication with chirps, trills and chucking. Vocal sounds announce aggression, male dominance, hierarchy and danger. After an alert call, they stay in their burrows, forage less, or travel shorter distances. Chipmunks are diurnal. The highest activity occurs mid-morning and mid-afternoon. They are solitary and territorial. Chipmunks store food in caches to prepare for winter as they do not store body fat. They also store food in their burrows, which are less than 1 m deep and up to 10 m long. Nests in these burrows are made from crushed leaves. Eastern chipmunks do not hibernate, but may enter periods of torpor. They are preyed upon by large carnivores including weasels, domestic dogs and cats, large birds, fishers, ermines, coyotes and raccoons.

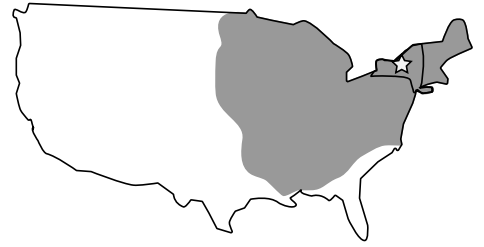
Diet

Chipmunks eat a variety of seeds, fruit, and nuts. They occasionally feed on insects, slugs, earthworms, bird eggs, and mushrooms.

Ecological Role

The eastern chipmunk plays an important role in the food chain, being preyed upon by larger carnivores such as coyotes and weasels. They can be considered pests due to farm and home damages. They are sometimes kept as pets.

Order **Rodentia**
Family **Sciuridae**



Eastern Chipmunk
Tamias striatus

