

# the Delmarva Fox Squirrel's Recovery

a photo essay

Story & photos by Mark Hendricks



The recent delisting of the Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel was cause for much celebration in the Old Line State.

"This is a huge success story," says U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Matt Whitbeck. "It is a species that characterizes the forests and farmlands of the peninsula and can be found nowhere else."

The squirrel—large and beautiful with silver-gray fur and found exclusively on the Delmarva Peninsula—was one of the original species to be granted special protection under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 (precursor to the Endangered Species Act). Habitat loss and overhunting primarily caused the species' decline. Now, nearly 50 years later, the squirrel was removed thanks to the continuing partnership between Maryland, the federal government and private citizens and landowners.

Glenn Therres, associate director of the Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Program, was instrumental in the squirrel's rebound. He credits much of the recovery to amenable landowners.

"Without landowners' cooperation, the Delmarva Fox Squirrel would not have been removed from the Endangered Species List. We could have saved it from extinction, but it would not have recovered," says Therres.

The Delmarva Fox Squirrel inhabits forests typified by large trees, many of which had been lost to farming and logging. Eighty percent of the squirrel's habitat, both agricultural and forested, sits on private land. These landowners allowed squirrels to be successfully translocated onto their properties and saw habitat unsuitable at the time of the listing regrown.

The squirrel now thrives in 10 counties across the peninsula, and the population stands between 17,000-20,000: a far cry from the time of the listing, when only small isolated populations could be found in four Maryland counties. ■

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