

Two Little Squirrels



The thirteen-lined ground squirrel is an animal of the great plains that expanded its range into Michigan when forests were cleared for farming.

The eastern chipmunk is a forest dweller that greeted Michigan's first settlers and has persisted in woodlots, parks and residential areas.

Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel

As this ground squirrel's name implies, 13 stripes run the length of its body. Five of the light colored lines break up into a series of spots over the back and rump. Five light and four dark stripes extend to the top of the head and end between the eyes.

This rat-sized squirrel loves sun and warmth, waiting to emerge from his burrow each day until the sun has warmed its environment. On cloudy days it may not come out at all. Although it loves seeds, half of its diet includes grasshoppers, cutworms, caterpillars, beetles and earthworms.

This grassland animal finds lawns, golf courses, cemeteries and athletic fields perfect habitat, and can become a bit of a nuisance when abundant.

Thirteen lined ground squirrels are true hibernators, retreating to their burrows in October and often not emerging until the following May. This is the mascot for the Minnesota Golden Gophers!

Eastern Chipmunk

The eastern chipmunk is a little smaller than the ground squirrel. It has two tan and five black stripes down the back, and two tan and two brown stripes on the sides of the face. Chipmunks are early risers, most active in morning and late afternoon.

Chipmunk's diet includes seeds, nuts, berries, insects, mushrooms and carrion. Although primarily ground dwellers, they will climb trees in the fall to gather nuts and seeds. They are not true hibernators and must cache large amounts of food in their burrows for winter. They may not be seen above ground in winter, but wake up periodically in their burrows to eat. Each burrow even includes an "indoor bathroom."

Chipmunks are not shy and will often make their burrows near human dwellings. When chipmunks are abundant they can sometimes cause problems by burrowing under patios, retention walls and foundations. They are mostly harmless and fun to watch.