

COMPLETED PROJECT REPORT

Project Title: Distribution patterns, habitat use, and impacts of the eastern fox squirrel (*Sciuris nigris*) in almond orchards: implications for predicting population expansion and occurrences.

Research Agency: University of California - Cooperative Extension

Principal Investigator: M. Freeman

Budget: \$56,984

Background:

Introduced into California as recently as the 1950s, the eastern fox squirrel (*Sciuris nigris*) was initially confined to urban and suburban areas such as neighborhoods, green belts, parks and college campuses. In the following years, these populations have spread to agricultural areas. Consequently, the fox squirrel has been identified as a significant pest in almond orchards by several growers in Fresno County. Not only do the squirrels consume almonds, they have been reported to chew and destroy PVC pipe and hoses. While little is known about the demographics of fox squirrels populations in California at the urban/agricultural interface, evidence seems to indicate that populations are growing and spreading into agricultural areas. A concentrated effort to understand the ecology and potential impacts of the fox squirrel is crucial in assessing the severity of what may become a significant problem to the almond industry.

Objectives:

1. Determine the extent of fox squirrels relative to almond orchards in Fresno County.
2. Identify habitat use of fox squirrels.
3. Create a predictive model for fox squirrel distribution.
4. Based on the above information, we will investigate possible control methods such as shooting, trapping, and rodenticides.

Summary:

This project has been canceled.

Final Update: 03/22/05