

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

In a mountain-top snow-covered parking area, a team of federal, state, and tribal wildlife biologists grab a ladder and begin marching through the snow and over frozen streams into the forest.

By-in-large the winter work of wildlife biologists is focused on indoor activities, like less than glamorous report writing or planning for the next year's field work. However, the dead of winter is when biologists working with the federally endangered Carolina northern flying squirrel grab their boots and their long underwear and hit the trail.

Not to be confused with their far more common cousin, the southern flying squirrel, Caroling northern flying squirrels live at high elevations, often where the birch and maple trees of the northern hardwood forest give way to the red spruce and Fraser fir trees of the spruce-fir forests found on the highest mountains in the East.

Across Western North Carolina, biologists have put out nesting boxes for the protected squirrel as a supplement to their natural tree cavities. The squirrels fill the boxes with insulating strips of bark and find refuge in them during the cold of winter. It's during this time that biologists pass through and count how many squirrels are using each box and begin to get an idea of overall population numbers and population trends over time.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.