

# Gray Squirrels Here To Stay

By Ray MacLeod

Get used to seeing Eastern Gray Squirrels in Nova Scotia. They may have once been tourists from Ontario, but not anymore. According to an Acadia University Masters graduate, they have made the Annapolis Valley their home and are here to stay.

"Our belief is that the Eastern Gray Squirrel has now established a breeding population in Nova Scotia," states Howard Huynh in a paper to be published in a scientific journal this fall. The report is the work of Huynh and three other students representing Acadia and Dalhousie universities as well the New Brunswick Museum and the Smithsonian Institute's Museum of Natural History. It states the animal is present and breeding from Windsor to Annapolis Royal, as shown by collected specimens he examined and anecdotal evidence from the Blomidon Naturalist Society.

Huynh says that Gray Squirrel studies from 1930 to 2004 mostly attributed sightings to escaped or released animals. That can no longer be considered fact, he states.

That finding is supported by



Hope Swinimer, director of the Hope for Wildlife Society, the most prominent animal rescue and rehabilitation service in the province. The proof, states Swinimer, is now scampering around a pen at her Seaforth facility, a Gray Squirrel that came to her this spring as a newborn from Coldbrook, Kings County.

"I received a call from a lady who was just home from work and found a little squirrel in her

driveway," Swinimer says. "Its eyes were still closed. I told her to put it back outside, warm it with a hot water bottle, and see if the mother came for it."

When no mother returned, the squirrel was turned over to Hope for Wildlife. Swinimer says she'd known for a long time that a pocket of established Grays existed in that area. People doing wildlife rescue and rehab in the Annapolis Valley

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