USER GUIDE: Data Sets — NYC Open Data Week Multi-Park Squirrel Count

Created: March 4, 2022
Last Updated: March 4, 2022
The Squirrel Census, info@thesquirrelcensus.com

What's In These Data Sets?

The Squirrel Census is a multimedia science, design, and storytelling project focusing on the Eastern gray (*Sciurus carolinensis*). They count squirrels and present their findings to the public.

On March 1, 2020 — with the help of 72 volunteer Squirrel Sighters, as well as NYC Open Data — they performed a sample count in 24 New York City parks, and gathered other material data. Four hundred and thirty-three squirrel sightings were tallied. The methodology was less focused on total squirrel numbers per hectare and more attuned to the stories — of squirrels, humans, and parks.

The data is organized into three sets:

NYC Open Data Week Multi-Park Squirrel Count — Park Data: This table contains environmental data related to each of the 24 NYC parks counted on March 1, 2020. Examples include weather, litter, other animals sighted, and human density.

NYC Open Data Week Multi-Park Squirrel Count — Squirrel Data: This table contains squirrel data for each of the 433 sightings, including location coordinates, primary and highlight fur color, elevation, activities, and interactions between squirrels and with humans.

NYC Open Data Week Multi-Park Squirrel Count — Stories: This table contains stories, observations, and notes written on tally sheets by teams of Squirrel Sighters during the count on March 1, 2020.

Who Manages These Data Sets?

The Squirrel Census, based in Atlanta, GA, manages this data. They have also led a comprehensive squirrel count of Central Park, as well as two other comprehensive counts of Inman Park, an historic Atlanta neighborhood. While the Squirrel Census used a wildlife counting methodology and formula to come up with Squirrel Abundance Numbers (SAN) in its Central Park and Inman Park counts, the NYC Open Data Week Multi-Park Squirrel Count did not rely on a rigorous methodology

and was mainly performed to give Squirrel Sighters the *experience* of counting squirrels and interacting with their parks.

The data collected was used by the Squirrel Census to create a 1-800 phone tree (1-833-NYC-SQRL), wherein users can navigate to find stories, songs, squirrel data, and other fun from each of the parks counted.

The Squirrel Census performs counts for many reasons: to learn more about the populations and behaviors of the Eastern gray (which is so common that it's often overlooked in academic studies); to tell a data-driven narrative about urban green spaces in general; to engage in citizen science and community building; and to transform spaces into art projects and stories that unfolded in real time; and more.

Get Started With This Data:

- What human activities were happening in different parks?
- How does squirrel fur color change in different parks?
- What stories did Squirrel Sighters record about their time counting squirrels?

Columns (Fields, Attributes):

Park Data
file name park-data.csv
Area Name
The logistical area in which the park is located: Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, or Brooklyn
Area ID
A, B, C, or D assigned to Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, and Brooklyn, respectively
Park Name
The specific park name where squirrels were counted
Park ID
01-24 assigned to parks where squirrels were counted, generally assigned north to south and west to east, 01 being Fort Tryon Park in Upper Manhattan, 24 being Cooper Park in Brooklyn (Note: Two groups of Squirrel Sighters counted two sections of Sara D. Roosevelt Park. The Section Above Delancey St has the Park ID 13.1. The Section Below Delancey St has the Park ID 13.2.)
Date
The sighting session month, day, and year in M/D/YY format. All sighting sessions took place 3/1/2020.
Start Time

The time the sighting session started in HH:MM:SS XM format. All sighting sessions took place in the afternoon (PM). If the Start Time was not recorded on the tally sheet, an estimate was used.

End Time
The time the sighting session ended in HH:MM:SS XM format. All sighting sessions took place in the afternoon (PM). If the End Time was not recorded on the tally sheet, an estimate was used.

Total Time
The sighting session duration, in minutes. If the Start Time and/or End Time was not recorded on the tally sheet, 30 minutes was used as the standard sighting session duration.

Park Conditions
Value is one of the following: "Calm" or "Busy". Squirrel Sighters were also given the option of writing in another value or adding notes. These notes are also included here.

Other Animal Sightings
Comma separated values indicating other animals sighted in the park. A list of other animals common to the park were provided. Some Squirrel Sighters wrote in other animals as well.

Litter
Value can be "Abundant", "Some" or "None." Some Squirrel Sighters added commentary on the specifics and location of litter. These notes are also included here.

Temperature & Weather
Squirrel Sighters were asked to record the temperature and describe the weather conditions before starting their sighting session.

Number of Squirrels
The total number of squirrels sighted in the park during the sighting session.

Squirrel Sighter(s)
Each Squirrel Sighter name was assigned a unique number (01-72) to anonymize the Squirrel Sighters while still capturing the number of participating Squirrel Sighters who counted each park and participated in the March 1, 2020 count.

Number of Sighters
The number of Squirrel Sighters that observed the park for the sighting session. Values range from "1" to "6."

#Squirrel Data
file name squirrel-data.csv

Area Name
The logistical area in which the park is located: Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, or Brooklyn

Area ID
A, B, C, or D assigned to Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower
Manhattan, and Brooklyn, respectively
Park Name
The specific park name where squirrels were counted
Park ID
01-24 assigned to parks where squirrels were counted, generally
assigned north to south and west to east, 01 being Fort Tryon Park in
Upper Manhattan, 24 being Cooper Park in Brooklyn (Note: Two groups of
Squirrel Sighters counted two sections of Sara D. Roosevelt Park. The
Section Above Delancey St has the Park ID 13.1. The Section Below
Delancey St has the Park ID 13.2.) If a park is not included in this
data set, it means zero squirrels were sighted in the park.
Squirrel ID
Identification tag for each squirrel sighted. The tag is created with
"Area ID" + "Park ID" + "Park Squirrel Number."
Primary Fur Color
Value is either "Gray," "Cinnamon," or "Black."
Highlights in Fur Color
Optional discrete value or string values consisting of "Gray,"
"Cinnamon," "Black," and/or "White."
Color Notes
Squirrel Sighters occasionally added commentary on the squirrel fur
color. These notes are included here.
Location
Value is either "Ground Plane", "Above Ground", or "Specific
Location." Squirrel Sighters were instructed to indicate the location
where the squirrel was when first sighted.
Above Ground (Height in Feet)
For squirrels sighted above ground, Squirrel Sighters were asked to
provide an estimate (in feet) for the squirrel's height above ground
when the squirrel was first sighted.
Specific Location
For squirrels sighted in a specific location, Squirrel Sighters were
asked to provide commentary on the squirrel's specific location. These
notes are included here.
Activities
Value is one of the following: "Running," "Chasing" (another
squirrel), "Climbing" (a tree or other environmental landmark),
"Eating," or "Foraging" (for food). Squirrel Sighters were also given
the option of writing in another value or adding notes. These notes
are also included here.
Interactions with Humans
Value is one of the following: "Approaches" (a human, likely seeking
food), "Indifferent" (to human presence), or "Runs From" (humans,

likely seeing them as a threat). Squirrel Sighters were also given the option of writing in another value or adding notes. These notes are also included here.
Other Notes or Observations
Squirrel Sighters were asked to provide other notes or observations on each squirrel sighted. These notes are included here.
Squirrel Latitude (X)
Latitude coordinate for squirrel sighting point in format DD.DDDDDD. This field is blank for any squirrel locations that were not indicated on tally sheet map by Squirrel Sighters.
Squirrel Longitude (Y)
Longitude coordinate for squirrel sighting point in format -DD.DDDDDD. This field is blank for any squirrel locations that were not indicated on tally sheet map by Squirrel Sighters.

#Stories
file name stories.csv

Area Name
The logistical area in which the park is located: Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, or Brooklyn
Area ID
A, B, C, and D assigned to Upper Manhattan, Central Manhattan, Lower Manhattan, or Brooklyn, respectively
Park Name
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Park ID
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Squirrels, Parks & The City Stories
Notes made by Squirrel Sighters while counting squirrels, observing the park, and exploring the city. If a park is not included in this data set, it means no stories were included.

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