



The Raynes Wildlife Fund has recently awarded grants to a number of projects, including one that will document the distribution and habitat attributes of northern flying squirrels in Teton County.

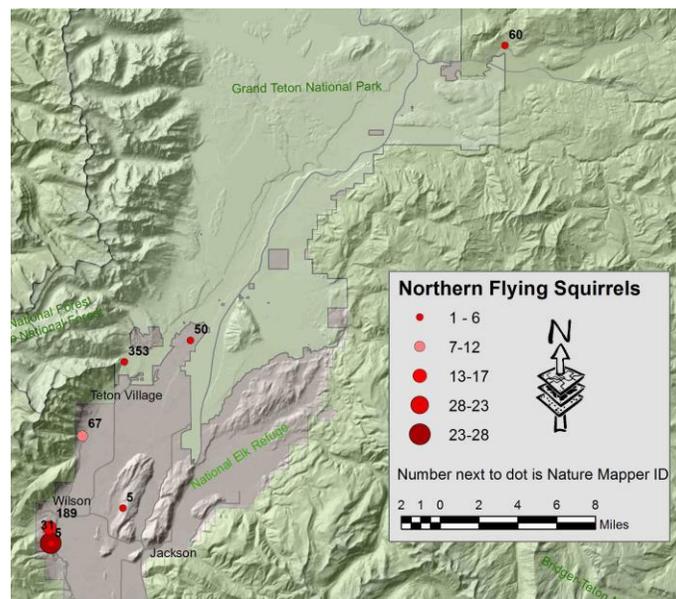
Northern flying squirrels serve as excellent indicators of forest function and health. In Teton County, surveys have not been done and little is known about distribution or habitat use.

Surveys will allow us to develop a baseline occupancy model, and evaluate vegetative composition and structure important for this species. Data from Jackson will complement data being collected elsewhere in Wyoming.

Northern flying squirrels are an ecological indicator of older aged forests. No studies have addressed flying squirrel occupancy and habitat requirements in the Jackson area. The results of this study will be used to improve our understanding of the status of the species in the Jackson area as well as provide much needed information on habitat use and requirements in this changing ecosystem.

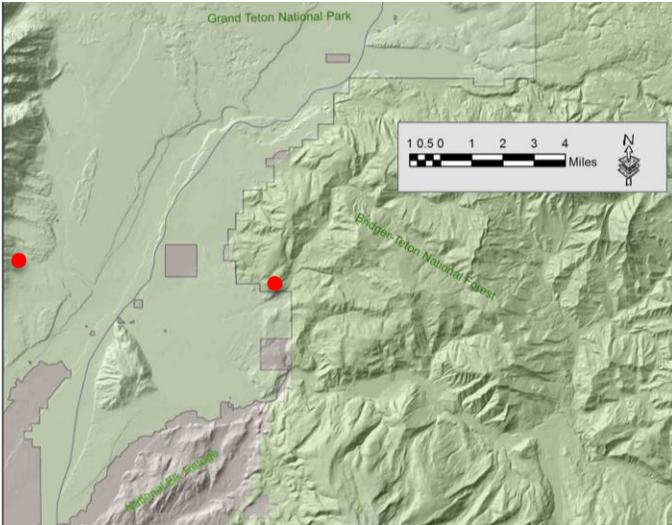
The work will commence this spring, and in the meanwhile, Jackson Hole nature mappers have been busy documenting a few flying squirrels of their own.

Between March 2009 and March 2014 nature mappers have recorded 57 sightings of flying squirrels. Some bird counters during the December 2013 Christmas Bird Count also reported one along the Valley Trail in Grand Teton National Park. The map below shows where these flying squirrels were seen and how many (a few hot spots out there). Sightings come from observers near or within older conifer forests, not surprisingly. Flying squirrels have been reported for every month of the year except July (perhaps because they are raising young?)



*Northern flying squirrels reported by nature mappers, 2009 – present*

*Below: other recent reports (not part of nature mapping)*



In addition to sightings, a few behaviors were recorded. Flying squirrels are nocturnal so they seem to hit the bird feeders after the birds have roosted for the night. Forty of the 57 sightings took place at bird feeders. There were a few other favored digs, as noted by observers below:

*"I heard voices of multiple squirrels - a squeaky twittering that could be mistaken for birds if not at this time of night."*

*"Seen gliding amongst large diameter conifers above our campsite after dark."*

*"It got into the house through the pet door, I think. We managed to escort it out after much excitement in the living room."*

*"The squirrel was in the home of B. Smith. He opened the door and the beast walked out."*

So, keep an eye out for squirrels in the dark – we may help the research that will be going on this summer.