



Common Native Rodents of Palmetto Bluff

Hispid Cotton Rat

The hispid cotton rat (*Sigmodon hispidus*) is a common species found in the Southeast in areas with dense grass, such as agricultural fields, road edges, and marshland. Often seen feeding below bird feeders where seed has fallen, hispid cotton rats primarily consume plant material like seeds, roots, and leaves. Occasionally, they will eat insects, bird eggs, crayfish, and potentially fiddler crabs in coastal areas. Breeding occurs year-round but tends to slow down in the winter months. Sometimes, you can find hispid cotton rats feeding on seeds below the Conservancy bird feeders in Moreland Village.

Marsh Rice Rate

The marsh rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris*), or marsh *Oryzomys*, is a common species found in marshes and open wet areas throughout the Southeast. These rats are known for being good swimmers and can navigate through marshes at high tide. They are omnivorous, eating many types of food such as fruits, nuts, berries, grasses, fungi, insects, snails, bird eggs, and many other small animals. Like cotton rats, breeding can occur year-round but slows down in the winter.

Eastern Woodrat

The eastern woodrat (*Neotoma floridana*), aka pack rat, is a common woodland species throughout the Southeast. They are found mainly in forested areas but use caves and rocky outcrops. Woodrats are primarily herbivorous, feeding on grasses, nuts, fruits, seeds, and most parts of trees (leaves, roots, stems, and bark). Breeding occurs from February to September but may breed year-round in areas with a milder climate.

Cotton Mouse

The cotton mouse (*Peromyscus gossypinus*) is a small woodland species commonly found in forested areas throughout the Southeast. Though most common in wooded areas, the cotton mouse can also be found around wetlands and dry regions with sand dunes. Cotton mice are opportunistic omnivores,

feeding on whatever is available. Their diet comprises seeds, grains, fruits, flowers, insects, and other arthropods. Breeding occurs year-round in southern portions of its range, and females can produce a new litter every 30 days.

Golden Mouse

The golden mouse (*Ochrotomys nuttalli*) is a less common species that ranges throughout the Southeast. It prefers woodlands or swampy areas with thick vegetation. Golden mice are often found in areas with many vines, greenbrier, and honeysuckle. These mice are granivores, mainly eating seeds from greenbrier, sumac, honeysuckle, and other plants. Breeding season for golden mice varies geographically. More southern populations can breed throughout the winter, while northern populations breed from spring to fall.

Southern Flying Squirrel

The southern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys volans*) is a common species throughout the eastern United States. Flying squirrels live in hardwood and mixed pine-hardwood forests with larger cavity trees for nesting. They are omnivores, eating everything from nuts and berries to eggs and baby birds. Breeding occurs biannually, once in late winter and once in the summer. Although there are two breeding seasons, only some females breed twice. Join us on a Research Excursion to see one using one of our cavity nest boxes!

Southern Fox Squirrel

The southern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger niger*) is the subspecies of the eastern fox squirrel seen in South Carolina and at Palmetto Bluff. There are many different color morphs throughout its range, and the fox squirrel in South Carolina is usually a silvery gray with a few melanistic individuals that are all black. Fox squirrels are opportunistic omnivores consuming primarily seeds, nuts, acorns, and berries but occasionally eat bird eggs and insects. Like the flying squirrel, fox squirrels breed once in late winter and once in late summer.

Common Non-Native Rodents

These non-native rodents were brought over on ships from Europe and Asia in the late 1700s.

- The roof rat (*Rattus rattus*)
- Brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)
- The house mouse (*Mus musculus*)