

Developing a captive husbandry program for the endangered Mount Graham red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis*) at the Phoenix Zoo

Tara SPRANKLE¹ and Stuart WELLS²

¹Conservation manager, Phoenix Zoo, Arizona, USA
(tsprankle@thephxzoo.com) ²M.Sc ES, Director of Conservation and Science, Phoenix Zoo, Arizona, USA
(swells@thephxzoo.com)

The Mount Graham red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus grahamensis*) is a subspecies of the North American red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) and is listed as Endangered under the North American Endangered Species Act. This slightly smaller subspecies is found only in the Pinaleños mountain range in Southeastern Arizona and has been isolated from other red squirrels for over 10,000 years. In June of 2011, due to record low moisture conditions and the high likelihood of catastrophic wildfire, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) implemented an emergency action to collect two male and two female Mount Graham red squirrels (MGRS) to be held at the Phoenix Zoo's Arthur L. and Elaine V. Johnson Conservation and Science Center as an assurance population in the event of wildfire. Once the threat of wildfire has passed the squirrels will either be returned to the wild or may serve as the seed population of a captive breeding program. This potential captive breeding program has been proposed as part of the recovery plan, and is currently under review and awaiting

approval by the USFWS. This subspecies has been kept only once previously in captivity, with no breeding, so there are many aspects of their husbandry needs that were unknown or are yet to be discovered. This poster will detail the squirrels capture and transport to the zoo, as well as current housing, cage service routines, diet development, behavioral observations, medical procedures, and plans for the future breeding program and releases.