

Squirrels of the world: The World of Squirrels

Richard W. THORINGTON, JR.¹, John L. KOPROWSKI²,
Michael A. STEELE³, James F. WHATTON¹, and Paula W.
BOHASKA¹

¹Department of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 20013 ²School of Natural Resources and the Environment, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 85721 ³Department of Biology, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, PA, 18766, USA

We have written a book covering the rodent family, Sciuridae, recognizing 285 species of squirrels worldwide. The common ancestor of squirrels lived 30-40 million years ago. Characterizing the different groups within the family was problematic until Reginald Pocock of the London Zoo studied the bacula and used their morphology as a basis for dividing the family into subfamilies. In 2003, molecular studies modified Pocock's classification. Studies of the DNA of several genes support a division of the Sciuridae into five subfamilies. Two subfamilies, the Ratuinae (the giant tree squirrels of southern Asia) and the Sciurillinae (the South American pygmy squirrels) appear to be the most ancient sciurid lineages. The subfamily Sciurinae includes many common tree squirrels and the flying squirrels, and the subfamily Callosciurinae includes most of the Asian tree and ground squirrels. The subfamily Xerinae includes most of the ground squirrels - those of Africa and North America - as well as the African tree squirrels. In our book we have introductory chapters reviewing the anatomy, paleontology, ecology, behavior and

conservation of the squirrels. For nearly all 285 species we provide accounts which include range maps and photos. We also present skull photos for each genus, and a detailed reference section.