

Distribution Patterns, Habitat use, and Impacts of the Eastern Fox Squirrel in Almond Orchards

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The Eastern fox squirrel, sometimes called the red tree squirrel, has moved from the urban areas in Fresno to surrounding nut tree orchards. We have visited several orchards and conducted informal surveys to gather information. We have now found this squirrel in orchards west of the city of Kerman; in orchards adjacent to the San Joaquin River and into the county of Madera; and east to orchards in Clovis and adjacent to the city of Sanger. During the summer, the adult squirrels appear to move in and out of almond orchards from adjacent trees such as palms and eucalyptus. The main damage is chewing on irrigation tubing and removal of almond kernels. We have identified current control methods used by farmers and plan to research their effectiveness next year. We supplied information for a story that was written in the September/October, 2002 issue of "Almond Facts" on the tree squirrel. The website <http://cefresno.ucdavis.edu> will contain on-going information about the project and information for growers and Pest Control Advisors.

We are developing a formal questionnaire on squirrels to be mailed to all the almond growers in Fresno County, and possibly some in Madera County. We have access to GIS (geographical Information Systems) and plan to map out orchards where the squirrel has been found. We just obtained a larger grant from California Department of Food and Ag to supplement this research effort. That grant will allow us to establish "trapping grids" and use radio collars on

squirrels in several orchards to determine the home range and movement patterns (with foraging and nesting). This intensive effort will go from January through December in 2003.