

13 Striped Ground Squirrel

(Sometimes referred to as a Michigan Gopher)

Commonly mistaken for a Chipmunk, the 13 Striped Ground Squirrel is usually bigger, has more stripes and some of the stripes are dotted. Ground squirrels prefer a habitat of short grass so lawns, golf courses and pastures make a great environment for them to live. The 13 Striped Ground Squirrel appears only during the day. They prefer warm weather and choose to stay in their burrows during inclement weather surviving on stored food. It uses deep interconnecting tunnels for hibernation and mating. It also has many surface tunnels for use in emergency situations. Their typical range for a male is around twelve miles with the female range around a third of that.

The 13 Striped Ground Squirrel is primarily a vegetarian but will also eat bugs and small vertebrae. Although they will eat grass and other vegetation, they really prefer seeds from crab grass, vetch, ragweed and a variety of other plants. That is why you will often see them under your birdfeeders. While often seen by homeowners as a pest, they usually do little damage to plants and existing vegetation. Their tunnels often come up under bushes, trees and plants leading the homeowner to believe that they are eating the roots, etc. However, this is done to provide them cover from predators and in fact some studies have shown that the air circulation to the roots of trees caused from their tunnels can be beneficial.

Hibernation begins in September and usually ends in March. The ground squirrel mates in early spring and has one yearly litter. They mature in about 45 days and leave to establish their own territory within several hundred feet of their birthplace. Even though litters run from 7 to 10 pups only 1 or 2 survive due to predators. Among their many predators are badgers, weasels, snakes, hawks, foxes, coyotes, house cats and even skunks.

Prevention & Control

In a garden, 1/2 inch wire mesh will help keep ground squirrels, rabbits and other small rodents out. The fence should be 18 inches high and buried 6 inches.



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