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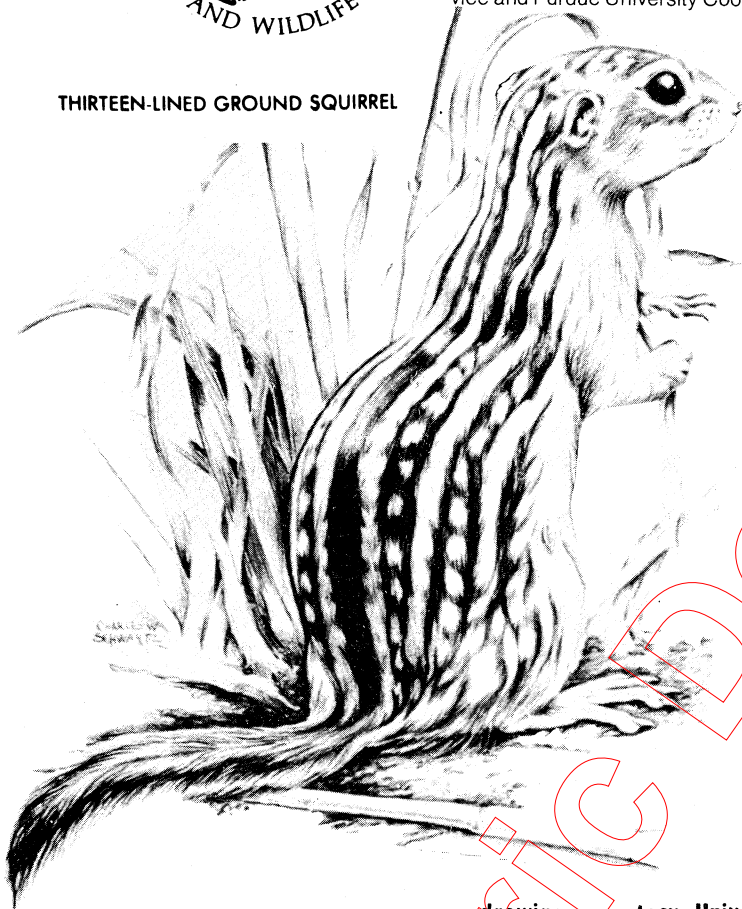
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controlling Ground Squirrels

Developed cooperatively by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.

THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL



FRANKLIN'S GROUND SQUIRREL



drawings courtesy University of Missouri press

The 13-lined ground squirrel, often-times called "gopher" or "striped gopher", derives its name from the thirteen alternating light and dark stripes on its back. These animals are active from late March or early April until late September or mid-October, when they enter their underground burrows to pass the winter in a state of hibernation. Mating takes place shortly after they awaken from their winter's sleep and the young are born blind, naked and helpless about one month later. Only one litter is produced each year and this may vary in number from 5 to 14 young. Adult ground squirrels are about 11 inches in length.

They vary in weight from around 5 ounces in early spring to almost twice that in the fall after they have accumulated fat to last them during the long winter fast. Their preferred habitat is open fields or brushy areas. They are not usually found in forests or in damp ground.

Thirteen-lined ground squirrels may be distinguished from tree squirrels by their shorter and less bushy tails and by the fact that they live underground and are not good climbers. They more nearly resemble chipmunks, but the latter animal does not have thirteen alternating stripes and is smaller in size.

CONSULT STATE AND LOCAL LAWS BEFORE APPLYING CONTROLS

The Franklin or gray ground squirrel is larger, being more nearly the size of the gray tree squirrel. They are less numerous than 13-lined ground squirrels and favor the concealment offered by brushy or wooded cover adjoining cultivated fields. Breeding habits, so far as known, are similar to the 13-lined. Damage to planted corn and other crops is usually confined to a strip along the edge of a field.

The food of ground squirrels consists of roots, fruits, seeds and leafy vegetation. Because of these food habits, the animals often become troublesome pests by digging up corn and other newly-planted seeds. They also cause damage to lawns, golf courses, or other turf areas. They are readily controlled by the use of poisons, gases, or traps.

Use of Gases

Ground squirrels may be killed by burrow fumigation with calcium cyanide. This material releases deadly hydrocyanic acid gas upon contact with air. A scant tablespoonful should be inserted in the burrow and the entrance covered with a piece of sod or other material making sure that the calcium cyanide is not covered with dirt. This is a dangerous substance and should be used with caution.

Use of Traps

Trapping is effective for removing small infestations of ground squirrels. Either Number 0 steel traps or regular wooden-base snap traps, used to take rats, should be placed in shallow depressions near the burrow entrance and lightly covered with fine dry dirt. The animals can be lured into the traps by sprinkling small amounts of grain on the earth covering them.