



Lunenburg County's southern flying squirrel is one of two Nova Scotian mammals identified as a national species at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

At risk

Rare squirrels being studied

By STACEY COWELL
scowell@highhouse.ns.ca

"They may be found in any location with mature, mixed forests — mainly hardwoods such as maple, birch, beech and oak — with numerous nesting cavities are limited as well."

"There's not much old, mature forest in Nova Scotia that's left because of the amount of forestry and logging that's occurred over time," said Mr. Kydd.

Southern flying squirrels don't hibernate and are smaller than their more common red squirrel cousins. "And when they have their legs extended, there's a flap of skin that goes between their fore and hind legs. Also, their tail is not puffy like a red squirrel, it's flat, which helps them with their gliding."

Flying squirrels have a unique ability to glide through the air from tree to tree. Anyone who thinks they've seen one of these elusive animals is encouraged to call the species-at-risk hotline at 1-866-727-3447 or e-mail sightings@speciesatrisk.ca.

DUNTY — The Mersey Tobetic Research Institute (MTRI) is studying one of Scotia's most unique, rare and little-known mammals.

The southern flying squirrel is one of Nova Scotian mammals, and the only native to Lunenburg County, identified as a national species at risk by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada.

Their range in Canada is limited to a few pockets in southern Ontario Nova Scotia, including Cookville, Ford, Sherbrooke Lake and Wentzells.

They're an elusive species and not easily studied because they're nocturnal," said Peter Kydd, a species-at-risk manager with MTRI, which operates a station in Kentville, Queens County.

The institute is currently doing research in southwestern Nova Scotia to learn more about the squirrels. For ex-

ample, scientists are trying to gauge how many of the animals live here, along with how and how they reproduce. Since 2005/06, MTRI has been studying their movements by a catch-and-release program in which traps are implanted in the squirrels. For example, the project was expanded to include sites and the introduction of nest boxes. Because of their limited habitat and because of the cavity nesters, they will nest in holes dug