



Mudpuppy's Pond

The Piebold Squirrel of Truman Library

by Theresa Dulinsky

There are over 300 kinds of squirrels, and they live in many countries of the world. The only parts of the world without squirrels are Australia, New Zealand, Madagascar, southern South America, the polar regions, and the hottest deserts. Squirrels belong to a group of animals called rodents. Other rodents include beavers, rats, mice and hamsters.

Squirrels are hunted for food by coyotes, foxes, mountain lions, and other predators. The squirrel's coloring is important in keeping him safe.

The color of gray squirrels matches the gray bark on the trees where they live. Red squirrels have reddish or brown fur to match the bark of pine, spruce, and cedar trees. Some red squirrels have ashy gray sides that blend with the trees that lose their leaves in autumn. Many squirrels have pale fur on their underside. This makes them harder to see from below. Some gray and fox squirrels have dark or black fur. If you travel to the town of Marysville, Kansas, you'll see its population of black squirrels. If you go to Marionville, Missouri you'll find the town is famous for its all white squirrel population.

Lakeside Nature Center cared for an unusual piebold, a white and red, fox squirrel this summer. He lives at the Truman Presidential Museum and Library. Suffering from a broken leg and a dislocated hip, he was brought to the center by the library workers who had given him the name Whitey because of his coloring. His strange coloration made him an easy prey to be caught by a dog. He has recovered and you can see him in his favorite oak tree at the Truman Library.



This squirrel's unusual coloration made him an easy target for predators.

(Photo: Kay D. Morris)

Wilma the Ornate Box Turtle

by Susan McDonald Bray



Perhaps you've seen her reaching for water, stretching or hiding under a log in her display. Wilma is Lakeside Nature Center's 66-year-old Ornate Box Turtle.

She was found when she was just a hatchling turtle by a young couple. They took her home with them. They housed her and took good care of her—offering her fresh water and some variety of foods, including dog food. Often during the warm months of the year, the young couple took the turtle outdoors for fresh air and sunshine. They did this good care for the turtle for 50 years.

Then the young couple was much older. They began to have health problems and couldn't always take such good care of the turtle. It was harder for them to give her a good choice of foods. It was harder for the people to take the turtle outdoors during warm weather. The turtle developed problems from not getting a good variety of food. She had signs showing she had not had enough calcium in her foods. She was dehydrated. Her nose had swollen shut.

That's when a neighbor of the couple learned about the turtle and brought her to Lakeside Nature Center. She was 60 years old in 1998!

Naturalists at Lakeside Nature Center helped the turtle to heal from all the problems she had developed. They decided to let the turtle live the rest of its life at Lakeside Nature Center. And they decided to name her "Wilma" after a character in the historic Flintstones cartoon.

"Wilma" has lived long in the care of people. To do that she needs a variety of good foods, fresh water, warmth and sunlight. She either needs to hibernate underground outside in winter or feel her home space to be as warm as a summer day all winter long.

Turtles don't live long or healthy lives if people keep them inside their homes without taking good care of them. Lakeside Nature Center naturalists know a lot about keeping turtles healthy. If you have any questions about what turtles need to be healthy and live long lives, please call Lakeside Nature Center at 816-513-8960.