

The life of a northern Idaho ground squirrel is not an easy one, let me tell you that. Oh - my apologies - before I go any further, I probably should introduce myself. I am Flora, a northern Idaho ground squirrel (*Uroditellus brunneus*, if you want to be scientific). I live just outside of McCall, Idaho. This is a sneak peak into my life.

To start it off, I will describe what I look like and some other aspects of my life. I am about nine inches long. I have dark reddish-gray fur with a ring of cream-colored fur around my eye. I also have a short tail, small paws and large black eyes. Some humans have called me cute and they are correct. I live in a wonderful three-part burrow. My burrow has a territory of approximately 150 square feet and its entrances are very cleverly hidden by shrubs.

My family consists of me and my five ten-week-old pups. They were all born in May, and in two weeks I will have weaned them off. Then I will be able to send them out into the wild. (I can't wait - they are becoming rowdy!) I had a mate once, he fought over me in April and guarded me as his own until I emerged from hibernation. He now lives away from us, and I don't expect to see him again.

Now, onto my daily life. Whenever I can, I sally off out of my burrow to find food. I do try not to spend too much time out of the safety of my burrow - there are many hungry predators that would like to eat me. However I need food for now and for winter, so I must find some. Grass, roots, flowers, seeds, flower bulbs, and dicot leaves all make wonderful meals. I do enjoy an occasional insect. I do try to store as much food as I can for winter, but it tastes so good! Sometimes I can't help myself and sit out in the open gorging myself on food. After all, I don't particularly live very long, only seven years, so I might as well make the most of my life.

Unfortunately, forest fires and habitation loss are making it harder for me to find food. Other squirrels come into my territory and steal my food. Large animals too, such as birds,

chipmunks, and rabbits eat my food, leaving barely anything for me. I sometimes worry about my kits. How will they find food or even a place to live? Humans and forest fires are destroying our habitat.

So, to end this, I live a rather contented life and I am a unique creature with a simplistic life. I am glad that humans seem to be helping my species, and I hope they continue doing so. A brighter future for me and my kits would render us eternally grateful to anyone who helps our humble species.

Sources

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