

Home Range and Habitat



Home range can be defined as the area within which an animal normally lives and finds what it needs for survival. Basically, the home range is the area that an animal travels for its normal daily activities. Many factors influence the size of a home range, including: species, number of animals (density) in an area, the time of year, the sex of the animal, and the type and quality of the habitat. Typically home range sizes fall within a range, for example, the home range of a gray squirrel varies from 1.2 acres to 8 acres. This is very dependent on the number of squirrels in the area and the quality of the habitat. The table below provides a comparison of home ranges and habitat components for four common animals.

Animal	Gray Squirrel	Eastern Bluebird	Night Crawler	Ant
Possible sizes of home range (as area or volume)	0.5–3.2 hectares	0.8–2.2 hectares during spring, summer. Often larger in fall, winter up to 240 acres.	1500 cubic centimeters–1 cubic meter	5,000 square meters
Typical size of home range (as area or volume)	0.5 hectares	0.8 hectares during spring, summer, early fall	1 cubic meter	1,000 square meters
Size of home range if traveling in a straight line (as distance)	137 meters	122 meters in spring, summer, early fall	100 centimeters	Up to 100 meters
Water	Stream, pond, creek, dew, and some from succulent plant material	Ponds, creeks, bird baths. Prefer running water.	Rain, dew. Skin must stay moist.	Dew, moisture, or liquids from foods they eat, anywhere they can find water.
Food	Variety of nuts (acorns, walnuts), buds, flowers fungi	Mostly insects. Some berries, such as dogwood	Dead leaves, soil, microorganisms, and animal remains	Fruits, plant materials, insects. A variety of foods depending on the species.
Shelter	Trees, tree cavities, leaf nests	Prefer running water.	Underground tunnels in soil	Most in soil underground. Some build ant hills. Others live in logs or other rotting plant material.
Habitat Type	Forest, woodlots, parks, backyards. Must have trees.	Fields, shrubby fields, parks, backyards with scattered trees	Most not native to U.S. Live in soil in forests, fields, gardens.	Found in a variety of habitats from deserts to forests. Not found in Antarctica or the Arctic.