

The Eastern Chipmunk, *Tamias striatus*



Habitat: Found in temperate forests throughout eastern North America. Eastern chipmunks live in shallow burrows (see life cycle) and do not like closed-canopy forests that have little light penetration.

Diet: Chipmunks eat mainly seeds and nuts, but also consume mushrooms, fruits, berries, corn, small invertebrates, bird eggs, and sometimes small vertebrates.

Life Cycle/Reproduction: Eastern chipmunks mate in early spring and sometimes again in late summer, depending on their age, food availability and the duration of snow. The young are born one month after mating. Chipmunks are very active in the summer and fall. When it gets cold, chipmunks inhabit burrows that they have built underground and covered with fallen leaves. These burrows can be up to 30 feet in length and have multiple entrances. Chipmunks collect and store acorns and other food materials in their burrows to tide them over throughout the winter. In the wild, chipmunks typically live for less than three years.

Dispersal: Young chipmunks leave their mother's range when they are about six weeks old. Dispersal is high while male search for females or if both sexes are searching for food. While dispersing, all chipmunks are subject to predation (see biotic interactions). Chipmunks aid in the dispersal of fungi and plants.

Biotic interactions: Major predators include snakes, fox, birds of prey and weasels. Competitors include other vertebrates with similar diets. Chipmunks are hosts for many internal and external parasites (viruses, bacteria, arthropods, worms, etc). As stated above, chipmunks aid in the dispersal of plants and fungi. Burrowing by chipmunks also aerates the soil, positively affecting plants, fungi, and soil-dwelling animals.

References:

Anderson, R. and J. Stephens. 2002. "Tamias striatus" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed May 27, 2010 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Tamias_striatus.html.

Saunders, D.A. 1988. Adirondack Mammals. State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry. 216pp.

Based on the fact sheet, what resources and conditions would favor the growth of a population of chipmunks? What resources and conditions would benefit an individual chipmunk?

Organism	Resources	Conditions
<i>Tamias striatus</i> (Eastern chipmunk)	Nutrients and energy obtained from feeding on available resources	Biotic Conditions <i>Competition</i>
	-generalist consumers, the diet consists of nuts, seeds, acorns, moths and other small invertebrates, and even the eggs of ground-nesting birds	-compete with other species for access to food resources
	Resources needed for burrowing, building nests, and storing food over winter	<i>Predation/Death</i>
		-susceptible to predation by owls, raptors, and other animals
		-human trapping
		<i>Dispersal</i>
		-while dispersing in search for food, can be susceptible to predation, especially when removed from the intact forest (and facing "edge effects")
		Abiotic Conditions
		-a suitable temperature
		-availability of water and air
	-favorable soil conditions for burrowing and nest building	