



## **A squirrely holiday**

The holiday season usually reminds us of all we have to be grateful for. From family and friends to having a place we call home, a fulfilling career, hobbies and more – the list is long for many of us. But I'm guessing it doesn't include squirrels.

That's not the case for Christy Hargrove a wildlife rehabilitator from Asheville, North Carolina. Hargrove recognized the untapped potential of scampering squirrels and decided the feisty rodents needed a holiday of their own. Her efforts prompted the creation of National Squirrel Appreciation Day, January 21, back in 2001.

Yes, there are broader, more inclusive holidays out there, but if we're making a point to appreciate the world around us perhaps that should include squirrels.

Here are a few reasons why:

- Squirrels can be found on every continent except Antarctica and Australia.
- Aside from their fondness for nuts, many squirrels also eat small insects, tree bark, roots, leaves and acorns. They are also one of the few wild animal species that will eat from a person's hand.
- To get from tree to tree or from a tree to the ground, flying squirrels spread the muscle membrane between their legs and body and glide on the air.
- Squirrels have four teeth in the front of their mouth that are constantly growing. This ensures that their teeth don't wear down to nubs from gnawing on nuts and other objects.
- Humans introduced squirrels into most of our major city parks in the 1850s and '60s as a way to bring nature to city dwellers and encourage kindness to animals.
- With famous squirrels like Rocky the Flying Squirrel and Scrat from 20th Century Fox's "Ice Age" movies, it seems that some squirrels are meant for stardom.

As we begin a new year, it's important for all of us to remember both the big and little things that make our world a beautiful place – including the fluffy-tailed squirrel.