

Be an Origami Naturalist: Gray Squirrel

Ages: 6 and up

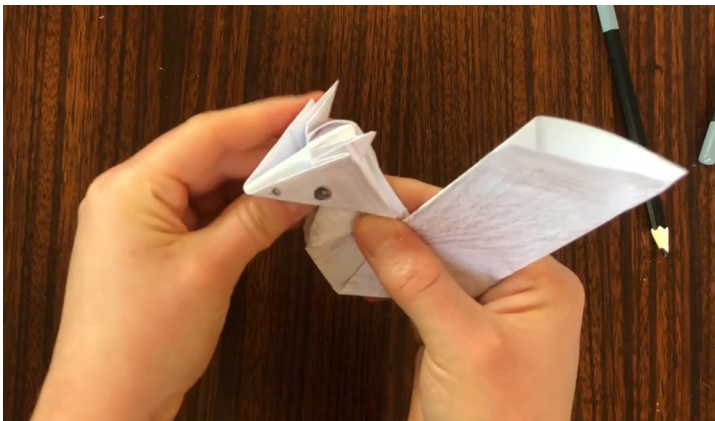
Duration: 15–30 minutes

Materials needed: One sheet of paper, 4 to 8 inches square; drawing materials.

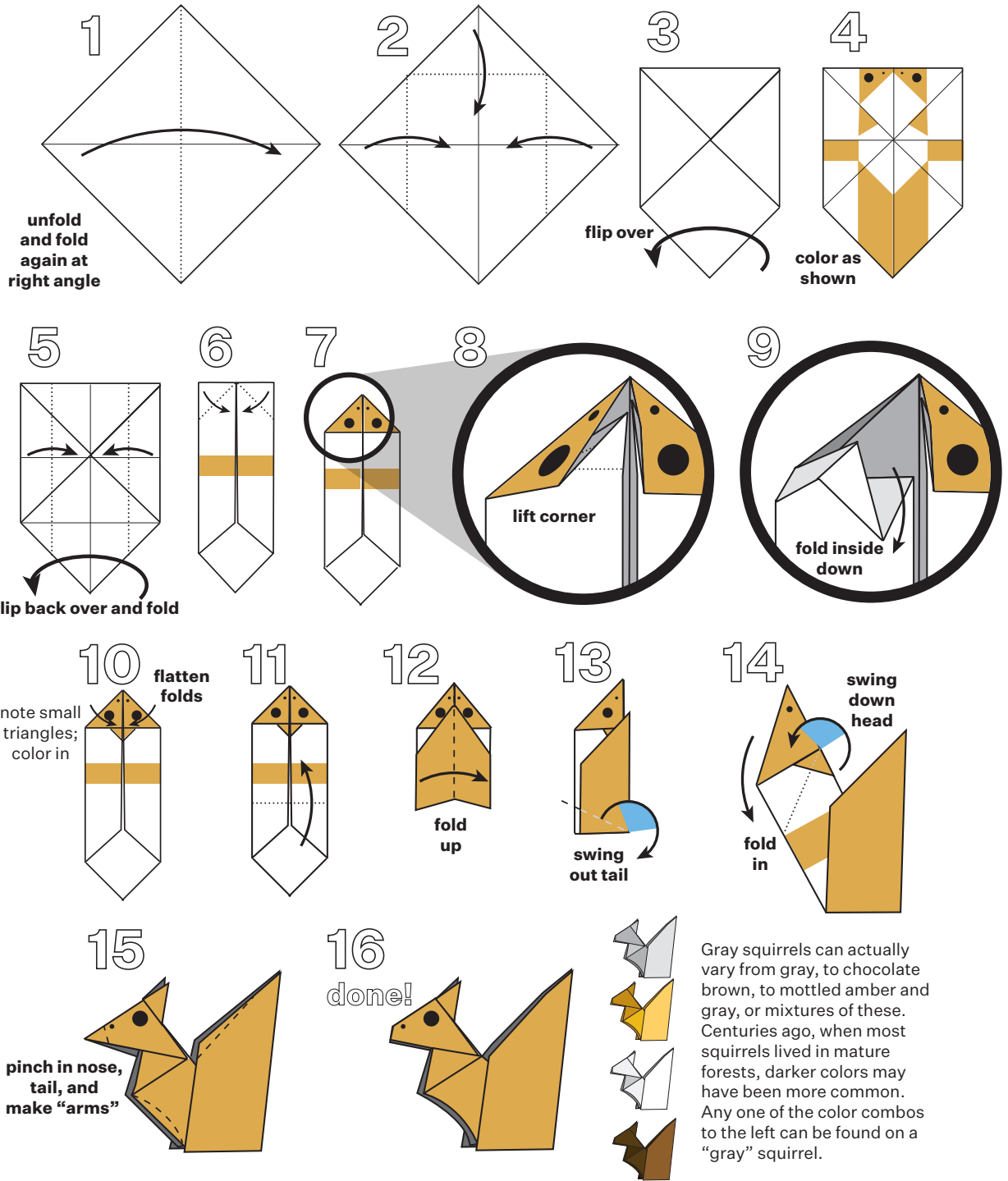
Introduction: The summertime Hudson Valley is full of life. If you can't get out into nature and explore in person (or even if you can), why not learn about a local creature by making one of your very own? With some plain paper, and crayons or pencils, you can use the art of origami to make your own beautiful animal.

For this activity, you'll be making an origami squirrel. By coloring and adding the right features, you can turn your squirrel into a native North American gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), one of the world's many species and varieties of squirrel, and now one of the most common in the world. Follow the illustrated instructions on the following page, or visit hrm.org/science-projects for a step-by-step video.

Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*): Found in forests and suburbs and cities, able to survive on acorns, by finding insects, or by startling humans into dropping their bags of potato chips, gray squirrels are common and widespread in the Hudson Valley. Although many of us think of them as indomitable pests, their population was once decimated by hunting, loss of food sources (like the chestnut blight in the early twentieth century), and pollution. There have been times when the sight of a squirrel in New York City was unusual. The name “gray” suggests that their appearance is boring and uniform—but observe them carefully. Between variations in their fur, and distinctive scars and other injuries from close escapes from predators, you may be able to recognize individuals.



Eastern Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)



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