

counterpoints

40°46'47"N 73°58'02"W

Central Park

As the most visited urban park in the U.S., Manhattan's Central Park needs no introduction. The park is also home to a host of small, furry inhabitants- a population of Eastern Gray Squirrels.

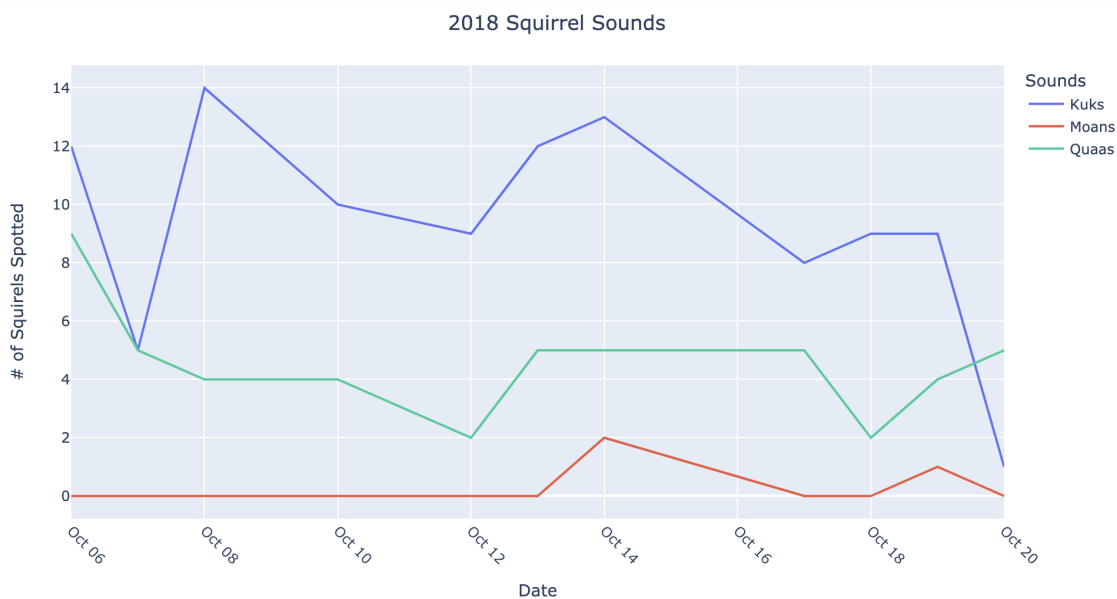
This score uses a particularly charming dataset, the results of the Central Park Squirrel Census (CPSC). This census was conducted in 2018 in an effort to study these often-overlooked animals and engage the broader community in data-driven storytelling. This data was collected by volunteers over 700 total counting sessions, spanning 350 countable park hectares.

The Central Park Squirrel Census data is organized into 3 sections- Hectare Data, Squirrel Data, and Squirrel Stories. The latter of the two are used in this score.

The chart below illustrates observed squirrel sounds over time. Three types of sounds were recorded, described below:

- **Kuks:** Squirrel was heard kukking, a chirpy vocal communication used for a variety of reasons.
- **Quaas:** Squirrel was heard quaaing, an elongated vocal communication which can indicate the presence of a ground predator such as a dog.
- **Moans:** Squirrel was heard moaning, a high-pitched vocal communication which can indicate the presence of an air predator such as a hawk.

Choose three distinct instrumental ranges or extended techniques to represent these sounds. Represent the graph using those three sounds or sound groups:



After exploring the graph, begin adding different sounds to your improvisation. Explore at least three of the Squirrel Stories below, adding new types of sound to illustrate each story. Listen to the other musicians in your interpretation of each Squirrel Story. How do squirrels, nature, and people cohabitate the aural space? How does the soundscape of the park change through time?

Squirrel Stories

Hectare was peacefully bustling.
It was a peaceful bustle.
A monk came to bless the squirrels.

They appeared in bunches. There were none, and then, suddenly, they came down from their trees.

quiet woods. skittish squirrels
paper bag in tree

Lovely rainy morning

There appear to be no squirrels on the lake's island

The island is approximately 20 feet from the ramble's shoreline. It appears to be roughly 800 square feet. A family of squirrels "could" live there, quite happily, but would most likely begin to feel isolated. Some would turn on each other, while others would begin to build boats.

The squirrels must be itchy today; I saw them scratching.

All squirrels in this hectare were nice and polite. I had a staring contest with squirrel no. 3 and I won.

Squirrels are known art lovers so I expected to find several mulling about the Met. I was not disappointed.

Squirrels, it seems, do not care for tennis

Very heavy foot traffic. Squirrels maybe don't like John Lennon tunes?

I didn't see a lot of communication -- or perhaps I'm not great at identifying it. The chipmunks and birds are vocal, but the squirrels calmly go about their business.

As I write these notes, I look up from my clipboard to see a squirrel looking me in the eye. He steps forward, puts a front paw to his chest, "Who, me?"

Yes. You.

Squirrels don't like weddings.

Sources:

<https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Environment/2018-Central-Park-Squirrel-Census-Squirrel-Data/vfnx-vebw>

<https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Environment/2018-Central-Park-Squirrel-Census-Stories/gfqj-f768>