


SQUIRRELS

Around the world, tree squirrels are among the most prolific and fun to watch backyard wildlife species.

But not everyone appreciates their bright-eyed, bushy-tailed charms. The abundance of squirrels in rural, urban and suburban neighborhoods can cause people to view them as a nuisance and disregard their special role in ecosystems.


If you've got squirrels driving you nutty, remember that they're only doing what's natural: Looking for a meal and a safe place to sleep at night. Whether you need to evict them from your attic or stop them from stealing your bird food, be patient and look for a way that won't harm the critters or their young.

DID YOU KNOW?



Squirrels don't always remember where they stored their supply of seeds and nuts for the winter. Because squirrels often fail to reclaim the buried food, abandoned seeds and nuts often take root, establishing trees and other plants in new locations. Thus, squirrels play a vital role in sustaining and expanding plant communities and ecosystems. Just imagine how many trees have sprouted because of squirrels' short memories.

SQUIRRELS IN THE YARD




Squirrels rarely, if ever, damage plants, so if you suspect that a squirrel has been sampling your tomatoes, it's best to make sure that a squirrel is in fact the culprit before you attempt to remedy the situation.

Because squirrels are diurnal (active during the day), it is usually pretty easy to see for yourself if squirrels are responsible for damage to plants and vegetables. And, of course, if you know the damage occurs at night, you can rule squirrels out entirely and should focus your efforts on nocturnal animals in your area, such as raccoons and opossums.

If squirrels are digging up your yard in search of food, you can discourage them and other animals by planting non-edible flowers, such as daffodils, or laying a wire mesh over the soil after planting. The mesh must have openings big enough for the bulbs to grow through but too small for squirrels to dig into.

SQUIRRELS IN THE HOME




Squirrels give birth at different times of the year depending on the species, and they often use attics, chimneys, sheds, or openings under porches and buildings as dens to raise their young. In order to avoid separating young squirrels from their parents, squirrels should not be evicted until the breeding season has ended. Trapping and moving the family is not recommended because it will almost inevitably lead to separation, and, as a result, baby squirrels may die.

When you're ready to humanely remove the squirrels from your home, begin by thoroughly inspecting attics and eaves to find openings where the squirrels enter and exit, concentrating your efforts on areas where noises have been heard. If you find no apparent points of entry, inspect the roof and the eaves and vents on the outside until you find the opening. If you find a nest and there are no immature squirrels, attempt to encourage the squirrels to go outside by placing a radio tuned to a talk-radio station inside the attic, along with several ammonia-soaked rags and/or a portable lamp.

When you are sure that the squirrel or squirrels have left, seal up the opening with 1/4- or 1/2-inch mesh hardware cloth or sheet-metal flashing, securely fastened. Be sure to extend the patch at least 6 inches beyond the hole in all directions in order to prevent the squirrels from gnawing around the patch. Trim overhanging limbs to prevent access to your home.

HUMANE CONTROL



Despite squirrels' many likeable attributes, some people don't appreciate it when squirrels raid their vegetable gardens or tear holes in the roofs of their homes to build nests. Nevertheless, it's important for all of us to remember that we should not vilify these animals; they don't have a score to settle with us. They are simply doing what comes naturally to them in order to survive. Fortunately for squirrels and us, there are numerous ways to prevent these curious animals from damaging property without harming them in any way.

Watauga Animal Services can provide Watauga residents with a trap for a \$55.00 deposit that will be returned to you once you have trapped the wildlife/animal you are wanting removed from your property. You may also use your own private trap as long as it is humane, Animal Control will remove whatever you may have trapped. Click [here](#) to print a Live Animal Trap Request Form.

A 2004 HSUS study of grey squirrels who were trapped and relocated from suburban areas to a large forest showed that a staggering 97 percent of the animals either soon died or disappeared from the release area.

97%

For Animal Control assistance within the City of Watauga, dial 817.656.9614.