

Squirrels are busy preparing for cold winter days ahead

Squirrels are special animals. They are among only a few animals that have truly learned to co-exist well with humans. The typical red squirrel survives in urban settings on natural food, but it also takes advantage of handouts from bird and squirrel feeders and also helps itself to your garden produce. Squirrels build nests in trees, but also may take up residence in attics, garages and other man-made shelters. For some people, squirrels are a pest that waste birdseed and dig holes in the lawn. Others love to feed squirrels as much as they do birds and delight in their antics.

Food. The favorite diet of squirrels consists of nuts, seeds and fruits. During the summer and fall, squirrels provision their territory by burying nuts and seeds in the ground, often in the lawn and flower beds. Before they bury it, a squirrel breaks the shell of a nut with its teeth, then rubs the nut on its face. This seemingly nonsensical ritual applies a scent to the nut which helps the squirrel find it later—under a foot of snow. Even in the winter, the average

adult squirrel needs to eat about a pound of food a week to maintain an active life. In the early spring, after they have eaten their stockpile of food and when they have babies to feed, squirrels can damage landscape plants before there is other food for them to eat. Oddly enough, some squirrels have developed a fondness for the coating on automobile electrical wires; some of the newer wiring has coating made from soybean meal.

Shelter. Squirrels build nests called dreys, made of twigs and leaves and may build a nest in a hollow tree cavity. The interior is lined with fur or other soft material for comfort. Nests are built between two strong branches high enough above the ground to deter predators but not too high or the nest will be destroyed by wind. Squirrels may build nests in an attic or a crawl space, but they have also built nests in cars, chimneys, barbecue grills and under porches.

Activity. In the summer, squirrels are most active a few hours after sunrise and before sunset. In the winter, squirrels

are normally most active between dawn and mid-day and will spend the rest of the day in the nest. During winter storms or severe cold, the squirrels may not leave the nest for days. But, tree squirrels do not hibernate. Adult tree squirrels live alone, but one may temporarily share its nest with other squirrels to conserve body heat. After the cold weather subsides, the other squirrels will go on their way. In the late winter and early spring, squirrels mate and the female gives birth to her babies—four or five is an average-sized litter. The male squirrel plays no part in the rearing process.

One way to live more peaceably with squirrels is to provide food and shelter for them. A squirrel feeder can be as much entertainment as a bird feeder. Squirrels are amazing to watch; they are natural acrobats and are able to maneuver quickly without falling. If squirrels live in your area, consider making a squirrel house to give female squirrels a place to raise their young. This may keep them out of your attic. (BPO)

The big sleep

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Winter is on its way, and for many animals, it's going to be tough to find food and stay warm during the cold winter months. What will they do? They won't sweat it—they'll sleep through it! Lots of animals spend anywhere from a few weeks to several months in a sleep-like state called hibernation. During hibernation, an animal's temperature and heart rate drop, and its breathing slows almost to a standstill. That way, it uses much less energy than it normally needs. When the weather gets warmer, the animal wakes up rested and ready for some summer fun!

Garter snakes don't like to be alone during their long winter nap. The solution to this is that hundreds—even thousands—often hibernate together in one huge, spaghetti-like clump. The body

heat of all those snakes helps keep the group warm.

Ever wonder why you never see ladybugs during the winter? They're hibernating! Large groups of ladybugs doze together, tucked into a tree hole or other protected burrow. Houseflies and mosquitoes also hibernate during winter.

Frogs, lizards and snakes depend on the weather to let them know when to hibernate. Since these animals are cold-blooded, their body temperatures are controlled by the temperature of their environment. As the temperature drops, frogs, lizards and snakes become more inactive. When their body temperatures get low enough, they begin to hibernate, often under stones or buried in mud. They keep on snoozing until warm weather wakes them up in the spring.

What do butterflies do? Not all of them hibernate because

some head for warmer winter homes while others spend the winter as caterpillars wrapped in a cocoon. The adults that tough it out do their hibernating in caves, trees or other shelters. How does a sleeping butterfly keep from freezing to death? As the amount of daylight gets shorter, the butterfly's blood produces chemicals called glycols. Glycols work like a car's antifreeze—they keep the butterfly's blood from freezing. Come springtime, the glycols dissolve, and the butterfly's blood returns to normal.

Most birds deal with winter the same way lots of people do—they fly off to a warmer climate! Those that stick around can tough out weather as cold as minus 30 degrees F, as long as they can find food. For information about how and what to feed these friendly birds, call 441-7180. (AH)

Building with recycled materials a sound business practice

Steel cans, newspapers and scrap wood become structural framing, insulation and flooring in a growing trend toward "green" construction and materials.

Manufacturers, planners, architects and builders have adopted a green or sustainable

building ethic for resource efficiency and productivity.

Architects and builders may be using recycled products, such as gypsum wallboard and ceiling tile, without even knowing it. Recycled content isn't always promoted because past industry

perception of recycled quality and price hasn't been positive.

That perception is changing. The focus is growing toward environmental building responsibility. New products are being developed daily. Many of these products are reported to be as

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Environmental Focus



The repellency of hedge apples: an old wives tale

Every year, we receive occasional calls from people wondering about the effectiveness of hedge apples. In fact, we have even heard of local hardware stores "selling" hedge apples and advertising them as a natural repellent against all sorts of house bugs.

Hedge apples are the fruits of Osage orange trees. At the present time, there is no evidence that hedge apples have repellent properties and we can believe this home remedy has little value in preventing bugs from coming into the house.

In pioneer times, Osage orange trees were planted along field margins to keep cattle from straying. The wood is extremely strong and was used by craftsman to make sturdy tools and bows. Osage orange trees can still be found along fence lines in rural Nebraska.

As for businesses selling hedge apples: it is *illegal* for a business to sell anything that is advertised as an insect control or repellent unless it has an EPA registration number. (BPO)

Caulking cracks and crevices prevents entry by many pests

In the fall, a number of pests try to find sheltered places to live and sometimes enter homes. The primary method of control is to prevent their entry by caulking cracks and crevices around window and doors, siding and foundations. These actions can prevent entry by a number of pests, including box elder bugs and elm leaf beetles. Box elder bugs and elm leaf beetles may become active during warm winter days and in the spring of the year and come inside the home.

Spiders, crickets, millipedes and sowbugs also come into a home in the fall of the year and are often found in basements and lower floors. Sealing cracks in the foundation and around basement windows will greatly help prevent entry by these pests. These actions can also help prevent entry by mice.

Another non-chemical control that will passively catch some pests is to place sticky traps, also sold as mouse glue boards, in corners of rooms. Pests most likely to be caught in these traps are spiders, crickets, millipedes and sowbugs. Another safe method of control is to use a vacuum cleaner to remove these pests. It is as effective as an aerosol insecticides and safer to you and your family.

The old adage, *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*, is true when it comes to caulking cracks and crevices. The time spent is certainly worthwhile and might reduce your heat bills as well. (BPO)



Late that night, Vince suddenly realizes why, oddly, he hadn't seen any roaches in his new apartment.

America unbugged: fast facts about bug fears and fascinations

Orkin Pest Control Summer Survey Results: Man vs. Woman vs. Bug

Women surveyed are twice as likely as men to be "grossed-out" by bugs (55% vs. 23%).

Men surveyed are more scared of bees and wasps than are women (38% vs. 31%), but women say they are more scared of spiders than are men (29% vs. 20%).

Men surveyed are more likely than women to consider killing a bug in the house a "man's job" (34% vs. 24%).

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Whoo Dumped?
441-6500
Report illegal dumpers.