

## Information on Problem Squirrels

Gray Squirrels are the most common cause of conflict with humans (see picture below). Occasionally, Flying Squirrels, Red Squirrels, and Chipmunks (ground squirrels) may also cause conflicts with people. The information below is based on my observations since about 1988. A track of a Gray Squirrel is shown at the bottom of this page.



**BIOLOGY:** All squirrels are RODENTS (Order=Rodentia). Gray squirrels have at least 2 litters per year, the first in March-April and the second around July-August. Litters can contain anywhere from 1 to 6 young, with 2 to 4 being most common. It is believed that flying squirrels, and red squirrels also have 2 litters per year around the same time. Chipmunks only have one litter per year around April, and are so fiercely territorial, that they force their young to move out of their territory after about 6-8 weeks.

In the Wild, gray squirrels will claim as much as one acre of forest for their own. In the suburbs, there may be 10-20 gray squirrels in a 1 acre area, depending on the food supply (e.g. bird feeders), and housing situation (e.g. hollow trees, open sheds, and attics)

**FOODS:** All squirrels will eat mainly nuts, fruits, berries, and seeds. Gray squirrels have been known to eat baby nesting birds as well. The only other squirrel that is carnivorous is the flying Squirrel, which is rarely seen because it is nocturnal.

**DAMAGE:** All rodents gnaw. Gray squirrels cause damage just by their chewing. They will chew into attics, and, once inside, can do extensive damage to wiring.

They can fall into chimneys and end up in your fireplace, or, if the damper is open, they may end up running around your house. Occasionally, I have found them nesting in a garage as well. Normally,

you will hear gray squirrels up inside the attic, or running in the soffits in the early morning (around sunrise), and, again, later in the day (from 4PM till dark). They are generally quiet at night. Red squirrels, and flying Squirrels will be heard scampering around at night. Red Squirrels are more prevalent around conifer (evergreen) trees, whereas you generally find gray squirrels around hardwoods. Both red squirrels and gray squirrels prefer to enter your house from a tree that is close enough to gain access to the roof, but sometimes they will climb a deck or a porch to gain entry to the house, or cross a utility wire. Flying Squirrels can "fly" (or, more accurately glide) from trees as far away as 50 meters or so, depending on the height of the trees. They land on the roof and scamper inside. Chipmunks generally enter from ground level. Chipmunks (our species is the Eastern chipmunk) are also known as ground squirrels.

**REMEDICATION:** All squirrels have to leave the building in order to find food. Just a note here, chipmunks will generally enter at the basement or crawl space level of the house, as they nest underground. You can wait till they leave, and then close up the holes. The problems with this method is that between March-May, and July-October, you may trap the young ones inside causing them to die and odors, flies, etc. will be the result. Another problem is that sometimes they will just chew in somewhere else. I believe that the animals causing the problem should always be removed, and then the holes sealed up to prevent others from infesting the structure. We remove them with cage traps and then the entry holes need to be sealed up to prevent new infestations. This is the method I generally use. I remove all the squirrels, then either close up the openings (at additional cost), or if you have a carpenter or handyman who can do it, then you can opt to do it that way. Just removing the squirrels, and leaving the access holes open is NOT considered to be the complete solution. On older houses, sometimes the repairs can get very expensive.



The tracks of the gray squirrel are generally arranged as a triangle. The rear 2 feet are spread apart, while the front 2 feet are very close together.