

CONTROLLING VERTEBRATE DAMAGE

Extension Bulletin E-868

April 1977

tree squirrels

fox, gray, red and flying squirrels
(*Sciurus niger* and *S. carolinensis*; *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* and *Glaucomys volans*)

See also the first in this series: Extension Bulletin E-860 on "General Considerations."

By GLENN DUDDERAR, Extension Wildlife Specialist

TREE SQUIRRELS, especially the fox squirrel, are common residents of almost any area, even urban areas, where there are enough trees to supply them with food and den sites. Occasionally they nest in attics or walls of homes, monopolize birdfeeders, and damage gardens, ornamental trees and shrubbery and crops. In these situations, the human residents often want to prevent continued nuisance.

IN THE HOME

EXCLUSION

Squirrels often find openings around eaves or ventilators or even gnaw openings through woodwork to get into a home. Occasionally they nest and raise young in such openings. The most effective control prevents entry by closing the openings with wood, masonry or hardware cloth.

Avoid enclosing squirrels within the home. Squirrels normally begin their search for food shortly before sunrise and for an hour or two after. This would be the best time to make repairs to avoid closing the squirrel within the home. To make absolutely certain, observe the opening to see that the squirrel has left, or prior to exclusion, apply a repellent as described below.

If the squirrel has been a resident of the house for any period of time, you may find a nest and young squirrels. In this case the only alternative is to remove the nest and young before making the necessary repairs. To prevent squirrels from coming down a chimney, cover the chimney top with wire mesh.

REPULSION

Squirrels can be repelled from inside the home by the odor of naphthalene.

Spread 100% granules or flakes on floors and between walls. Use about 5 lb. per 2,000 cu. ft. If the area to be treated has large openings and is very drafty, this technique will probably be ineffective.

POPULATION REDUCTION

If you cannot exclude the squirrels, the only alternative is to trap them. Commercial sources of live traps are listed in "Sources of Supply." Live traps should be baited with foods such as peanuts, corn or sunflower seeds. Trapped squirrels can either be gassed or drowned or transported at least five miles from the point of capture and released in wooded areas.

A permit from the Law Enforcement Division, Michigan DNR, is necessary for trapping or shooting outside the legal squirrel season. Without a permit, shooting during squirrel season requires a hunting license except on your own property.

IN ORNAMENTAL TREES, SHRUBBERY, GARDENS, CROPS AND BIRDFEEDERS

EXCLUSION

When squirrels damage ornamental trees or shrubs, or consume nuts intended for harvest, they may be excluded from the vegetation by fastening a 12-in. wide piece of sheet metal entirely around the stem or trunk of the plant at least 4 ft. from the ground.

Sheet metal formed into a downward sloping metal flange and attached to the supporting pole or the base of the bird

feeder will prevent squirrels from climbing up into it. It is important that the sheet metal be very smooth and high enough to prevent the squirrel from jumping above it from the ground or at least 4 ft.

If the birdfeeder or the plant is in a position so that the tree squirrels can gain access from other trees or shrubs, then similar metal guards should also be attached to these trees or shrubs.

REPULSION

When squirrels cannot be excluded from damaging plants, they may be repelled by spraying the plant with 7.95% thiram. Reapplication is necessary to protect new growth. Do not apply to portions of plant to be consumed by humans or domestic animals.

POPULATION REDUCTION

If it is impossible to isolate the damaged location from the surrounding vegetation, then the two effective control measures are shooting and live trapping. If shooting is permitted in the locality of the damage, the best time to conduct the operation is in the early morning or late evening. Shotguns or .22 rifles, if permitted, are the best weapons. If live trapping is desired or necessary, several live traps should be used if many squirrels are involved. See the section on live trapping around the home.

IN FORESTS

Seed for direct seeding can be treated with materials containing 42% thiram to repel squirrels from eating the seeds.

CONTROLLING VERTEBRATE DAMAGE

Extension Bulletin E-867

April 1977

chipmunks and ground squirrels

(*Tamias striatus*, *Eutamias minimus* and *Citellus tridecemlineatus*)

See also the first in this series: Extension Bulletin E-860 on "General Considerations."

BY GLENN DUDDERAR, Extension Wildlife Specialist

THE EASTERN CHIPMUNK, the least chipmunk and the striped ground squirrel are the smaller members of the squirrel family, measuring 8 to 10 in. All are primarily ground dwellers, but chipmunks occasionally climb trees and shrubs for food and protection.

Chipmunks can be identified by the black and white stripes on the back of their reddish brown coat and by their habit of running with their tails straight up in the air. The striped ground squirrel, erroneously called a gopher, has cream-colored stripes the length of the body. Five of the 11 light stripes are broken into a series of spots.

These members of the ground squirrel family move quickly and are alert to danger. Chipmunks prefer woody areas with plenty of food-producing trees and bushes. Food and protection offered by shrubs, flowers, gardens and various types of landscaping attract chipmunks, and it is in these conditions that most problems arise.

Striped ground squirrels prefer grassy areas, such as lawns and golf courses, where they sometimes create problems. Their burrows are extensive and may exceed 30 or 40 feet in length.

The chipmunk burrow system usually opens at the base of stumps, fallen logs or at the side of stone walls and is kept free of excavated dirt at all times.

The burrow entrances of the striped ground squirrel are usually surrounded with excavated dirt and may occur anywhere in a grassy area. These interesting creatures are often a welcome addition to the landscaping, but at times their numbers or destructive habits cause the landowner to seek damage control methods.

REPULSION

Commercial repellents containing 7.98% thiram may repel these animals from plants. Thiram sprays must be applied repeatedly in order to protect new growth. Seeds for direct seeding of forest trees can be treated with materials containing 42% thiram to avert chipmunks and ground squirrels from eating the seeds. Repellents are generally effective only as long as other foods are available in the area. Sources for these materials are listed in "Sources of Supply."

EXCLUSION

Chipmunks can be prevented from damaging shrubbery and small trees by wrapping the base of these plants with light-gauge metal. Where possible the metal should be at least 12 in. high to prevent climbing.

POPULATION REDUCTION

Trapping

The large, wooden-base snap traps used in rat control are effective for chipmunks and striped ground squirrels. Nut meats, peanut butter, oatmeal and similar foods make good baits. Place traps along runways or at burrow openings and other areas of activity. It is usually advisable to place the traps under a small box with an opening that allows ground squirrels, but not desirable birds, to get to the baited trap.

Shooting

Shooting is a most effective control method if only a few chipmunks or ground squirrels are involved. Small-

gauge shotguns or air-operated pellet rifles are the most desirable weapons. Early morning or late afternoon are the best hunting periods. Check with local police officials for shooting regulations.

Cats

A cat that is not overfed can keep a chipmunk or ground squirrel population in check. Other animals, especially birds, may also be taken, however.

Poisoning

(These techniques require a permit from the Law Enforcement Division, Michigan DNR.)

Burrow fumigation—The following fumigant can be used to gas ground squirrels in their burrows. Cover the burrow opening with a piece of inverted sod to confine the gas to the burrow without smothering the cartridge with loose soil.

Fumigant	Formulation
gas cartridges	3/4-3 oz.

Amount Used

Light fuse and insert in burrow. Cover burrow opening with a piece of inverted sod.

Poison baiting—Strychnine-treated grain bait is available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for use under government supervision. Apply teaspoon quantities around burrow openings or in burrows if birds may consume bait. After 48 hours, close burrows with soil. Retreat any that are reopened. One pound will treat 10 to 15 acres.