
Getting to Know Squirrels



The most common type of squirrel in this area is the Eastern gray squirrel.

- 🐿 Gray squirrels are diurnal, or active during the day, with peaks of activity in early morning and late afternoon.
 - 🐿 Squirrels build large nests of leaves and twigs on tree branches. They also den within tree cavities and in buildings where they can gain access through open spaces in the roof, attic, or walls.
 - 🐿 Although they do not hibernate, squirrels often remain in their nests in cold or stormy weather, venturing out when they need to find food, which they have often cached near their nests.
 - 🐿 Squirrels are omnivorous. They eat seeds, nuts, fruit, tree bark and buds, eggs, and fungi.
 - 🐿 Like other rodents, squirrels are accomplished gnawers, using their sharp, ever-growing front teeth to strip bark and chew through wood and plastic.
 - 🐿 Breeding season begins in late winter. Depending on conditions and food availability, squirrels may produce two litters a year. Average litter size is three young, born naked and blind. Young squirrels remain in the nest for about six weeks.
-

Give wildlife a helping hand.

The goal of the Mercer County Wildlife Center is to protect the future of native wildlife species through education, rehabilitation, and release.

You can help the Center meet this goal by donating your time or resources.

Volunteer opportunities:

- 🐿 Animal technicians - Dependable, compassionate people to help feed and administer medications to the animals in our care.
- 🐿 Community outreach volunteers - Enthusiastic people to greet the public at community events, raise funds by selling merchandise, and educate others about wildlife by distributing literature.
- 🐿 Publications - Writers, copy editors, and layout people to help develop our newsletters, brochures, and handouts.
- 🐿 Publicity - Volunteers to write press releases that help spread the word about the Center.
- 🐿 Flea market - People to help run our flea market fund raisers. We also gratefully accept certain donated items.

For more information about these volunteer positions, call the Volunteer Coordinator at (609) 397-8435.

Wish list items:

Caring for the injured, ill, or displaced animals that come through our door involves various supplies, many of which you probably use in your own home. Visit our web site to see our wish list.

Mercer County Wildlife Center



Coexisting with Squirrels



Nimble and opportunistic, squirrels are always on the lookout for a free buffet.

P.O. Box 161
Titusville, NJ 08560
(609) 883-6606


www.mercercounty.org/mcwc/mcwc.htm



Coexisting with Squirrels

Squirrels are opportunistic, making use of all sources of food and shelter available to them. They can also cause property damage, such as gnawing through electrical wiring when they nest inside walls or attics or overturning bird feeders. The best way to discourage them is to modify their habitat. Here are some ideas:

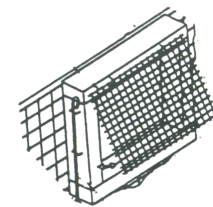
- ❏ **Do not feed them** – Do not offer squirrels food. Discourage them from raiding bird feeding stations by placing feeders at least six feet away from fences, trees, and buildings or by using squirrel baffles. Do not use capsaicin-based “hot pepper” powder; this powder can make squirrels sick and can irritate birds’ eyes.
- ❏ **Allow them to find their way out of buildings** – Occasionally, squirrels enter buildings through open doors, windows, or chimneys. If a squirrel is loose, determine its location and close surrounding interior doors. Keeping one window or door open, leave the room, allowing the squirrel to find its way out.

- 
- ❏ **Keep your house in good repair** – Squirrels, especially adult females, seek out openings for potential den sites. A house in poor repair is an open invitation to them. Gnawing through wood to create larger holes, squirrels gain entry through even small spaces. If you suspect that a squirrel has taken up residence in a wall or attic space, look for likely entries and listen for tell-tale sounds of scampering. From March through September, assume that there are juveniles in the nest. Wait until the young are old enough to leave on their own. Once you are sure that there are no more young, you can begin the process of closing the squirrels out of the space by frightening them away with loud noises or by waiting until they have gone outside on their own during the day. If you have any doubts about whether all the animals are gone, you can leave one hole open and fit it with a one-way door, similar to a cat door, with a hinged flap so that the squirrels can escape but not reenter.

Leave this door in place for several days, continue to listen for activity, and, if possible, inspect the space until you are certain they are gone. Then, seal all openings with 1/2" hardware cloth or

metal flashing, being sure to extend these over the hole at least 6" in all directions to prevent squirrels from gnawing through the patch.

- ❏ **Deter future visits** – To prevent future problems, squirrel-proof the building permanently by repairing or replacing loose or rotting siding, boards, and shingles. Trim tree branches away from the side and top of buildings to prevent easy access to the eaves and roof.
- ❏ **Protect trees and plants** – To prevent squirrels from stripping bark or otherwise damaging trees, wrap a 24" metal cylinder at least 6 feet up the tree trunk and trim lower branches. Occasionally, squirrels dig up bulbs; to protect these, place chicken wire over the soil where they are planted.



One-way Door

Illustration from the Humane Control of Wildlife in Cities and Towns, Humane Society of the U.S.

Thanks to the HOWL Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in Washington state for providing the information in this pamphlet.