



Eastern Gray Squirrel (Photo: J. Las Wilson)

COEXIST WITH Squirrels

updated 2020

No matter where you live in North Carolina you likely have heard squirrels chattering or witnessed them chasing each other up, down and around tree trunks. Squirrels are fun to photograph, exciting to hunt and are well-adapted to living near humans. Due to their abundance and distribution, the Eastern Gray Squirrel and the Southern Flying Squirrel are the primary culprits in most squirrel-related nuisance situations.



Southern Flying Squirrel (Photo: Judy Frederick)



Eastern Fox Squirrel (Photo: Chuck Bryan)

Squirrel Quick Facts:

What squirrels call North Carolina home?

The Eastern Gray Squirrel is found statewide. The Southern Flying Squirrel is relatively common but rarely seen due to its nocturnal nature. The Eastern Fox Squirrel, Red Squirrel and Carolina Northern Flying Squirrel have limited distributions in the state.

Why and how are squirrels getting in my home?

Squirrels enter homes (typically attics) as an alternative to tree cavities and leaf nests. Attics provide a warm, safe nesting location to raise young. Squirrels can enter your home through existing holes (e.g., unscreened vents, gaps in siding/shingles, etc.), openings created by squirrels or other animals or through chimneys. Squirrels can gain access to the roof of a house by jumping from nearby trees or climbing along wires/cables connected to your home.

How can squirrels damage my home?

Gray squirrels, which cause the most property damage, will occasionally get into attics or under houses through small holes or by chewing through siding. Squirrels can also cause damage by chewing on porches or through electrical wiring.

Why are squirrels always chewing on things?

Like all rodents, squirrels must continually chew to wear down their front teeth. A squirrel's teeth are constantly growing, and chewing helps keep them from getting too long. This behavior can cause damage to wood and other materials within a squirrel's reach.

Are squirrels dangerous?

Squirrels will not attack unprovoked but can bite and scratch in self-defense if you try to touch or catch them.

Can squirrels transmit rabies?

All mammals are susceptible to the rabies virus; however, squirrels are rarely infected. The best rule of thumb is: don't handle wildlife, but if you are bitten, seek medical attention.

What if I find an injured/orphaned squirrel?

[Licensed small mammal rehabilitators](#) can take in injured or orphaned squirrels. If a young squirrel falls out of its nest, contact a rehabilitator *first* before moving the animal. Given enough time, the mother usually retrieves her young - even if the nest is destroyed.



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 1751 Varsity Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606

More information: ncwildlife.org/graysquirrel
ncwildlife.org/foxsquirrel

ncwildlife.org/southernflyingsquirrel
ncwildlife.org/northernflyingsquirrel



Eastern Gray Squirrel (Photo: George B2 on Pixabay)

To prevent problems with squirrels:

- **Routinely check buildings** for openings that could provide access for wildlife. Look for signs of chewing where a squirrel has attempted to create or expand a hole. If a squirrel is nesting, delay repairs until the young have matured and left. One-way gate devices installed over the hole allow squirrels to leave but not re-enter. Permanently seal openings with metal sheeting or wire mesh (half inch or less) once you are sure that no squirrels are inside.
- **Trim limbs back** at least 6 feet from your house to prevent squirrels from jumping from a tree to your roof.
- **Encircle tree trunks** with a 2-foot-wide collar of smooth metal, 6 feet above ground to prevent squirrels from damaging nut or fruit crops (e.g., pecans). Attach the collar using small springs to allow for tree growth. This technique can also be

used on trees near homes to prevent squirrels from jumping from trees to the roof. This will not work if the canopies of nearby trees are within jumping distance for a squirrel.

- **Avoid conditioning squirrels** to expect a meal at your house. Remove bird feeders, or use one that is squirrel-proof. Predator guards should be placed higher than a squirrel can jump. Place feeders away from trees or fences to prevent squirrels from jumping onto the feeder.
- **Try spicy repellants** that are capsaicin or pepper-based (see below for recipe). Some birdseed is pre-treated with capsaicin to make it taste bad to squirrels and other rodents, but not to birds. Moth balls are toxic and their use is not recommended..



Squirrel-proof birdfeeder (DepositPhotos)



Tree baffle (Reddit)

Spicy Squirrel Deterrent

- Several cayenne, jalapeño, or habanero peppers
- A few cups of water
- 1 tbsp vegetable or canola oil
- 3 drops dish detergent

Simmer peppers, oil & water for 20 min. Do not let the water boil - it will reduce the spiciness. Let cool. Pour the liquid into a spray bottle and add the dish detergent to keep the oil and water mixed. Spray on outdoor surfaces to prevent chewing or regular visitation from squirrels & other wild mammals (rabbits, raccoons, etc).

If you already have a problem with squirrels:

• Consider following these non-lethal options first:

- * Exclusion - Use wire mesh (half inch or less) or metal sheeting to cover openings and prevent squirrels from getting into a building.
- * Harassment - a motion-activated sprinkler can deter persistent squirrels from a small area.
- * Relocation - If a squirrel is causing property damage, it can be trapped under a depredation permit and relocated. Squirrels can only be relocated to private property with explicit landowner permission. For more info visit: ncwildlife.org/Learning/Species/Mammals/Gray-Squirrel#100372055-what-to-do-if-a-squirrel-has-caused-property-damage.

- **Where appropriate, squirrels can be harvested** during the established hunting season with the appropriate license. Learn more: eregulations.com/northcarolina/hunting-fishing/small-game-seasons/#squirrel
- Squirrels in the act of causing property damage may be shot by the landowner without a depredation permit. Check with local city or county authorities regarding restrictions on the discharge of firearms.
- If a squirrel has caused property damage and you need assistance, contact a Wildlife Damage Control Agent (a private individual who charges for services). Find a list of agents: ncwildlife.org/Trapping/Wildlife-Damage-Control-Agent