Wildlife Fact Sheet: Squirrels

Squirrels prosper in suburban areas due to their supreme agility and adaptability. Gray squirrels are active during the day, and flying squirrels are nocturnal. Squirrels are high-strung animals; they like to live in open and free spaces, and will behave erratically when trapped in an enclosed living space.

*FUN FACT:* Squirrels have two litters a year: in early spring and in the late summer/early fall. If squirrels are heard scampering in an attic at those times of year, it’s most likely a mother with her babies.

- **Squirrels Circling or Falling Over:** Squirrels are very susceptible to a parasite called roundworm (which creates rabies-like symptoms that affects the brain). This condition is fatal and is not treatable in people or in squirrels.
  
  *PEOPLE – PARTICULARLY CHILDREN – SHOULD BE KEPT AWAY AND THE ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER SHOULD BE CONTACTED*

- **Squirrels digging in yard:** Squirrels need to bury nuts so they have a food source for the winter. Their digging of shallow holes won’t damage the lawn; it’s just a temporary issue.

  SELF-HELP OPTION: Cayenne pepper or similar repellants that contain capsicum can be sprinkled on digging areas for prevention of digging.

- **Squirrels in House Interior (LIVING SPACES):** Squirrels that are inside houses will run everywhere looking to escape but will run away from the doors and windows.

  SELF-HELP OPTION: If the squirrel does not find its way out through the doors and windows, call the CLIFTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT for assistance.

- **Squirrels in Chimney:** A squirrel in a chimney most likely will have fallen in and cannot get out. Squirrels can get anxious because they are stuck and just want help getting out.

  SELF-HELP OPTION: Put a thick rope down the flue, secured to the chimney, to help the squirrel climb out. To prevent this from happening again, properly installing a chimney cap will help.
Baby Squirrels: Baby squirrels that are by themselves are most likely lost from their mothers. They could have fallen out of the nest or strayed from their family.

**SELF-HELP OPTION:** Before doing anything, give the mother a chance to reclaim her baby and leave the squirrel in direct vicinity of the tree that is nearby as long as he is not injured (wait an entire day; by the next morning call the CLIFTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT).

*If it is cold outside, or the animal isn’t fully furred, they’ll need a heat source, such as a hot water bottle or hand warmer. Place a piece of soft fabric between the animal and the heating device and check to make sure both stay warm.*

*If a baby squirrel is following other people or trying to climb on a person, this indicates a juvenile baby squirrel who lost its mother and needs to be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator.*

**Special Note of Flying Squirrels:** Flying squirrels are small and people rarely get the chance to see them. They are about 9 inches long from the nose to the tip of their tail. They have bulgy, shiny black eyes, a flat tail and loose skin that extends from the front legs to the hind legs. This helps them "fly" or glide. They are nocturnal and very sociable animals.

Squirrels raiding bird feeder: Squirrels may be attracted by bird feeders. **SELF-HELP OPTION:** There are many bird feeders that are specialized (like baffle feeders) that are available to deter squirrels. The pipe must be at least 15 in. long and 4 ft. off the ground to prevent the squirrel from climbing over or jumping to it.

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*If you trap a squirrel, the only thing an Animal Control Officer can do is release it back on your property depending on the situation. Make sure a wood board is placed underneath the trap. RESIDENTS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AN ANIMAL THAT IS CONTAINED IN A TRAP. An outside wildlife service can help remove the squirrel from the area humanely (A fee may be involved). *

Any other questions?

Visit [www.humane society.org/squirrels](http://www.humane society.org/squirrels) for more information.

Or call the Clifton Health Department at 973-470-5760.