

E&C News

Campbell County Cooperative Extension • Environmental Education Center
1261 Race Track Road • Alexandria, KY 41001 • (859) 694-1666

Campbell County Environmental Education Center Newsletter

February 2023

Managing Tree Squirrel Problems in Kentucky

Source: Thomas G. Barnes and Matthew T. Springer, Forestry and Natural Resources

Identification

Kentucky has three species of tree squirrels: eastern gray (*Sciurus carolinensis*, Figure 1), northern fox (*Sciurus niger*, Figure 2), and southern flying (*Glaucomys volans*). Gray and fox squirrels are game species, whereas flying squirrels are a non-game species. Because flying squirrels seldom cause problems for homeowners, they are not discussed in this publication.

The eastern gray squirrel is the most common tree squirrel found in Kentucky. These medium-sized rodents have bushy tails. They are 16 to 20 inches long and weigh one to two pounds. Gray squirrels vary in color from gray to brownish gray with a white belly. Completely black (melanistic) and white (leucistic) forms are also encountered occasionally. The northern fox squirrel is Kentucky's largest tree squirrel. Fox squirrels measure 18 to 27 inches, including their bushy tails, and weigh 1¾ to 2¼ pounds. Fox squirrels are typically grizzled gray with a touch of yellow or orange upper parts and pale yellow to bright orange underparts.



Figure 1. Common color phase of the eastern gray squirrel in Kentucky.
Photo by Steve Katovich, Bugwood.org

The fox squirrel's tail usually has numerous yellow-tipped hairs, while gray squirrels have white-tipped tail hairs.



Figure 2. Common color phase of the northern fox squirrel in Kentucky.
Photo by Whitney Cranshaw, Bugwood.org

Damage

Fox and gray squirrels often come into conflict with humans when they take up residence in an attic, eaves, or walls of a house. Squirrels sometimes cause damage by gnawing and removing bark or fruits from valuable fruit- and nut-producing trees, ornamental trees, and shrubbery or by feeding on corn, tomatoes, strawberries, and other seeds or mature fruits in the garden (Figure 3).

Legal Status

Tree squirrels are popular game animals pursued by Kentucky hunters, but they are protected by Kentucky law. If you are a property owner within Kentucky, squirrels fall under K.R.S. 150.170, which allows you to protect yourself or your property from damage from wildlife (excluding federally protected species) at any point in the year.

Preventing and Controlling Tree Squirrel Damage

The best long-term solution to managing squirrel problems in the home is to exclude or “build them out” of a building or attic. Because squirrels are rodents and have large front teeth, you must use quarter-inch or half-inch hardware cloth or 26-gauge metal when excluding squirrels from buildings. Do not use steel wool or window screening; the squirrels can chew through it.

The best way to eliminate squirrels that have entered a building is to find all their entrances and travel routes. Be sure to look for eave openings, attic vents, loose flashing around chimneys and pipes, and openings around cables. Plug all entrances except one and set a trap at the open entrance (see section on trapping below).

Mothballs had been recommended for use to cause squirrels to vacate buildings, however they are no longer labeled for use on anything other than moths and caterpillars. This is due to their toxic nature and potential harm to humans and other wildlife.

If you can chase squirrels from your residence, you may then take actions to limit them from returning. Once the squirrels have been eliminated from the building, be sure to repair any damage they caused and block any potential openings. To prevent further damage, trim all trees that have limbs within eight feet of the building.

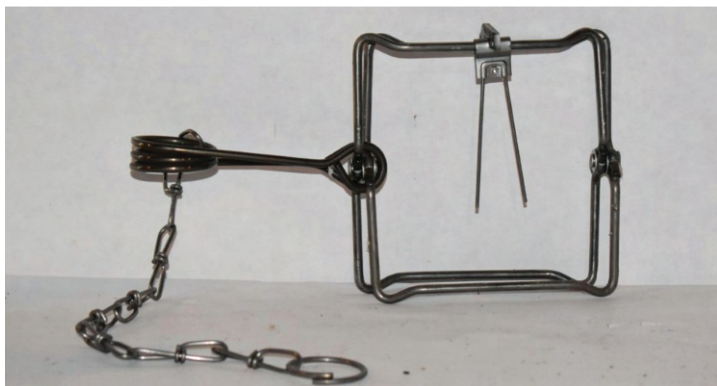


Figure 4. Conibear trap available to be used for squirrels. Photo by Stacy White, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service



Figure 3. Damage to tree branches by squirrels. Photo by Whitney Cranshaw, Bugwood.org

One method of controlling and preventing squirrel damage is to reduce the population through shooting or trapping. In rural areas squirrel populations can be reduced effectively by hunting.

Because squirrels are most active during the mornings and evenings, concentrate your hunting activities during these periods. Many types of firearms are capable of taking squirrels, but a shotgun loaded with No. 6 shot shells, a .17-caliber rifle, or a .22-caliber rifle is most effective.

A variety of traps can be used to catch squirrels. If you know the squirrels' entry point and you can easily reach it without endangering yourself, place a No. 110 conibear trap (Figure 4) directly over the open entrance. As the animal passes through the opening, it will be killed instantly. Another method of lethally trapping gray squirrels is to use rat snap traps nailed to a tree or house and positioned 15 to 20 feet above ground. The traps should be baited with peanut butter or sweet corn. Another trap option is similar to the conibear trap but encased within a metal tube, helping to limit access of non-target animals (Figure 5). The trap is versatile for placement in a variety of positions, including on a tree branch or trunk. Ensure it is secured in place, or its effectiveness will decrease. It can be placed with or without bait.

Squirrels can also be captured with live cage traps (Figure 6). To be effective, these traps must be pre-baited and wired open for several days before trapping. A variety of baits can work well, including peanut butter, walnuts, pecans, apple or orange slices, corn, and sunflower seeds. To prevent squirrels from returning, take trapped squirrels at least five to 10 miles from the capture site before releasing them. If squirrels are entering an attic where there is space to set a live trap, place the trap immediately behind the opening and catch the squirrel as it enters the building. Do not remove squirrels when young are present.

One method of keeping squirrels from browsing on trees and gnawing on wood is to use a chemical repellent. Repellents do not stop gnawing damage, but they do reduce the severity of damage.

The best repellent is one containing Thiram. Always follow label instructions when using any chemical substance. Old reports suggest repellents containing polybutenes can be used to repel squirrels. The substance burns the squirrels' feet. The following substances can be sprayed on wood to repel squirrels:

1. One pound of copper naphthenate mixed in 2½ quarts of mineral spirits.
2. Three pounds of asphalt emulsion and two pounds of copper carbonate mixed in two quarts of water.
3. One teaspoon of disinfectant (such as Lysol) or three ounces of Epsom salts mixed in one gallon of water.

Several of these solutions may discolor wood; treat a small area hidden from view first to determine the amount of discoloration.



Figure 5. Body-gripping trap available to be used for squirrels. Photo by Matthew Springer, University of Kentucky

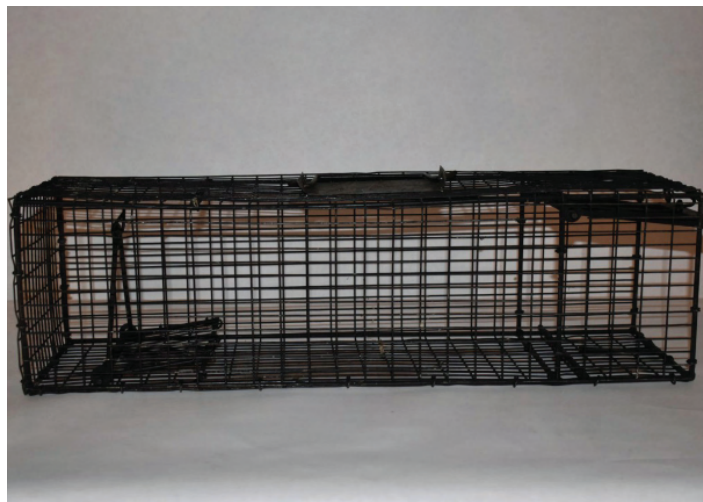


Figure 6. Live trap used for squirrel control. Photo by Stacy White, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

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What's Up Next?

February 2nd - 2:00pm *Winter Birding*

February 6th - 10:00am *Nesting Wreath*

February 10th - 6:30pm *Night Hike*

February 15th - 5:30pm *4-H Nature Club*

February 16th - 2:30pm *Nesting Wreath*

February 22nd - 9:30am *Winter Birding*

February 24th - 1:00pm *Shiitake Mushroom Production*

EVERY TUESDAY 3-4pm & **FRIDAY** 9-10am *1000 Hours Outside*

NEW FOR 2023!

Would you like to receive our Horticulture Newsletter? Scan the QR code or call (859) 572-2600 to be added to the distribution list



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1000 HOURS OUTSIDE

@ THE CAMPBELL COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Get in your 1000 hours outside this year
with a guided walk along the nature trails!

EVERY TUESDAY 3-4PM & FRIDAY 9-10AM
JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023



***Some dates may be cancelled due to
School field trips or inclement weather
throughout the year***



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LEXINGTON, KY 40546



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with prior notification.



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Winter Birding

**Campbell County
Environmental
Education Center**
1261 Race Track Road
Alexandria, KY 41001

**February 2nd
@ 2:00pm
February 22nd
@ 9:30am**

Join us for a lesson on bird I.D. and a hike around the interpretive trail to see and hear birds! Participants are encouraged to bring their own binoculars if possible.

Registration is required. Please call (859) 694-1666 / (859) 572-2600 or register online at <http://campbell.ca.uky.edu/>

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Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

make a nesting wreath

@ THE CAMPBELL COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER



FEBRUARY 6th @ 10:00am
FEBRUARY 16th @ 2:30pm

Registration is required. Please call (859) 694-1666 / (859) 572-2600
or register online at <http://campbell.ca.uky.edu/>

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NIGHT HIKE

FEB. 10TH, 6:30PM



**CAMPBELL COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION CENTER**

**1261 RACE TRACK RD.
ALEXANDRIA, KY
41001**

**Registration is required. Please call (859) 694-1666 / (859) 572-2600
or visit <http://campbell.ca.uky.edu/> to register**

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Nature Club



University of Kentucky
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4-H Youth Development

2022-2023 Meeting Dates

(3rd Wednesday of Each Month)

☀ Sept. 21

☀ Dec. 21

☀ Mar. 15

☀ Oct. 19

☀ Jan. 18

☀ Apr. 19

☀ Nov. 16

☀ Feb. 15

5:30pm-6:30pm

Ages 5-15, come learn about nature and explore the outdoors with 4-H at the **Campbell County Environmental Center:**

**1261 Race Track Road
Alexandria, KY 41001**

Each participant must register each month.

Register online at campbell.ca.uky.edu

or by phone: (859) 572-2600.

Contact Ginny Butsch with any questions:

ginny.butsch@uky.edu

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Shiitake Mushroom Production



University of Kentucky
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Friday, February 24, 2023
1:00 p.m.

Shiitake mushrooms, native to eastern Asia, can be grown locally for their gourmet and medicinal value. Participants will learn how to select trees to utilize for shiitake mushroom production, how to grow them, and about their nutritional value. Households will take home a log capable of producing shiitakes.

**Campbell County
Environmental Education Center**

1261 Race Track Road (Rt. 824)
1 mile east of US 27
Alexandria, KY 41001

The instructor has been recognized with a national environmental education award for the program developed to turn small trees into revenue producers while upgrading the quality of forests and educating producers in the value, both nutritionally and financially, of shiitake mushroom production.

DJ. Scully

Instructor:

DJ. Scully, Campbell County Extension Agent for Natural Resources and Environmental Management

Call by Wednesday, February 22 to sign up for this workshop. Registration is limited.
Please wear old clothes; bring a drill and bits; and a hammer if possible.

To register call 859-572-2600

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