



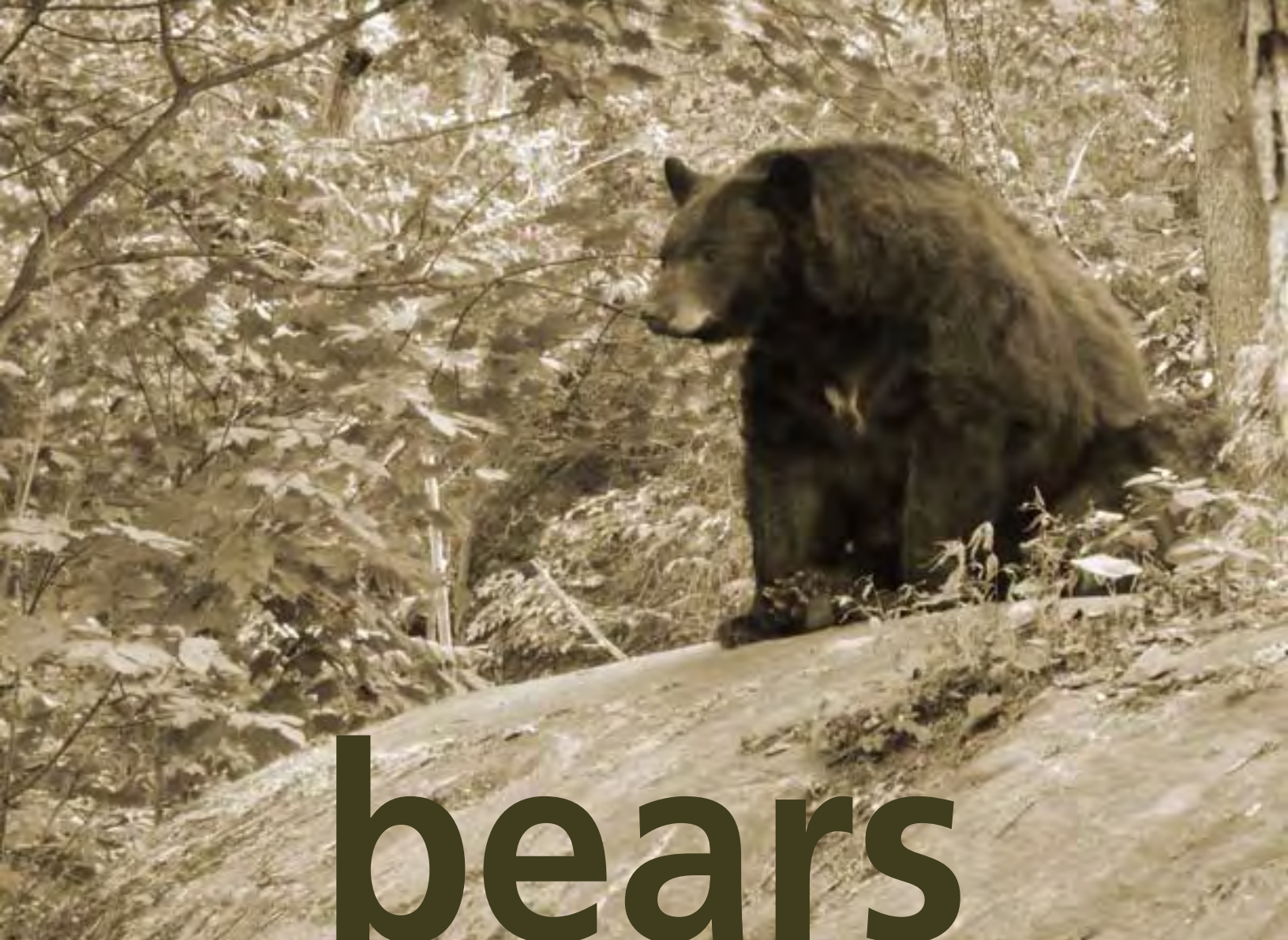
# living with wildlife

Sightings of wildlife are often a highlight of our visits to “cottage country”.

Wild animals are fascinating to observe and our encounters with them provide a refreshing insight to the natural world.

Since these creatures live in cottage country year-round, we must be respectful about sharing their world. Although “conflicts” with wildlife may sometimes arise, an understanding of each animals’ needs and characteristics will help us embrace a more humane approach to resolving and preventing potential problems.





# bears

Black bears feed mainly on summer and fall berry crops such as raspberries, blueberries and mountain ash, as well as acorns and beechnuts in the fall. Natural foods however vary greatly in abundance from year to year. Shortage of food and reduction of habitat will bring bears into areas of human habitation where food or garbage around homes, cottages and campsites become attractive to them.

## BEARS IN YOUR BACKYARD?

To keep them out of your backyard is simple – make sure you clean up after yourself!

### Helpful hints:

Store garbage in steel bear-proof containers if possible or alternatively in airtight containers secured inside a storage area not to be put out until the day of pick-up. Keep containers clean.

## FREEZE MEAT SCRAPS UNTIL GARBAGE PICK-UP DAY

- Rinse all recyclables and also store in a secured area
- Clean up outdoor grills after use
- Keep pet food in at night
- Cover compost well with soil and leaves (if unwanted guests still visit – stop composting)
- Never compost meat, dairy products or sweets
- Ensure bird feeders are animal proof and can not spill to the ground
- Feed birds only in late fall to mid April

Since bears become habituated to available food sources it may take several days for the bear to move on after the attractant is removed.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- A black bear's diet is primarily vegetarian? Although black bears are omnivores, plant foods make up the majority of a bear's diet - comprising up to 90%. Preferred foods include berries, nuts, greens, insects and meat.
- Black bears are peaceful creatures who normally shy away from people.
- New born bear cubs are little bigger than a chipmunk. Born in late January or early February while their mother is hibernating, cubs will weigh between 1/2 to 1 lb (200-500 grams)!







# beavers

Beavers make an essential contribution to our natural environment. The ponds they build provide a healthy freshwater habitat for many other living things including aquatic invertebrates and a variety of amphibians, fish, reptiles, birds and mammals such as moose and otter. Animals that may not live in or near the pond itself, will visit this productive community in search of water and food.

By holding water in the beaver pond, beaver dams prevent water run-off, especially after a heavy rainfall. In times of drought, beaver ponds provide a readily available supply of water and replenish groundwater. By slowing rapidly flowing water beaver dams also prevent flooding and erosion.

Beavers are also excellent forest managers. Beavers usually fell fast growing deciduous trees, preferably aspen as well as willow, white birch or alder. A beaver will take these trees from the water's edge allowing sunlight through and space for the longer living trees to grow. They do not often harm commercially valuable hardwoods (such as maple or oak) but if you wish to keep a specific tree, encircle it with 2" X 4" X 3' heavy wire fencing – leaving a 6" space between wire and the tree trunk. Anchor firmly.

## A BEAVER IN THE BOATHOUSE?

Periodically a beaver may move into a boathouse. You have provided a dark, quiet place for them to move into. Scatter mothballs and wash areas with bleach. When the beaver has left, seal off vulnerable areas with wire fencing. When you leave the cottage for the winter, sink fencing across the boat access. Leave lots of mothballs or other non-toxic, offensive smelling material.

Because beavers store their winter food supply on the pond or lake bottom, you may sometimes notice freshly chewed sticks in the crib of a dock. This is merely a beaver's lunchroom not it's house! It is important to remember that beavers are interested in eating bark and fresh twigs – not the dock. If necessary, a beaver may be deterred from this area with bleach or kept out completely by placing wire around the crib.

To control the water level in your pond, see our beaver baffle on page 24.





# mice

**Mice have adapted very successfully to living in close proximity to humans and are regular visitors to cottages and camps. These little creatures, like all wild animals are seeking food and shelter. Do not give them the opportunity should you not wish to co-habitate with these tiny opportunists. Because they can squeeze through the smallest of entry points, extra effort must be taken to keep them out.**

## **A MOUSE IN YOUR HOUSE?**

Quick dry cement is best for sealing holes on the outside of buildings. Six mm metal screening should be placed over vents, under open porches and sheds. Steel wool can be used around pipes in the kitchen, bathroom and basement. Nail sheet metal over cracks. All openings for water pipes, electric wire, telephone cables, sewer pipes, drain sprouts and vents must be sealed. Doors and windows must be tight fighting. Plastic sheeting or screening, caulking or wood are unsuitable, as mice will chew through them. However, contrary to popular belief, mice do not typically chew on wires – although they once used the cloth in old “loom” wires for bedding.

By preventing access to all food sources, you will force these little marauders to move on. Dry goods such as sugar, cereals, pasta, nuts and grains should be kept in glass or metal containers with tight lids. Root vegetables should be kept in a rodent-proof cupboard or refrigerator.

For an easy method of removal, simply place a 5-gallon bucket or garbage bin near a counter with seeds or peanuts on the bottom. A mouse will easily find its way into the bucket but will not be able to get out. However, do not leave a bucket or other live trap unattended (i.e. use this method only if you are able to check on it every few hours) as you will subject the mouse to undue stress and possible inhumane death. For another humane trapping method see the home made “mouse trap” diagram on page 25.

## **Mouse Proof!**

- Rinse all empty bottles and jars and store them upside down.
- When leaving for the season ensure any dry food left is secured (e.g. in an unused freezer, bread basket etc.) and not even hand soap or candles are left out
- Properly clean areas mice have been using gloves and an effective disinfectant
- Trapping alone is not an effective method of rodent control. Unless access points are closed up, more animals will continue to move in.
- Poisons result in a lingering, inhumane death with much suffering and will have the same effects on other animals – including pets.
- Glue boards should never be used as they cause immense suffering from suffocation, dehydration, injury or stress.



A close-up photograph of a raccoon nestled in a bed of dry pine needles. The raccoon's head is turned to the right, showing its characteristic black mask and pointed ears. Its fur is a mix of brown, grey, and white. The pine needles are dry and brown, creating a textured background.

# raccoons

Raccoons are very adaptable creatures and thrive in a diversity of habitats. As omnivores, they will eat just about anything! Raccoons have compensated for human encroachment into natural areas by moving back into our neighborhoods where food and shelter is often readily available. Any available food source on your property will encourage these opportunists to stay.

The raccoon is a very curious, intelligent creature that has front paws much like small human hands. These hands are very sensitive and raccoons often locate their food entirely with their sense of touch. They are skilled at opening doors, latches, jars and are adept at getting into almost any garbage can regardless of the devices designed to keep them out! Do not give them the opportunity - properly store and secure your garbage.

## **RACCOONS IN THE CHIMNEY?**

Raccoons like dark, warm places with small entrance holes. Although they do not hibernate, raccoons will curl up in a den (e.g. a tree cavity, hollowed log or even an attic or chimney) throughout harsh winter weather. Raccoon babies are born in April or May in the winter den. For the first ten weeks, the mother will leave her young as she forages for food on her nightly journeys. If she is away too long, the kits may whimper or whine when they become hungry. Often a first clue to their presence in or around the cottage.

If a raccoon family has moved into your premises – it is best to wait out baby season. After ten weeks, the kits will join their mother on evening jaunts and eventually the family will move on. After this time, you can close up any points of entrance. Never light a fire in attempt to smoke any animal out of a chimney, as this is very cruel and dangerous. A disturbance such as a radio playing or a light source will cause the mother to take her babies elsewhere. However, only when the mother and her kits have been seen coming outside should a cottage/home owner begin to encourage them to leave and repair the entrance area. Separating a mother raccoon from her young will result in their slow and inhumane death. Furthermore, a mother separated from her young will do considerable damage trying to get them.







# skunks

Skunks are one of the most commonly misunderstood of wild animals and are actually gentle, intelligent creatures. When treated with respect and granted appropriate space, they are enjoyable and harmless creatures to have around. Known for its odour, a skunk does not spray without reason and will provide ample warning before doing so. When threatened a skunk will lift its tail, stamp its feet, arch its back and growl. If the message was not understood, the skunk will turn its back end toward its assailant, flip up the tip of its tail and squirt as a last resort.

As generalists, skunks have adapted to a wide variety of habitats and food sources including plants. They prefer open areas, thick brush and forest edges over dense forest habitats. They may choose to live under foundations, porches, decks, sheds or a woodpile. Skunks will come out at night to hunt grubs, worms and mice. In the winter skunks usually find hollow logs or groundhog holes, or dig burrows to nestle down in. On mild days they will awake and forage for food.

## A skunk under your deck?

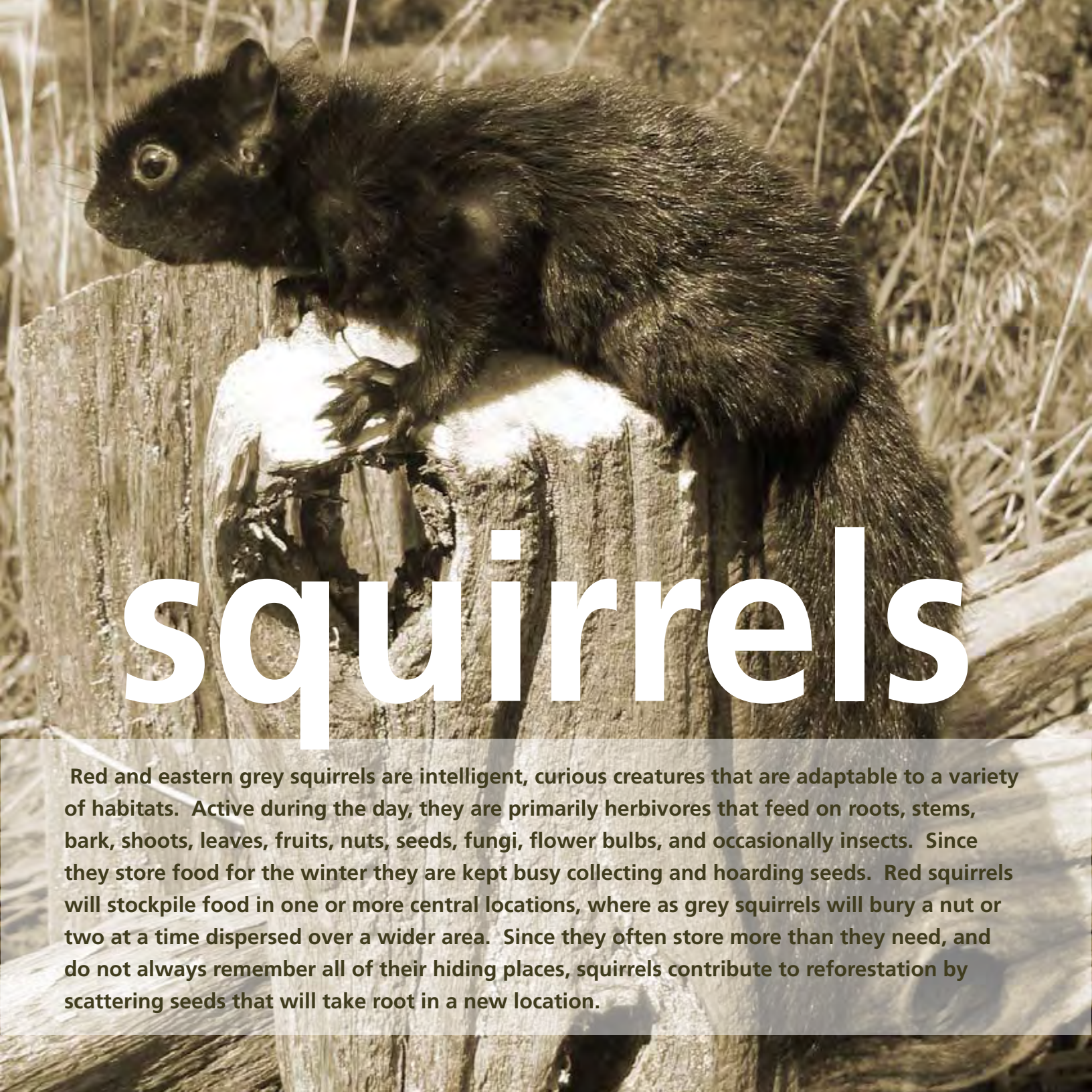
To close off an entry hole under a porch, deck or shed, dig a trench around the perimeter. Place galvanized 1" by 1" wire mesh into the trench bending it outward at the bottom, and fill in the trench. Leave an opening large enough to allow the animals to get out. To monitor when the animals leave, place a barrier such as a ball of paper or soil in the exit hole. Monitor the opening daily after sunset to see if the barrier is removed. Check for footprints.

Ensure that all the animals have gone before closing an entry hole permanently. Place a bit of food such as fish or peanut butter inside the hole so that only an animal inside could get it. Cover the hole with wire mesh in such a way that it can be removed to check the food or if an animal is left inside. If the food remains untouched for several days you have been successful.

Do not attempt to remove skunks in the winter or spring. Skunks may stay in their dens for several weeks during harsh weather. Since access to alternative den sites is limited due to the snow and ice, removal should not be attempted. Babies are born in May and will be at least eight weeks of age before they are seen out with their mother. Note that it may take the runt several days longer to leave the den with the rest of the family.







# squirrels

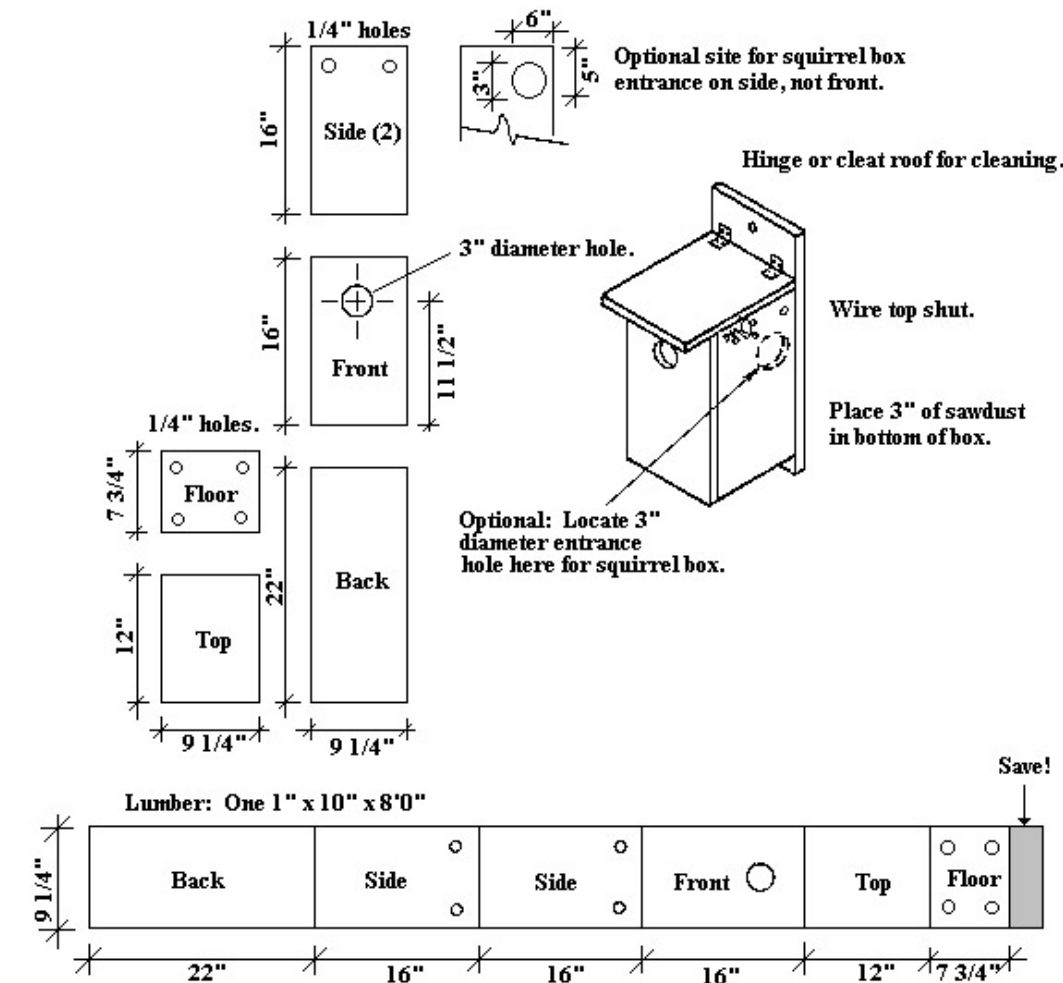
Red and eastern grey squirrels are intelligent, curious creatures that are adaptable to a variety of habitats. Active during the day, they are primarily herbivores that feed on roots, stems, bark, shoots, leaves, fruits, nuts, seeds, fungi, flower bulbs, and occasionally insects. Since they store food for the winter they are kept busy collecting and hoarding seeds. Red squirrels will stockpile food in one or more central locations, where as grey squirrels will bury a nut or two at a time dispersed over a wider area. Since they often store more than they need, and do not always remember all of their hiding places, squirrels contribute to reforestation by scattering seeds that will take root in a new location.

## SQUIRRELS IN THE ATTIC?

Grey or red squirrels generally build their nests high up in trees, in hollow trunks or forks between thick branches. Although they do not hibernate, they will spend long hours in their nests during winter. Red squirrels will stay in their nests for days where as grey squirrels will leave their nests every day. Squirrels may take up residence in your home or cottage and are invited in by dark, warm places with small entrance holes to nest such as an attic, roof or shed. Entrance holes can be small as a golf ball. A sure sign of red squirrels nearby is large stores of pinecones, nuts and fungi.

Before attempting any removal methods the time of year must be carefully considered. Babies are born and raised between March and May and then again between August and October. When babies are fully mobile and seen coming

outside for food you may encourage squirrels to move out with the use of battery-operated lights and radios. Relocating squirrels is not a viable option as once you remove one, another will move in. Once the squirrels are mature and mobile during the day, close all entrance points (common entry points include eaves, vents and fascia board at the corners of buildings) and offer an alternative – put up a squirrel house! A squirrel family will take over a nesting box provided to them with a 1" hole at a top corner.







# avoid conflicts

Wild animals that come into contact with humans are merely seeking food or shelter. Do not provide these opportunities if you should not wish to encourage them.

## helpful tips:

- Put garbage out on the day of pick-up, not the night before
- Freeze meat scraps and bones until day of pick-up
- Use tight fighting lids on garbage cans that cannot come off when disturbed or secure garbage in a shed or garage
- Secure garbage can lids with bungee cords and put a heavy weight on the lid
- Attach garbage cans to something permanent
- Rinse cans and bottles well for recycling (don't leave sharp edges on cans)
- Cover compost well with soil and leaves (if unwanted guests still visit – stop composting)
- Never compost meat or dairy products
- Ensure bird feeders are animal proof and can not spill to the ground
- Do not leave pet food and water bowls outside
- Keep shingles and eaves in good condition
- Uncapped chimneys, openings into attics, rotting roofs and loose shingles are all invitations for wildlife to move into buildings.
- Screen bathroom, stove and other vents and attic openings with heavy 2.5 cm by 2.5cm wire (not chicken wire), leaving a 5-6 cm overlap on each side
- Trim branches that overhang buildings and remove unused TV towers





# problem solving

**Please be respectful and patient should conflicts arise.**

## **consider the following:**

- Never light a fire in an attempt to smoke animals out of a chimney, as this is inhumane and very dangerous.
- Before closing any entry hole to your residence permanently, be sure you are around the following few days to monitor for noises that indicate animals are trapped inside.
- Do not use chicken wire to block access points as it can stretch and an animal could get its head caught in it.
- Battery-operated sources of light or sound (such as a radio left playing) may cause an animal to find a new home (use low-voltage lighting attics or other small spaces) – avoid electrical devices as animals may chew on the wires.
- Outdoor, movement –activated floodlights may scare off any nocturnal visitors (raccoons however may become accustomed to outside lights)
- Never use poisons – they subject animals to intense pain and suffering and you cannot control who gets it.
- If an animal has fallen into a window well, drape a blanket, board or anything they can grasp over the edge and leave it. During the night, when all is quiet the animal will be able to climb up and leave. For a skunk use a plank on a gradual sloping angel with lattice pieces every 8-10cm.



# things to remember

- Never attempt to corner or capture a wild animal!
- Do not disturb animals when they have young. Know the life cycle of the animal you wish to remove. If mothers are separated from their young, they may do considerable damage trying to get to them. If the mother is removed and relocated, the babies will die an agonizing death.
- Live Trapping and re-locating an animal is not a long-term solution. The removal of individual animals, without taking steps to eliminate access to denning/nesting sites and food sources, will just leave space for another animal to inhabit. Most wild animals are territorial, so relocating them may create new problems elsewhere.
- Animals should be encouraged to leave your premises on their own with minimal disturbance to avoid unnecessary stress and suffering.
- If the situation warrants removal of the animal from your cottage or other building – seek the assistance of experts who employ humane removal techniques and simply let the animal go on site.





# misconceptions

## **Babies**

Often young animals found alone are assumed abandoned. This is usually not the case. Leave the animal alone and watch it from a distance. If after a few hours the mother has not returned there is a chance the animal is an orphan. Call for assistance.

## **Mange**

Rabies is often confused with mange (a parasitic skin infection that causes hair to fall out in large patches) a condition often seen in foxes. Secondary infections cause open sores and crusting that often lead to blindness. The result is a prolonged, horrible death, often from starvation. An animal cannot recover on its own but mange can be treated. The animal must be live trapped. Get help as soon as possible!





# helping wildlife

Loss of habitat is the worst threat facing wildlife today. Habitat is the place where a particular animal lives – where it finds food, water, shelter and space. As human populations expand into natural areas, there is less room for wildlife. The following simple projects can help wild creatures meet their survival needs on your property:

- Build a brush pile – provides shelter for mice, rabbits and chipmunks.
- Put up nesting boxes.
- Build a bat house.
- Plant a butterfly garden.
- Landscape to attract birds and other wildlife. [Click here](#) for more info.
- Maintain a chemical-free lawn.
- Leave shorelines natural. For projects in and around the water and permit information [click here](#).
- Bird proof your windows. [Click here](#) for more info.
- Effectively manage your wood lot for wildlife.
- Plant trees.

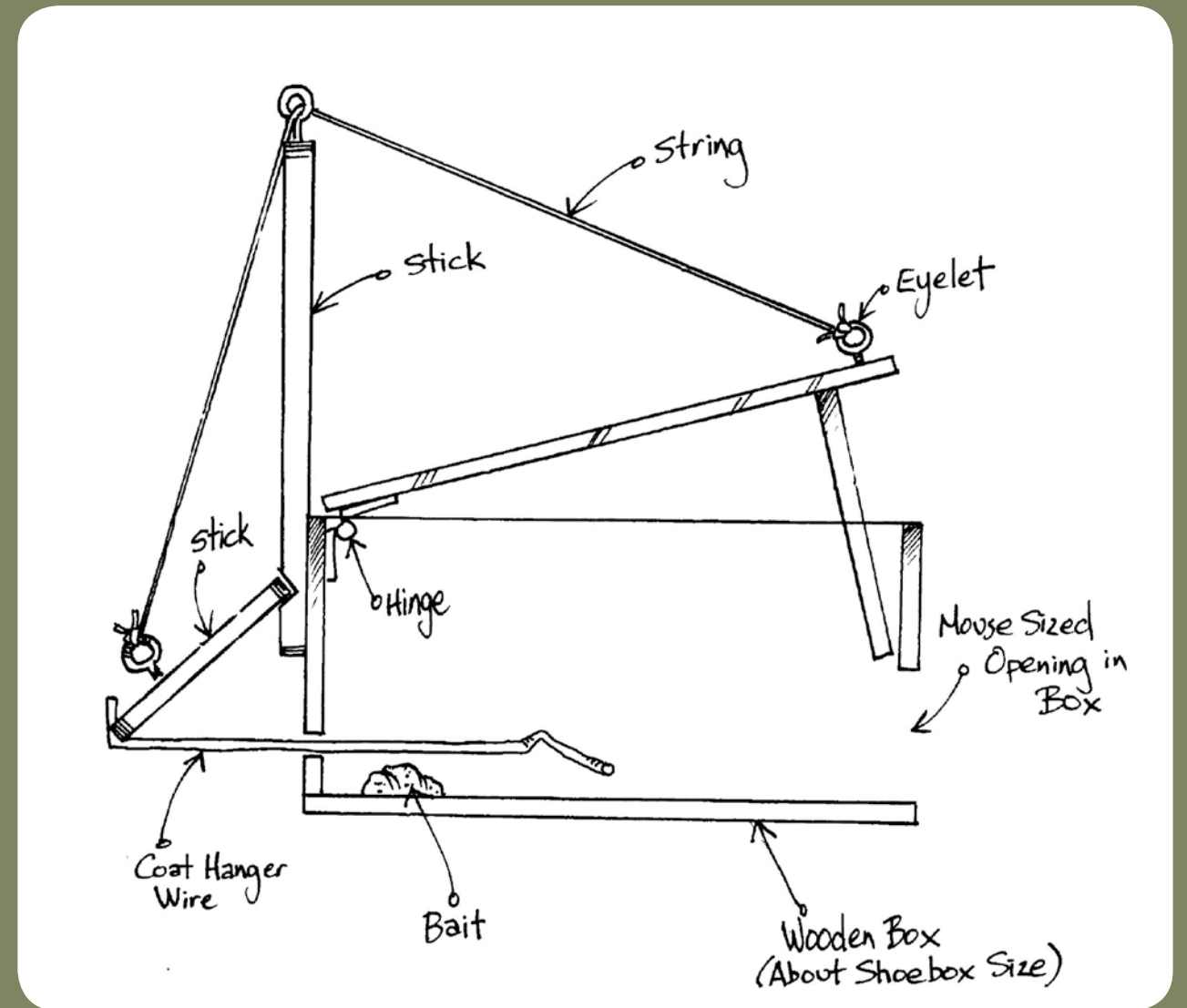
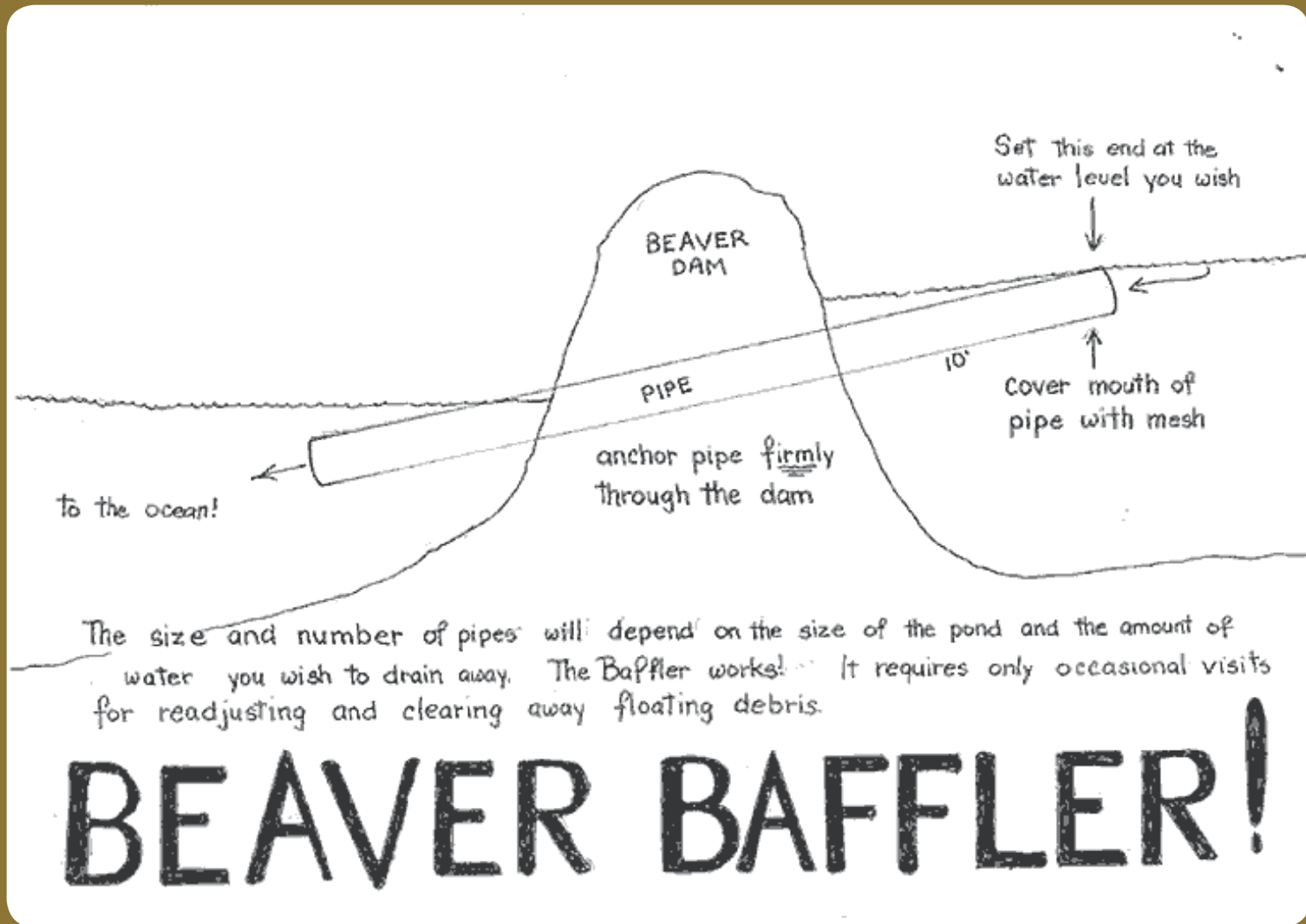
## **VISIT THE FOLLOWING WEB-SITES FOR GREAT PROJECT IDEAS AND WILDLIFE INFORMATION:**

- [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#)
- [Canadian Federation of Humane Societies](#)
- [Ontario Forestry Association](#)
- [Federation of Ontario Naturalists](#)

## **ENJOY WILDLIFE AT WHILE PARTICIPATING IN VALUABLE WILDLIFE MONITORING PROGRAMS SUCH AS (CLICK LINKS BELOW):**


- [Frog Watch](#)
- [Marsh Monitoring Program](#)
- [Canadian Lakes Loon Survey](#)





HOME-MADE MOUSETRAP





**WITH A LITTLE UNDERSTANDING HUMANS AND WILDLIFE CAN CO-EXIST PEACEFULLY.  
SIT BACK, RELAX AND ENJOY WILDLIFE ON YOUR PROPERTY!**

**Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary**

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