

The more I thought of the matter, the more I felt the pair of squirrels might know the whereabouts of my apples. I climbed up the steep wooded hill toward the fir. Looking across in a maple-tree, I saw one of the apples in a crotch twenty feet from the ground. Another was in the crotch of the next tree higher up. On the branch of the fir, with his tail curled over his back, sat Mr. Douglas Squirrel enjoying the third apple.

Going back into the cabin, I said to myself: "If the little fellow will tell me how he did it, I will gladly give him four times as many apples." Looking over the situation, I discovered a round hole, that looked about the size of the apple, up in the corner just below the shingles. One of my apples was a pretty good-sized load for a squirrel. I decided he had sunk his teeth into each apple and climbed straight up the side of the wall. The tiny bit of peeling I had discovered in the corner showed he had had difficulty at least with one apple. He had surely earned the fruit; the joke was on me.

The cones of the Douglas fir ripen in August, and by September they begin to open. This is Chickaree's busiest season. He goes at it with a vengeance. Out to the tip of a limb a hundred feet from the ground he runs, snips off the cones with his scissor-like teeth, springs quickly back, and jumps to another branch, the very model of industry. With his quick, jerky disposition, he is never slow. His task

looks dangerous, yet he never seems to miss his hold. At the end of the long, swaying branches he is just as sure-footed as I am walking on the ground a hundred feet below.

But this is not saying he may not meet with an accident. For years our pine squirrels have used a regular trail through the tree-tops from one side of our ten acres to the other. They know the exact branches to take along the maple lanes and the bypaths of the dogwoods, oaks, and firs. They travel with speed and guide their steps with almost unerring accuracy. But once I saw an accident. A Douglas squirrel was up about thirty feet and jumped from the limb of a fir to a maple. He lost his footing and landed in the bushes below with all feet spread like a flying squirrel. He was mad~~d~~ through and through at his foolish slip and scampered up the fir-trunk in a jiffy, spitting out words which, if interpreted in our language, might not be suitable to print.

In building a home Chickaree may select a variety of places. He generally has a nest quite high up on the limbs of one of our firs or in the hollows of the alders and maples. His house is a warm structure of twigs lined with bark and other soft material. He does not sleep away the winter as the chipmunk does, so he must store up for a rainy day. He carries off fir and pine cones and always some of our walnuts, sometimes accumulating them at the base of a tree,

under the shelter of a log, or hiding them in crevices and crannies of the ground. He has a remarkable way of locating these stores when they are needed, even when they are under cover of the snow. Like his store of hazelnuts, if they are not found his cache serves the purpose of reforestation.

But the squirrel is not the only sprite of our woods. He is one of three varieties of tree-squirrels that are found living near our home. The big squirrel we call the silver-gray has much the same habits of storing his food and nesting in the trees, but he is twice the size of his red cousin. The flying squirrel, with his large eyes, like the owl, is a creature of the night. He differs from the red squirrel by the extension of his skin, which spreads out like a cape along his sides between his front and hind legs. When he leaps from one tree to another he glides on a downward, sloping course like a small parachute. He springs into the air with considerable force, but the distance he can "fly" depends upon the elevation from which he starts. By this unique method of travelling from the top of one tree to the base of another, he can bridge the gaps in a way that no other squirrel can. Strangely enough, however, with all his remarkable equipment, the flying squirrel cannot make as good time through the forest trees as the red squirrel. The airplane method of gliding down and then climbing up makes a longer course.

All the tree-squirrels are expert climbers and have somewhat the same habits of home-making and storing up provisions for a rainy day.

We once made a little box, roofed over and sheltered from the weather as a winter feeding^h-_lace for the squirrels, and supplied with nuts, wheat, and corn. When the chickarees discovered it, they raced around gesticulating with their tails and pouring out a torrent of excited comment. Then they set to work to carry away everything in the box, hiding the food in crannies in the trees and holes in the ground. Although the store would not be half as safe from the elements as it was in the box, it was scattered and hidden from other woods folk who might want a bite. The pine squirrel is not inclined to look after the interests of other people. He is as faulty as some human beings. Indeed, his sharp tongue, quick wit, and inquisitive nature have led him into some bad habits.

In April a pair of robins had built a nest about twenty feet up on one of the limbs of the white fir that stood just below our house, and the mother robin had been sitting on four eggs. One day I noticed she was off the nest. She did not return during the morning, and in the afternoon she was still away from home. Something had happened. I climbed the tree to a point from which I could look into the grassy cup. The eggs were gone.

The robins built another nest in the same tree, just seven feet from the ground, where two small bushy limbs had sprouted from the trunk and made an ideal nest-spot. Then one day they began calling in such an excited manner that I knew they were in trouble. I rushed down the hill, and, coming around the tree in sight of the nest, I saw to my amazement my friend Mr. Red Squirrel, whom we had long called Piney, on the edge of the nest lunching on a robin's egg he held in his paws.

I reached for something to throw. There was nothing at hand but a little stick. I hurled it with all my might. The little wretch dropped the shell and scampered up the tall fir.

"I'll fix you for this," and I clambered up, swung my leg over the lowest limb, and started after him toward the top. At least I would teach him not to rob birds' nests. This tree was tall and in the open, so he could not get away. I would get him in the very top and with a big shake catapult him clear out into the garden. It would give him a scare that would teach him to keep out of the tree.

I had reached the topmost branches where the trunk was slender. He saw he was cornered. He watched me from the very tip. Just as I hooked my leg around the tree to give the top a big flip, he sprang lightly out into the air and, sailing downward, caught the end of a bushy branch about eight feet below me. Before I could descend he had run down the

trunk and was chattering as if he thought it was a good joke.

I was exasperated. There were three eggs left in the nest. Perhaps I had scared him enough to keep him away. I would watch the remaining eggs. Two days later they were gone.

We had fed and watched and enjoyed the pine squirrels for years here on the hillside. Piney was so attractive; but now we were losing faith in him. Here was a little fellow with long, gnawing teeth, whom Mother Nature had raised to eat nuts and seeds; yet how had he become so depraved as to steal eggs and even young birds? Did he have weasel blood in his veins? If he was bent on murder, I should have to get rid of him.