

campus critters

al Research, also had a special squirrel she took care of. About three years ago she found a newborn female squirrel that had fallen out of a tree near Johnson Hall.

"It still had the cord on," she said.

Because the mother did not return for Chickup, christened by Johns' young nephew who couldn't pronounce chipmunk,

"We do a great disservice to animals when we feed them a lot and make them dependent on people," he said.

If you insist on spoiling the squirrels, Shindledecker suggests giving them peanuts and sunflower seeds.

"Please don't feed them Cheetos, sugar cubes or pieces of doughnut," he said.

'We do a great disservice to animals when we feed them a lot and make them dependent on people.'

-Ken Shindledecker

Johns called a local veterinarian who instructed her how to care for it. She fed it milk, baby formula and seeds and mothered it until it was old enough survive on its own.

Like most parents who treasure the first years of a child's life, Johns holds fond memories of her squirrel.

"I have pictures of her in my photo album," she said.

Her entire office got involved with Chickup and monitored her weight on a mail scale.

Johns said she didn't mark Chickup for future identification when she freed her because she didn't want to find her someday run over by a car. However, Johns was able to recognize her later on campus.

Although squirrels may appear amiable, Cal Young science teacher and wildlife expert Ken Shindledecker recommends keeping your distance from the squirrels.

"Don't feed the squirrels," he said. "They'll bite you."

Among the four varieties of tree squirrels, the most common at the University are the fox and the gray, Shindledecker said. The nocturnal flying squirrels can be found in the South Eugene hills and the red squirrels inhabit the forests.

When searching for the sciurus griseus (fox) or sciurus niger (gray), look for a big, bushy tail on the gray, also known as the western silver-gray, and a grayish patch on the back of the yellowish-brown eastern fox.

They make their homes in hollows of trees or build nests resembling those of crows.

The aggressive fox, which is displacing the gray, has two 45-day litters in the spring and fall, but the gray has just one. Each litter may yield two or three babies.

Unlike the short-tailed ground squirrels, which include chipmunks, woodchucks, prairie dogs and marmots, tree squirrels do not hibernate in the winter. Instead, they continue to forage for food and wrap their tails around them for warmth.



File photo

Squirrels may appear scarce on campus in the winter but they forage for food instead of hibernating.

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