

GETTING TO KNOW WILDLIFE

FALL BEST TIME TO ANIMAL PROOF YOUR HOME



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Squirrels have been frantically burying nuts for the past month while chipmunks, cheeks bulging with seeds, are stashing the last bit of food in their underground dens.

We humans are also battening down the hatches, preparing for winter. One of those tasks should be to inspect your home to ensure that wildlife do not become unwanted tenants over the winter.

Last week's column focused on animal-proofing to deter mice. This week, we will consider those areas like attics and chimneys that sometimes attract squirrels and raccoons looking for shelter. Better to prevent the problem of babies being born in these areas next spring and having to provide a grace period at that time.

Animals gain entry into attics through soffits, fascia, roof vents, loose shingles and where two roofs intersect as shown in the photo. Look up under the eaves to see if you see any weak spots or openings and then stand back from the house to observe the roof as well.

Unless you feel comfortable doing work on and around your roof, we suggest you hire a contractor who does home repairs. If you go this route, it is important to make sure the person you have hired is sensitive to the fact that there may still be animals living there. To be confident that no animals are in the attic, check out our web page "Animal in My Attic" for step-by-step advice.

The right materials should be used for doing any repairs. Chicken wire will not deter a raccoon nor will it even stand up to a determined squirrel. You should use a heavy 16 gauge one-inch welded wire mesh that is secured with screws and washers or a half-inch welded wire mesh if red squirrels are involved.

Squirrels and birds may move into chimneys to escape bad weather. Raccoons sometimes use chimneys during the birthing season to have their young. For these reasons, it is important to install a chimney cap and also a spark arrestor screen. A cap alone is not sufficient to keep animals or birds out. The screen can be made out of the welded wire mesh mentioned above, shaped so that it fits securely over the chimney.

After mid-October is the safest time to do roof repairs as most babies will have moved out, but be mindful that animals may have also moved in for the winter. However, there is still time for any that have to find another denning site for the winter.

As a volunteer organization, the Centre welcomes donations and issues charitable receipts for its education work. See the website below for information.