

# What those naughty squirrels taught me



**Bryn Haworth** tried everything to stop a family of squirrels from stealing the food in his bird feeder, but the solution was remarkably simple

I've had this running battle with squirrels ever since I put up some bird feeders in the garden. Over time, I've developed a grudging admiration for them, and their problem-solving brain has been an inspiration to me as each year they have figured out ways to get at the seed.

Usually I foil them and they give up but, last year, there was a family of five squirrels whose brains must have evolved and they drove me mad for at least three or four months. I put netting up until most of the trees were covered. I tried putting Vaseline on the poles, which was very amusing for a while, watching them leap up and then slide slowly down, but even that doesn't work anymore. (Do they use gloves?)

I bought squirrel baffles which they eventually used as mini-trampolines to get them onto the feeders. I even thought about cutting out a recipe I read for squirrel casserole and taping it to the window, just in case they were smart enough to read, because nothing else was working. It got to the point where I was becoming so distracted, I had to keep stopping what I was doing to go and see if they were on the feeders!

Then I thought, "Lord, what are you saying in all this?" and I realised I hadn't prayed about it. The thought 'use your authority' came to me. Having had some success with an infestation of ants back in the 80s using this method, I stood outside and boldly commanded to the squirrels to "Go, and be removed from the garden in Jesus' Name!"

Well, this was effective for half a day and then they came back. So I prayed again, but each day they returned.

Now I really felt a failure. My faith was obviously not strong enough and, feeling defeated, I slumped down into my chair and stared out at these American imports running amok, and said "Lord, what shall I do?" Then that same inner voice said to me, "Don't put your bird feeders in a place where squirrels can get at them."

Well that made good sense, so I positioned them away from the trees, bought a new spring-loaded bird feeder and, just like that, they stopped!

They still run around in the garden and occasionally try their old tricks, but at least now I can get on with my work.

It's amazing isn't it? All I had to do was get the bird feeders out of harm's way. We all have areas in our lives that make us easy targets for temptation's arrows. And no

matter how hard I pray about these things, at some point I have to take action and find a way not to put myself in such a vulnerable position.

"It's the little foxes that spoil the vineyard" (Song of Songs 2:15). It's not the big temptations; it's the little ones that do the damage. Maybe it's time to switch the TV or computer off. I found I've read an enormous amount of books since turning the TV off an hour earlier each night, which for me has created more of a hunger for God.

It could mean not buying certain food or drink for a while – not having anything in the house that could tempt me. Good habits you have to work at, bad habits you don't. One good habit I've found is to search out the relevant Scriptures that show God as the one who satisfies me. Just stopping to think on his Word strengthens me no end: (Psalm 4:7; Song of Songs 1:2b). "He satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed as the eagle's" (Psalm 103:5).

My failure to deal with the 'little foxes' in my life was making me feel bad about myself when all the time there was a simple answer: "Don't put your bird feeder where the squirrels can get them."

There is relative peace and tranquillity in the garden now. The squirrels still scamper around, looking incredibly cute as they stare wistfully up at the bird feeders.

I even felt a twinge of guilt yesterday, but that quickly passed. Time to move on. ■

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