

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
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EXTENSION
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Notes: "The Parasol Tail and Thermoregulatory Behavior of the Cape Ground Squirrel *Xerus inauris*" was in a scientific journal called *Physiological Zoology* in 1984. You can find a copy online at <http://compphys.bio.uci.edu/bennett/pubs/55pdf>. Included are several photographs of squirrels with their parasol-tails up. "Thermoregulatory" comes from "thermoregulation": the ability of an organism, such as a squirrel, to keep its body temperature within a certain OK range. Richard W. Thorington Jr. and Katie E. Ferrell are the authors of *Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

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Q. Dear Twig: I like squirrels.

A. You mentioned that.

Q. And their tails.

A. Me too.

Q. And how they use them as umbrellas.

A. And **parasols** — a parasol being a kind of umbrella. It's light and sometimes frilly. You use it to keep the sun off you.

Q. Explain.

A. Four scientists studied the Cape ground squirrel in the Kalahari desert in Africa. They found that the squirrel keeps from getting too hot **"by using its bushy tail as a portable parasol."**

Q. Cool.

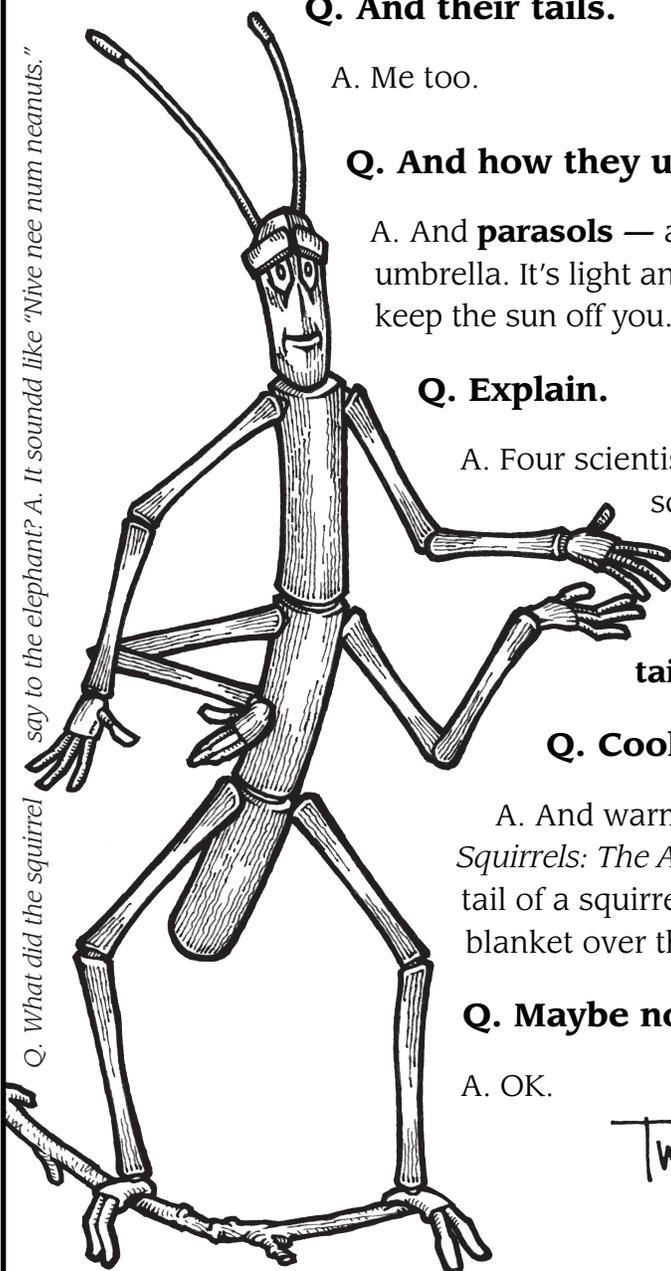
A. And warm in winter. A book called *Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide* says the tail of a squirrel can help "by serving as a blanket over the squirrel in cold weather."

Q. Maybe no more about squirrels.

A. OK.

Twig

Q. What did the squirrel say to the elephant? A. It soundd like "Nive nee num neanuis."



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