

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of
Oct. 21, 2007

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Notes: Find the Cornell University fact sheet, "Tree Squirrels," at http://wildlifecontrol.info/ccewdmp/Publications/Squirrel_factsheet.pdf. For short, sweet, nicely presented details about the eastern gray squirrel, fox squirrel, red squirrel and southern flying squirrel, go here — http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/species_a_to_z/AZMammals/tabid/17912/Default.aspx — then click on the link for each species. Blatant promotion: Twig's new book, *Hairy Blenny and the Monkeyface Prickleback*, has just come out. Get details (what it's about, how to buy it) (hint: it's cheap!) (in price but not quality!) (nope, that's high!) at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/storyhp?id=4346>.

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Q. Dear Twig: Do squirrels ever fall out of trees?

A.: Yes. And I base that, for starters, on two accounts. First, once, I was sitting in an oak tree, enjoying the fall (get it?) sunshine. Across the road an **eastern gray squirrel** had just climbed up a cedar tree. It got to the top. It tried to jump over the road to my oak. It missed. It plopped down next to the road in the grass, a plunge of a good (bad) 20 feet. Thankfully, though, it seemed unhurt. It ran to the oak and raced up the trunk. I cheered and gave it four thumbs up.

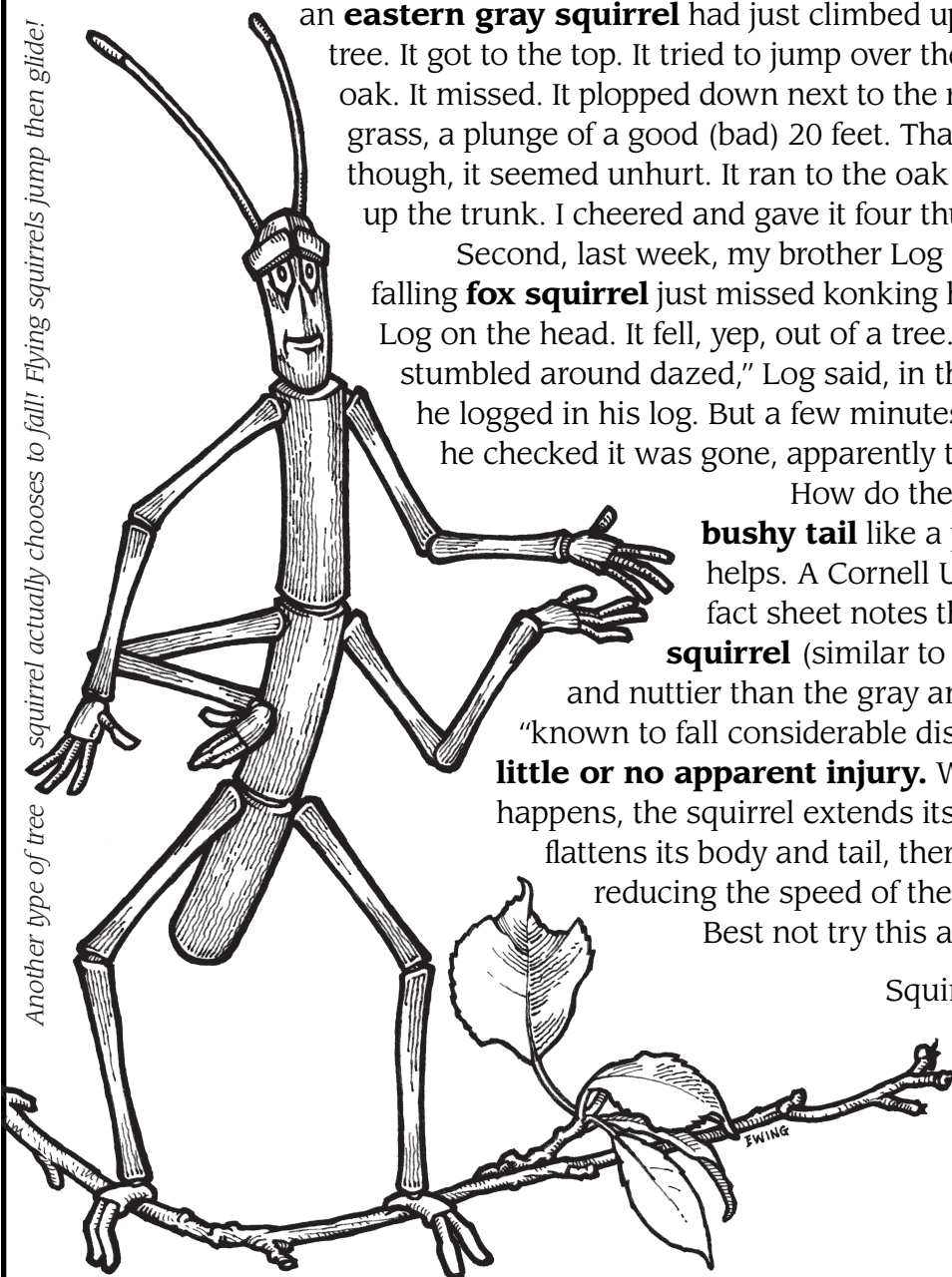
Second, last week, my brother Log said a falling **fox squirrel** just missed konking his wife Mrs. Log on the head. It fell, yep, out of a tree. "At first it stumbled around dazed," Log said, in the log that he logged in his log. But a few minutes later when he checked it was gone, apparently then OK.

How do they do it? A **bushy tail** like a parachute helps. A Cornell University fact sheet notes that the **red squirrel** (similar to but smaller and nuttier than the gray and fox) is "known to fall considerable distances with **little or no apparent injury**. When this happens, the squirrel extends its legs and flattens its body and tail, thereby reducing the speed of the fall." Yaiee! Best not try this at home.

Squirrelly,

Twig

Another type of tree squirrel actually chooses to fall! Flying squirrels jump then glide!



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).