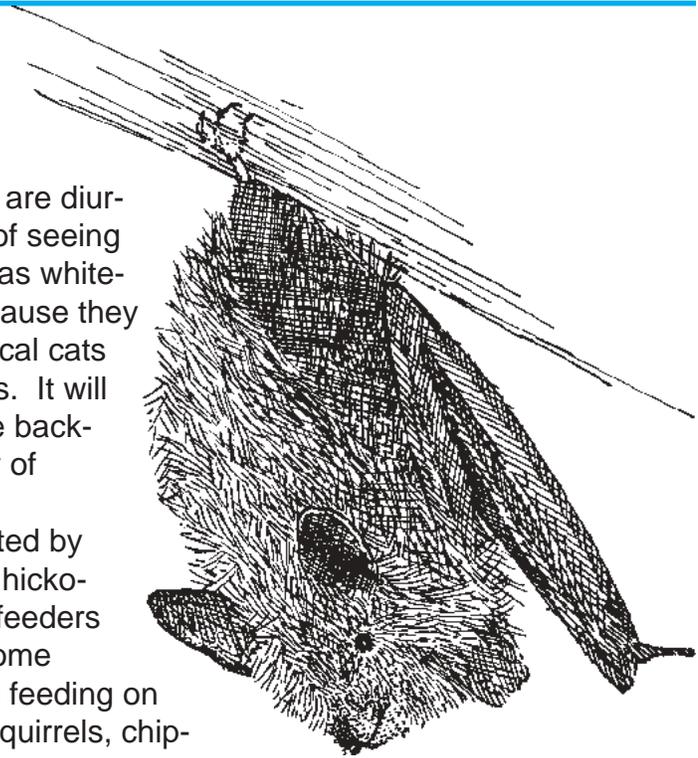


Small Mammals

Providing for small mammals can be a fun challenge. Although many small mammals are nocturnal (active at night), there are a few, such as chipmunks and squirrels that are diurnal (active during the day). The chances of seeing the more nocturnal small mammals, such as white-footed mice and shrews, are fairly low because they are quite secretive and often fall prey to local cats and dogs due to their small size and habits. It will be the exceptional rather than the average backyard habitat that can attract a large variety of small mammals.

Many small mammals will be attracted by seed producing hardwoods such as oaks, hickories, pines and hazelnuts, or by providing feeders with peanuts, sunflower seeds or corn. Some examples of small mammals you may find feeding on seeds and nuts in your backyard include squirrels, chipmunks, raccoons and white-footed mice.



Bats

The most likely species of bats that might visit your backyard are little brown and big brown bats. These nocturnal animals require roosting areas like the ones provided by bat boxes and feed on flying insects attracted to electric lights.

Flying Squirrel

The flying squirrel uses nest boxes or cavities as daytime hideaways in mature forest areas. They will come to feeding stations stocked with sunflower seeds and peanut butter that are located in fairly open locations at night. A bluebird-sized nest box placed high (16-20 ft) in an evergreen tree may be provided as a daytime retreat. Look for gnaw marks around the entrance to indicate use.



Chipmunks

As daytime gatherers, chipmunks need seed and berry sources for food. Chipmunks feed and travel in sunny areas with rock piles, logs and other hiding places nearby. These hiding places provide protection from predators.

A large, flat boulder near dense shrubs well supplied with sunflower seeds makes an ideal feeding table.

Chipmunks will also feed on the ground under bird feeders. Rock walls, rock piles, brush piles, and even stacks of firewood provide cover for these entertaining little animals.

Squirrels

Gray and fox squirrels require large hardwood trees. Natural foods for these animals consist of acorns, hickory nuts and walnuts. They'll also feed at bird feeders. Placing a platform feeder near the ground can sometimes encourage them to leave the elevated bird feeders alone. Nest boxes can be placed to provide nest sites for these squirrels.

Acrobatic red squirrels need coniferous (cone-bearing) trees as aerial highways with a nearby seed source. They can be attracted to feeders with sunflower seeds and peanuts.

Cottontails

Eastern cottontails are frequent visitors to backyards, where they feed on young grass shoots, clover, plantain and sometimes, vegetables in the garden. These rabbits can be invited to our backyards by providing cover in the form of low-growing shrubs or brush piles near the areas where they feed. Rabbits will also use old burrows for refuge and shelter. In areas where natural holes are scarce, artificial burrows made of rough untreated wood or concrete drain tiles can be provided as substitutes. These, fitted with a bottom but no lid, can be partially or totally buried in areas where there is good drainage.

It's important to make sure the burrow doesn't fill with water during heavy rains. The top of the artificial burrow may be covered with soil, rocks, sod or brush. Placing these in close proximity to a bank, hedgerow, shrubbery or brush piles may increase their use.

