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## Controlling Chipmunks

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## controlling **Chipmunks**

Developed cooperatively by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service.



THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL



FRANKLIN'S GROUND SQUIRREL

drawings courtesy University of Missouri press

Chipmunks are among the smaller members of the squirrel family. They are primarily ground-dwellers, but climb trees and shrubs for food when necessary. Two genera are recognized in the United States. The Eastern chipmunk (Tamias) is most common in northeastern states from Canada westward through Michigan, and southward nearly to Florida. The Western chipmunk (Eutamias) can be found from Michigan westward to the Pacific, but is most common in the Rocky Mountains. There is a close re-

semblance between the two species. The Eastern form averages 9 to 10-1/2 inches in length and weighs about 3 ounces. His western cousin is somewhat smaller, averaging 8 to 9-1/2 inches in length and weighing 2 to 2-1/2 ounces. The eastern species has three dark dorsal stripes, while the western one has five. Chipmunks are sometimes confused with the 13-lined ground squirrel, which is a larger animal with thirteen alternating light and dark stripes.

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While chipmunks do not go into complete hibernation like woodchucks and ground squirrels, they usually disappear by October into their deep burrows. They apparently awake from a torpid condition at intervals to feed from caches in the burrows and may sally forth in mid-winter during warm spells. By mid-March, they are very much in evidence. Three to five young are usually born in May after a 31-day gestation period. There may be a second litter in late July or August, but it is believed that these are last year's young which failed to breed in April.

The burrows are very lengthy, occasionally covering 30 feet or more, but there is no evidence of the excavated dirt around the burrow entrance. It is probable that they carry this dirt in the cheek pouches and scatter it on the forest floor to make the burrow openings less conspicuous. The favorite habitat of chipmunks is the open woods where they frequent stone walls, log piles, and thick underbrush. While good climbers, they are less carefree in trees than tree squirrels.

#### CONTROL METHODS

Chipmunks generally add to the enjoyment of the outdoors, but occasionally are so numerous as to become pests. They dig up newly-planted garden seeds and bulbs, or attack cultivated fruits, seeds or stones. Control is most easily accomplished by the use of traps, shooting, or the exposure of poisoned grain.

#### Trapping

Trapping is the preferred method where a small number of animals are creating nuisance or damage.

Number 0 steel traps or the wooden-base snap traps commonly used for rat control are most effective. Place traps around rock piles or logs most frequented by chipmunks, or near burrow entrances. Suggested bait materials include nutmeats, pumpkin or sunflower seeds, peanut butter, corn or rolled oats. Nutmeats and other large baits should be securely tied to the trap trigger with thread. Rolled oats may be sprinkled around the trigger.

#### Shooting

Where firearms can be used, a small gauge shotgun is preferred to a .22 rifle. Hunting is more effective in the early morning and late afternoon than at other times of the day.

#### Poisoning

Poisoned grain is an effective control agent, but it must be handled carefully to avoid danger to beneficial wildlife, children, pets, and livestock. In order to reduce this hazard, it is recommended that this method be used only by trained personnel.

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