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# Kevin O'Hara: Report from the front lines of the vermin wars

Posted Friday, October 12, 2018 2:57 pm

By **Kevin O'Hara**

PITTSFIELD — I had a miserable summer. First off, while sprucing up our house in July, my paint brush accidentally broke through a wasp's nest. In moments, I was swarmed over by a squadron of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, who left me looking like a schoolboy with the mumps. A month later, I fell while crossing a wet wooden bridge on the golf course, fracturing two ribs. And, no, the bridge wasn't located near the 19th hole, as some friends might have you believe.

While convalescing in my backyard, I noticed a cute red squirrel scurrying about our tall pines. I marveled at his antics and acrobatics, and nicknamed him Li'l Red. But my admiration quickly dampened when I witnessed the little guy drag a pine cone through a fresh hole in my newly-painted white shed door.

Despite my aching ribcage, I secured the entry with wire mesh and staple gun, only to find a new hole the next morning. And the next! Within the week, my shed door resembled a large front tooth wearing braces. Upon entering the space, I found myself ankle-deep in acorns and pine cones — Li'l Red's winter store! Looking up, I discovered two more entries in the drop ceiling, where I figured he was planning to take up winter residence.

As I painfully cleaned up his mess, my romantic image of Li'l Red as a dainty little teapot disappeared, and I was suddenly akin to Old Brown, the owl who took a chunk out of naughty Squirrel Nutkin's bushy tail in

Beatrix Potter's classic story. But his bushy broom wouldn't satisfy me. Nope, I wanted his blooming head!

## SUGGESTIONS

I called on friends for their expertise on how to rid myself of this chiseled-toothed monster. One suggested rat poison, but I found that the product could also drop an elephant. Another gent offered me his Havahart trap, saying, "It's against the law to relocate small game animals like squirrels from your property, but who's ever going to catch you?" Given my recent stretch of bad luck, I figured I'd be nabbed by some maniacal game warden who'd recently taken up taxidermy as a hobby.

As I helplessly watched my industrious squirrel build time-shares for his mates, I stumbled upon a YouTube clip titled, "Walking the Plank." The instructions: fill a five-gallon bucket halfway with water. Next, dab one end of a 12-inch ruler with peanut butter, and tape the other end weakly to the bucket's rim, so it extends midway across the bucket. When the squirrel walks the plank to gather his treat, the plank collapses beneath his weight and, presto, my Li'l Red is singing Bubbles. I did as instructed, but somehow Li'l Red escaped the plank like some salty pirate of old.

Another pal gave me his vintage Daisy Red Ryder BB gun. I accepted the rifle with a shrug, knowing I was no Buffalo Bill. In fact, during my inglorious boot camp days in Texas, I was demoted from the M-16 firing range to the pathetic pellet-shooting gallery. A most humbling experience. That afternoon, however, Li'l Red gave me a clear shot. I took aim and fired, hoping to send him a suppository, er message, but I missed him by a mile. Noting my errant shot, he boldly egged me on, posing for a bonus shot. Zing! Chuckling loudly, he bounded up the tree to his summer lodge, unharmed.

## EFFECTIVE REPELLENT

Finally, I purchased a squirrel repellent that gives off the scent of its predators, and I sprayed it generously onto Li'l Red's numerous points of entry before taking up my evening backyard patrol. At dusk, when my enemy stuck his snout into his main passage, he nosed smartly out again in a spitting rage. Scuttling up the old spruce, he rained curses upon me, utterly defeated.

I checked the shed daily for the next week, and found the floor as clean as a funeral parlor. Having finally outwitted my summer nemesis, I opened a well-earned bottle of Troegs Perpetual IPA. But as soon as I raised the ale to my lips, I heard a faint but unmistakable rummaging coming from the loft in our garage. Yep, Li'l Red, staking out a new claim.

Oh, woe is me! My home, but his castle.

*Kevin O'Hara is a longtime Eagle contributor. Visit his website at [thedonkeyman.com](http://thedonkeyman.com)*