

## **Bindery Tails**

'My garden, which is bounded by a low stone wall, has a few trees and shrubs and a shallow pond. It is surrounded by farmland with some pine, spruce, beech and other trees nearby. I have put up two squirrel feeders. The reward is red squirrels. Like a sea-otter playing in lapping waves, or a wagtail flutter-jumping after food, a squirrel is so lightly perfectly balanced that it seems almost a creature of the air, a little russet undulation. Then it stops : frozen in a pose, flattened upside down on the tree trunk, curled above the feeders like a dead branch stub or quite still on the grass, nut in hand.

Coming out of a side door last year I surprised a squirrel fossicking about in some geraniums. Instead of vanishing it turned and ran up the gable-end of the house, thirty feet of sheer stone work. Not content, it went on up the side of the chimney. Still not satisfied it climbed the pot and perched like a button-boy on the top of a tall ship's mast. I hid, worried how it could retreat. After ten minutes it simply came down the same way, head first, back to its geraniums. I went quietly to the bindery another way.

It has been a good year for reds, or mine are tamer. Slim-tail ran along the wall last week to a feeder. Then Darky-tail appeared. What a furious chase. The tree is forked. Round and round in figures of eight they dashed, horizontally, but rising and falling around the trunks like two Morris dancers. Sometimes one shot up the tree, then down again into the fray. But the best was to come. Another squirrel arrived, a sedate and sensible squirrel. It looked at these two hooligans, came along the path by the kitchen window, went quietly up to the other feeder, ate some nuts, then back to the flower bed where it scratched among some pansies, sat up, and looked my way. Was it only my fancy that it gave me a wink?'

D.D. Dickinson ( Tod le Moor)