

Chipmunks do their late shopping

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

The warm, record-breaking temperatures we had the other week made it pleasant for shoppers. It seems warm temperatures increase activity in all living creatures.

I know wild animals around the area were also actively searching for last-minute food supplies.

Birds were not as active at our birdfeeder as they were when the temperature was colder. They were out searching for some of the insects I saw flying around.

ANOTHER ANIMAL active in that warm weather was the eastern chipmunk, one of two species of chipmunk found in Michigan.

The least chipmunk is similar to the eastern, but the least is found only in the upper peninsula. Normally, chipmunks are sleeping in underground burrows that they made during the summer. From November to March, chipmunks spend most of their time in their underground tunnels and nest. Some nests may be as deep as three feet.

Chipmunks do not hibernate like 13-lined ground squirrels, which remain in a very inactive state all winter. Chipmunks awaken periodically during the winter and feed on grasses, fruits and nuts stored in their nest.

It's interesting that the scientific name of the eastern chipmunk is *tamias striatus* — *tamias* is Greek for "squirrel" or "one who stores and takes care of provisions."

THE CHIPMUNKS I saw the other day were filling their cheek pouches with last minute stores of food for the winter. Animals that do not store enough food may have to venture out onto the snow in January or February — putting themselves in a vulnerable position for attack by a predator.

Warm days will help extend those stores, which should help them through the winter. Then, in late March, we will again see the streaking stripes of the chipmunk as he dashes from tree trunk to tree trunk in his search for succulent spring flowers and grasses on which to feed.



Chipmunks took advantage of the mild winter weather to fill their cheek pouches with last-minute stores of food for the winter. Animals that do not store

enough food may have to venture out into the snow in January or February — putting themselves in a vulnerable position for attack by a predator.

Shapiro praises state report on research fund

University of Michigan President Harold T. Shapiro praised the report of the Governor's Commission on the Future of Higher Education — particularly for its emphasis on university research.

"The commission's recommendation for establishing a Research Excellence Fund is particularly important. Such a fund would challenge Michigan's colleges and universities to redouble their efforts to attract the best teachers and students," Shapiro said.

"I believe the commission's report sets forth the steps that must be taken to preserve excellence in the Michigan system of higher education," Shapiro said.

"It also charts the course for making higher education affordable and for focusing resources on high-priority teaching and research efforts. These efforts will make possible the vital contributions that universities can and must make to the economic progress of this state."

"Only the best can produce the high-quality teaching programs, advanced training and new research that keep Michigan competitive in the national and international marketplace for ideas and products," Shapiro said.

"TO THAT END, the University of Michigan already has an international reputation for the quality of its programs and has taken many new initiatives in the last five years to strengthen those programs."

"Further, it has begun reviews of its technology transfer activities to be sure they are fully supportive of the social and economic potential of our research," Shapiro said. He added that the U-M would welcome joint efforts with the state to support quality education and research, as well as improvements in its patenting and licensing activities that would aid the socially useful transfer of new ideas and technology.

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