

Community residents offer rich world of culture, activity

by Catherine O'Brien with Jennifer Andreson

Clark students have frequently been referred to as socially aware of the world as it exists around them. Clark University is spoken of as a community in which everyone looks out for each other and is completely accepting of one another. While these sound like ideas students would like to live by, close examination of the Clark University campus proves something quite different. There seems to be an entire social population at Clark which is completely ignored by faculty and students alike.

That population consists of the squirrels. That's right, you've seen them day and night frequenting certain locations on the campus— playing a game of cops and robbers or perhaps on the run to some buffet— but how often have you been given an opportunity to get to know the diverse squirrel population at Clark?

While it is true that the squirrels lead busy lives, they are occasionally available for a quick informational session, provided, of course, it is on their territory. Squirrels have been reigning on Clark's urban campus for over one hundred years. Possession of squirrel territory at Clark is quite reminiscent of faculty tenure. Squirrels need to spend at least 3.7 years on the Clark campus before they can be considered for territory of their own. Until that time, they rely on small bushes and trees, mostly located around the academic buildings, for a place to live & defend.

Once they have reached their 3.7 years quota, the squirrels are brought before a review board, consisting of four officers, Spinoza (a recent addition) and the president of VARC, which decides on whether or not territory ought to be granted. The board looks at several factors, including the num-

ber of birds attacked and speed in climbing a tree.

A written examination is also given, testing the squirrels working knowledge of the larger garbage cans on campus and bonus points are awarded if the squirrel can access at least two of the dumpsters. The most sought out territory is that directly surrounding the University Center, however those squirrels who are not yet of legal age tend to prefer the areas adjacent to the firstyear halls.

Most squirrels work until they are granted tenure. They hold odd jobs around campus which include everything from shaping bushes to taking down ugly flyers to annoying Bill Cahillane as he goes about his daily duties.

There have actually been 4 squirrels in that last position over the past three months but each one got fired because it was unable to find its' way out of the building once the door behind the Information Desk was closed and the gate was pulled down. It's been a very unfortunate three months.

The squirrel community is generally a peaceful one. There have been very few reported problems and even those have been minor events such as squabbles over steak fries from the IC or grapes (apparently some squirrels find that green grapes resemble peanuts). They would like to hold a greater place in the Clark community and were upset about the recent dismantling of the rat laboratories in the psychology department. They have noticed a significant decline in attention placed on them since that dismantling. However, business for the squirrels goes on as usual as they scurry around the Clark campus making it a better home for future generations.



Bob reveals all in candid interview

The poster squirrel for Clark University is named Bob. Bob does several publicity stunts each semester and was actually spotted attempting to fly off of Jonas Clark during the lunar eclipse several weeks ago. He had been visiting Bullock Hall and was under the impression that he would be able to fly.

An anonymous source suggested that Bob secretly desires to be down under, but refused to comment further on the meaning of that statement. As of recent, Bob has had many complaints regarding Clark and has become one of the more hostile squirrels on the campus.

Bob offered to candidly speak on several topics for me, but requested that each reader be charged \$3 in order to read his comments. (He seems to fear this interview could cost him his job.)

Bob: on Clark's people:

They look at me all day and say, "How cute!" I think they're ugly. They appear in masses at certain times during the day wandering around as if they own the place. Sometimes they even sit down on my grass. And I look at them, screaming, "Oh no you don't, that's mine!" on living at Clark:

You think I'm here by choice? My mother left me here! She ran away with the milkman. The food's great here the grass keeps it nice and moist, and there are lots of great pathways.

But the humans suck.

on classes:

Classes? What's that? I just eat, poop and sleep!

on the "begging position":

What do you mean begging? I'm praying, saying "God, send these humans AWAY!" Why do they always stare at me anyway? And if they think I'm begging, why don't they give me anything? Dumb humans!

on dogs:

Damn dogs! Always sniffing around, peeing on my trees, my home. If I was a dog, I'd pee on them!

on relationship to the rat:

I am not a rodent! I am a cute little furry animal and my name's Bob! What's so great about those rats anyway? They're ridden with diseases and they have no tails.

Bob believes that as poster squirrel, his words will resound across campus as the voice of squirrels everywhere. He is actually planning on running for Student Council president next year. Bob is confident that the amount of time he spends silently observing and despising humans will allow him to carry on the tradition of president. He plans as one of his first and greatest efforts to initiate a Squirrel Day at Clark. Classes will be cancelled and everyone will act like a squirrel for the day! Bob will be up for tenure in August.

Observations of a Common Squirrel

BY DAVID BERNSTEIN

A common squirrel, *Sciuridae Sciurinae*, was observed for a 45 minute period beginning at noon. The squirrel began its activities in the Fuller Quadrangle and finished them in the protected corner formed by Wright Hall. Both areas were relatively free of pedestrian traffic at the time of observation, and it was an overcast day. Observations were recorded every ten seconds according to the following key:

- W=Watching. Squirrel freezes and watches surroundings carefully.
- sW=Standing. Squirrel raises itself on hind legs and surveys surroundings.
- H=Hiding. Squirrel runs into a bush or other concealing place.
- C=Climbing. Squirrel engages in climbing an object, such as a tree.
- F=Foraging. Squirrel looks for food by inspecting and/or digging beneath ground.
- E=Eating. Squirrel consumes a food product.
- R=Running. Squirrel moves at a very rapid pace.
- S=Chasing. Squirrel chases or is chased by another member of the species.
- G=Grooming. Squirrel engages in self-cleaning behavior.

OBSERVATIONS

The observed squirrel spent most of its' time foraging. During the beginning of the observation, it did not seem to find much food, and tended to watch more often. Once the animal had moved to the more protected area of trees around Wright Hall, it's behavior pattern changed and it engaged in a lot less watching behavior (around 550 seconds). After a great deal of foraging, the squirrel seemed to find a concentration of food (possibly nuts) which it spent much time consuming. It is possible that these nuts had been placed there previously by the squirrel because of their great concentration in the small area.

The squirrel's reaction to noise was very peculiar. In the area around Wright Hall, there was a great deal of noise emanating from the dorm rooms. The squirrel had apparently grown accustomed to these sounds, as it did not engage in much watching behavior at all. Even the shrill laugh of one of the residents did not stop it from eating. Interestingly, the squirrel became very aware of its surroundings and engaged in watching behavior at the sound of a car horn. A faint car horn seemed to cause a break in the squirrel's behavior. This is probably a learned response to avoid cars in the street.