

# SOME CLASSIC SQUIRREL FEEDING REMAINS

N.B. Red and grey squirrels leave identical remains.



## Stripped Cones

Squirrels bite and tug the scales off pine, spruce and larch cones in order to extract seed. They leave wide scatterings of scales and a very characteristic stripped central cone core. They usually sit in the tree canopy to feed, dropping the bits widely.

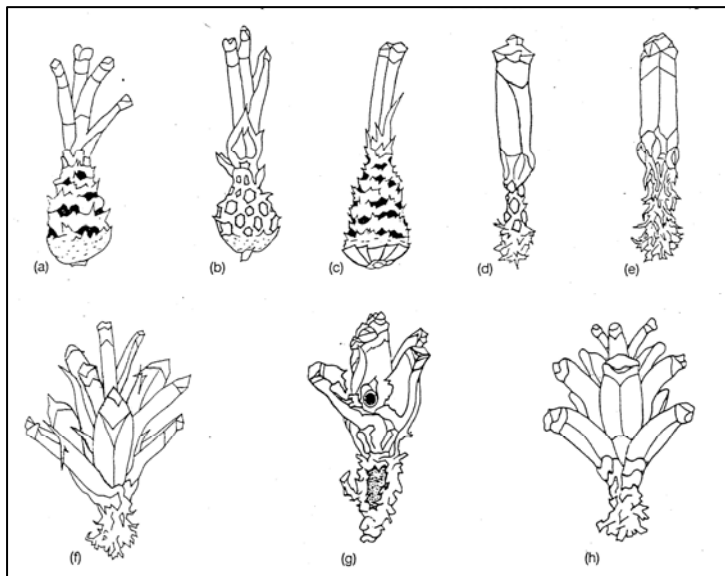


*Scots pine (above) and larch (below) cones stripped by squirrels*



*Norway spruce cones stripped by squirrels*

Mice and voles may strip cones in a similar way, but the scales are always clipped neatly, never leaving the ragged tugged scale-bases that squirrels leave. Small mammals usually eat only one or two cones, usually on the ground, under or near cover, and leave neat piles of scales.

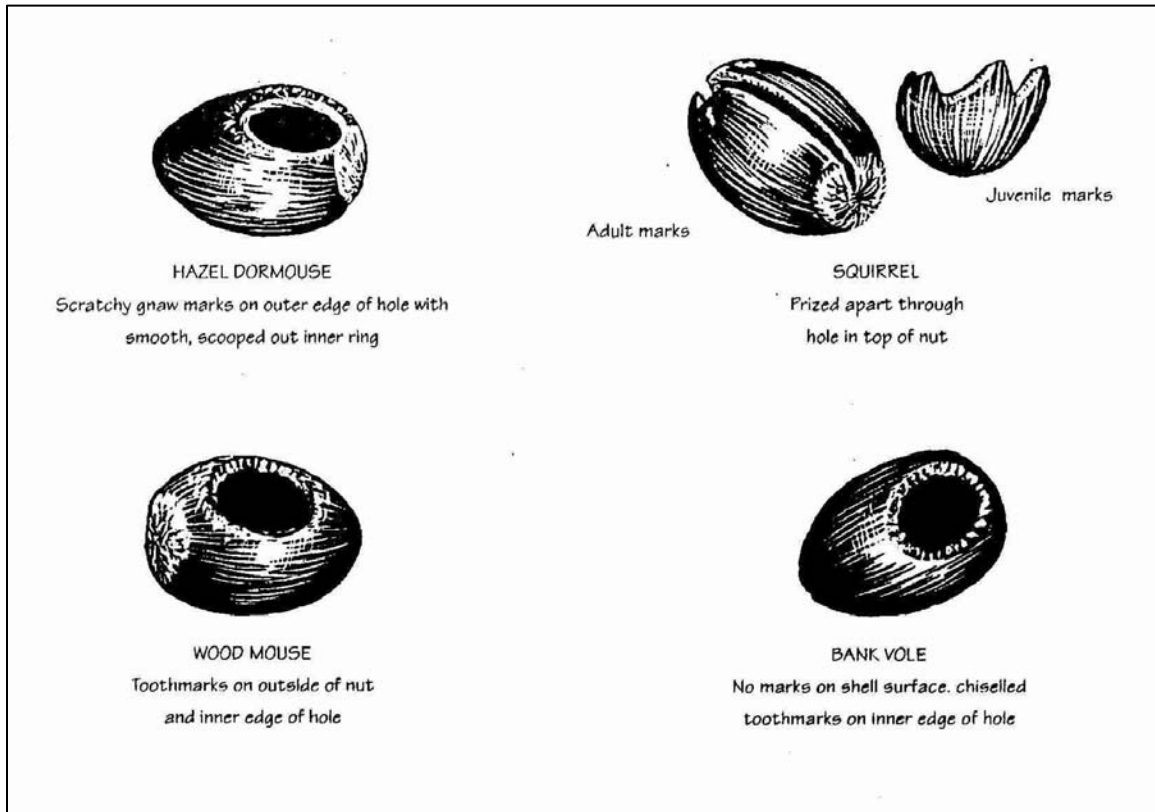


*Scots pine cone cores stripped by red squirrels. Individual squirrels have characteristic techniques for removing scales, resulting in different cores.*

[from Moller, H. (1986) "Red squirrels (*Sciurus vulgaris*) feeding in a Scots pine plantation in Scotland." *J.Zool., Lond. (A)* 209, 61-83]

## Split Hazel Nuts

Hazel nuts are eaten by bank vole, wood mouse, dormouse, tits and, of course, squirrels. Squirrels classically split the shell neatly in half, although inexperienced young squirrels can make a bit of hash of this. Small rodents gnaw holes in the side of the nut. Tits bash them open with their bills.



*Illustrations taken from The Mammal Society's "How to Find and Identify Mammals".*



*Ripe hazel nuts split by squirrels.*



*Green unripe hazel nuts split by red squirrels.*

Notice the chisel mark in the apex of the nut. This is chiselled by the upper incisors; the lower incisors are then inserted and the squirrel gives a sharp twist splitting the shell along a line of weakness.