

Squirrel population boom frustrates fruit growers

October 16 2012, by Wilson Ring



In this Oct. 5, 2012 photo, a gray squirrel sits in Montpelier, Vt. Biologists say a variety of natural forces have combined to produce an overabundance of squirrels throughout Vermont and some adjoining states, devastating at least some apple orchards. It's expected the population could crash as rapidly as it grew.(AP Photo/Toby Talbot)

(AP)—A squirrel population boom is menacing fruit growers and others in some patches of the country.

Apple grower Clarence Boston says squirrels have destroyed about half of his most profitable variety after a southern Vermont season already made tough by [hot weather](#).

Squirrel populations are also up in parts of New York, New Mexico, Indiana and Ohio. But other spots are seeing average or even below-average activity.

Biologists know squirrel populations have rare but periodic "eruptions" when conditions coincide to produce abundant foods that fuel the fast-reproducing animals.

This year's squirrel boom in Vermont followed two seasons of bountiful acorn and beechnut crops and last year's mild winter.

The plague is expected to end this winter in Vermont after a poor nut season this year.

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Citation: Squirrel population boom frustrates fruit growers (2012, October 16) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-10-squirrel-population-boom-frustrates-fruit.html>

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