

REALITY

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Got Raccoons? Rats? Squirrels? Bats?

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WEMC Member
Ronnie Smith

TRAPPING OF


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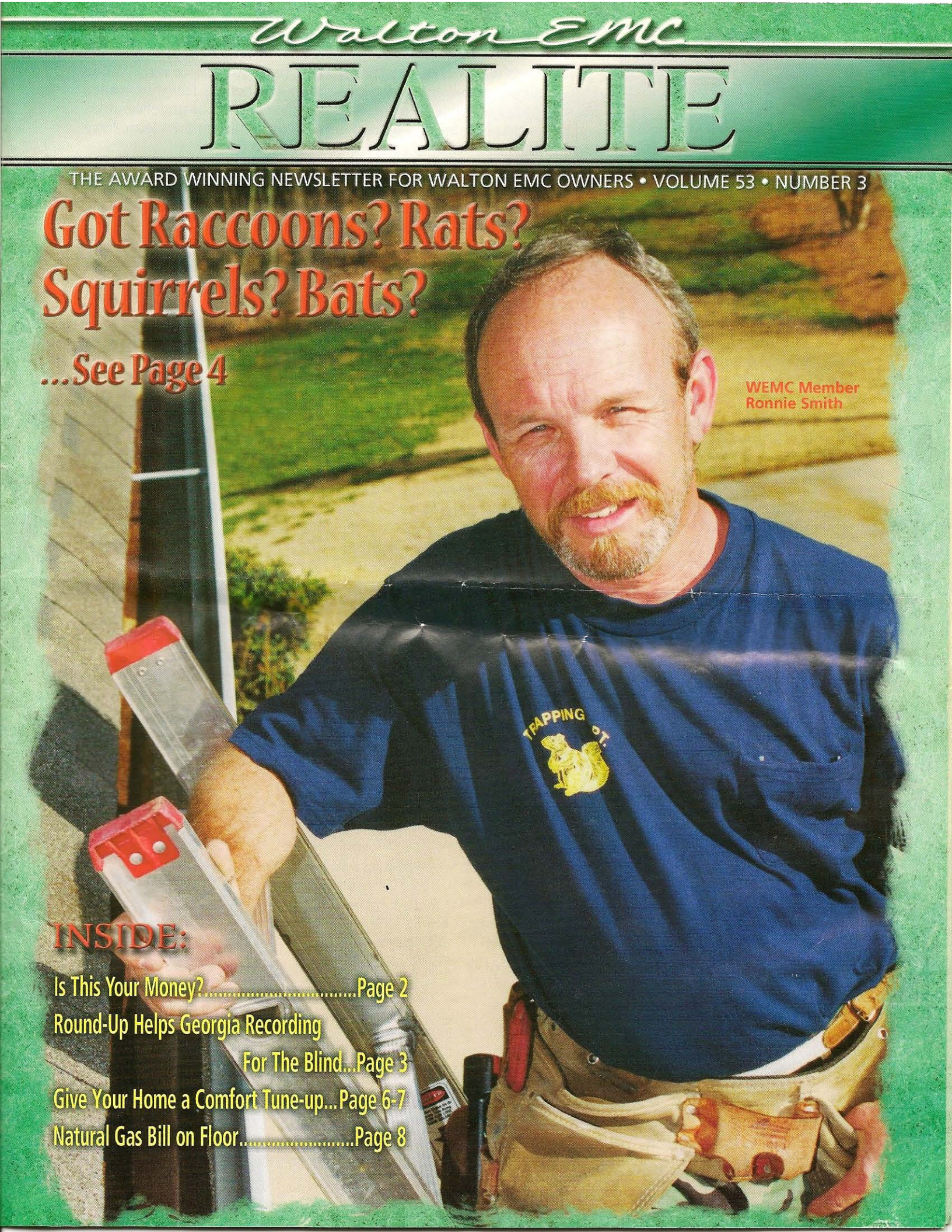
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Got raccoons? Rats?

Squirrels? Bats?

Then you better call someone like Walton EMC member Ronnie Smith.

"If it bothers you I can eliminate it," says Smith, reciting the motto of his business, The Trapping Department. But there are more reasons than just being bothered for ridding your home of unwanted animal visitors.

Destructive Little Critters

"The worst thing that can happen is an electrical fire caused by an animal chewing on wires," says Smith. "They typically chew on exposed wires and don't bother those that run inside conduit (a pipe for electric wires) or are covered by insulation."

But what makes squirrels and rats chew on wires? You wouldn't think wires taste better than an acorn or food from the pantry.

"Rats and squirrels must constantly gnaw to keep their teeth ground down," continues Smith. "That's why many times you'll hear a gnawing sound in the wall or ceiling. The animals are actually chewing the wood to grind their teeth." Besides wood, the varmints may choose to do their dental work on copper or aluminum wiring.

Smith also believes that animals can detect faint odors left

on the wires when they were installed. If the installer had just eaten lunch, the wire may smell like a Big Mac to visiting squirrels. They may also be attracted to the human odor or a cologne smell unknowingly left behind by the worker. The scent on the wire may be irresistible.

Another worry with invading animals is the health problems they bring indoors.

Rodents can harbor rabies and all type of parasites, including fleas and mites. Their droppings are the breeding ground for all sorts of viruses and spores, including the Hantavirus, a rapidly progressing illness that often requires its victims to be put on ventilators. Other species carry similar health hazards.

Then there's the destruction caused when animal pests chew through plastic plumbing and cause a leak or damage roof shingles, allowing rain to seep through the roof.

And no one wants to eat food that served as a picnic for an invading rodent. A rat may eat its body weight in food during the span of one day. You'd think they'd be thankful for a free meal; they show their appreciation by ruining ten times as much as they eat.

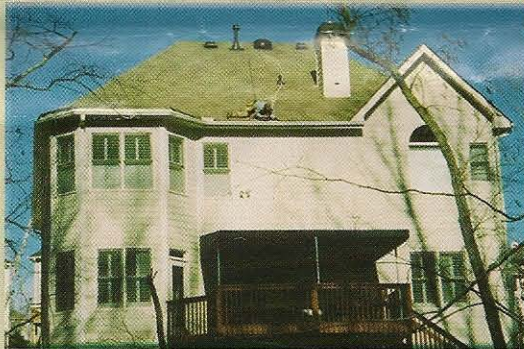
Why Me?

Small nuisance animal control is a relatively new and growing field, an offshoot from traditional pest control. Smith

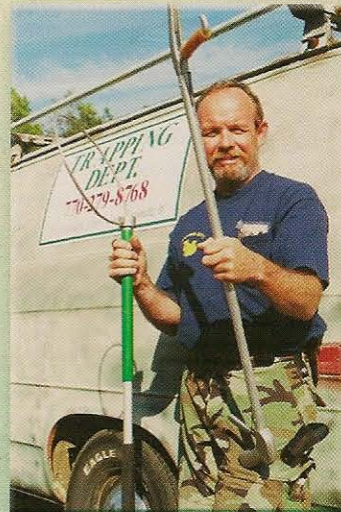
How Do I Know?

Look for these signs of animal infestation:

1. Noises, occurring both day and night, in walls or ceilings. They may sound like gnawing or chewing.
2. Odors, especially dead animal smells.
3. Sightings of animal droppings or urine stains.
4. Finding actual animal nests or nesting materials. These may look like shredded paper or cardboard or pieces of string or cloth.
5. Insulation missing from wires or wiring with signs of chewing.



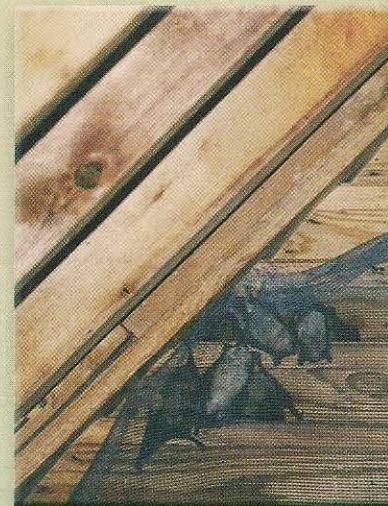
Smith's repairs may take him 30 or 40 feet high, beyond the reach of ladders.



Snares are one way Smith uses to humanely remove larger animals like opossums and raccoons.

Quick

Besides being annoying, unwanted animals in your home pose health and safety risks.



Bats in the belfry. A colony of bats sets up housekeeping in the attic. Even the health risks associated with guano in the attic necessitates their relocation.

Houseguests

attributes the growth in his business to our area's expanding urban and suburban areas.

"By mowing down woods and trees, animals get confined to smaller areas," says Smith. It looks like we're really the ones who are the unwelcome guests.

So why do animals pick a certain home? According to Smith, 80 to 90 percent of the homes he sees have one common problem.

"There's almost always a gap where the roof deck and fascia board meet right behind the gutter," says Smith. "The gap can be as big as three or four inches. It takes only a quarter-sized opening for an average one-pound rat to get inside. It doesn't matter if the home's three months or 53 years old; if it was built that way, the house is going to have problems."

Other common problems Smith sees are torn or inadequate screens on gable vents and holes in foundations.

What You Can Do

Many people think getting rid of the animal by using poison, BB guns, lights or ultrasonic devices will do the trick. "Not so," says Smith. "The solution is in the repair. If you don't seal the place they're coming in, they'll be back."

Most homeowners can do some simple repairs themselves.

If the problem is severe or in a hard-to-reach area, you may want to consider a professional.

If you call a professional, make sure they have a DNR trapping permit. Beware of gypsy "here today and gone tomorrow" companies. Accurate estimates require a site inspection. Last, ask about re-infestation warranties on the work that's completed.

Smith has a few other hints to help cut down on invading animal problems:

- Get rid of bird feeders and keep cat and dog food inside, eliminating easy meals that attract wild animals.
- It may help to cut tree branches that are hanging over or close to your roof. "To keep flying squirrels from landing on your roof, though, you'd have to cut the trees back at least 500 feet," says Smith.
- Install a chimney cap and spark arrester on your chimney.

What's the most unusual case Smith has solved? "I got a call in the middle of the night about a grunting-type sound in these folks' home. After looking in the attic, crawl space and everywhere else, I found a pager going off in a dresser drawer that was set on vibrate mode."

It doesn't matter to Smith. Nuisance animal or nuisance pager—if it bothers you, he'll eliminate it. 🐾

end
g and destructive,
ur home can pose a
safety hazard.

Building practices, not animals gnawing holes is the problem Smith repairs in 90 percent of his calls. By not closing the gap between the roof deck and the fascia board, builders leave easy access to invading critters.



asily gets by this fallen screen wire and
n though bats are extremely beneficial,
o (bat droppings) inside your home or

