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S. O. S. Save Our Squirrels

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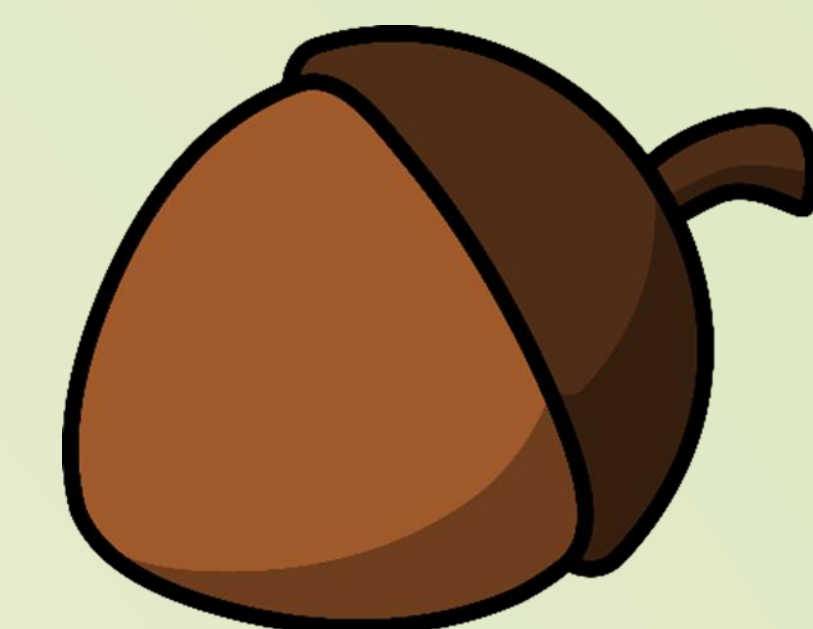
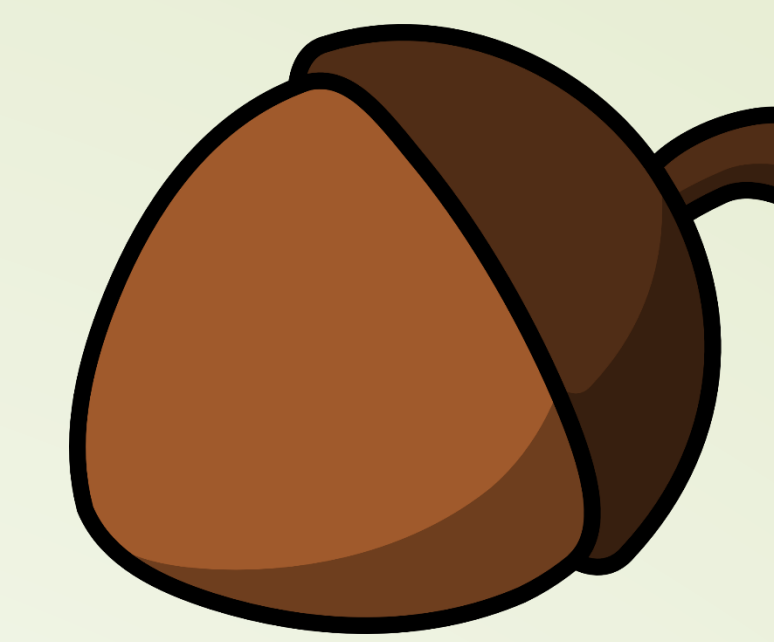
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S.O.S. Save Our Squirrels



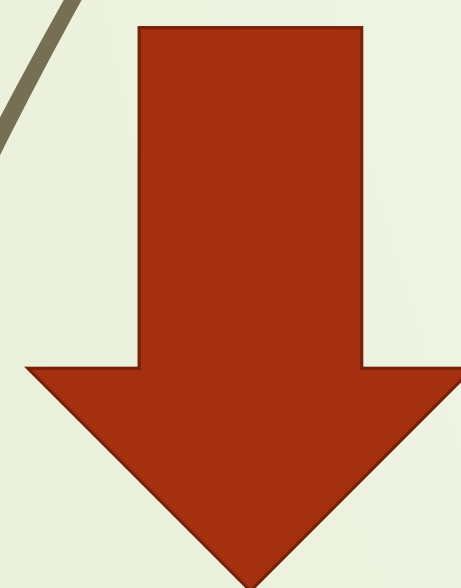
Hailey Bushek | Politics, Policy & Administration | Western Oregon University

Abstract

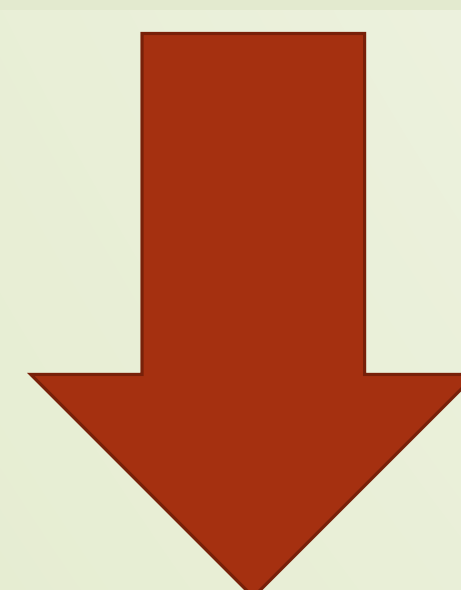
This project focused on the issue of squirrel safety and environmental harmony on the Western campus. Through data research, staff interviews, and field monitoring I was able to define my thesis. Squirrels are a vital part of our campus ecosystem and we should not harm them with unnatural food sources. I found that squirrels on campus were becoming dependent on the human population for food via our trash. In order to help solve the problem, my solution was to attempt to alter human behavior by spreading awareness. I worked with Western's Communications and Social Media Department as well as the Marketing Department to get the word out. An interview was released detailing my project and providing informative tips on how changing our trash habits would help the squirrels and contribute to a healthier environment for all.

Problem Evolution

The Western Grey Squirrel is threatened as a species in Oregon and subsequently on the WOU campus.



The Western squirrel population is threatened by an increasing amount of automobile related mortalities.



The squirrels on campus are at risk of becoming dependent on human trash as food source. This poses the greatest harm to them on campus.

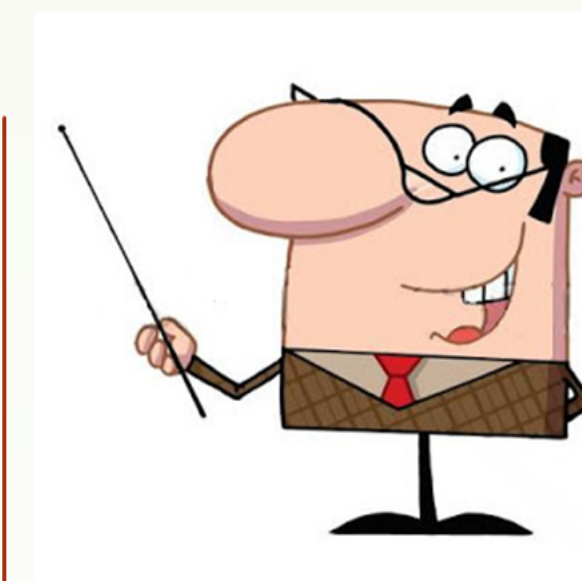
Procedure

Step 1



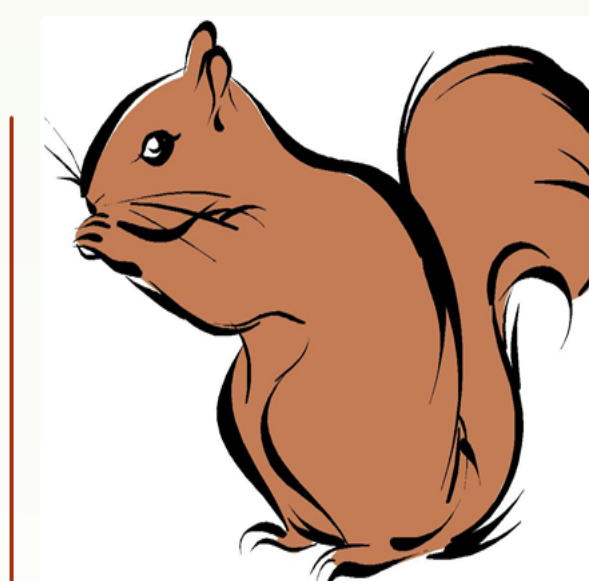
Gather background data on the decline of Western Grey Squirrels. Is road mortality a leading cause, or is something else more relevant to this campus?

Step 2



Talk to various experts on campus. Speak with public safety as well as biologists and fellow squirrels lovers. See what they have to contribute to or alter your hypothesis.

Step 3



Monitor squirrels in trash cans. Are they really getting into bins and eating human food? Are they too comfortable around us?

Step 4



Compile data and research from all areas of the project to form a final project. Speak with the Social Media coordinator to get awareness out about how we can help squirrels live healthier lives.

Project Results & Conclusions

- Through observation and monitoring, I found that squirrels were in fact getting into trash bins on campus.
- Due to information gathered, I knew that the consumption of human food was not good for the squirrels.
- I concluded the best way to help the squirrels at Western would be to spread helpful tips on the "dos and don'ts" of trash habits.
- I worked with the Social Media team at Western to get my story published and help raise awareness on how we can all be good stewards of our campus environment.
- Students can largely help squirrels by steps as simple as throwing away food waste inside.

Squirrels & Civic Engagement

- My chosen topic for the civic engagement project may seem amusing on the surface. However, civic service is about getting involved in your community and working for what you're passionate about. I care about animals and my local environment. That is why this topic was perfect.
- Everyone should be involved in a cause they care about. Maybe it's squirrels, maybe it's education, maybe it's health care. Whatever it is, find a way to get involved in your local community. Embrace your passions and don't be afraid to get your hands a little dirty.



Photo Source: <https://blogs.volunteermatch.org>

Research & Investigation

- The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife website provided background into the decline of the Western Grey Squirrel population. Urbanization is cited as a possible source.
- A group at Oregon State University conducted a study that shows the positive and important role squirrels play in the ecosystem.
- A study published by the Journal of Zoology emphasized concern of squirrels' "seemingly fearless attitude in the way of human interaction"
- My interview with the Physical Plant's Kevin Hughes led me to monitoring trash cans. I discovered many were going in and eating human food.
- My interview with Biologist Jeff Snyder made me aware of the potential harm to the environment any time an area is urbanized and the local wildlife becomes dependent.

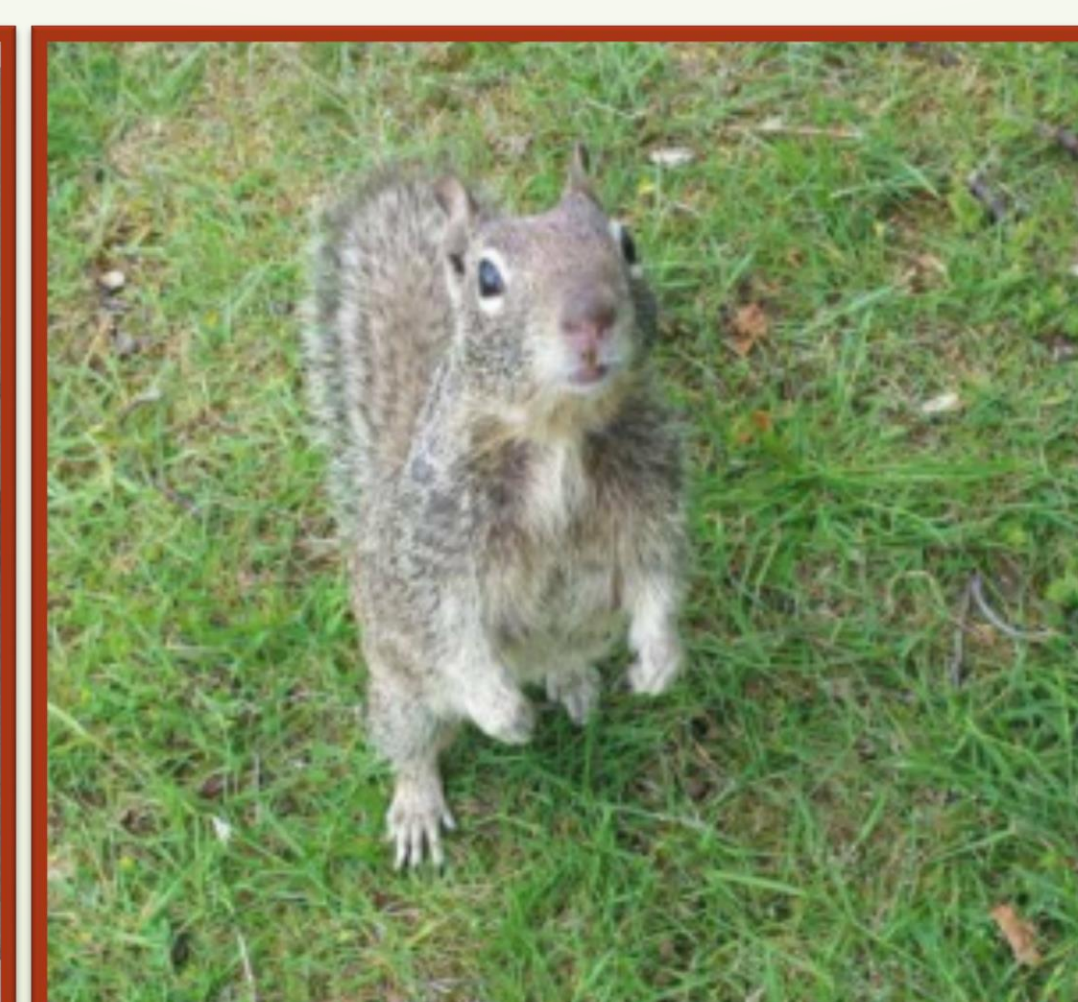
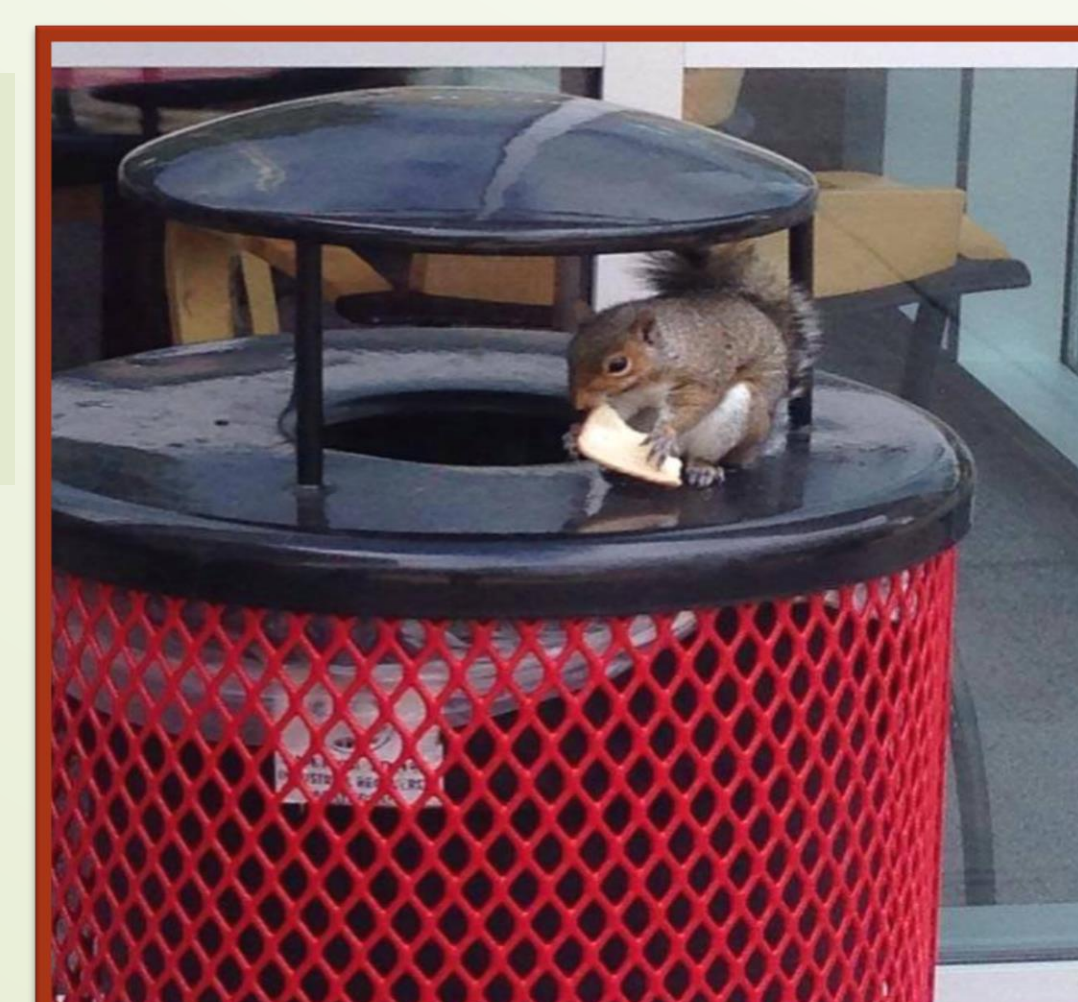


Photo Source: WOU Squirrels Facebook Page

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