

Grey Squirrel Poem

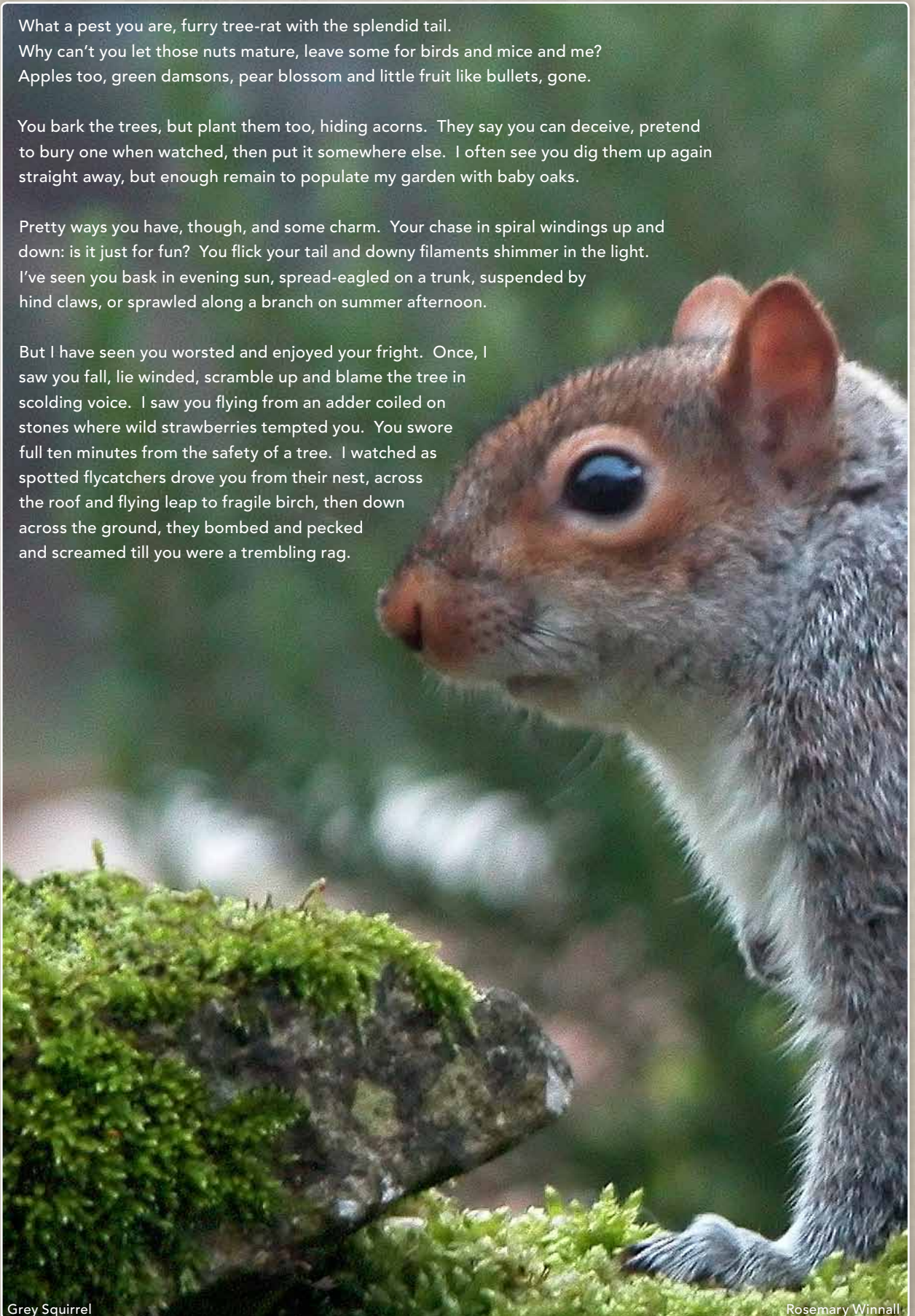
SUSAN LIMBREY

What a pest you are, furry tree-rat with the splendid tail.
Why can't you let those nuts mature, leave some for birds and mice and me?
Apples too, green damsons, pear blossom and little fruit like bullets, gone.

You bark the trees, but plant them too, hiding acorns. They say you can deceive, pretend
to bury one when watched, then put it somewhere else. I often see you dig them up again
straight away, but enough remain to populate my garden with baby oaks.

Pretty ways you have, though, and some charm. Your chase in spiral windings up and
down: is it just for fun? You flick your tail and downy filaments shimmer in the light.
I've seen you bask in evening sun, spread-eagled on a trunk, suspended by
hind claws, or sprawled along a branch on summer afternoon.

But I have seen you worsted and enjoyed your fright. Once, I
saw you fall, lie winded, scramble up and blame the tree in
scolding voice. I saw you flying from an adder coiled on
stones where wild strawberries tempted you. You swore
full ten minutes from the safety of a tree. I watched as
spotted flycatchers drove you from their nest, across
the roof and flying leap to fragile birch, then down
across the ground, they bombed and pecked
and screamed till you were a trembling rag.



Grey Squirrel

Rosemary Winnall