

# Squirrels are biggest threat to our critical infrastructure, call Special Branch

By Neil Shaw, February 08 2017, UK

Squirrels are the biggest threat to the security of our critical infrastructure, according to a security expert.

Chris Thomas has been tracking power cuts caused by animals since 2013.

He says squirrels, birds, rats and snakes have been responsible for more than 1,700 power cuts affecting nearly five million people in the English-speaking world.

His Cyber Squirrel 1 project was set up to track animal attacks, as reported in the English-language media around the world.

Squirrels topped the list with 879 "attacks", followed by birds, 434; snakes, 83; raccoons, 72; rats, 36; martens – 22; and even frogs – 3.

To be honest, I've been suspicious for some time of the three squirrels which hop over the garden wall and raid the nuts we put out for birds. They squeak with a distinctly foreign accent.



Grey squirrels infiltrated Britain 100 years ago. They quickly spotted the potential of stealing the innocent mantle of Beatrix Potter's cute little "Squirrel Nutkin", eventually pushing out our native red squirrels.

But cute they are not. As Mr Thomas discovered, they are hell bent on sabotage and not to be trusted an inch.

In December a mile of beautiful beech trees on the A38 had to be felled because squirrels were gnawing at branches which then dropped in front of drivers.

Sue Downey, 65, said: "As a tree lover I found it a shocking sight. I nearly crashed the car because the sight was so unbearable I had to keep looking away."

The Forestry Commission said damage caused by grey squirrels costs the British forestry sector around £6 million a year.

The alarm bells rang when Western Power Distribution, which provides our electricity, swore blind that it knew of no incidents.

This is just the sort of response you might expect when "they" are covering up a massive threat to national security.

But they're out there, all right, these squirrel spies – and some of them are clearly suicide gnawers (so we know who sent them).



In September last year a squirrel blacked out a Somerset village of 1,400 homes.

Milborne Port, near Yeovil, was plunged into darkness after a squirrel with a taste for electricity gnawed through a power cable.

One resident, CJ Collingwood, said: "There was a massive flash behind our house. We wandered up and he was still smoking, poor thing."

Poor thing? In Gloucestershire, another squirrel blacked out more than 1,500 homes – and also perished in the process.

The animal was electrocuted when it climbed on to an electricity pylon in Charlton Kings, near Cheltenham, causing a short circuit. And the war is getting personal. Mr Thomas also discovered that there have been six deaths caused by squirrels downing power lines, which then struck people on the ground.

You've been warned.