

AGC.....Disguised Squirrels

In the creation of the animals of the world God designed amazing features and abilities. Among the reptiles of the world with its ability to shed its skin as it grows to leave the rattle on the end, and its pit organ with its infrared heat detectors, its Jacobson's organ with its advanced sense of smell, is the rattlesnake. The rattlesnake hunts many different small animals but among its common food, is the ground and wood squirrels. These small rodents have been designed to cope well with the attacks by its mortal enemy. Let's look at the ways God has designed the squirrels with the ability to avoid being lunch for the rattlesnake.

The California ground and wood squirrels have been given very sly ways to avoid being detected and eaten for lunch. These squirrels have been observed practicing very different "camouflage" techniques. One just recently observed in these squirrels is snake skin eating and skin bathing. In a recent report in the journal *Animal Behavior*, Donald Owings and Barbara Clucas detail the practice of skin eating. It seems that in order to give the squirrels a fighting chance against the extraordinary hunting abilities of the rattlesnake God has given the squirrels a few tricks of their own.

The squirrels were observed picking up shed skins of rattlesnakes and eating them, then licking their fur which is thought to transfer the smell of the snake to the fur of the squirrel. Snakes have really poor eye sight and this would in effect cause the snake's sense of smell to be confused by "snake smell" on what must surely act and look like a squirrel. But, the snake's ability to see is very poor and so is probably of little help in the hunting strategy. In addition to the bath in snake solution, these amazing creatures will also take a good roll in areas where rattlesnakes have been laying. This would also transfer snake smell to the fur of the squirrel and help to confuse the hunting ability of the rattlesnake.

The squirrels can also avoid a lethal snake strike by changing the temperature of its tail. Since the rattlesnake is using its heat detector to find its prey, the target will be the area of the body that the snake "sees" as the hottest. If this is the tail which has less muscle and blood vessels so any poison that the snake gets in will have less effect on the squirrel and this would also give the squirrel a head start in an unexpected direction. Some types of squirrels even have some immunity to snake poisons.

So even in the behavioral abilities of the squirrel we can see the marvelous design talents of the master creator. Let's always give God the praise for the things that he has done for the animals of the world for us to see and marvel at.