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The Famous White Squirrel

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The Famous WHITE Squirrel

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Have a good semester and I hope to see you around.
ISU students?

Sounds great! Anything else you want to share with the
Ethos:

I'm a squirrel, you think they check my I.D.? I don't
How do you get into the bars?

If you are the like the majority of the population on Yik Yak and have
been taking note of the rambunctious squirrels on campus (don't

It puts a much-needed smile on your face on those long school days.
It's always nice when you're walking around campus and,

CHARLIE COFFEY
DESIGN
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maybe he'll bring you some luck on your next exam—or score you a
exclusive interview with him. Here it is:

We were lucky enough to sit down with the white squirrel and get an

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He’s Still Alive, Bitches

BY PAIGE ROANE   DESIGN NAILAH FITZGERALD
PHOTO CHARLIE COFFEY

It’s always nice when you’re walking around campus and, suddenly, out of the corner of your eye, you see some squirrels messing around in the trees or sprinting toward absolutely nothing. It puts a much-needed smile on your face on those long school days.

If you are the like the majority of the population on Yik Yak and have been taking note of the rambunctious squirrels on campus (don’t judge, they’re fun to observe) you may have noticed that there’s one squirrel who doesn’t fit in with the rest.

The elusive white squirrel.

Those of us who have noticed this guy may refer to him as the “albino squirrel,” but the squirrel is not, in fact, albino. Our little friend is actually leucistic, according to Tim Stewart, associate professor in natural resource ecology and management.

Leucism is a condition seen in animals that causes reduced pigmentation. If the squirrel were albino, he would have red eyes and be completely white—which would be pretty creepy looking. The squirrel on campus is not completely white and has dark eyes.

Leucism usually is not helpful for these animals when trying to avoid predators, but this squirrel seems to have some luck in his back pocket because he’s been seen running around for over a year. Iowa State’s campus seems to have given the squirrel a bit of a safe haven.

We always appreciate how welcoming ISU students are to other students—the animals on campus must take after us and just let this little white squirrel do his thing.

Many other college campuses across America have a white squirrel population too. At many of these schools, the white squirrel is seen as good luck if you spot one before an exam. At Iowa State we have the zodiac, which is bad luck if you walk over it. Where is our source of good luck? Why not a white squirrel spotting?

Not one, but five towns use white squirrels as their claim to fame and none of the towns are particularly happy about the others according to Roadside America—a unique travel guide to unusual attractions. The biggest bragger about its white squirrel population is Olney, Illinois, who titles itself the “Home of White Squirrels.”

The squirrel war is actually pretty serious—even combative. These towns are not messing around with their white squirrel appreciation.

According to Roadside America, “if you crave more than a cursory encounter with these genetic purebloods, visit Olney during the last three Saturdays in October. That’s when the city conducts its white squirrel count, an annual event since the 1980s.” Each year about 150 people volunteer to help with the count.

“They are very well taken care of here,” says Jessica Akes at the Olney Chamber of Commerce. Akes says that the town provides food and shelter to the squirrels whenever necessary, “and our city clerk bottle feeds the babies that get knocked out of trees.”

These squirrels are very loved in this town. From squirrel crossing signs to giving the squirrels the right-of-way on the streets, these white squirrels are sitting pretty in Olney.

Although Iowa State is not that crazy about our furry friend, we appreciate him adding some diversity to the Iowa State squirrel population. Iowa State’s Facebook page even has an entire photo album dedicated to it. If you want to check it out (you definitely want to check it out) just go to Iowa State’s facebook page and find “The (not so) elusive white squirrel” album.

The squirrel also has a Twitter account (@AlbinoIsu) where the white squirrel is able to express his real, and more colorful personality.

We were lucky enough to sit down with the white squirrel and get an exclusive interview with him. Here it is:

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<th>Ethos:</th>
<th>So what’s it like being the only white squirrel on ISU’s campus?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squirrel:</td>
<td>Pretty fun actually. I feel like a model when all the students and staff want to take pictures of me when I’m hanging around on campus.</td>
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<th>Ethos:</th>
<th>Do you enjoy people taking your picture?</th>
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<td>Squirrel:</td>
<td>Well, since I am really one-of-a-kind here at Iowa State, I don’t want to just be letting everyone see the goods, but I still like to keep up my reputation and have a strong social presence.</td>
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<th>Ethos:</th>
<th>Where on campus do you like to spend most of your time?</th>
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<td>Squirrel:</td>
<td>If I told you that, I wouldn’t be so elusive, huh? Also, I know where all the best nuts are. It’s top-secret.</td>
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<th>Ethos:</th>
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<td>Squirrel:</td>
<td>I love going out to Mug night! Makes Friday a bit harder but I just downloaded the app Yik-Yak, so I usually climb up into a tree and sit there scrolling through it for hours. Seems like a lot of students enjoy talking about me.</td>
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<td>Have a good semester and I hope to see you around. Good luck spotting me in the winter!</td>
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Next time you see the little guy on campus make sure to say hi and maybe he’ll bring you some luck on your next exam—or score you a drink at Mug Night. ☕️