

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION  
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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**Notes:** "The Parasol Tail and Thermoregulatory Behavior of the Cape Ground Squirrel *Xerus inauris*" was in a scientific journal called *Physiological Zoology* in 1984. You can find a copy online at <http://compphys.bio.uci.edu/bennett/pubs/55.pdf>. Included are several photographs of squirrels with their parasol-tails up. "Thermoregulatory" comes from "thermoregulation": the ability of an organism, such as a squirrel, to keep its body temperature within a certain OK range. Richard W. Thorington Jr. and Katie E. Ferrell are the authors of *Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

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**Q. Dear Twig: I like squirrels.**

A. You mentioned that.

**Q. And their tails.**

A. Me too.

**Q. And how they use them as umbrellas.**

A. And **parasols** — a parasol being a kind of umbrella. It's light and sometimes frilly. You use it to keep the sun off you.

**Q. Explain.**

A. Four scientists studied the Cape ground squirrel in the Kalahari desert in Africa. They found that the squirrel keeps from getting too hot **"by using its bushy tail as a portable parasol."**

**Q. Cool.**

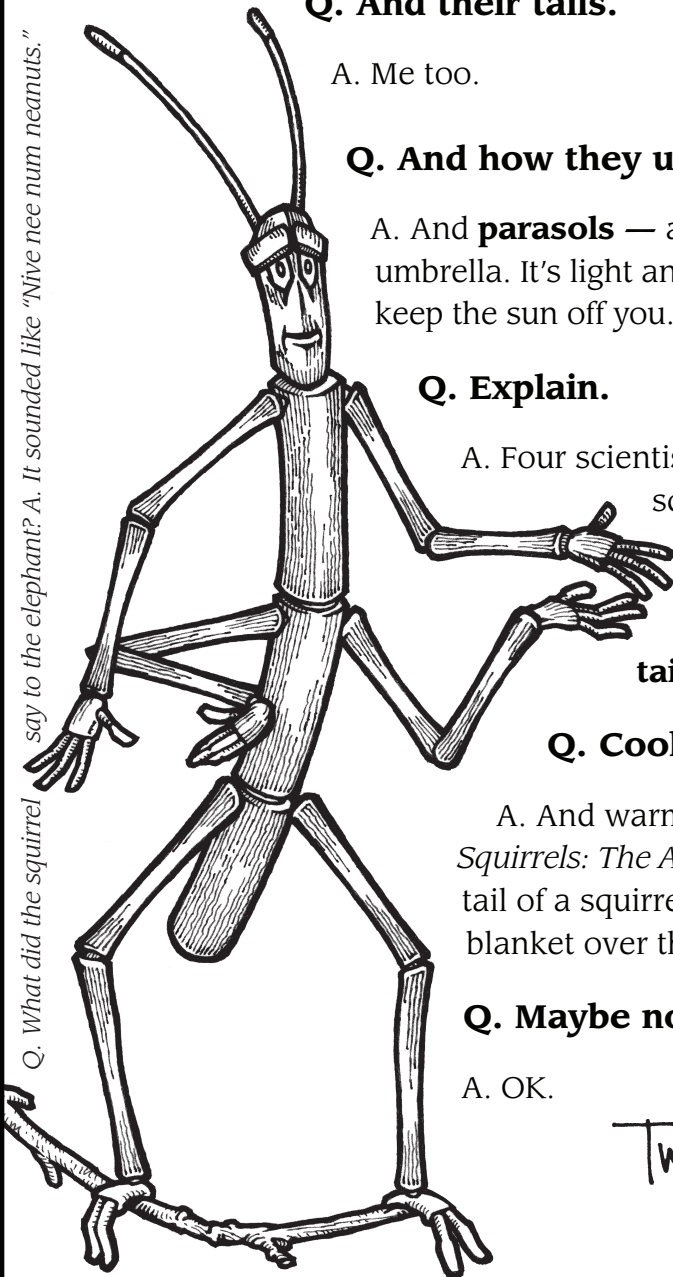
A. And warm in winter. A book called *Squirrels: The Animal Answer Guide* says the tail of a squirrel can help "by serving as a blanket over the squirrel in cold weather."

**Q. Maybe no more about squirrels.**

A. OK.

Twig

Q. What did the squirrel say to the elephant? A. It sounded like "Nive nee num neanuts."



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