

The squirrels by my house are active these autumn days. Acorns and pine nuts are plentiful, but the little varmints have figured out how to steal sunflower seeds from the bird feeder. I don't have dogs in the yard to chase squirrels away as my son does. My cat doesn't help and only chases birds, voles, lizards and snakes. However, I won't let the squirrels "outfox" me. One bird feeder is now squirrel-proof, hung on a cable between trees. The other hangs way below a branch, but a squirrel can still drop down and I've watched one leap out of the feeder back onto the tree. I sawed off a nearby access branch and tried an aluminum tray umbrella, but it's not adequate prevention yet. Hmm...I may have to buy something better.

And now for the Tune of the Week, Chase the Squirrel. I'm not the only one who has speculated that two versions – one apparently from an Indiana source and the other from a Pennsylvania source – are related, yet also distinct from one another. They may be on different branches of the same family tree. At the very least, you can play them as a medley and they go together well.

Following is their respective backgrounds. Notated in the [Traditional Tune Archive](#), listed as version 4 for Chase the Squirrel (which I think of as the "Indiana" Chase the Squirrel) it is elsewhere described by Lynn "Chirps" Smith: *"Dr. Paul Tyler came across this tune on field recordings of Frank Wisheart of Indiana. This is where the Volo Bogtrotters learned the tune. Franklin Pierce Wisheart was born in Tipton Co, IN on 25 June 1860. He lived in Frankfort, Clinton Co, Noblesville, Hamilton Co & Lebanon, Boone Co, IN during his life. He farmed and worked as a janitor and was well-known for his fiddling. He played with his daughter, Edith, and Noah O. Brandenburg, both of whom played piano. Mr. Brandenburg was also a fiddler. He played in numerous fiddling shows, contests, etc. He won 2nd place in the IN State Fiddle Contest. He died in Lebanon on 10 April 1949."*

Regarding the other version of Chase the Squirrel, the [Traditional Tune Archive](#) includes a speculation that the tune recorded in Pennsylvania as played by V. Strosnider in the 1930's and included in Samuel Bayard's book [Dance to the Fiddle and March to the Fife](#) came from two other tunes: *"The Maid That Dare Not Tell. American, Reel. USA, southwestern Pa. D Major. Standard tuning (fiddle). ABA. The title is a floating one, and this tune Bayard (1981) identifies as a composite made from combining or fusing strains from other tunes. The 'A' part is very reminiscent of 'Shepherd's Hey.' A tune with some similarities, esp. in the 'A' part, is 'The Eighth of January' in Ford (1944)."* Bayard could be correct and I was able to hear The Maid that Dare Not Tell from Francis O'Neill's book of Irish music (#1405), but I sense

differences and conclude how difficult it is to actually trace traditional tunes to older sources.

Two of my favorite modern-day sources are Bigfoot, with Rhys Jones of Illinois fiddling, to represent the "Indiana" Chase the Squirrel and Mark Tamsula and Richard Withers playing "Pennsylvania" Chase the Squirrel from the Samuel Bayard collection. The melodies and chord changes aren't all identical, but with the same title and certain similarities, I'll offer them both this week and let you decide if they go together and which you like better, or if you -- like me -- can't decide and wish to keep them as a medley.

[Bigfoot's Illinois Chase the Squirrel \(with Bigfoot's Rhys Jones and John Herrmann\)](#)

[Mark Tamsula and Richard Withers's Pennsylvania Chase the Squirrel](#) (note the nice low note banjo slide)

[Paul Kirk, Stephen Rapp and friends](#) Paul has a wonderful write-up about source fiddler Frank Wisheart below the video.