Squirrel

Design Document

Team 3

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Executive Summary

Development Standards & Practices Used

- Using a hybrid agile process
  - Weekly “stand-up” meetings
  - Dynamic sprints
  - Code reviews before merging
  - Use git for version control

Summary of Requirements

- The product must scare away squirrels
- The product must not damage the house or injure the clients pet
- The product must be able to withstand bad weather conditions
- There should be some way to monitor the status of the device
- The device must be able to attach to the deck without damaging it
- The device should be relatively low in cost

Applicable Course from Iowa State University Curriculum

- Cpre 185
- Cpre 288
- Cpre 458
- Cpre 575
- EE 333
- SE 185
- LD ST 322
- Com S 227
- Com S 228
- Com S 309

New Skills/Knowledge acquired that was not taught in courses

- Developing and designing a mechanical system to move the device
- Building and testing prototypes
- Evaluation and selection of parts needed to build the device
- Working on teams with people that specialize in an area different from our own.
- Identifying and providing for the needs of a client
- Developing a test plan

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1 Introduction

1.1 Acknowledgement

Thanks to Bob Thompson for providing the project idea, and Gary Tuttle for technical knowledge and advice.

1.2 Problem and Project Statement

Bob Thompson has squirrels that come and chew on his deck. Bob needs to get rid of the squirrels because the damage that they are doing to the deck and house is expensive to repair. The squirrels are smart enough to ignore loud noises and Bob's dog barking at them. Therefore, we need to find some way to autonomously scare the squirrels off of Bob's deck in a nondestructive way. The device that we create must be able to withstand the outdoors and potentially poor weather conditions. It must also only target squirrels, Bob has a pet dog and it is important that the launcher does not shoot at him.

To solve Bob's problem we propose using a small turret system that targets the squirrels and shoots them with ping pong balls. The ping pong balls will be attached to a fishing line so that we can reel them back in once they have been launched. We plan to use a sensor network and a computer vision system to identify and then target the squirrels with the launcher.

1.3 Operational Environment

One of our biggest challenges for this project is making the turret able to withstand the weather. Since it will be exposed to the elements on Bob's deck we need to design it in a way that if there is a storm or bad weather the turret will not be damaged. We will also need some form of monitoring system so that if our design fails to withstand some weather we can update Bob that part of the turret has malfunctioned.

1.4 Requirements

- The product must launch a projectile towards squirrels to scare them off the deck. The targeting system has to identify squirrels specifically so that it won't shoot at people or other animals.

- This projectile must not damage the deck, or injure the clients pet. There are windows along the house that can be easily broken and there will be traffic on the deck from other animals and people. In case the projectile misses the squirrel, there must be zero risk that the projectile will cause harm to the property or any other animal.
- The product must be able to withstand bad weather conditions. Wind should not prevent the product from rotating as normal and rain must not prevent the targeting system from identifying squirrels.
- There should be some way to monitor the status of the device. Should a device stop working for some reason, it must have a way to alert the client. Device malfunctions could include: projectile is damaged or not reloading, a camera or sensor is broken, a camera or sensor is covered by something, or the device cannot turn/rotate.
- The device must be able to attach to the deck without damaging it. The wood on the deck should not be screwed or nailed into, and the device should detach without peeling off the paint or finish.
- The device should be relatively low in cost. All three devices should be produced within the base budget provided for the class.

1.5 Intended Users and Uses

While our product is designed for Bob's situation it could potentially be used in any situation where the user wants to scare away squirrels. The only adjustments that would need to be made for each user would be the attachment the secures the launcher so that it does not move or fall over.

1.6 Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions:

- Three identical machines, each with a shooting range of around 25', will be sufficient to cover the area of the deck.
- Firing a ping pong ball toward the squirrel will be enough to deter it from damaging the deck.
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Limitations:

- Machine must have a reasonable cost.
- Has to operate for long periods of time without maintenance.
- Must stay operable in strong winds and rainy conditions.

1.7 Expected End Product and Deliverables

The goal of our project is to produce a functional squirrel deterrent turret by December of 2020. Given the success of the first unit, as well as time and budget constraints; we may decide to build up to 2 more units to improve coverage of the property. The sentry device can be broken down into the following 5 subsystems: power, vision, targeting, launching, and UI.

The power system is responsible for stepping down AC power from an outlet to DC voltages that will be used to power the raspberry pi, servos, sensors, and launcher.

The circuit in Figure 4 is our initial idea for ADC power conversion.The voltage rectifier turns the AC to a rectified wave which then is smoothed out by capacitors and a switch-mode power supply controller. This possibly will need an LC filter, but the voltage regulator would finally step the power to the load to the most appropriate voltage the load needs. We will have an approximation once we start ordering servos, launcher electronics, computer hardware, and any other variables.

The vision system is responsible for controlling the sensors and identifying the squirrels. The photo database and networking aspects used in the machine vision process are also included in this section.

The targeting system is responsible for rotating the center pipe, which is used to sweep the area with the camera and line up the shot for the launching system.

The launching system is responsible for firing and recoiling the projectile. The projectile will be launched with a spring, slingshot, or a flywheel design. The projectile will be recoiled with a servo that winds back a fishing line attached to the ball, to pull it back to its starting position.

The UI is an additional proposed idea that would display system status over an LCD screen. The LCD could be used to display error information useful for debugging or repairs, as well as information on the number of squirrels tracked over a given time.

2. Specifications and Analysis

2.1 Proposed Approach

Our proposed approach is to create 3 identical machines with AI capabilities to identify squirrels. Upon identification, it will shoot a ping pong ball at it to scare it away. The ping pong ball will then be reeled back using a string that will be attached. The machines will communicate with a UI and report any errors to the machines.

So far, we have brainstormed ideas of how we would like the machines to look and function (see section 2.4). We have also started designing circuits and making a list of hardware and software requirements (e.i. See section 1.5 and 1.7).

2.2 Design Analysis

So far, we've designed an initial circuit schematic for power, basic mechanical architecture, and have started making decisions on what the hard requirements are in terms of the possible environmental damages that the system would most likely have to endure.

We have yet to begin implementation of our design. As we progress through this semester and next we will update this section with what we learn about the effectiveness of our design.

Strengths of our current plan include:

- Minimal power usage due to cameras only being turned on if the always-on motion sensors detect movement.
- User-friendly UI to report errors and bugs
- Camera protection and self-cleaning
- Batteries not constantly needing replacement
- Not needing to move negates navigational issues.
- Retractable ping pong ball that doesn't require extensive retrieval measures

Weaknesses of our current plan include:

- Long-term durability against environmental damages
- Power will require an ugly electric cable connecting to the house's power outlet
- Wifi connection required

2.3 Development Process

We will be using an Agile development process with weekly stand-ups and three week long sprints. We have chosen an Agile process because it's flexible and gives us room to learn with each iteration and set appropriate goals/deliverables. Since we aren't very familiar with working on a project like this and working with people from different areas of study, an agile process will let us focus on small deliverables and make sure everyone has something to work on. Weekly stand ups should be sufficient to keep everyone updated; more frequent stand ups would be hard to coordinate between all six group members, but may be necessary the week of an important deadline. We also decided on three week sprints because it forces us to break the project down into smaller, manageable pieces while still giving us enough time to work on important functionality.

We have also decided against a Test Driven Development process due to the fact that a lot of the code we'll be working on is unfamiliar to us and involves a lot of configuration. This means we'll be reading through documentation and then doing a lot of experimenting. Once we have communication set up we'll add unit and integration tests.

2.4 Conceptual Sketch

The system below is a sentry device designed to identify and agitate squirrels. The primary component box holds a sensory array, power convertor, a gimbal, the base of the geared center pipe, and a raspberry pi. The power convertor is used to step the AC voltage from a wall outlet down to the DC voltages needed to power the electrical components within the box. The sensor array is used to detect motion within the range of the sentry. The raspberry pi is used to control all of the other devices in the system.

At the top of the geared center pipe, lies another box which holds the targeting camera as well as the launching and retrieving mechanisms. The center pipe acts as an insulated path for wires between the boxes, as well as rotational axis for the launcher box. The boxes are used to keep components safe from weather and FOD. When movement is detected by the sensory array, the raspberry pi will activate the camera and gimbal to sweep the area for squirrels using machine vision. The camera is attached to the launcher so that it will line up with the projectile trajectory. Once fired, a servo is used to reel back the projectile and place it into the launch position.

The base of the primary box rests on a clamp. The Clamp is used to fix the sentry unit to the deck railing. Velcro straps will also be wrapped through braces on the primary box and the clamp to keep the system secure.

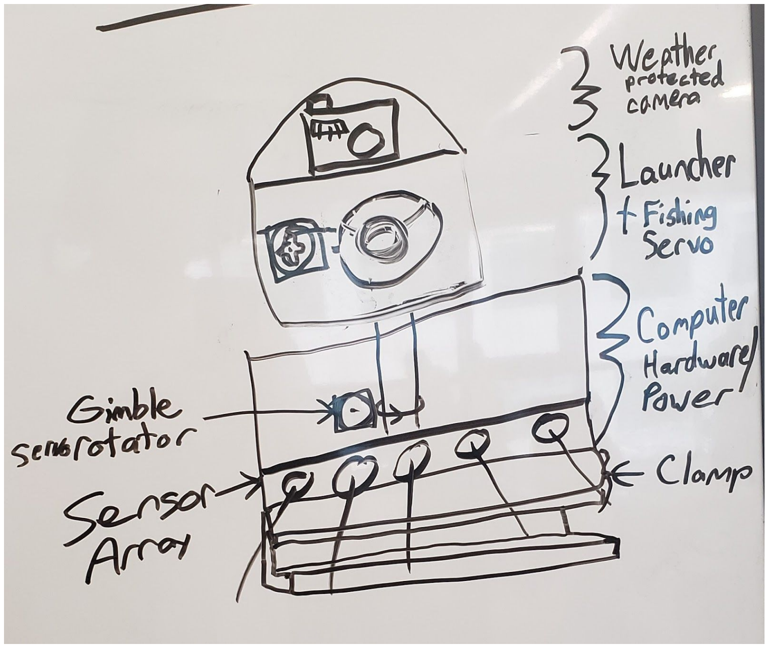

Figure 1: Squirrel Sentry - Front View

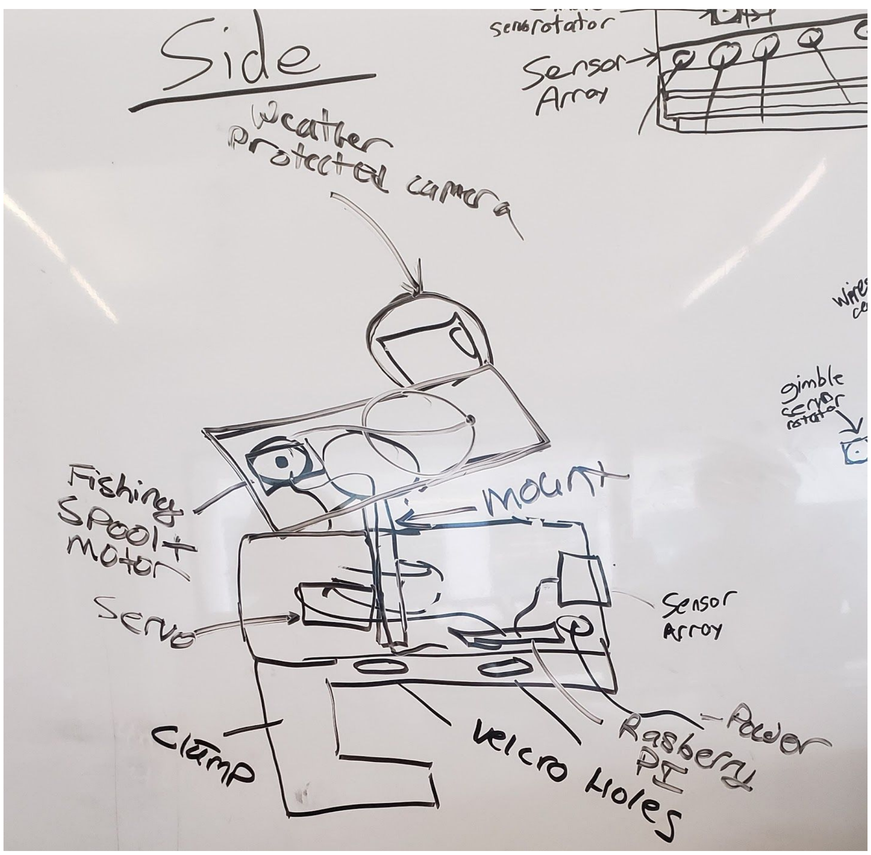

Figure 2: Squirrel Sentry - Side View

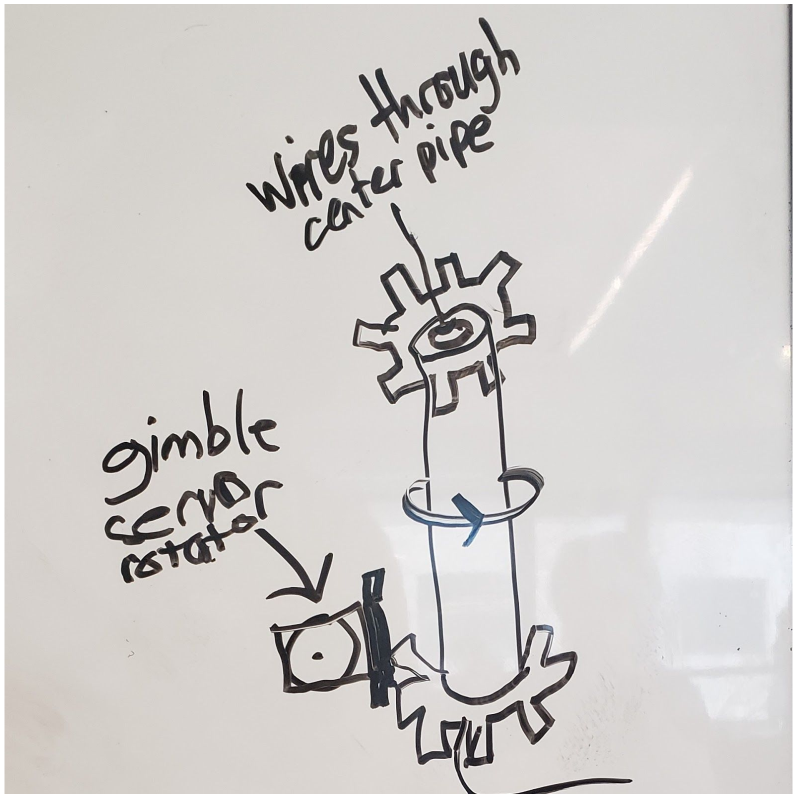

Figure 3: Rotating hollow shaft

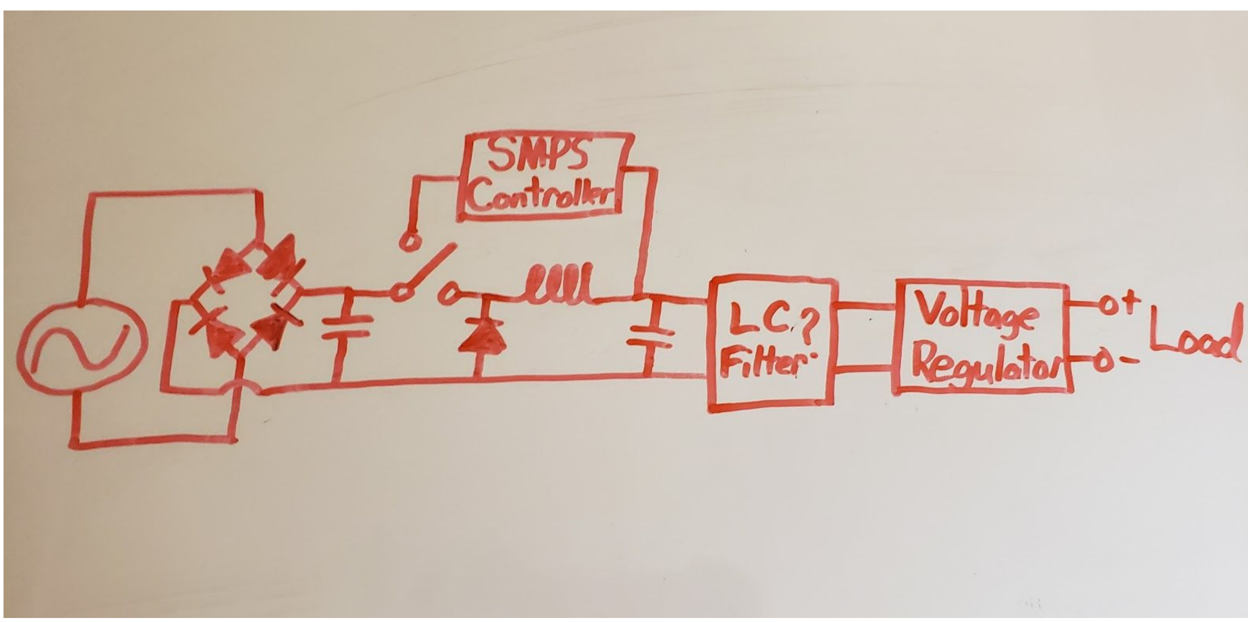

Figure 4: Initial ADC power converter circuit

3. Statement of Work

3.1 Previous Work And Literature

We intend to model the computer vision piece of our project after a similar project that was done by Peter Quinn [1]. Peter uses a product called Jevois, a camera system with a small microprocessor attached that is optimized to use deep neural networks (DNN) for object localization and classification. Peter takes the on board YOLO (you only look once) classifier and uses transfer learning to fine tune it to identify the squirrels in his garden. Transfer learning is a technique where you take a previously trained DNN and continue its training using a small data set specific to your use case. Using transfer learning Peter was able to tune the network with only a few images of squirrels in his yard and get satisfactory detection.

Using Peter's method is advantageous to us. It allows us to offload the processing of the network to the Jervois camera, and we will not need to worry about the processing requirements for the main arduino processor that we intend to use. It also gives us a path to develop the vision network without needing to design it ourselves. While this project gives us a jump start on the vision system for our project it is not the perfect solution. We still need to learn how to use the Jervois camera to deploy our YOLO network after we fine tune it and since it is not a well known and popular system like Arduino it will be difficult to find online help. Another issue is that we will need to set up a system to collect images to train our network. In order to use transfer learning we will need to capture images of the squirrels on Bob's deck. This means that we will need to set up a system specifically for collecting data.

3.2 Technology Considerations

For the main controller we plan to use a raspberry pi, or an arduino microcontroller. These controllers are very popular. This means that if we run into issues when building the sensor network and connecting the vision system there will be a lot of online resources to assist us in solving the issue.

Our computer vision system will consist of the Jevios camera that is both a camera and a microprocessor in one. This is an advantageous system to use because we will not need to consider the processing capabilities of the rest of the system, and it allows us to isolate the most complex part of our design, the YOLO squirrel detector.

Our launcher will be a prefabricated ping pong ball launcher. Since we are not mechanical engineers the goal is to find some pre built systems for all of the mechanical parts of the device and modify them to connect together. We plan to use a prefabricated solution for the mechanical piece of the targeting system as well. We need to research, evaluate, and choose what prefabricated solution we want to use in the coming months.

3.3 Task Decomposition

Targeting System

1. Find or build a gearing system for turning the main axle connected to the launcher.
2. Find or build a motor system to control and turn gears.
3. Define feedback loop and develop program for turning system to specific location.

Vision System

1. Find sensors for motion detection.
2. Develop loop to turn on camera when motion is detected.
3. Collect images of squirrels on Bob's deck.
4. Fine tune YOLO network.
5. Load custom network onto Jevios camera.
6. Feed location of detected squirrels from camera to main controller.
7. Develop controls for a targeting and launching system to fire at squirrels.

Launching System

1. Find or build a ping pong ball launcher. Modify it to connect to the targeting system.
2. Find a fishing line and spool to reel in the ping pong ball after it has been launched.
3. Find and build a motor system to reel in the ping pong ball.
4. Define and program control loop for launching and reeling in the ping pong ball.

Power System

1. Finding appropriate ADC Converter for walled power connection
2. Initial draft of circuit design for delivering safe power load

UI (extra)

1. Complete the previous four tasks with priority over this task.
2. Develop a status system that can be used over the internet for debugging purposes as well as real time status of the device when it is running.

3. Develop an LCD display to show general status information about the device.

3.4 Possible Risks And Risk Management

Our main risk is the mechanical system used to control movement and firing of the ping pong balls. As EE/CprE/SE students we have not had any training on developing or building these systems.

Or second risk is the training and deployment of the YOLO network. From past experience we know that this is very complex and will take a long time to do.

3.5 Project Proposed Milestones and Evaluation Criteria

TBD after we determine project timeline

3.6 Project Tracking Procedures

We will track our progress using the issues page on gitlab

3.7 Expected Results and Validation

Targeting System - System will turn the launcher left and right to a specified location of the programmer.

Launching System - System will launch and reel in ping pong ball when the command is given by the programmer

Vision System - System is able to detect motion. This detection will trigger the main camera to turn on. The main camera will send object detection information back to the main controller.

Main Control - The main control system will take in the information from the sensors and send it to the UI. When the main camera sends a detection signal the main control will use the targeting and launching systems to fire in the general location of the detected object.

Power System - All systems will be left undamage through regular use.

4. Project Timeline, Estimated Resources, and Challenges

4.1 Project Timeline

We will complete the timeline in the coming weeks in preparation for the 2nd due date of the design document.

4.2 Feasibility Assessment

For our project we believe that it is feasible to complete the targeting and launching systems. We also anticipate that the motion detection piece of the computer vision system will be completed. We anticipate a lot of difficulty in the Squirrel detection piece of the computer vision system as the technology that we are using is only four years old. This means that there are very few out of the box solutions for this piece of the system and it will take a lot of work.

4.3 Personnel Effort Requirements

We plan to complete this portion along using our project timeline that will be prepared for the next submission of the design document

4.4 Other Resource Requirements

We have just begun looking into prefabricated solutions for the launching, targeting, and power systems. We will need sensors for motion detection. We will use the Jevios camera and an arduino or raspberry pi for the main control system.

4.5 Financial Requirements

Have not yet discussed this. The product should be relatively inexpensive since we will need to buy a lot of parts to build the turret.

5. Testing and Implementation

5.1 Interface Specifications

Since we are still in the initial design phase we have not yet discussed the testing plan. We plan to go over this later in the semester.

5.2 Hardware and software

5.3 Functional Testing

5.4 Non-Functional Testing

5.5 Process

5.6 Results

6. Closing Material

6.1 Conclusion

We have completed our initial design. We plan to meet with our advisor to get feedback on it and then plan to split up and take on our four main issues. The targeting system, the launching system, the vision system, and the power system. We also intend to meet in the next few weeks to develop our project timeline, and our testing plan.

6.2 References

[1] P. Quinn, *Squirrel Deterrent*, Hackaday.io, April 28, 2018. Accessed on: February 23, 2020, [Online]. Available: https://hackaday.io/project/156926-squirrel-deterrent/details

6.3 Appendices