

Squirreling Away Food



Submitted By:

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Overview

Squirrels can be found in nearly every habitat on Earth. They are omnivores and eat almost any type of food. During this activity, students will supply a variety of foods for squirrels. They will predict which food(s) the squirrels will prefer then observe and check their hypothesis. Bonus: Present your information on your classes poster at The Mountain Science Expo!

Grade Levels

K-2

Curriculum Correlation

K: K.P.1.1, K.P.1.2 First: 1.L.1.1, 1.L.2.2 Second: 2.L.2.1, 2.L.2.2

Duration

45-60 minutes

Location

Indoors and Outdoors

Materials

- Binoculars
- 3 – 5 different types of food (these may include unshelled peanuts, birdseed, dried corn, bread scraps, apple pieces, etc.)
- Container for each type of food (these should be identical)
- Recording sheet
- Clipboards

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Educators Information

Squirrels are mammals who belong to the order Rodentia (rodents). There are over 200 species of squirrels in the world. Some common types are red and gray tree squirrels, ground squirrels and flying squirrels. Because they are so common and live near humans, squirrels are easily observed and often entertaining to watch in their persistence to obtain food. Among their favorite foods are nuts, fruit and seeds. However, they also eat insects, plants and food scraps left by humans.



Procedure

As I sit here typing this lesson, I am observing six squirrels in my backyard trying to figure out a way to get to the bird feeder I've just refilled. Though it took a little time, they figured out a way to "fly" off the rooftop and land on the feeder. This behavior is a bit frustrating, but also entertaining and amazing! Ask your students to share stories they have experiencing zany squirrel behavior.

ENGAGEMENT

- Who has ever observed squirrels trying to obtain food?
- Where was the squirrel(s) and what did you notice?
- What types of squirrels have you observed?
- Describe how the squirrel(s) moved about to get to the food.

EXPLORATION

- Tell students they will be conducting an experiment to determine which types of food squirrels prefer.
- Students will brainstorm a list of 3-5 foods they think squirrels will eat.
- Each student should record their prediction/hypothesis about which food(s) the squirrels will prefer and why.

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- Food should be placed in a similar manner so squirrels don't choose the food based on the presentation. It is important that food be placed in identical containers, such as plastic lids or on wire mesh screens. Consistent amounts of each food type should also be made available.
- Students will make frequent observations and record their findings to determine which food(s) squirrels are consuming more rapidly.

EXPLANATION

- Collaborate with classmates to determine why you think squirrels chose one or more foods over another.
- How can/do humans impact these choices?

ELABORATION

- An understanding that a habitat provides all the needs for an animal to survive is important. Those needs are: food, shelter, water, air, and space.
- Students will gain a better understanding of how squirrels have adapted to survive in a wide variety of habitats.

EVALUATION

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of lesson objectives through discourse about their findings.
- Throughout the study, students will talk amongst their peers about why squirrels behave the way they do and why they prefer certain foods.

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Extensions

Compile the information that your students collected onto a poster to be presented at The Mountain Science Expo!



Resources

- <https://www.whatdosquirrelseat.org/>
- <http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2014/09/26/squirrels-animals-fall-winter-science-united-states-surprising-facts/>
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/group/squirrels/>