

**URBANA PARK DISTRICT  
ANITA PURVES NATURE CENTER**

**SCHOOL TOUR: FALL FROLICKERS**

**TEACHER’S GUIDE**

Grade: **Kindergarten**

Program Length: **1.5 Hours**

**Focus Concept:** *Squirrels have special adaptations allowing them to live in the forest, climbing among the tree branches.*

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will

- Learn the characteristics and behaviors of a common neighborhood animal, the squirrel.
- Relate observed seasonal changes to the survival needs of squirrels.
- Learn that animals and plants are dependent on one another.

**INTRODUCTION**

Squirrels are a common city and forest animal, easy to observe, and very appealing. On their hike, your students will observe the adaptations and seasonal behavior of squirrels in Busey Woods, go on a nut hunt, and identify some adaptations of squirrels.

Common Core Standards Correlated

Area	Strand	Standard	Standard Numbers
English Language Arts	Speaking/Listening	Comprehension & Collaboration	K.SL.1, 3,6
English Language Arts	Language	Conventions of Standard English	K.L.1
Mathematics			K.MD K.GA

Next Generation Science Standards Correlated

Physical Science	Life Science	Earth & Space Science
	K-LS1-1	K-ESS2-2, K-ESS2-2, K-ESS3-1

Illinois Learning Standards Correlated

Learning Area	Goal	Standard	Benchmark
Science	11	A	Ka
	12	A	Ka
		B	K

The activities listed below are intended to provide ideas to be used before or after the field trip. Feel free to adapt the activities to match the ability level of your students.

**SUPPLEMENTAL ACTIVITIES**

**Squirrel Spotters:** Before the class comes to the Nature Center, make binoculars out of toilet paper tubes, taped together and colored. These can be used during the hike as "squirrel spotters."

Another option is to make binoculars out of small white plastic drink bottles. Directions can be found on the internet.

**Animal Observation:** During the hike, students will be observing squirrels and what they are doing. Have students practice their observations skills by watching what an animal is doing. This could be a bird through the window, an insect on a flower, or an animal seen on a neighborhood walk. What is the animal doing? How many different things does it do while being observed? For example, does the bird fly, eat from a feeder, interact with another bird, etc.

**Tally Marks:** Students will be observing squirrel behavior during the hike. The leader will be making a record using tally marks. It may be helpful to review tally marks with the students before the hike.

**Squirrel Behavior:** Use the Squirrel Behavior Tally Sheet to review the squirrel activities observed during the hike. Use the information to create simple graphs or charts of squirrel behavior. The tally sheet is a simplified version of an ethogram, a tool used by scientists observing animal behavior. An ethogram is a list of possible behaviors an animal might exhibit, and can be simple, as this one is, or more detailed. A scientist would use the same ethogram each time he/she is observing an animal so methodology is consistent and results can be compared. If desired, copy or recreate the ethogram and use it on a neighborhood walk, then compare the behavior of squirrels in the neighborhood with those in Busey Woods.

**Nut Mystery:** Ask the students to bring acorns or other nuts from home. Sort them into groups of similar kinds. Place them outdoors on a stump, rock or feeder. What happens to them? Which nuts are eaten first? Are squirrels the only animals who might eat them?

**Make a squirrel feeder:** Pound a long nail all the way through a 1 x 4 x 12 board. Fasten the board to a post or tree near the classroom window. Stick an ear of corn on the nail and watch the squirrels enjoy! An easier way to feed squirrels is to hang a sunflower head from a branch. Squirrels love sunflower seeds. Watch to see which birds love them too.

**Rodents in the Classroom:** Do you have a classroom pet? Gerbils are gentle rodents and are active during the day (unlike hamsters). Have the students observe the gerbil for a few days and compare its behavior to that of a squirrel. Do they eat the same things? Do they look alike? Would a squirrel make a good pet?

**Hallway Habitat:** Create a hallway or classroom mural of the forest, including trees, fallen leaves, dead logs, etc. Have the students draw squirrels and other woodland animals and place them in their proper locations on the mural.

**What's Wild?:** (*Project Wild* activity) Ask students to bring pictures to class of as many different kinds of animals as they can find in magazines, newspapers, or online. Once they have a collection, talk with them about wild animals and domesticated animals (pets, farm animals, etc.). Have the students work in groups and sort the pictures into categories, wild or domestic. Make two classroom collages, one of wildlife, and one of domestic animals. Posters can be divided into habitats - sky, water, forest, desert, mountains. Students can glue animals where they belong on the poster.

**Everybody Needs A Home:** (*Project Wild* activity) Ask each student to draw a picture of where s/he lives, including the things they need to live where they do - a place to cook and store food, a place to sleep, a neighborhood. Ask the student to point out the things they need to live that they included in their drawings. Discuss with the students the things that are needed in a home or habitat (food, water, shelter, space). Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine: a bird's home, a squirrel's home, or another

animal of their choice. Then have them choose an animal and draw its home. Make a "gallery of homes" out of the drawings. Summarize by emphasizing that although the homes are very different, all animals and people have similar needs.

**Squirrel Puppets:** Make squirrel puppets using paper lunch bags, brown construction paper, walnuts (or other nuts), scissors, glue and markers. Following the illustration, make templates for the head, tail and arms. Have the students trace the templates on brown paper and cut out. Glue the pieces to the paper bag. When dry, the students can draw in eyes and facial features. Help the students to shell the walnuts. Save the shells and eat the insides. (If using acorns, do not eat.) Glue the shell between the squirrel's paws.

**VOCABULARY:** These words will be used by the educators during the program.

Adaptation	Forest	Seasons
Balance	Leaves	Seeds
Behavior	Nest	Squirrel
Bushy	Nuts	Teeth
Characteristics	Paws	Tai
Claws	Plants	

## REFERENCES

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