

Hello Trees Resource Sheet



KS1 Y1 Science Diary Item

Squirrels and Conkers



You don't have to use every Science Diary suggestion!

You don't have to do everything on this sheet! Bits in **bold** recommended.

OBJECTIVE: learn about squirrels' habitat, food, habits and body parts,



WHAT YOU NEED

1. **Internet connection and screen to display a video**
2. **Paper and colouring pens to draw a picture of a squirrel or modelling material to form a squirrel**

We are going to watch a video of a grey squirrel starting to eat a conker and then burying it. We can watch the video again and again to discuss habitat, food, habits and body parts of the squirrel.



✓ **Use secondary sources of information:** watch a 3.25min video (and repeat):

Search for 'Jeremy Inglis photography', 'videos', 'Grey Squirrel Eating a Conker'.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

✓✓✓ **Observation, curiosity and questioning**

✓ **ANIMALS** ✓ **identify and name mammals: grey squirrel** [reinforce name and spelling]

What is the squirrel doing? [carrying a conker, nibbling it, burying it]

How can we tell the squirrel is aware of danger [stays stock still, pulse beats in neck, pants]

Which way does she come down the tree [head first. Most mammals can't do this. It is an advantage because this way the squirrel can see if there is danger ahead]

Is the squirrel stealing or dispersing? [initial nibbling may or may not damage the conker]

How deeply does the squirrel bury the conker? [keeps digging a long time]

Why does the squirrel cover the conker with soil and a leaf? [to hide it]

Will the squirrel be able to find it later? [leaf will have blown away, more leaves fallen ...]

Who is the squirrel hiding it from? [other squirrels, birds, foxes and other animals. Birds have been seen to watch where squirrels bury food then steal it.]

How could squirrels avoid their food being stolen? [dig deep, hide behind vegetation while they dig, cover the surface carefully, pretend to bury food in one place then do so elsewhere, hide the food up a tree (away from foxes). Squirrels do all of these]

Do you think squirrels are clever? [yes, they think of clever ways to protect their food]

Do you think squirrels bury a lot of conkers/acorns/other food? [yes, 1000s]

Most squirrels we see are Grey Squirrels. They are tree squirrels: they live in trees.

✓ plant structures: the squirrel climbs down the **trunk**. The **bark** is grey, hard, crusty, cracked, grooved. The conker is the **fruit** or seed of a **horsechestnut tree**. If the squirrel forgets about the conker it could grow into a horse chestnut tree. We can't see the **leaves** or **branches** of the tree. The squirrel buries the conker above the **roots** of the tree.

In December a squirrel builds a nest called a 'drey' in the fork of a tree. It is spherical, made of sticks, and dry leaves and lined with moss, thistledown, grass and/or feathers. Squirrel babies are called 'kits' or 'kittens'. They are born in February, usually 1-4 in a litter. Kits are born hairless and with their eyes closed. They depend on their mothers for 2 or 3 months. Males, females and babies share the nest keeping warm. When food is plentiful, squirrels may have a second litter in June.

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✓ identify a mammal omnivore

Squirrels are mammals. Kits get milk from their mothers

Squirrels are omnivores [From the video we see that squirrels eat conkers. If we search 'what do squirrels eat', we learn that although they mainly eat fungi, seeds, nuts and fruits, they **do** also eat eggs, small insects, caterpillars. Therefore, squirrels are omnivores]

✓ **name main body parts** (including head, neck, arms, elbows, legs, knees, face, ears, eyes, hair, mouth, teeth) ✓ **compare** to animals that pupils are familiar with – and to humans.

Are squirrels' **eyes** on front or sides of their head? [either side; see danger both sides]

Can we see her **nose**? [only just, not black like a dog. More like a cat]

Do you think the squirrel can smell buried conkers? [yes, but not if soil dry or snow covered]

Do you think our squirrel will sniff out and steal other squirrels' food? [yes]

Are squirrels' **forelegs** and **hindlegs** the same size? [hindlegs bigger; push hard with hind legs to bound far forward. Ability to climb rapidly helps them escape from dogs - and to get to eat their food before birds or other squirrels get it]

What do we call animal's feet and hands? [**paws**]

Does the squirrel have **toes**? How many toes? [4 on front paws, 5 on back paws] [Toes on forepaws flexible to grasp and turn conker]

What are squirrels' **nails** like [long enough to be called **claws**. Good for gripping bark]

Difficult to see from the video: **ankles** can turn through 180° [claws can dig in behind]

Knees [can sit on their bottoms, knees up, hindpaws out for balance]

Ears [not so furry] How do we know he can hear dogs? [jumps right round] Do ears turn as dogs' ears do? [don't see them turn in the video]

Elbows? [yes, hinge so paws can bring food to mouth]

Whiskers? [yes, black. Used for sensing space around the face]

Does the squirrel gnaw the conker with front **teeth** or chew with back teeth? [both, as seen clearly on the video. Squirrels have cheek teeth for grinding, a gap, and then front teeth for gnawing. So that they don't get worn down from gnawing, front teeth keep growing]

Fur: different colours and length on his tail, head, tummy, round his eyes, on his ears



Provide tools for pupils to draw or model a squirrel.

- ✓ names of common deciduous trees: pupils know horsechestnut tree.
- ✓ **school locality**: where in relation to the school's locality have pupils seen squirrels.
- ✓ notice patterns, **compare**: we have compared squirrels to common pets.
- ✓ group and **classify**: we have **classified squirrels as omnivores**



✓ **Develop scientific language:**

A squirrel's nest is called a 'drey'

Omnivore means 'eats plants and meat'

- ✓ Communicate what they find: ✓ To different audiences and ✓ In different ways: **as ever**
- ✓ **PLANTS** ✓ Identify common trees and plants: **conkers are horsechestnut seeds.**
- ✓ **SEASONAL CHANGES** ✓ Store seeds in Autumn to eat in Winter x Day length

PLENARY: # Pupils know that a squirrel is an omnivore mammal
Pupils know squirrels' body parts and their uses for survival