

Squirrels Preparing for Winter
Nature Chat
Family Letter

"Dear Families,

Today for our nature chat we learned about squirrels preparing for winter! I asked the children what season we are in, and they all let me know that it is fall. We determined that winter is the next season and that snow will be falling. A very excited child said, "the snow covers up food!". This is one reason for squirrels to collect food for the winter. We learned the word "hoarding" which refers to the way squirrels collect large amounts of food. I asked the children if they think squirrels are already collecting for the winter. They didn't think so, but they actually are! Another way they prepare for the winter is by fattening up. While collecting for winter they also eat as much as they can. The fat keeps them warm and can be a source of energy while food is scarce. We thought of some other ways that squirrels survive in the winter.

I asked the children if they see squirrels by themselves or in groups. They all answered that they see squirrels by themselves. Although squirrels prefer to be alone, they collect in groups to form huddles over the winter. This is one way they stay warm to survive the cold temperatures. We looked at a photo of three squirrels huddled up together on a branch. One child asked, "What are they doing?!". They found this picture to be very silly. It's rare to see squirrels snuggled up together because they usually do so in their nest. In the fall they build large nests high up in trees. I was asked, "Why do they build the nest high up?". We learned that the higher up they are, the less likely a predator can get them. They make their nests out of twigs, leaves, feathers and more. We looked at a picture of a nest so that we know how to find them.

I asked the children if they remember what hibernation is. A few let me know that it is when animals sleep through the winter! We decided that squirrels don't hibernate because they are active and eating all winter. As an activity, the children pretended to be squirrels, collecting food for winter! They ran around the yard collecting acorns to put in our pretend nest. The children made up their own rendition by squeaking like squirrels! They accepted the challenge with ease, finding many acorns.

Until next time,
Ms. Julie"