



BACKYARD ADVENTURES

LITTLE LAB WEEK 8: SQUIRRELS

EVER WONDER . . . IF SQUIRRELS CAN FLY?

What we learned this week:

- Squirrels eat many things such as nuts, seeds, grains, fruit and mushrooms.
- Squirrels use their fluffy tails for communication and balance and more!
- Flying squirrels “fly” by gliding from trees.

Curiosity Circle

This past week the Captain was out hiking in the woods and noticed some little animals with big bushy tails running up and down the trees. He was wondering what these animals are called, what they eat, and why they have those big bushy tails. He also thought he saw one fly from one tree to another, and wants to know if this is possible! We figured out that the Captain must have seen squirrels on his hike, and explored the answers to these “Ever wonder?” questions: **Ever wonder how many different types of squirrels there are?** There are three main types of squirrels: ground squirrels, flying squirrels and tree squirrels. Squirrels come in lots of different colors, including grey, red and black. Squirrels can be found in most parts of the world. The smallest squirrel (the African Pygmy squirrel) lives in Africa – it is only 2.5 inches long. The largest squirrel (the Indian Giant squirrel) lives in southeast Asia – it can grow to be 3 feet long! **Ever wonder what kinds of squirrels live in Virginia?** Virginia has several kinds of squirrels, but the most common is the Eastern Grey Squirrel. Eastern greys live in the trees – either in tree holes or in nests in the branches that they build from leaves (almost like a bird!). They often bury their food in secret stashes in the ground. They have babies twice a year – once in spring and again in late summer. These squirrels are most active in the morning and at night, when they are out and about gathering food. **Ever wonder why squirrels have big, bushy tails?** Squirrels use their tail for many things – to communicate with other squirrels; as a parachute when falling; as an umbrella, a sun shade or blanket; as a rudder when swimming; and as a balance when running through the trees and balancing on branches.



Ever wonder what squirrels eat? Squirrels most commonly eat nuts, seeds, grains and fruits, mushrooms, lichens, leaves, twigs, and bark. But squirrels that live close to people will eat just about anything! **Ever wonder how fast a squirrel can run?** Squirrels can run about 20 mph. **Ever wonder if a flying squirrel can really fly?** A flying squirrel looks like it is flying, but it is actually just jumping and gliding from branch to branch. A flying squirrel has extra skin between its front and back legs that stretches out when it jumps; this allows it to glide through the air! **Ever wonder what other animals squirrels are most closely related to?** Squirrels are mammals. They are most closely related to chipmunks, prairie dogs, woodchucks and mice.

Curiosity Centers

- ◆ **Discovery Activity:** we pretended to be squirrels digging for food and hiding it away.
- ◆ **Manipulative Activity:** we matched the right color tail to each squirrel, then pretended that the squirrels were using their tails as parachutes, balances, umbrellas and more!
- ◆ **Art Activity:** we made our own flying squirrel gliders.

The Roundup & The Big Deal

We learned a fun new song about squirrels, then put on our own squirrel tails and pretended to be squirrels balancing on tree branches!



Hey, Hey Word of the Day: **SCAMPER**

Curiosity @ Home

This week at home, look for squirrels. You'll find them anywhere there are lots of trees. How many can you spot? Can you find any squirrel nests high up in the tree branches? Also look for food that squirrels like to eat – acorns, mushrooms, lichens, etc. Can you spot any squirrels carrying food back to their nests?

Songs & Poems

C-Zone Song (to the tune “I’m a Little Teapot”)

Welcome to the C-Zone
It’s time for us to start
Exploring and learning
We’ve all got a part
(Spoken) So let’s fasten up our lab coats and get curious!

Song to the Captain (to the tune “Wheels on the Bus”)

Squirrels have great big bushy tails
(What?)
Bushy tails (What?)
Bushy tails. (What?)
Squirrels have great big bushy tails
(What?)
That’s how they keep their balance!

(repeat, but end with other uses for their tails, such as “That’s how they talk to each other!” or “That’s what helps them swim!”)

Flying squirrels don’t really fly
(What?)

Don’t really fly (What?)

Don’t really fly. (What?)

Flying squirrels don’t really fly
(What?)

Now who wants to tell the Captain?

I’m a Flying Squirrel (to the tune of I’m a Little Teapot):

I’m a flying squirrel
I like to glide
Through the air
Across the sky
When I make a big jump
Above the ground
My skin stretches out
To slow me down

C-Zone Goodbye Song

Goodbye from the C-Zone
It’s time for us to go
The learning never stops
Now tell me what you know!

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IS FOR
SQUIRRELS
& SCAMPER



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