

Photo Description



A gray squirrel sits in a garden holding an orange piece of food in its paws. The squirrel is surrounded by green plants and flowers. It is eating the food and looking at the camera.

Scientific Phenomena

This image represents the Anchoring Phenomenon of animal feeding behavior and habitat adaptation. The squirrel is demonstrating how animals obtain food resources from their environment to meet their survival needs. Scientifically, this shows how animals have adapted specific behaviors (foraging, food manipulation with paws) and physical features (sharp teeth, dexterous paws) to successfully gather and consume food in their habitat. The squirrel's presence in a garden environment also illustrates how some animals have adapted to live alongside humans in urban and suburban settings.

Core Science Concepts

1. Animal Needs and Survival - All animals need food, water, shelter, and air to survive. This squirrel is meeting its food needs.
2. Animal Behaviors - Animals have specific behaviors that help them find and eat food, such as foraging, storing food, and using body parts as tools.
3. Habitats and Resources - Animals live in places that provide what they need. Gardens can provide food resources for wildlife.
4. Body Parts and Functions - Animals have body parts that help them survive, like the squirrel's paws for holding food and teeth for chewing.

Pedagogical Tip:

Use this image to start a "Notice and Wonder" routine. Have students share what they notice about the squirrel's body parts and behaviors, then wonder about why the squirrel might be doing these things.

UDL Suggestions:

Provide multiple ways for students to share observations: drawing, verbal descriptions, or acting out squirrel behaviors. This supports different learning styles and communication preferences.

Zoom In / Zoom Out

1. Zoom In: At the cellular level, the squirrel's digestive system breaks down the food into nutrients that individual cells can use for energy and growth. Special enzymes in the squirrel's stomach and intestines help break apart the food molecules.

2. Zoom Out: This squirrel is part of a larger ecosystem where it plays important roles as both a consumer of plants/seeds and as prey for larger animals like hawks. Squirrels also help spread seeds throughout the environment, helping plants reproduce and grow in new places.

Discussion Questions

1. What body parts does the squirrel use to get and eat its food? (Bloom's: Analyze | DOK: 2)
2. How do you think this squirrel's habitat provides what it needs to survive? (Bloom's: Evaluate | DOK: 3)
3. What patterns do you notice about how different animals hold and eat their food? (Bloom's: Apply | DOK: 2)
4. Why might squirrels be successful living in places where people live? (Bloom's: Synthesize | DOK: 3)

Potential Student Misconceptions

1. Misconception: Squirrels only eat nuts.

Clarification: Squirrels are omnivores that eat many different foods including fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, and sometimes insects or bird eggs.

2. Misconception: Animals in cities don't have real habitats.

Clarification: Urban animals like squirrels have adapted to city life and use parks, gardens, and trees as their habitat, finding food and shelter there.

3. Misconception: Feeding wild animals is always helpful.

Clarification: While animals need food, feeding wild animals can make them dependent on humans and may not provide the right nutrition they need.

NGSS Connections

- Performance Expectation: 2-LS4-1 - Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats
- Disciplinary Core Ideas: 2-LS4.A - There are many different kinds of living things in any area, and they exist in different places on land and in water
- Crosscutting Concepts: Patterns - Patterns in the natural world can be observed and used as evidence

Science Vocabulary

- * Habitat: The place where an animal lives and finds everything it needs to survive
- * Foraging: The behavior of searching for and gathering food
- * Adaptation: A special feature or behavior that helps an animal survive in its environment
- * Omnivore: An animal that eats both plants and other animals
- * Resources: Things in the environment that animals need to live, like food and water

External Resources

Children's Books:

- Nuts to You! by Lois Ehlert
- Squirrels Leap, Squirrels Sleep by April Pulley Sayre
- Those Darn Squirrels! by Adam Rubin

YouTube Videos:

- "Animal Habitats for Kids" - Educational video showing different animals in their habitats with clear narration suitable for primary grades (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZV8UdyJOE4>)
- "How Do Animals Get Their Food?" - Simple explanation of animal feeding behaviors and adaptations for elementary students (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8nGkw8Q7gk>)