



Forest Friends Theme

Here's a fun theme to do when the animals are busy outside preparing for the coming winter or any time the children seem especially interested in these furry friends.

Language & Literacy

Books

Fury Wild Animals and Friends Landoll Publishing

Chipmunk At Hollow Tree Lane by Victoria Sharron

Squirrels by Brian Wildsmith

Where Are The Night Animals by Mary Ann Frasher

Flying Squirrel at Acorn Place by Barbra Gaines Winkelman

Mouse Count by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh

Songs, Poems, & Finger-plays

The Squirrel

These are the brown leaves fluttering down,
And this is the tall tree bare and brown.
This is the squirrel with eyes so bright,
Hunting for nuts with all his might.
This is the hole where day-by-day,
Nut after nut he stores away.
When winter comes with it's cold and storm,
He'll sleep curled up all snug and warm.

Adapted Traditional

Brown Squirrel

Brown squirrel, brown squirrel shake your bushy tail!
Brown squirrel, brown squirrel shake your bushy tail!
Wrinkle up your little nose,
Hold a nut between your toes.
Brown squirrel, brown squirrel shake your bushy tail!

Activities

What do I eat? Hold up a picture of a forest animal and ask what does this animal eat... kids will find most eat berries, nuts, seeds, plants, grasses, and small animals: for example some owls will eat mice and snakes. Some forest

animals come to people's homes and eat people food they find in the garbage and in gardens!

Owl Paper Bag Puppets

Supplies: Brown paper lunch bags, various owl parts cut from construction paper for the children to glue to the bag (yellow triangle beak, small yellow triangles to glue on as feet, brown triangles (or actual feathers, to glue on as feathers on the chest, two brown triangle ears, two big white eyes with black dots in the center for pupils.)

Directions: Have the kids glue parts on the owl, talk about the shape and color of each part.

Mouse Count Props:

Use some easy to find props with the book *Mouse Count* by Ellen Stoll Walsh. You need is a jar (an old plastic peanut butter jar works good) and some rubber mice or stuffed mice. You can usually find these in stores around Halloween time. Use them when you read the story. Let the children practice counting with them when you're finished.

Math & Number Concepts

Have out a variety off nuts, acorns, pinecones, etc. for the kids to count, sort, and create patterns.

Art

Squirrels

Supplies: Toilet paper tubes, picture of a squirrel (with its tail able to be cut off), brown colors or markers, scissors, glue.

Directions: Invite the children to color the picture of the squirrel. Then if they are able have them cut it out (assist those who need help), and let them glue it's body to the front of the toilet tube, and it's tail to the back of the toilet tube.

Mouse Paint

Supplies: Large sheet of white finger paint paper, yellow, red, and blue, finger paint.

Directions: Give the kids one color at a time and have them mix the color to see what color they get just like the mice did in the story Mouse Paint. If you want you could also give them some mice cut from white construction paper to glue on when they are done painting.

Forest Friends Feeders

Supplies: Chenille sticks, Fruit Loops and Cheerios.

Directions: Have the kids string Fruit Loops and Cheerios onto the chenille sticks, tie ends together to make a treat wreath! Hang it in a tree outside for birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and other wildlife to eat!

Chipmunk Nut and Seed Pictures

Supplies: a chipmunk coloring book picture, a variety of seeds and nuts, brown crayons, glue.

Directions: Let the kids color the chipmunk picture and then glue seeds and nuts on the picture to give it more texture and add dimension. They could make it look like the chipmunk was collecting the food or actually use the seeds and nuts to fill in the body.

Dramatic Play

Set up a Camp Site! - A small pop-up tent is great for creating a fun "camping" dramatic play adventure where kids are sure to come face to face with some plush wildlife! Be sure to include a sleeping bag, binoculars, and maybe even a fake campfire.

Music & Movement

Chipmunk Nut Search: Hide a bunch of peanuts in the room or outside and have the kids pretend to be chipmunks searching for food! Have them bring the nuts to you for storage! (Use care around very young children, peanuts are a choke hazard, also check for peanut allergies! Use fake peanuts instead, cut from construction paper, felt, or foam.) After all the nuts are found celebrate because the chipmunks will have plenty of food for the winter! Hide them again and play a few more times!

Owl and Snake, Hide and Seek: Turn off the light and have the person who is it pretend to be an owl hunting for snakes to eat... When the owl says "Who can I eat?" the children have to try to crawl on their bellies to get away from the hungry owl back to their home!

Science & Sensory

Animal Sort: Find pictures of forest animals and then let the children sort the animal pictures into groups of animals of the same color, size, and kind. Have out a variety of picture of various forest animals for the kids to look at and explore, fill the discovery box with leaves, twigs, moss, etc. and ask the kids to build a squirrel/bird nest.

Blocks & Building

Ask the children to build a house for a mouse. Add forest animal plastic toys to the block area.

Technology

Animal Videos with animals making their sounds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8rEif13zqs>

Cooking & Snacks

Nuts and Berries: Let the kids sort them, talk about how they are different and how they are the same.

Have a Forest Animal Snack! Let the kids make some trail mix, add some nuts, chocolate chips, raisins and popcorn to some of the Fruit Loops and Cheerios left over from the feeders. The kids will think it's great to pretend to be eating like the squirrels, chipmunks, and other forest animals!

Pear Mice: cut a peeled pear in half from the top and set it on a plate, add some cloves for eyes and a little piece of carrot for a nose and a bit of string cheese for a tail. Or what ever you can come up with to make a mouse! A great snack to go along with the Mouse Count & Mouse Paint stories.

Bulletin Boards

"We are WILD about School" – Invite the children to create woodland animals out of construction paper and use them to decorate the bulletin board.

Write your ideas here...