

# YOUNG EXPLORERS

## Acorn Frenzy

It gets a little nutty in autumn, especially when the acorns fall! But have you ever wondered what an acorn is? Or why some years there are lots and other years there aren't?

### Planting the Seeds

Have you ever eaten an orange and found a seed? Well, that seed can grow into a new orange tree. An acorn is a seed too—it can grow into a mighty oak tree. But scientists estimate that only about 1 in 10,000 acorns will ever grow into a tree. The acorns that don't grow become tasty snacks for birds and other wildlife like chipmunks and squirrels.

### It's Raining Acorns

Some years, acorns cover sidewalks and lawns, and then the next year it's hard to find any! Heavy acorn years, called mast years, happen every 2-5 years. Rumor is that mast years predict an extra chilly winter. Before you pull out the extra hat and mittens, know that scientists say that rumor's about as true as a groundhog predicting spring weather.

### A Tasty Snack

Squirrels and chipmunks are among the acorn's biggest fans. Watch as they run across a patch of grass with stuffed cheeks, finding the best place to store acorns for winter. Some squirrels will come back to their buried treasure, but most acorns are forgotten.

Blue Jays give squirrels a run for their money when it comes to burying acorns. A single jay can bury up to 5,000 acorns a year and carry them a mile away from the tree they fell from. Like squirrels, jays won't dig up all of their acorns, but they still have a solid stockpile to snack from.

### Get Nutty

Next spring, keep your eyes on the ground and look for sprouting acorns. The hard shell will split open, revealing a red root trying to anchor itself in the dirt.

In the meantime, act like a squirrel or jay and collect some acorns. Instead of storing them, use a marker to draw faces on them and make acorn friends! Take a picture of your acorn friends and have your folks share on Facebook and Instagram at [@massaudubon](#) or via email at [explore@massaudubon.org](mailto:explore@massaudubon.org).

