



Acorn Woodpeckers (AWPs)- Pre -K and Kindergarten

Objective: Students will observe Acorn Woodpecker Colony & will:

- a.) explain that in summer, AWP's eat insects for food
- b.) describe how AWP's peck holes and store acorns for winter food.

Kindergarten Science Standards

2a: Students know how to observe and describe similarities and differences in the appearance and behavior of plants and animals (e.g., seed-bearing plants, birds, fish, insects).

3b: Students know changes in weather occur from day to day and across seasons, affecting the Earth and its inhabitants.

Materials:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Woodpecker puppet | <input type="checkbox"/> Soap bubbles (pretend they are insects- students pop them and pretend to eat the insects.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A chisel (to demo woodpecker bill making a hole) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary words: Oak |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acorns in a basket | <input type="checkbox"/> Woodland, Colony, Granary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fencepost loaded with holes | |

Theme: Acorn Woodpeckers eat insects in the summer and acorns in the winter!

On the hike to the Acorn Woodpecker station, introduce the concept of ***Oak Woodland***- a place where lots of oak trees grow! Go by an oak tree that is dropping acorns. Have the students observe the tree:

- a.) It is dropping acorns (its seeds) and when the rainy winter weather arrives, the seeds will sprout and grow new oak trees.
 - b.) Are its leaves changing color and dropping off, too?
 - c.) How does this tree look different from a pine tree?
 - d.) Fall is the season when some leaves change color, trees drop leaves and drop seeds!
- 1.) This is an Acorn Woodpecker. [Show Drawing] What markings do you see on this woodpecker? Its feather colors and patterns help us tell Acorn Woodpeckers from other birds. It has: *A red cap Black back White belly Black Wings with a white spot*

- 2.) Acorn Woodpeckers live in colonies. Leader explains that AWP colonies cooperate to raise babies! Only 1 or 2 females (moms) lay eggs, the rest of the woodpeckers help to feed the babies so they can grow!
- 3.) AWPs eat different food in different seasons! In summer, when the days are warm and insects are plentiful, they fly and catch insects on the wing. They feed some of the insects to their babies. They nest in spring so that there is plentiful food (insects) to feed their babies. What season is it now? Even though it has been chilly at night, there are still a few insects flying about. Look and see if you can see an acorn woodpecker sitting on a tree branch and then fly in a loop. If you do, you have seen that bird catch and eat an insect!
- 4.) **Activity:** Adults blow soap bubbles, kids pretend soap bubbles are insects and their hands are acorn woodpeckers. They fly loops and pop them and pretend to eat or feed to babies. So, in summer there are plenty of insects for the AWPs to eat.
- 5.) In fall, cool nighttime weather kills many insects! (Brrr!) There are hardly any insects left in the wintertime. What can the acorn woodpeckers eat? Acorns! Acorns are seeds from oak trees! Where do AWPs find the acorns? On the ground.
- 6.) AWPs must spend all fall gathering acorns, drilling holes & finding holes that they fit into! (Teacher demos drilling a hole into the wood w/ a chisel and explains that AWPs' bills are like chisels.) An acorn storage tree is called a *granary*. A granary is where the acorn woodpeckers store their acorns.
- 7.) **Activity:** Kids try to fit acorns into holes in log. There are 2 different sizes of acorns & they must fit snugly into holes.
- 8.) Then as the cold rainy weather of winter comes, AWPs begin eating the acorns out of their granary (or are they eating larvae of the weevil that live inside the acorns?) Let's pretend it is wintertime and there are no more insects to eat. We must find our acorns and eat them.
- 9.) **Activity:** Students "fly" to the tree and remove acorns, pretending to eat them. So, Acorn Woodpeckers store acorns to eat in the wintertime.
- 10.) Many other animals compete with the acorn woodpeckers for their stored acorns. Scrub Jays fly to the granary and try to steal acorns. Ground Squirrels will crawl up and try to get acorns to eat. The AWP must defend its food by flying and diving at the other birds and squirrels.
- 11.) Let's count how many holes the acorn woodpeckers have drilled into one side of this post! 1,2,3...