

The background is a light blue sky with soft white clouds. A large, dark brown tree branch curves across the middle of the page. On this branch sits a large, fluffy orange squirrel with a white belly and a bushy orange tail. The squirrel is holding a yellow leaf in its paws and looking towards the right. Surrounding the squirrel and the branch are numerous autumn leaves in various shades of orange, red, yellow, and green. Some leaves are falling, while others are attached to the branch. In the top right corner, there are three acorns hanging from a small branch. A small snail with a brown shell is crawling on the branch above the squirrel. A line of ants is visible on the branch to the left of the squirrel. A small red bug is on the branch to the right of the squirrel. The title text is centered at the top, and the author and illustrator names are at the bottom.

Une année dans la nature

L'AUTOMNE
DE PETIT
ÉCUREUIL

Anita Loughrey
Illustrated by Lucy Barnard

Kimane

Squirrel sat in the big oak tree and looked at the leaves around her. Her dad was busy gathering juicy blackberries for their winter store.

“The leaves are no longer green but they still look pretty,” Squirrel said, noticing the new colours.

Then she saw one leaf fall from the tree and gently float to the ground. “Oh no!” she cried. “The tree must be ill. The leaves are falling off.”



“I must stick them back on,” she thought.
“But what can I use?”



Squirrel ran over to
the cornfield that had
just been harvested
and scooped up some
of the damp mud.

One by one she stuck
the leaves back
onto the branches
using the mud.



“That’s better,” she
thought, satisfied.
She nibbled on an acorn
and admired her work.

The warm autumn sun
shone down on the
forest. Squirrel was
pleased that she had
saved her oak tree home.

The different coloured
leaves glimmered in
the sunshine.



One leaf fell from the tree, then another
and another. Soon all the leaves she had
stuck back on - and some others - had fallen
to the ground.



“It didn’t work!” Squirrel cried.



But as the mud dried
it began to crack.

The leaves littered the ground.
Clouds drifted over the sun and
Squirrel fought back tears.

“What’s the matter, Squirrel?”
asked Snail who was passing.



“The leaves are falling off the oak tree!
I tried to stick them back on with mud
but it didn’t work,” she said sadly.

“We could stick them back on with
my slime,” Snail suggested.

Squirrel ran down the tree and grabbed large handfuls of leaves.



Snail slowly moved along the branches and Squirrel followed behind, sticking the leaves in place.



When they had finished, Squirrel rewarded herself by eating a shiny conker. "What an excellent job we've done!" she said.

A big raindrop hit Snail's shell as he crawled away. Another landed on Squirrel's nose. A few drops of rain landed on the leaves.



Drop!



Drip!



Drip!



Soon it was pouring.
“Oh no!” cried Squirrel.
“The rain is washing the slime away”. Leaves fell off the tree once more. Squirrel bowed her head. All her hard work had been for nothing.




“What’s the matter?”
asked Spider from his web.

“My tree is ill! The leaves are falling
off!” cried Squirrel. “But maybe we could
stick them back on with your silky web!”

Squirrel gathered up the
beautiful red and gold
leaves again. Together
she and Spider stuck the
leaves back on the branches
of the big oak tree.



When they had finished
they smiled at their
good work. The leaves
fluttered in the breeze.



Suddenly there was a strong gust of wind.
It loosened the web and blew the
leaves high into the air.


Colourful leaves swirled
all around them,
then fluttered back
to the ground.

Squirrel looked around and gasped. She
noticed the other trees were losing their
leaves too. "All the trees must be very
ill," she wailed loudly. "We will never be
able to put all the leaves back."

Her dad dropped the twig of
blackberries he was carrying
and dashed up the tree.



“What’s the matter, Squirrel?” he asked,
putting an arm around her.
Big tears streamed down Squirrel’s face.
“All the trees in the forest are ill.
Their leaves are falling off,” she cried.
Her dad began to laugh.



“What’s so funny?” asked Squirrel.
“The trees aren’t ill,” said Dad,
as he gave her a reassuring squeeze.
“Every year the trees lose their
leaves ready for the winter.”

In the spring new buds and new
leaves will grow.”

“So it’s supposed to happen?”
asked Squirrel.

“Yes poppet. This is the cycle of
life,” said her dad, as they gazed
out at the beautiful blanket
of leaves that covered
the forest floor.

Autumn Activities

Fun and simple ideas for you and your child to enjoy together.

Stimulate the senses

Introduce your child to the wonders of nature by collecting autumn items that stimulate the senses.

How about...

- a smooth conker to feel
- a fragrant pinecone to smell
- some juicy blackberries to taste
- leaves to listen to as you crunch them in your hands
- different coloured and shaped items to look at



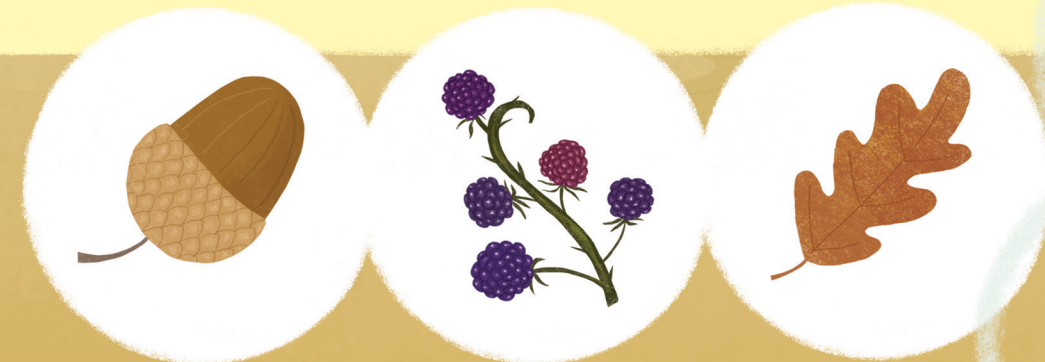
Pretty pinecones

1. Collect some pinecones and paint them different colours, such as gold, orange, yellow and red.
2. Add some different coloured glitter in autumn colours to give a sparkly effect.
3. Glue lengths of string to the top of each pinecone and hang on your door for a pretty, autumn decoration.



‘Signs-of-autumn I spy’

Use the pages in this book or go for an autumn walk with your child to play ‘signs-of-autumn I spy’. See what signs of autumn you can spot. Say: “I spy with my little eye, a sign of autumn beginning with the letter...”. For example, you could use ‘A’ for acorn, ‘B’ for blackberry or ‘L’ for leaves.



Handprint tree

1. Paint a tree trunk and branches onto a large piece of paper.
2. Choose three or four colours using autumn leaves as inspiration.
3. Paint your child’s hand with one of the colours and print onto the tree painting.
4. Repeat with the other colours until you have filled all the branches. (Wash your child’s hands between each colour to get bright coloured leaves).





Did you spot the signs of autumn in the story?

Squirrel's dad was collecting food for their winter store.

Squirrels gather fruit and nuts to eat during the winter, as food is harder to find during the colder months. Squirrels like to eat acorns, blackberries, blackcurrants and conkers.

The leaves on the trees were changing colour.

In autumn plant leaves stop making food because there is less daylight and the temperatures are cooler. The green colour in their leaves breaks down and the yellow, orange and red colours become visible.

The cornfield had been harvested.

Plants that have been sown in the spring are ready to harvest in the autumn. Harvesting means collecting the food that has grown. Farmers use a machine called a combine to harvest food like corn. The combine collects the corn ears and drops the corn stalks back on the ground.

Shiny conkers were growing on horse chestnut trees.

Conkers are the hard, dark-brown nut of the horse chestnut tree. The shell is shiny and squirrels crack them open with their sharp claws. The nut is the tree's seed. Many animals eat the nuts, but lots of the nuts are not eaten and will grow into new horse chestnut trees.

Leaves were falling from the branches.

Trees lose their leaves in autumn because they have no use for them during winter. They don't need them to make food. It is also nature's way of protecting the tree from wind damage, so the plants can survive winter and grow again in spring.



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