

Auburn Squirrel Project- Available Food Data Collection

Thank you for volunteering to do a little extra work! This should not take more than 15-20 minutes and will be done **every other week** until around April 2022. You will collect data about how long seeds are on the ground for squirrels to eat and bury, as well as look for other potential foods that squirrels could eat during winter. Collecting this data throughout winter and into the spring will allow us to test our assumption that some aspects of climate are impacting the length of the food hoarding season.

1. Pick a tree.

You will go back to this same tree every 2 weeks until ~April 2022.

- Look for a hard masting tree (produces hard seeds or nuts)- oak, hickory, beech, pecan, walnut
- Be able to identify your tree at least to genus.

2. Record the coordinates of the location.

- For finding coordinates of your location, see “Finding GPS Coordinates for Locations” at [Tips and Tricks - Auburn Squirrel Project \(weebly.com\)](https://www.auburnsquirrelproject.com/tips-and-tricks)
- Record coordinates under “Step 1” on the datasheet.

3. Define a spot under the tree of known area to count seeds.

- If you have a backyard that is not disturbed by mowing or other yard care, you can mark a permanent spot to count at each week. *Please note on the data submission survey each time that this plot is permanent.*
- If you cannot permanently mark your counting spot, just be sure you are counting at various locations *underneath the same tree* each time.
- To measure your seed counting area:
 - Bring a ruler and measure out a square approximately 1m x 1m. Temporarily mark the sides of the square so you have boundaries to count seeds in, sticks would work well.
 - If you don't have a ruler with you, use heel-to-toe steps to measure out an area approx. 1m x 1m. Record how many heel-to-toe steps each side of the square was. Measure how long your shoe is to get the total length in centimeters of each side of the square. This cm length is what you will record in the data submission survey.

- Record square side lengths under “Step 1” on the datasheet.

4. Count seeds in your measured out area.

- Look for hard mast- hard-shelled seeds and nuts like acorns, hickory nuts, pecans, walnuts, beech nuts, etc.
- Count and record the number of mature (brown) and immature (green) hard-shelled seeds/nuts are on the ground in your square. Do not remove them from the square and try to disturb the area as little as possible.
- Identify the types of seeds and nuts to the best of your ability (accurate count is most important, rather than ID). ID unknown seeds as “unknown”
- Record counts and IDs under “Step 2” on the datasheet. “(M/I)” refers to counting the mature and immature seeds.

5. Look for other potential squirrel foods.

- Walk around your study spot for a few minutes. Record the presence (Yes/No) of any of the following potential squirrel foods that you can see on the ground or in trees: fungus/mushrooms, flowers, leaves, pollen, fruits, berries, or other soft seeds, maple samaras (seeds).
- Fill out “Step 3” on the datasheet.

6. Notes and comments

- Make note of any other potential foods for squirrels in the area. Write a short description of your study area along with any other comments you have about this data collection session.
- Fill out “Step 4” on the datasheet

7. Submit your data on the online submission survey!

Thank you for participating!