

## The Mysterious Case of Disappearing Acorns – Squirrels Starving

by Kimberley D. Mok, Montreal, Canada on 12. 8.08



Image: A hungry squirrel in Virginia (Corbis)

Is Mother Nature calling it quits? Along with the baffling [collapse of bee populations](#) worldwide to other strange natural phenomena, we can now add the bizarre disappearance of acorns in widespread areas along the eastern seaboard – Virginia, Pennsylvania, Nova Scotia, and even as far away as the Midwest.

"I'm used to seeing so many acorns around and out in the field, it's something I just didn't believe," says Rod Simmons, a field botanist based in Arlington, Virginia, where at this time of year, acorns are usually everywhere – either underfoot or falling from oaks. "But this is not just not a good year for oaks. It's a zero year. There's zero production. I've never seen anything like this before."

He wasn't the only one who noticed this odd occurrence:

Simmons and Arlington naturalists began calling around. A naturalist in Maryland found no acorns on an Audubon nature walk there. Ditto for Fairfax, Falls Church, Charles County, even as far away as Pennsylvania. There are no acorns falling from the majestic oaks in Arlington National Cemetery.

"Once I started paying attention, I couldn't find any acorns anywhere. Not from white oaks, red oaks or black oaks, and this was supposed to be their big year," said Greg Zell, a naturalist at Long Branch Nature Center in Arlington. "We're talking zero. Not a single acorn. It's really bizarre."

Zell began to do some research. He found Internet discussion groups, including one on Topix called "No acorns this year," reporting the same thing from as far away as the Midwest up through New England and Nova Scotia. "We live in Glenwood Landing, N.Y., and don't have any acorns this year. Really weird," wrote one. "None in Kansas either! Curiouser and curiouser." (from Washington Post)

It's strange because oaks in other areas are overproducing, yet in these areas, oaks (which are self-pollinating) seem to be on reproductive strike, despite dropping an overabundance of acorns last year. Plenty of animals will starve this time around. Is it climate change or could it be the extreme opposite of a natural boom-and-bust cycle?

Full story on [Washington Post](#)

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While Oak trees are propagated by squirrels burying acorns, when the squirrel population gets too large, most of the acorns are eaten. For that reason, every few years the trees produce few acorns in order to allow the squirrel population to die off. The next year, after many squirrels have starved, the trees resume their normal production.

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I live in mechanicsville VA, and our oak trees had acorns. we watched squirrels knock the acorns off the tree all fall, there are still shells on the ground.

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In Durham, NC we have plenty of acorns too. I've seen this story a few times this year now - is there really reason for concern? I certainly don't know if there is but I know that some years the acorns are heavier than others.

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No Acorns here in Sonora California-near Yosemite national park

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