



The Leaf Thief

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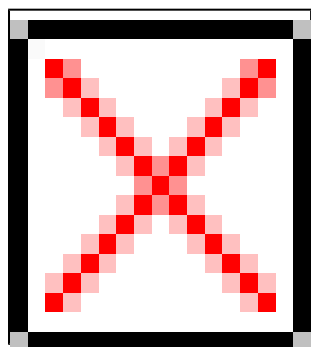
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4



Enter a very cross squirrel. Yesterday her trees were covered in beautiful leaves, but today? Some are missing, and Squirrel is sure someone must have stolen them. Her bluetit friend reassures her that no, mouse has not stolen her leaves, nor has woodpecker, and that no-one from the woodland creatures is taking her leaves. Why not go back to her nest and relax? But next morning yet more leaves have gone. Bird decides to tell Squirrel that the Leaf Thief is in fact the wind! It shakes the trees and rustles the leaves. The explanation that this amazing event happens every autumn satisfies Squirrel who realizes how silly she has been, especially when she is told the leaves will grow back again next spring. The ending brings on a laugh. Next morning's scene shows Squirrel shouting loudly, 'Bird! Someone has stolen THE GRASS!' as Bird sighs, peeping out from his bird box at a snowy scene. The book concludes with a page of facts about autumn. There are brief notes about deciduous and evergreen trees, and the fact that autumn begins at different times of the year, depending upon whether in the Northern or Southern hemisphere. Many children will already know that Christmas in Australia, for example, is in their hottest months, in the middle of their summer. Lots of information-hungry children will act like sponges and lap up the facts both hidden and open in this amusing book about the inevitable change of seasons. It is full of autumnal colours, rich oranges, browns, golds and reds, and the text hops and jumps about the pages in a very child-friendly way, matched closely by the pictures. There are lots of little jokes in the pictures too, such as bluetit deep in his nestbox, reading a book entitled *Bowling for Beginners*. The book reads aloud very well.

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