

"Who Goes There?"

Fontenelle Nature Association

Grades: 2nd and 3rd

Objectives:

1. Students will be introduced to the concept that animals leave evidence of their presence.
2. Students will discover at least one prey animal that lives in a forest by dissecting owl pellets and identifying their contents.

Pre- & Post-Trip Activity Suggestions

Activity: The Ol' Bait and Track

Concept: Students will bait an area and observe evidence of animals living near their school.

Suggested Timing: Pre-Trip or Post-Trip

Time: 20 minutes each day over a period of days

Location: Outdoors (schoolyard)

Materials: log, cinder block or other heavy object; bait (you can try one of more of the following: raw or cooked bacon, fruit, seeds, peanut butter, etc.); water; some sand or an area with exposed dirt

Procedure: Find an area with some trees or tall grass near your school (these are the most likely places that animals will be living). Prepare the area by choosing a spot with dirt and moistening it with water or by placing some sand around a grassy area and dampening and smoothing it. (Note: If this is on school grounds, don't forget to inform custodial staff or caretakers of your experiment!). Place the log or cinder block in the center of your prepared area. This way the animal will have to stand on its haunches in order to retrieve the bait and will leave a good impression with its back feet. Place the bait you have chosen on the log or block and leave it overnight. Check the next day and observe evidence carefully (Note: You may need to wait several days for activity to begin.) Hopefully you will find signs of ants, flies & other insects as well as tracks. You can try the activity in different places or experiment with different types of bait.

Activity: Wildlife Safari

Concept: There are many animals in the forest but some can also be found in the schoolyard and even in your classroom. Students will go on a scavenger hunt for such evidence in your classroom and around the schoolyard.

Suggested Timing: Pre-Trip or Post-Trip

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors and Outdoors

Materials: paper and pencils for listing animal signs

Procedure: Invite your students to explore your classroom in depth, looking for any signs of animal life -- alive or dead. They might find spider webs, dead insects near lights, or holes along the baseboards (from insects). Introduce the concept that animals live everywhere and humans must share the environment with them. Expand your search to the outdoors. Look for tracks,

animal droppings, insects, birds, holes in leaves and leaf galls, chewed nuts and twigs, etc.
Return to class and discuss your findings.

Activity: Micro Safari

Concept: When searching outside it is easy to miss many of the smallest signs of life. Students will use a magic loop to focus their observation.

Suggested Timing: After *Wildlife Safari*

Time: 15 minutes

Location: Outdoors

Materials: loops of rope or yarn, paper and pencils for each student, magnifying glasses (optional)

Procedure: Find an area outside where students can find individual spots on the ground to work. Have each student place a magic loop (approximately 12 inch diameter circle) over the site they will be investigating. They should then look very closely at their area to find signs of animal life. Signs like chewed grass, worm castings (droppings), living creatures etc. Encourage the students to dig for bugs and other life forms and pay close attention to small holes in the ground or grass. Students should list and describe the signs they find.

Activity: Bird Hunt

Concept: Birds are one of the most colorful and obvious of all animals. Students will practice observation skills, identifying the most common birds by sight and sound.

Suggested Timing: Post-Trip

Time: 30 minutes each class period

Location: Indoors and Outdoors

Materials: Bird picture cards representing common birds, recording of common bird sounds (optional)

Procedure: Purchase a set of bird picture cards or a bird guide with pictures. You also can obtain a tape of birdcalls. Begin this activity with an introduction to the concept that there are many different kinds of birds and each has its own role to play in nature. If you can, have the students make their own bird feeders and set up a feeding station somewhere near the school. Ask the students what types of features might help to identify a bird and make a list of these things on the chalkboard. This list might include: colors (specific streaks, speckles, lines, rings), body size, body shape, wing shape, beak shape, call, location, and behavior. Introduce students to a number of bird species using the cards with their associated natural history. You might discuss the northern cardinal, crow, blue jay, black-capped chickadee, morning-dove, white-breasted nuthatch, and others that you see outside your school. Divide the students into groups and have a contest to see which team can remember the correct identification of the most birds. Note: If you have a tape of birdcalls you can play the calls of our local birds for students to hear. The next morning (it is best to observe birds as early as possible) head outside to your feeding station or some other area that might have birds. Bring the bird cards for comparison. Stop, look, and listen to the bird sounds. See if you can identify the birds by sight or sound. (Note: You will benefit from setting up feeding stations on your school grounds. These stations can then be used for observation and experiments -- see "Tennis ball can bird feeders" activity below).

Activity: Tennis Ball Canister Birdfeeders

Concept: Setting up a birdfeeder can help you attract a variety of colorful birds to observe and learn to identify.

Suggested Timing: Post-trip

Time: 45 minutes

Location: Indoors

Materials: One tennis ball canister per student (these can be easily obtained from a local tennis club during tennis seasons, small pop bottles can also be substituted), plastic or styrofoam plates with high sides or plastic bowls with large flat bottoms (one per student), birdseed (preferably black oil sunflower), razor blade, scissors for each student, hot glue gun

Procedure: Make a small slit with the razor blade on opposite sides of each canister near the bottom. Have each student cut a small hole in the canister on each side where the slit is located (the slit is to help them get the hole started; the hole is for the seed to come out for the birds to peck at). Hot glue the bottom of each canister to the bottom of the inside of the bowl or plate (make sure this is well glued). The canister opening should now be at the top. You can punch holes near the top for wire or string so the feeders can be hung from branches. Decorate each canister with stickers, ribbon or other material. Fill canisters with birdseed and place on school grounds. Try and choose a place that has bushes or other hiding areas nearby for the birds. You can add a pan of water or birdbath for the birds that come to feed.

Activity: Edible Owl Pellets

Concept: Owls and hawks leave evidence of their existence through pellets that are regurgitated and contain mostly animal fur and bone. Diets of birds of prey can often be studied by examining their pellets. Students will simulate the texture of real owl pellets by making their own snack.

Suggested Timing: Post-Trip

Time: 30 minutes

Location: Indoors

Materials: 2 1/4 c. Bisquick Mix, 2/3 c. milk, 1/2 c. powdered sugar, chow mein noodles; pieces of animal crackers, cookie sheet, oven

Procedure: Mix all ingredients. Shape into "pellets" and bake 8 - 10 minutes at 450 degrees.

Suggested Resources

National Wildlife Federation. Ranger Rick's Nature Scope: Birds, Birds, Birds. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

This is a close up look at the adaptations and biology of birds.

National Wildlife Federation. Ranger Rick's Nature Scope: Amazing Mammals, Part I. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

This includes lots of mammal activities including tracking activities for classroom use.

National Wildlife Federation. Ranger Rick's Nature Scope: Amazing Mammals, Part II. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

This includes lots of mammal activities including tracking activities for classroom use.

Stokes, Donald, and Lillian Stokes. A Guide to Animal Tracking And Behavior. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1986.

Stokes, Donald, and Lillian Stokes. A Guide To Nature In Winter. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1976.

This book includes sections on Tracks In The Snow; Winter's Birds and Abandoned Nests; and Evidence of Insects.

Stokes, Donald, and Lillian Stokes. Stokes Beginner's Guide To Birds: Eastern Region. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1996.

Guide has color photographs with most common birds indexed by color.

Zim, Herbert S., and Ira N. Gabrelson. Birds: A Golden Guide. New York: Golden Press, 1987.
Easy-to-use guide with simple color drawings and descriptions of birds.

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