

Scavenger Hunt

Activity Summary

Students will go on an outdoor scavenger hunt to find signs of wildlife. There are a number of extensions that can be used to enrich this lesson. Keep in mind that duration of the activity can be significantly affected when these are used.

Objectives

- Identify signs of wildlife in an outdoor setting.
- Make observations and describe features that could be signs of wildlife.
- Become familiar with the study area.

Materials

- * List of items to find
- * Hand lenses – you can request these in advance if you want the students to look up close
- * Field guides – you can request these in advance on birds, fish, reptiles, or waterfowl
- * Pencil

Procedure

1. Introduce the activity by showing examples of things that could be found around the center that would indicate the types of wildlife living there. Talk with them about signs of wildlife, where to look for things, and how to be safe when looking (avoid lifting boulders and logs with hands, don't stick hands into areas that are dark, know what poison ivy and stinging nettle look like, and avoid them, etc.).
2. They also should be introduced to listening for sounds of wildlife. Remind them that there is a diverse population of animals living in the different types of habitats at the nature center.
3. Divide the students into groups of 2 to 5.
4. Provide them with a list of the assigned items, pencils, and guides if to be used.
5. Establish the area to be investigated. Make sure enough adults are on hand to adequately monitor the groups as they hunt.
6. Determine a length of time during which they will be hunting, and listening, for their items. Remind them to keep track of what they find and where they find it by recording it in on their paper with a detailed description.
7. After the hunt is over, ask the students to come together and share what they have found with the other students
8. Have them name at least three things they saw, heard or smelled that indicated wildlife in the area.

9. Ask them what other forms of life did they observe and collect while they were scavenging.

Extensions

- Begin this lesson by having students test their observation skills. Previously “plant” several items that “do not belong” along a trail. See how many of these the students can spot.
- Have students keep journals, instead of just the sheet of paper, describing their discoveries.
- Blend this activity with a lesson in digital outdoor photography.
- This lesson could be preceded with instruction in using maps and compasses. Students then could be expected to mark the location at which they find each item on their map, and you can request site maps at the front desk.

Younger Students

This can be done with younger students as well. With the help of a couple of adults, establish groups of 5-10 students and have the adults read the clues and help them look for items on the list.

Signs of Wildlife - Scavenger Hunt List

Instructions: As you find an item on the list, *describe* the item and its location. YOU DO NOT NEED TO COLLECT THE ITEM. Simply draw and/or describe it and guess what animal left that particular sign. Then check the item off of your list and continue the hunt. Keep in mind you probably won't find all of the items, and that is okay.

- White-tailed deer track
- Track (a track of an animal other than a deer)
- Path worn by deer or other animals
- Animal Scat
- Animal Scat (from a *different* animal than the first)
- A bit of animal hair or skin
- An insect or spider molt (shed exoskeleton)
- An insect or spider egg case
- A bird nest
- An ant hill
- Earthworm castings
- A chrysalis or cocoon
- A burrow in the ground
- A bone, claw or tooth
- A feather
- An egg or egg shell
- A bird song or call
- A wasp nest
- A spider web
- A mud dauber nest
- The buzzing of an insect
- Claw or scratch marks
- Tunnels in tall or thick grass
- The sound of a fish splashing on water
- The sound of a woodpecker drumming
- A buck rub or scrape
- A shed antler
- Nut shells with gnaw marks
- Tree trunks with gnaw marks
- A squirrel nest
- Small holes or tunnels in an old log
- Holes in a leaf