

# Be a Wildlife Detective!



## Introduction

In the book ***Over in the Forest: Come and Take a Peek*** the reader is introduced to woodland animals. These animals leave clues to their presence in a forest. In this outdoor activity, students look for clues, and write down what they see in their journals.

## Materials Needed

- ◆ A copy of the book
- ◆ Journal and a sketchbook or camera
- ◆ Magnifying glasses and/or binoculars that students can share.

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Each organism has different structures for different functions
- ◆ All organisms have different needs
- ◆ Behavior is influenced by internal cues (hunger) and external cues (change in environment.)

For standards correlation please see our website.

## Procedure

1. Read the book, ***Over in the Forest: Come and Take a Peek***, including the glossary for older students.
2. Take a field trip to a woodland area nearby where forest animals may have left clues.
3. Students need to wear comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes and should bring something to write on, and/or a camera.
4. Divide the group into teams as they walk quietly through the woods writing down what they see and hear—a woodpecker rapping on a tree, a bird chirping, or a squirrel chattering. Are there any waste droppings (called scat) that may give you a clue what animal was there, and sometimes even what the animal has eaten?
5. Owls have a unique way of regurgitating indigestible parts—teeth, bones, fur, for example, called owl pellets. Perhaps you will see one.
6. Look for abandoned nests and burrows of birds and mammals which can tell you a lot about the habits of these animals.
7. Look for tooth marks on twigs and branches, or scratches where an animal has climbed.
8. And of course, study the tracks of the ten main animals in the story, and take a photo if you see any on your woodland walk. If there are any tracks that are not like the ones in the book, photograph them or describe them in your journal. Tracks tell a story!

## Nature Connections

- ◆ Invite students to explore, observe, draw and/or take photographs in the same location to create a field guide. Include the time and date of what they discover on each walk throughout the year. Be descriptive and note any changes.
- ◆ What does the animal eat, how does it protect itself from predators?
- ◆ What does it do when the weather changes?
- ◆ Do research using the internet and/or library to complete your "field study" journal.

## Additional Resources

Learn more about tracking forest animals in books and the internet:

- ◆ *Wild Tracks* by Jim Arnosky (Sterling, 2008)
- ◆ *Tracks, Scats and Signs* by Leslie A. Dandy (Copper Square Pub. 1996)
- ◆ *The Woods Scientist* by Stephen Swinburne and Susan Morse (Houghton Mifflin, 2002)
- ◆ *The Peterson Field Guide Series*, published by Houghton Mifflin.
- ◆ <http://bear-tracker.com/mammals.html>
- ◆ <http://www.kidwings.com/owlpellets/flash/v4/index.htm>
- ◆ [http://www.azgfd.gov/i\\_e/ee/lessons/symbols/wildlife\\_student.pdf](http://www.azgfd.gov/i_e/ee/lessons/symbols/wildlife_student.pdf)
- ◆ <http://www.nwf.org/wildlifewatch/>