



# Who's Been in the Forest?

## Students Investigate Signs of Wildlife

In this activity, students head outside to their school forest and/or any other parts of their living schoolyard to look for signs of wildlife using the habitat.

GRADES K-8

SCIENCE

SURVEY

WORKSHEETS

### Introduction

Insects, birds, and animals are often hard to spot but may leave behind tell-tale signs. In this activity, students practice deepening their observation skills and record observations on a provided worksheet. Students can work independently or in teams.

There are two versions of the worksheet to choose from: a black-and-white version and a color version. Blank space is also provided if students notice a clue NOT already on the worksheet. Please note that the examples on the worksheets focus on broad-leaved trees rather than conifers.

### Materials

- Printed copies of the worksheet (black-and-white OR color version, provided below)
- Clipboards
- Pencils
- (Optional) Magnifying glasses

### Instructions

#### Step 1: Get Ready

- Students can work independently or be organized into teams of two or three.
- Hand out the materials.
- Head outside. Establish the main study area and set physical boundaries for students.
- Remind students to focus on observing WITHOUT picking plant parts.
- Students should also minimize disturbance to any bugs they might discover (such as caterpillars that will turn into butterflies or moths). If bugs are collected, they can be returned to their original location at the end of the activity.

#### Step 2: Observe and Gather Data

- Allow 20 to 30 minutes for students to look for signs and record them on their worksheets.

## Reflection

Gather students back together outside or inside for a follow-up discussion. Possible prompts include: “What was the most common sign? What do you think made it? When do you think this creature came to this habitat? How might we spot it? What was the most surprising discovery?”

## Extensions

1. Repeat this activity during different months or seasons to discover differences and similarities in patterns of habitat use.
2. Conduct further research. There are many species that use plants in any given habitat and there is not always an easy answer as to which animal is making the marks on a plant or on the ground. Students can be encouraged to do some research or design experiments to observe the actual creature. Leaves, for example, are eaten by many species of caterpillars, snails, slugs, leaf miners, birds, and other animals. Twigs and branches, for example, may be chewed on by squirrels, rubbed against by deer antlers, or used by insects laying eggs. This may be just the start of your students’ detective journey!



### NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS

#### Disciplinary Core Ideas

- Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

#### Crosscutting Concepts

- Cause and Effect
- Patterns
- Systems and System Models

#### Science and Engineering Practices

- Asking Questions
- Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information
- Engaging in Argument from Evidence

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### NATIONAL SCHOOLYARD FOREST SYSTEM

The National Schoolyard Forest System™ seeks to create schoolyard forests on PreK-12 public school grounds across the country to directly shade and protect students from extreme heat and rising temperatures due to climate change. This initiative was founded by Green Schoolyards America, and launched with California as the first state in partnership with the California Department of Education, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and Ten Strands.

For more information, visit:  
[greenschoolyards.org/schoolyard-forest-system](https://greenschoolyards.org/schoolyard-forest-system)



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### PUBLISHER

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# Who's Been in the Forest?



Detective's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Leaves with one hole.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Leaves with many holes.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Leaves with lines on them.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



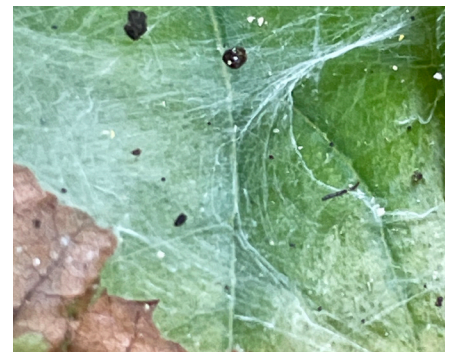
Leaves with bird poop.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Leaves rolled up.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Webs.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Stems with marks on them.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Animal tracks.

I think it was \_\_\_\_\_



Drawing of something else I noticed.

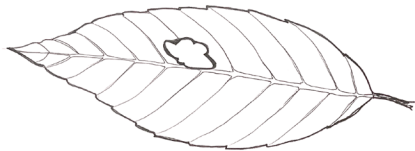
I think it was \_\_\_\_\_

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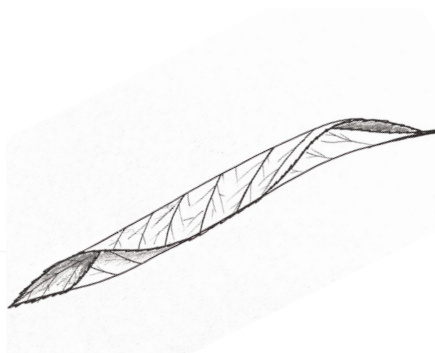
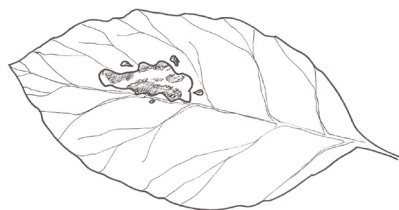
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Leaves with bird poop.

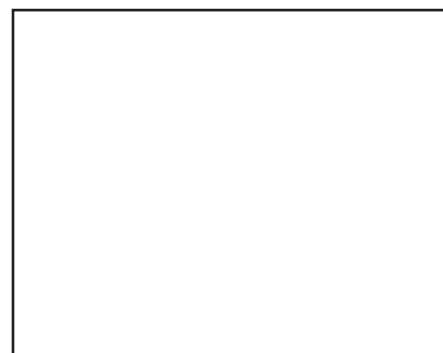
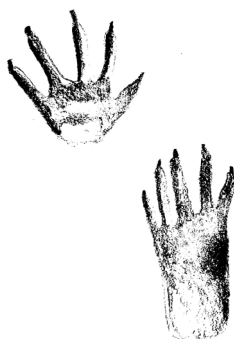
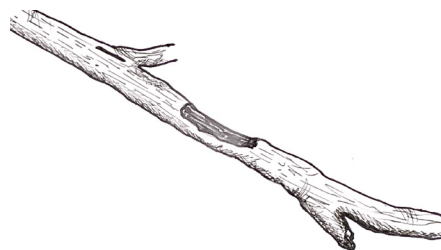
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I think it was \_\_\_\_\_

Animal tracks.

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Drawing of something else I noticed.

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