

NATURE QUEST

Nature Quest challenges kids of all ages to be curious about nature, right here in southeast Indiana. Take this sheet to a nature preserve, park, or wildlife refuge. Complete each part of the grid below. We'll release new Nature Quest challenges throughout the season. After you complete any one challenge, enter to win the Grand Prize. Enter all eight!

Materials you might take along:

- Guide to tracks and scat (Google it!) and BioKIDS website to help you ID scat and tracks
- Pencil and/or colored pencils, and a notebook
- Books or field guides from the "Library Thing" list for this challenge

Tip: This Nature Quest challenge can be done anywhere wildlife go. We recommend visiting a nature preserve you love that includes a pond, creek, or lake. To find a new favorite park or preserve, go to www.oakheritageconservancy.org/findparks

<p>Animal tracks are a fun way to see who's been nearby. Find a place with mud, wet sand, or damp soil (or, of course, fresh snow!). Damp woods, creek banks, and along ponds and lakes are all good places to look. Do you see any tracks? Draw them!</p>	<p>Try looking for tracks for raccoons and deer: they're common animals, and their tracks are unique. Follow the tracks. Where do you think the animals were going?</p> 	<p>Birds make tracks, too! Look for fork-shaped tracks. They might be small, from a song bird, or big like a wild turkey's (up to 4 1/2" long!). What was the turkey looking for?</p> 
<p>A good detective also looks at plants for signs of animals. Can you find any twigs, bushes, or saplings that have been bitten off? If the bite is sharp and at a 45 degree angle, it was probably a rabbit. If the end of the twig is rough and ragged, it was probably ripped off by a deer! Make up a story about the deer or rabbit who stopped for a snack.</p>	<h2>ANIMAL EVIDENCE</h2>	<p>Can you find a "gall"? It's a ball-shaped growth on a stem or leaf. An insect laid its eggs in the stem or leaf. The plant responded by growing that ball. In spring, an adult insect will bite its way out of the gall. Draw what you think that insect will look like.</p>
<p>The most obvious sign of wildlife can be its "scat." Scat is what scientists call animals' droppings or poop.</p> <p>Never touch scat!</p> <p>But do look for it: scat tells so much. Different kinds of animals leave behind different types of scat.</p>	<p>Can you find some scat? Draw what you see. Be sure to note the shape, size, color, and even the texture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick tube shaped scat: Dog, raccoon, opossum, skunk. • Scat with fun in it: Carnivores like fox or coyote (the fur is from the animals, or prey, they ate) • Tiny and round: rabbit • Pill shaped: deer 	<p>Crawdads live partially in water - and also on dry land. But: they breathe through gills, and they have to keep their gills moist. The dig burrows underground that fill with water. The crawdads have to do something with all of the mud they dig out, so they build chimneys. Find a chimney and make up a story about how the crawdad built her chimney.</p>

Find more Nature Quest challenges, and enter to win the Grand Prize, at www.oakheritageconservancy.org/nature-quest

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Big Oaks Conservation Society

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