

Who was here?

We share this planet with animals, birds, reptiles, and insects as well as a variety of plants and microorganisms. This activity gives children an opportunity to discover who lives in their backyard, playground, or camp ground.

The objectives are: recognize the different signs an animal leaves; correlate the signs with the animals.

Background:	<p>Most beings leave some type of sign that we can recognize and use to identify who has traveled through the area. As children begin to recognize animal signs and correlate them with different animals, they become more aware of how interdependent we are on one another.</p> <p>For the purpose of this activity, “animal” is any being – from insect to mammal. “Sign” is anything that suggests the presence of an animal – including burrows, dens, carcasses, tracks, feathers, fur, droppings, calls, sounds, or actual sightings.</p>
Skills:	The children should be able to recognize feathers, tracks, etc. and deduce where the sign came from.
Age:	Grades 2 - 9
Materials:	Field guides (to help identify feathers, tracks, etc.), paper and pencil.
Activity:	<p>Explain to the children that different animals leave different signs when they travel through an area. Talk about the tracks that they leave in the snow or sand, the crumbs that fall to the floor when they eat, the sounds they make on the playground. Animals leave similar signs when they move around.</p> <p>In this activity, pair the children and give them one area to examine. They should locate as many signs as possible, taking notes on the sign and the animal that they think left the sign.</p> <p>When the group gets back together, have a large map of the area in which they were making their observations. Have each team identify the signs and animals that they found. Record these findings and the approximate location on the map.</p>
Discussion:	<p>Which animal was most prevalent? Which was the least prevalent? Why are these animals attracted to the area?</p> <p>This is a good way to introduce children to habitats. Did the animals come because there was food for them? How about shelter? Was there any evidence of predators?</p>
Adaptations	If the children are young, they can make general identifications, for example: feather, bird
Junior Badge:	Wildlife, Ecology
Brownie Try-it	Animals

This activity is based on Homes for Wildlife.