

# CSI: Critter Scene Investigations

## Suggested Number of Volunteers: 1-2

## Materials in Activity Tub:

- Scene #1 • owl feather
    - owl pellet
    - snake shed
  - Scene #2 • turkey feather
    - shotgun shell
  - Scene #3 • grass duck nest
    - empty egg shells
  - Scene #4 • acorns/nuts
  - Scene #5 • deer bone
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- copies of participant answer sheet
  - clipboards
  - pencils/pens
  - track ID booklets
  - scene boards
  - scene number sheet
  - rulers

## Materials Provided by the Group:

- None

## Objectives

Students will:

1. Learn about how to track animals and determine how using clues in nature, you can determine what has happened.

## Background:

If you just take a moment and look in nature, there are a lot of “crimes!” Part of the fun in being active in nature is to find these clues and determine what has been happening in this area.

This is also a great way to determine what animals are in an area and what animals you might be able to see when out hiking.

## Procedure:

### Before the Activity

Set-up each of the five scenes before the event. Each scene should be labeled with the scene number sheet so participants know which scene they are at and which one corresponds with the answer sheet.

Scene #1: Place the owl feather near the owl wing tracks. Near this, place the snake shed. The owl pellet is optional. If you choose to use it, place it at the far end of the scene away from the feather and shed.

Scene #2: Place the turkey feather near the turkey tracks and blood. Place the shotgun shell around there too.

Scene #3: Place the grass nest so all tracks (skunk and duck) lead to the nest. Place the broken egg shells in and around the nest.

Scene #4: Place the acorns near the squirrel tracks and blood.

Scene #5: Place the deer bone near the mouse tracks.

### The Activity

1. Ask participants if they were to walk into a prairie or forest and not see any animals, would that mean that there were no animals living in this area? No! To know what animals live in an area, we must look at lots of clues. These clues include:

- Animal homes - bird nests, fox holes, insect hives, etc.
- Evidence of animals eating - a half eaten nut, a chewed bone, a hole in a leaf, etc.
- Animal body parts - fur on a branch, a bird feather, a deer antler shed, a snake shed.

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# CSI: Critter Scene Investigations, continued

- Scat - animal poop!
- Tracks - animal footprints left in the mud or snow.
- Animal calls or songs - a bird calling, a coyote howling, a deer snorting, etc.
- Animal Smells - a skunk's spray, a fox's territory smell, etc.

2. Explain to participants that their job is to visit each of the five scenes and determine what happened at each one. You can build suspense by asking participants if they watch CSI on TV? That is what they are going to be doing at this station – taking in the clues, interpreting what they see, and deciding what happened at each scene.

Let them know that they will have track ID guides at each station to help them determine which animals were involved.

Also remind participants that just like a real crime scene, they should not touch the scene.

3. Give each participant, or group, a clipboard with an answer sheet and a pen/pencil. Ask each participant/group to start at a different scene. Explain that they will be rotating through all the scenes.

4. As participants work at each scene, volunteers should walk around and help participants/groups come to the correct conclusion. DO NOT tell participants the answers, simply help them with leading questions IF they need assistance.

5. When participants have completed each station, wrap-up the activity by going through each station and having participants tell you what they think happened. Be careful not to crush participants when they are wrong. Simply point out some hints to help them realize the correct answer. Also, be aware that there can be more than one correct answer for each scene.

## CSI: CRITTER SCENE INVESTIGATIONS ANSWERS

Scene #1: The snake just got done shedding. The owl swoops down and picks-up the snake to eat. Several hours later, the owl produces a pellet.

Scene #2: The hunter shot the turkey, the bobcat takes the turkey before the hunter can get to it. Or, the hunter shoots the turkey and retrieves it. Several hours (days) later, the bobcat passes through the area and smells the turkey's blood.

Scene #3: The mother duck leaves the nest to look for food for herself. The eggs have not yet hatched. A skunk walks up and eats the eggs. Or, the mother duck has taken her newly hatched ducklings for a swim. While they are out, a skunk walks over look for a meal, but leaves when he finds nothing.

Scene #4: The squirrel is eating acorns when he is attacked by a red fox and eaten.

Scene #5: A deer died probably of natural causes. A mouse comes into the area and starts gnawing on the deer bone. Then a coyote come and scares the mouse away.