

# Who's Living in your backyard?

*Please use this checklist to confirm that all of the parts of this station are in this bag both when it is unpacked before the OSF Science Night AND when it is re-packed after your event.*

- Table sign, laminated
- Explanation/ What to Do sheet, laminated
- Photograph of Answer key, laminated
- Scats of North American Wildlife display box
- 6 picture cards (deer, squirrel, skunk, rabbit, opossum and bobwhite quail), laminated
- rubber track replicas of deer (one front and back), squirrel (one front and back), bobwhite quail (one foot only), skunk (one front and back), rabbit (one front and back) and opossum (one front and back)

You will need to set up the Passport Question with American Redstart at this station. It can be found in the PASSPORT bag.

The "Who's Living in your Backyard?" framed poster and a wooden easel should be placed at the station.

## **What you will need to provide for this activity station:**

- Tape to attach table sign

## WHO'S LIVING IN YOUR BACKYARD?

### Explanation/Background:

Do you know what kinds of animals might be living in your own backyard or on your school grounds? Animals leave behind many tell-tale signs of their presence. Even if we don't see the animals we can tell who has been there from the signs they leave. For example, if you find a beautiful blue and black striped feather on the ground in your yard, chances are a Blue Jay has passed that way. Each bird species has unique feathers. Each species of bird also builds a unique nest.

Another sign of life in your backyard is scat or droppings. Believe it or not, this is an excellent way to tell who has been in your backyard. Animals have very unique droppings. You also can learn a lot about what different animals eat from their droppings because seeds and bones often pass through the gut and are deposited with the waste.

A fun way to determine who is around is to look for tracks, especially in snow or after a rain when the ground is soft. Tracks also have many stories to tell. They may lead the way to an animal's den or resting place. They tell whether the animal was running or walking or whether the animal was alone or in a group. Many different kinds of animals leave tracks including mammals, birds, snakes, frogs and even insects. Each animal leaves a unique footprint that can be identified by the size, toe number and placement, claw marks, and the distance between tracks. Plaster can be used to make a permanent record of animal footprints. Today we will see if you can identify the tracks of some common animals that might be lurking in your own backyard.

### What You Will Do:

The children will be given a set of animal cards to match to the footprint casts on the table. There are clues on the back to help them.

### What You Need:

- A poster showing animals that might be in the backyard of a child in Ecuador and a child in Georgia. The poster also shows some examples of different signs they might look for in their backyard.
- Set of rubber casts of animal tracks.
- Set of laminated animal cards and answer key.
- Scat (animal dung) samples to display.
- Other samples of animal signs: gnawed stick, nest, feather, etc.

### What To Do:

1. Hang or display the poster and other objects.
2. Set up the rubber track replicas on the table.
3. Children will place the laminated animal card next to the track replica they think it belongs to. There is an answer key – a photograph of the actual rubber track replicas with the name of the matching animal next to it.

# Who's Living in Your Backyard Answer Key



BOBWHITE QUAIL



GRAY SQUIRREL  
Front foot is smaller



OPOSSUM  
Hind foot has "thumb"



WHITE TAIL DEER  
Front foot is larger



COTTONTAIL RABBIT  
Front foot is smaller



STRIPED SKUNK  
Front foot has long nails