Earth Day 2022

Mammal Tracks

Name: Schoolyard Clue Cards
Grade: *All*
Topic: Engage students in the scientific method using animal tracks
Time: 30-*45 minutes*

Introduction:

This activity presents a set of ten 6" x 9" tracking cards that engage students in the scientific method. Students learn to observe, form hypotheses, analyze data, predict, refine hypotheses, and develop conclusions using animal tracks and other clues. Students will use scientific investigation to identify the different types of wildlife that are present in suburban areas and learn how urbanization and human development activities affects them.

Materials:

Kit will include:

- Schoolyard Clue Cards
- Track Field Guide

Videos and additional Information can be found on the DFW Earth Day website

DFW Airport Headquarters Office
DFWearthday@dfwairport.com

2400 Aviation Drive
DFW Airport, TX 75261

Key Terms:

Habitat - the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism

Diurnal - of or during the day

Nocturnal - done, occurring, or active at night

Procedure:

Group of 5-9 students or as a class.

Each numbered card contains a tracking scenario on one side and observations and discussion points on the other. Each card presents a connected but new sequence of tracks that provide data for speculation. Cards are laid out one at a time in the sequence shown on the back of the instruction card. The notes on the back of each card offers guidance to instructors, starting with basic observations and then advancing to increasingly refined hypotheses based on new information. Inquiry-based questions can be modified and tailored.

Prior to showing any card, the teacher should study both sides of the card to become familiar with the general setting and help guide the inquiry process. During the activity, questions should be asked in an open-ended manner: “What do you see on this card? Or “What are the possible explanations for the track patterns seen here? Or “What do you think might happen on the next card?” Students will work together to develop different hypotheses and then use successive information to create, change, or confirm a hypothesis.

Conclusion/Key Take away:

After completing this activity students will:

- Learn how to identify and interpret animal tracks.
- Use tracks to identify species and behavior
- Develop skills in scientific investigation and reasoning
- Use critical thinking to explain how human presence and development impacts the natural wildlife in suburban areas and how wildlife is adapting to humans.

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