

## Whose poos? Instructions

### **Whose poos?**

Decide what animals you want to use for your activity. More valuable if the animals are local since that is what you might see on a hike. Also, mix it up – mammals, birds, herps.

For mammals, try to select animals that have different types of scat – coyote, bobcat, rabbit, squirrel, armadillo, raccoon and white tail deer. Opossum scat is kinda runny and hard to do, so skip them. Mountain lions and bears are cool, but have HUGE droppings, so you'd need a massive amount of modeling material. Same with horses and cattle.

For birds, quail and dove have nice, round solid droppings that are easy to form. You might want to try generic waterfowl (duck or goose), too. Vultures, hawks, owls and shorebirds have loose, liquidy splay that doesn't work for modeling. Most songbird droppings are just too small and it is very difficult to identify species.

For herps, I don't do salamander, tortoises or turtles since no one sees their scat. Geckos/lizards are fun and easy. I also choose a nonvenomous snake such as bull snake or Texas rat snake since they grow large (and you need to make the appropriate-size scat). I avoid venomous snakes because discussion about them could waylay your whole session!

### **What's it look like?**

This is where you will need to do your homework. The Tracking References (attached) list some scat books, but actually most of the books have some scat drawings. Make sure whatever photo/drawing you reference has a scale. You can also go online and find photos, but most of those don't have a scale. Not all scat references will tell you what the animal eats, so you'll need to look up the diets of your chosen animals.

### **Materials**

- Reference books/materials with description of the animal, its diet and drawing/photo of scat for the student teams (I have so many books, we had more books than teams). Or – make a reference card for each animal with the necessary info and drawings and hand cards out to the teams. If you want to reuse the cards, don't forget to laminate to protect from modeling materials.
- Modeling material in white (uric cap for birds and reptiles), brown and dark mossy green (waterfowl and dove). Depending on your budget, you can use soft modeling clay/foam (expensive) or make your own salt dough clay (instructions on the internet) dyed to the colors you need.
- Add-ins representing what the animal eats. For instance, broken-up shrimp shells, raisins (representing dried berries), bits of grass, leaves, diced almond pieces (representing bone), chocolate sprinkles (representing insect parts), pet fur (representing animal fur), peppercorns (again, dried berries), fish scales from the butcher counter (they look at you strangely, and then scrape off some scales for you anyhow) – use your imagination! Somewhat depends on the animals you chose.
- Paper plates – for modeling clay, add-ins and student teams to build their model.
- Sharpie marker to label plates with names of items.
- Rulers for each team so they can accurately scale their model.

**Timing**

With adults, I allowed 30 minutes, but with groups of 5 or 6, may not have been enough time. It takes a while for everyone to work out who does what. However, since the kids will probably have a little more guidance and smaller groups, 30 minutes should be plenty.

**Finale**

After each team has made their model, they must then make a presentation to the group. They should describe what the scat looks like (see descriptor words on attached Scat handout) and what the animal's diet is composed of. They might want their classmates to make a guess as to Whose Poo, but depending upon the kids, that could get out-of-control. Might just want them to describe scat, diet and a little bit about the animal.