

FUN AND QUICK ACTIVITIES (PRE-VISIT OR POST VIST)

Not much time? No worries. Here are several ideas for all ages that complement the lesson and can be done in under an hour.

OBJECTIVES:

ANIMAL FOSSILS: STUDENTS WILL IDENTIFY SEVERAL ANIMALS BY THE TRACKS THEY MAKE

STORY IN THE SAND:

STUDENTS WILL WORK IN GROUPS TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE TRACKS AND OTHER SIGNS THEIR CLASSMATES LEAVE

OWL PELLETS:

STUDENTS WILL UNDERSTAND THAT OWLS ARE A NECESSARY PART OF THE FOOD CHAIN, AND PELLETS ARE ONE SIGN OWLS LEAVE BEHIND.

Supplies needed:

Animal track fossils: coffee grounds, cold tea or coffee, flour, salt, bowls, mixing spoons, rubber animal tracks

Owl Pellet Dissection:

Owl pellets, tweezers or toothpicks, forceps, paper plates, bone chart, latex or rubber gloves, tape or glue

Arizona Standards

SC-S1C1-01, 02, 04

SC-S1C2-05

SC-S1C4-01, 02, 03,

SC-S4C1-01, 02, 03, 07

SC-S4C3-01, 02, 03, 06

ANIMAL TRACK FOSSILS

Using just a few ingredients, students can make their own animal track fossils that look like the real thing. Ingredients needed: coffee grounds, cold coffee or tea, flour, salt, and rubber animal tracks. Create the fossil dough with students by measuring 2 cups used coffee grounds, 1 cup cold coffee or tea, 2 cups flour, and 1 cup salt in a bowl. Knead the dough together and press into flat rounds on some waxed paper. This amount should be enough for ten students to create fossil tracks. Divide the dough between the students and have them press rubber animal tracks into their piece. They should use pencil tip or other pointed object to write the type of animal into the edge of the 'clay.' Allow fossil tracks to dry overnight.

A STORY IN THE SAND

Many of the signs that are left in our desert are actually left behind by people. When people get lost, professional trackers look for these signs when trying to locate the lost person. They look for signs such as footprints, broken branches, trash, bits of torn clothing and other signs that a person might leave behind. Here is a chance to test your tracking skills.

Go to an area of your school that might have sand, dirt or an area that you are able to leave signs (footprints, trash, food crumbs, etc.) Divide into two teams. Team one should close their eyes while team two makes a variety of tracks and other signs in the selected area. They should be trying to tell a story for the other team to guess. When they are finished team one can open their eyes and try to guess what team two was doing, or what story they were trying to tell. Team two can go over their tracks and explain their story and then the teams switch rolls.

DISSECTING OWL PELLETS

One sure sign that you have owls living in the area is to find owl pellets. By dissecting these pellets, you can discover just what food the owls ate. Owl pellets can be ordered at www.pelletsinc.com, amazon.com and other sites. The pellets they provide will most likely have birds, mice or other small rodents inside

Direct students to work together in pairs to dissect their pellet. Using their fingers, forceps, tweezers and toothpicks gently pull apart their pellet. Sort all of the bones into one pile and place the fur and other unknown materials in a separate pile. As the students dissect their pellet help them answer the following questions:

- * What do you expect to find in your pellet?
- * What is the soft material?
- * What type of animals did your owl eat?
- * Can you tell how many animals it ate?

Using the attached bone chart have the students glue or tape the bones they find to the appropriate spot on the chart. Have the students share their findings with their classmates.

If you only have one pellet and/or would like to do a dissection the whole class can see, use an overhead projector and screen. Your entire class can watch while you demonstrate how to do the above procedure.

You can also set the best bones in a thin layer of plaster-of-Paris to make a fossil!

