

# *Wings, Worms, and Wonder*

## Nature's Signs Scavenger Hunt

Document your findings in your nature journal in words and sketches to achieve each goal and complete the hunt.

### *1. Survey the Scene*

Find an open or elevated spot where you can get a view of the area. Sketch the landscape view in your nature journal. Make sure to include notable landmarks, both prominent and less so.

The goal is to create a map of the landscape, so make sure to include features, paths, borders, water features, and large landscape features like boulders. Take time to really observe and document all aspects of the land. This is your hunt map.

### *2. Sky Secrets*

Notice the wind and from where it is blowing. Is the wind light or strong, warm or cold? Is the breeze you feel normal for your area? (For example, if you live at the beach the winds usually blows off the water during the day.)

Look up at the clouds. What type of clouds do you see. Are they moving quickly or slowly across the sky?

If the wind isn't "normal" for the area, does the wind's temperature, direction, and look of the clouds above give you any clues about any weather fronts soon to arrive?

Document the wind direction and cloud shapes in your journal.

### *3. Sunshine Surprise*

Look in the direction of the sun. Based on its location in the sky, can you guess what time it is - morning, noon, afternoon, or sunset?

Does the sun's position offer any clues about what direction you are facing when you face its direction? Document the sun's position in the sky in your nature journal.

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### *4. Discover Ordinal Directions*

Use the landscape clues gathered so far to discover north, south, east, and west. Add a correctly oriented compass rose to your landscape map, if you can.

If you can't yet, skip ahead and return to this one when the directions are clear to you.

### *5. Telling Trees*

Move to a group of trees or more wooded area. Look at the trees around you. Do you know what type they are? Observe which side of the trees in the area have more leaves and branches. Is it their sunnier side? The sunny side is a clue to which direction is south.

Walk around a single tree. Notice the roots. Trees use roots as their anchors, so the roots are always bigger on the windward side of the tree. This will show you from which way the prevailing winds blow. Does that match your earlier wind direction observations?

Draw the trees, the directions their largest roots grow, make leaf rubbings, and add any other tree clues in your journal.

### *6. Rocky Clues*

Use your map to move to any exposed rock faces or natural boulders if there are any. Are they slanting on a similar angle? Geologists call this angle the rock "dip" What direction do the rock formations "dip" toward? Document the "dip" direction in your journal.

Do you see any small stones or pebbles? If so, notice if they are smooth and round or jagged and rough. Smooth rocks are a sign they have been tumbled by water. This is a clue that the area was a river bed past, or present. Document your stone observations in your journal and if you found water clues in the rock textures.

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### *7. Moisture Mystery*

Moss and algae need water to grow and reproduce. Seek out shady sides of trees and rocks to find moss growing and you will likely find north. Can you find the moss's moisture source. Is it wicking through a rock, from a creek, or just the side of the tree that doesn't dry out as quickly in the sun?

Seek out any shady water areas to find algae growing. Look to see what is casting the shade over the water and you will usually discover that the water is on the north side of the shade casting object.

If you haven't yet, can you now determine north, south, east and west?

In your journal, document the directions on your map, as well as where you found moss, what it's moisture source is, and if you found algae in a water source.

### *8. Lichen Love*

Lichen evolved from both algae and moss and grows in areas where neither could survive independently. Lichen comes in colors from grey green to brown and even red purple. It grows in patches on trees, rocks, fence posts, signs, and about anywhere else it likes. The patches can be flat, hairy looking, or even look a bit like lettuce or seaweed.

Lichen is an indicator of excellent air quality and won't grow in places with poor air quality. Walk around and look at trees, rocks, and other surfaces in shade or soft sunlight.

Do you see any lichen growing? If so, take 3 long deep breaths and enjoy the fresh air.

Document in your journal where you found lichen and its colors.

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### *9. Floral Clocks*

Flowers are nature's timekeepers. They signal seasonal changes and time of day through their blooming, opening, and closing. If you get to know the blooming schedules of local flowers, you will be connected to the earliest indicators of seasonal shifts.

Since most flowers are sun seekers, they signal which direction is south as the south side is the sunny side. Find a slope covered with flowers and determine the direction based on the fullness of the flowers and growing there. In your journal, draw the sunny south facing sun loving flowers blooms you discover. You can also name them if possible.

### *10. Animal Activity*

Animal tracking is a skill of its own, but a little observation of animal tracks offers quite a few nature clues. Have you seen any tracks on your path? If you find tracks, walk around them to observe them from all angles. This helps you get a more info from the tracks.

Look for easy evidence of animal activity in their tracks and scat (poop). Do these clues tell you: the type of animal (a pet or a wild animal), the direction the animal was traveling (to or from food or water), or what they may have been doing (eating, hunting)?

If you find duck or frog tracks, they will likely lead you to water. If you find raccoon tracks in a clearing do they lead to its shelter in a wooded area or disappear up a tree? Or if you find bear tracks, is that a clue to stay keenly aware of your surroundings?

Draw the tracks you find, their location, and all other clues in your journal.

### *Scavenging Success!*

Congratulations! Your clues are completed because you read the signs nature whispered to you. You are now a step closer to being a nature navigator. Make sure your discoveries to the nature clues are documented in your nature journal, and then return to the meeting place to share your findings and celebrate!