

Nature Detectives: Day 1

This week your young scientist will use his or her amazing observations skills to examine and investigate on a smaller scale. Sharp sleuthing skills will find signs of living things in your backyard. As s/he explores, your young scientist will put together clues to know, while you may not always see a living thing, signs are all around to know it is there.

These curated activities are listed in a suggested sequence but may be done in the order that works best for you and your young scientists. Learn more about this series in the [Introduction to Weekday Wonders](#).



Question of the Day

Can you spy living things outside your window?



Daily Nature Journal

Ask your young scientist to spend some time outside today completing a daily nature journal entry. Use the [Guide to Nature Journaling](#) to support them in nature journaling each day.



A Part of Something Bigger

Tell your young scientist that being a great detective means having a keen eye for the small things and the details. Sometimes, scientists must put together pieces to see the big picture. If a scientist only has a portion of a living thing, clues may be used to solve the puzzle.

Have your scientist draw a table that has 3 rows and 3 columns. Show him or her the clue pictures on page 3. Each picture is a part of a living thing. The picture may be an up-close portion, or it may be a specific part, like the tail of a fish. In each square of the table your scientist drew, have him or her write what s/he thinks the part is or to what it may belong.

Next, have your scientist use the pictures on page 4 to match the living thing with the clue from page 3. Have your scientist describe what helped him or her know which clue matched which picture. For example, he or she might say that the stripes in the clue helped him or her match the striped lionfish.



I Spy

Remind your young scientist how it is important to use keen eyes when exploring nature and explain to your young scientist about rolling rocks and looking under logs and through leaf litter without telling them about the living things s/he may find as described in the upcoming Movement Activity. Have your young scientist make a list or draw what s/he thinks may be hiding under a log, rock, or leaf litter.



Looking Under Logs and Rolling Rocks

Now that your young scientist has focused on smaller details of living things in the previous activity, it is time to see if s/he can spot small things living in places s/he might not expect. Outside, have your young scientist locate an object that has been in place for a while. It may be a rock, log, gutter splash drain, flower pot, bench, chair, or other part of landscaping. The important part is it has been there for a while. Have your scientist write or draw anything that s/he thinks might be living under the object.

Have your scientist squat by the object, then lift it so it opens AWAY from him or her. If anything living underneath becomes frightened and flees, it will run away from the scientist. Once any startled inhabitants have had a chance to escape, carefully look under the rock or log.

Discuss the following questions with your scientist.

- What is living under it? Grubs or other insect larva, ants, termites, centipedes, millipedes, or spiders may be a few of the animals your scientist finds.
- Did anything escape? What did it seem to be?

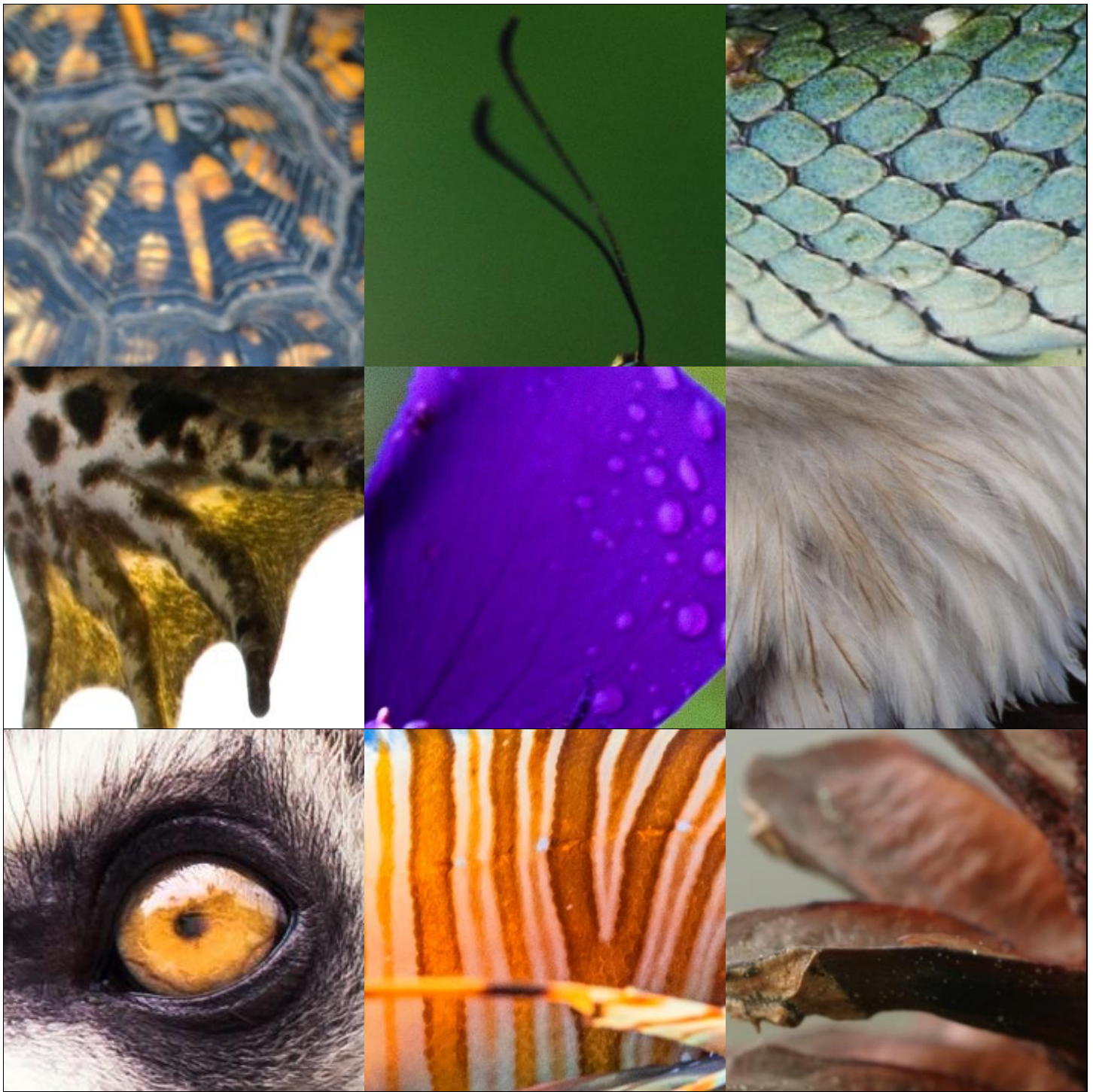
In his or her nature journal, have your young scientist compare the animals s/he thought would be found to the animals actually found. Have him draw or add to his list. Once you are finished, remember to gently return the rock or log to its original positions.

Now have your young scientist think about the animals from the expected-to-find-list that weren't actually found. Discuss if your scientist thinks those animals might live in the spot under the object. Would they be small enough? Do they like cool, dark, damp areas? What are some other factors that may determine if found or not?

Another way to find small, hidden living things is to sift through layers of decomposing leaves on top of soil, called leaf litter. Have your young scientist locate a small, sturdy stick about 8- 12 inches long to use as a tool and then find a nice area of leaf litter. Once again, the longer the leaf litter has been there, the more living things the young scientist may find. With the stick, the young scientist should gently and carefully remove the layers of the litter. Discuss the following questions.

- Are there any of the same living things as from the rock or log?
- What different living things does s/he find in the leaf litter?
- Why might there be the same or different living things there?

A Part of Something Bigger Clue Pictures



A Part of Something Bigger Pictures

