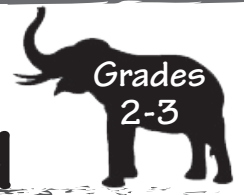




# What clues do elephants leave behind



Elephants are very large animals and leave many clues behind when they walk through an area. Students will learn more about these clues, be able to identify them, and tell the story of the elephants by looking at the clues that the elephant left behind.

Subject Area: Science

Background Information: Pages 8, 9

Vocabulary: Dung

Students will be able to:

- Identify the clues that elephants leave behind: footprints, dung, tusk marks, tree rubbings, and pushed over trees;
- Explain one reason elephant dung is important to the ecosystem.

Materials:

- Lesson 8: What clues do elephants leave behind - Elephant Clues PowerPoint
- Activity Sheet 21: Elephant Clue Card
- Activity Sheet 22: Animal Clues
- Pencil, pen, or marker to circle the clues

## Learning Activities

### Preparation

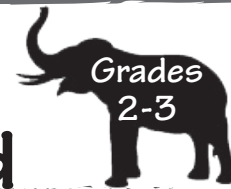
1. Print one copy of Activity Sheet 21 : Elephant Clue Card and Activity Sheet 22: Animal Clues for each student.

### Activity

2. Elephants are the largest terrestrial animals alive today, so clearly they leave clues as to where they have been and what they were doing when they travel through an area. Even if you didn't see the elephant itself, you know it has been through the area because of the clues it leaves behind. Ask the students what clues an elephant might leave behind? *Footprints, dung, leaves and grasses that have been eaten.*
3. Let's examine some of these clues.
4. Show the students the Lesson 8: What clues do elephants leave behind - Elephant Clues PowerPoint and review the clues with the students.
3. Some clues that elephants leave behind are special just to elephants, such as tusk marks in clay and mud, trees rubbed against as a scratching post, and even trees they have pushed over. Elephants will use their tusks to dig in mineral pits to find salt and to dig holes to find water for themselves and other animals. Elephants will rub against trees to scratch themselves, which leaves the bark rubbed smooth. At times, elephants will push trees over. This action helps makes paths for elephants and other animals and keeps the savanna a grassland for themselves and other herbivores.
4. Have the students look at Activity Sheet 21: Elephant Clue Card. Using the elephant clues on Activity Sheet 22, have them circle the clues that an elephant left behind.



# What clues do elephants leave behind



## Discussion

5. Once the students have circled all the clues, have them use the clues to tell the story of what activities the elephants did as they traveled through the area. Researchers study the clues that animals leave behind to learn more about them. They can discover what parts of the habitat elephants spend the most time in, where an animal travels to and what routes it takes to get there, what an animal eats, and how many animals are in the area. Have the students look at the clues and tell the story of the elephant.

- Was there only one elephant in the area? *No, there are several different elephant footprints, both large and small. Who left the little footprints? A baby was traveling with its mother.*
- What did the elephants first do when they first entered the area? *They rubbed against the tree on the far right. Why would an elephant rub on a tree? To scratch its back and sides . . . it feels so good! Scratching also helps to remove dry skin.*
- What happened next? *The elephants left a pile of dung. Why is dung important? It spreads seeds, fertilizes the soil and helps the dung beetle. What can you see in the dung? You can see grasses and seeds and bark, almost everything an elephant eats.*
- Where did the elephants travel next? *They traveled to the mineral lick and used their tusks to dig for salt. Why do elephants seek out salt? Salt is an important mineral for many animals, including people. Elephants use their tusks to dig up the soil and eat it.*
- After the elephants left the mineral lick, where did they go and what happened? *They walked to a tree and pushed it over. Why might an elephant push over a tree? Maybe to reach the tasty leaves, fruit or bark. Is this bad for the habitat? No, because elephants eat mostly grass and pushing over trees opens the habitat up for more grasses to grow.*

6. So now, just like researchers in Africa, we have followed the tracks of elephants to learn about their lives, where they have been and what they were doing.

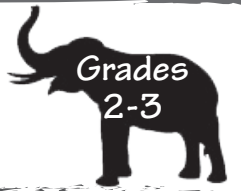
## Extension

Just as students looked for the clues that elephants left behind, they can look for animal clues in their own backyard. Have the students use the bottom half of Activity Sheet 21, to look for clues in their own backyard. They might find footprints, dung, and tree rubbings like they did in this activity or new clues like nests, feathers, and webs! Students can even become citizen scientists and take photos of the animals or animal clues they find and upload them to Project Noah. Visit <http://www.projectnoah.org/> to learn more.



Lesson  
8

# What clues do elephants leave behind?



Grades  
2-3

Activity Sheet 21

## Elephant Clue Card

Look at the elephant habitat and find the clues that an elephant left behind.



Footprints



Tusk Marks



Dung



Rubbing Tree



Pushed Over Tree

## Extension Activity

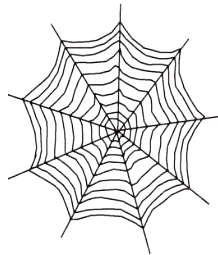
### What animal clues can you find at home?



Feather



Nest



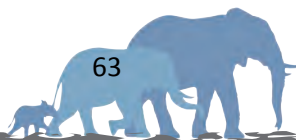
Web



Footprints

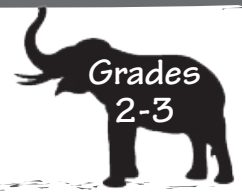
Other

Look for animal clues near your home to learn what animals live nearby.





# What clues do elephants leave behind?



Activity Sheet 22

Use the clue card to circle the clues below that the elephant left behind.

