

Discovering secrets



American Robin
Wisconsin's
State Bird

Wisconsin Explorers Kids ages 3-5
Wisconsin Explorers
Wisconsin Explorers
Wisconsin Explorers
Wisconsin Explorers
Wisconsin Explorers

_____ your name

_____ date

_____ name of park

Have fun! Explore! Collect a patch!

Grown-ups, get ready to spend some quality time outdoors with your favorite preschooler! As an added bonus, your child can earn a colorful patch. Just check off explorations here or on the evaluation form as you do them.

- We followed an ant (page 3).
- We invited an ant to lunch (page 3).
- We found wild shapes (pages 6-7).
- We watched a bird (page 8).
- We took a bird walk (page 10).
- We found the moon (page 11).
- We took a texture walk (page 14).
- We took a crayon hike (page 16).
- We painted a nature picture (page 17).
- We found colorful animals (pages 18-19).



Explorer Packs Available!
Borrow a pack filled with exploring tools. Ask park staff.

To earn a patch:

- Complete 5 to 10 of the explorations listed above.
- Attend a nature program or take a nature hike.
- Pick up litter, clean up your campsite, or invite birds into your yard (see page 8).
- Fill out the evaluation form (found on colored center pages of this booklet).

To get a patch (choose one method):

- Give your evaluation form to a park staff person and tell him/her what you did.
- Visit the Wisconsin Explorers website. Go to <www.wiparks.net> and search for "Wisconsin Explorers." Complete and submit the evaluation form following the directions on the website. The patch will arrive by mail in 2-4 weeks.
- Mail the evaluation form, your address, and a letter or drawing telling about your explorations to: Wisconsin Explorers Program PR/6, Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. The patch will arrive in 2-4 weeks.

For more information, call (715) 365-8966
or email DNRWisconsinParks@wisconsin.gov

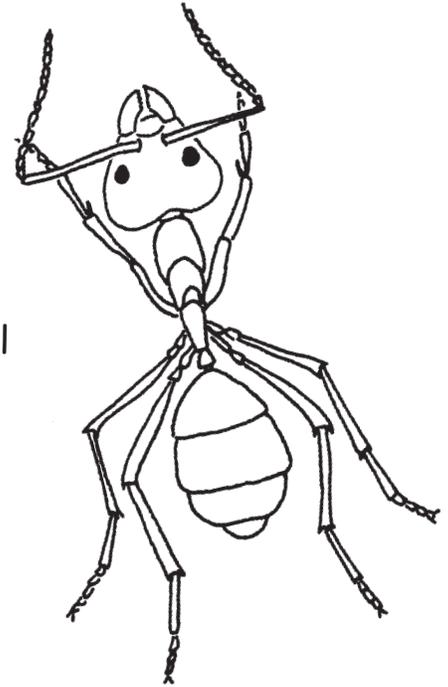
The Wisconsin Explorers program is an interpretive program of the Wisconsin State Park System made possible by the generous support of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin and the following donors: Bong Naturalist Association, Friends of Buckhorn State Park, Friends of Devil's Lake State Park, Friends of Hartman Creek State Park, Friends of Interstate Park, Friends of Kettle Moraine, Inc., Friends of Kohler Andrae State Park, Friends of New Glarus Woods State Park, Friends of Rock Island State Park, Friends of Whitefish Dunes State Park, Menasha Corporation Foundation, R.D. & Linda Peters Foundation, and one very generous anonymous donor.



Follow an Ant

Ants love to visit your campsite or picnic. How do they find you so quickly? If you see ants, get your family or friends together and follow the ants home. Can you discover their secret places?

How many ants and ant nests can you find? Look for small piles of fine soil around sidewalks. Look under stones or boards. Look around trees and buildings.



kitchen ant

Kitchen ants are this big — and black.



field ant

Field ants are this big — and black, brown, or red. They live in large colonies in the soil.

carpenter ant

Carpenter ants are this big — and black and brown. They live and make tunnels in wood.

Grown-ups

Caution!

Most ants will bite when disturbed.

Play follow the leader

Watch ants follow each other. Then pretend to be ants and play "Follow the Leader."

Play in the ant maze

Ask your preschooler to find some small pebbles. Pretend the pebbles are ants. Use the ant home on pages 4 and 5 as a maze. Move through the tunnels, follow each other, talk to each other, and find food together.

Eat ants on a log

Spread peanut butter on celery sticks. Invite your preschooler to add raisin "ants" and enjoy a healthy snack.

Smell an ant

When ants meet, they smell each other. Some ants have distinct odors that people can smell. Put an ant in a cup and smell it. Do you smell rotten coconut, lemon, or wood smoke?

Invite an ant to lunch!

Drop small pieces of food near an ant. Try bits of bananas, cherries, peanut butter, honey, and dead insects. Which foods do the ants seem to like? Clean up the food when you are done so you don't attract other wildlife to the area.



Respect wild animals

Model respect for all life by treating ants kindly. While most people don't invite ants into their homes, remember that when you are outdoors, you are the visitors.



Read a story

Ant Cities by Arthur Dorros

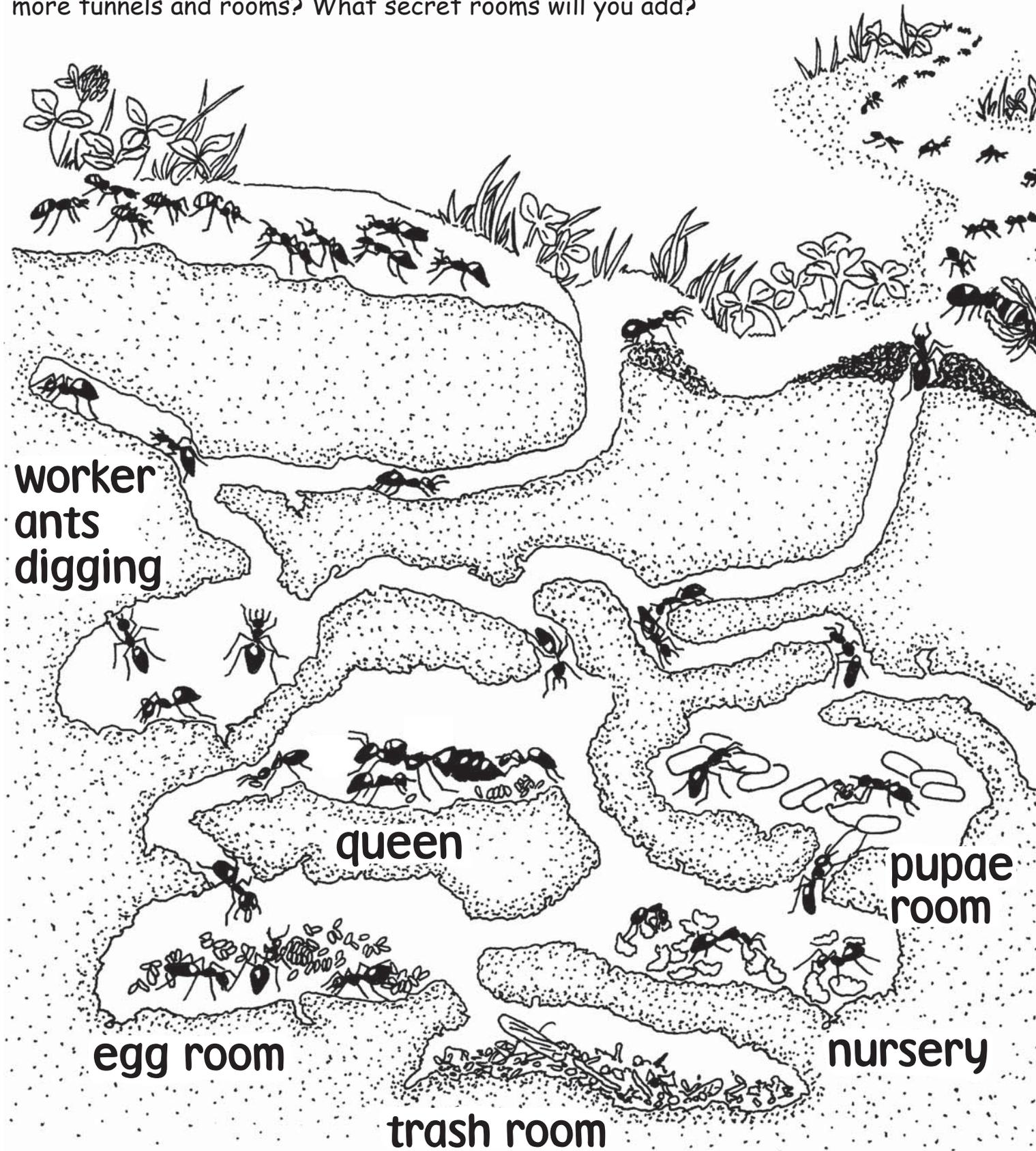
If You Were an Ant by Barbara Brenner

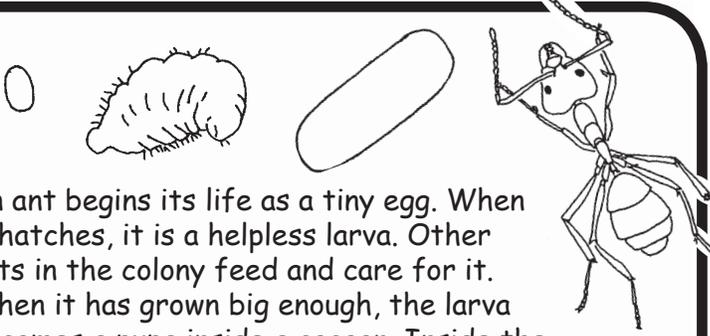
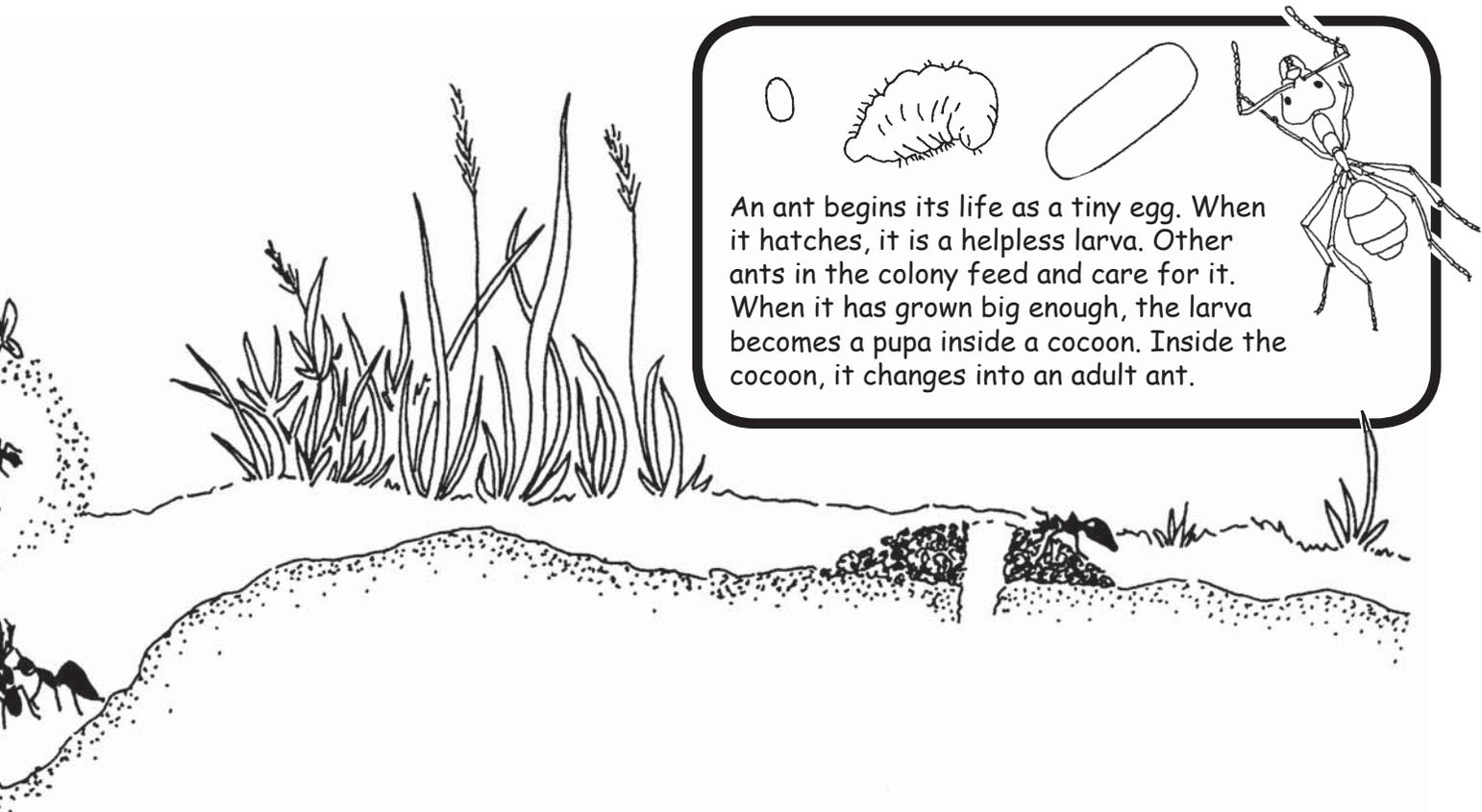
Amazing Anthony Ant by Lorna and Graham Philpot

If I Were an Ant by Amy Moses

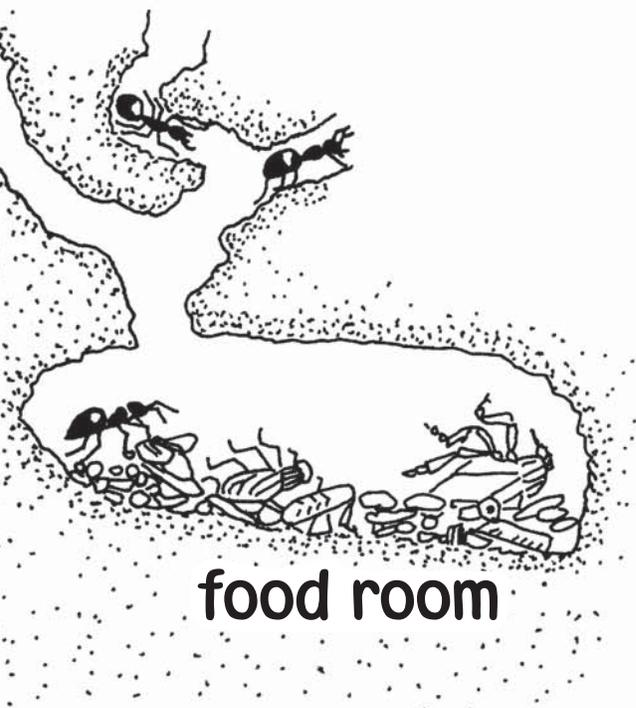
Home sweet hidden home

Ants usually live under the ground. They build many rooms in their homes. Can you help these ants finish their home by drawing more tunnels and rooms? What secret rooms will you add?





An ant begins its life as a tiny egg. When it hatches, it is a helpless larva. Other ants in the colony feed and care for it. When it has grown big enough, the larva becomes a pupa inside a cocoon. Inside the cocoon, it changes into an adult ant.

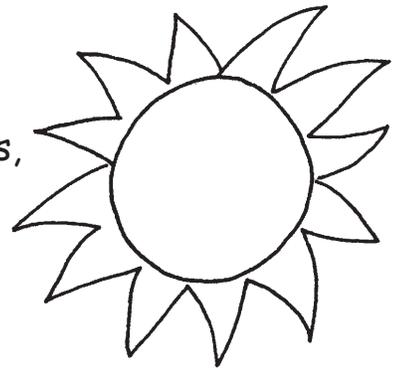
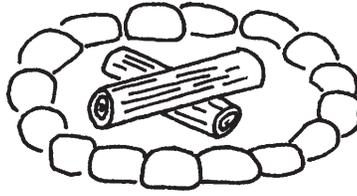
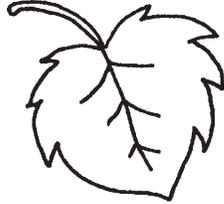
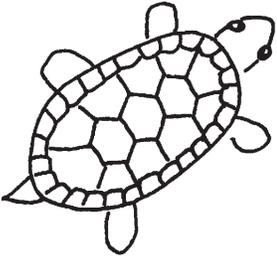


food room

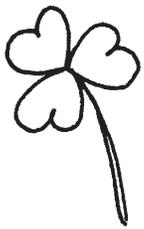
Draw new tunnels and rooms in this ant home.

Find Wild Shapes

Look around the park or your campsite. Take a walk. Look for hidden shapes in leaves, animal homes, trees, footprints, and every wild thing you see.



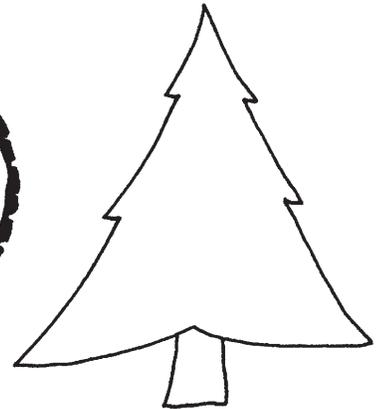
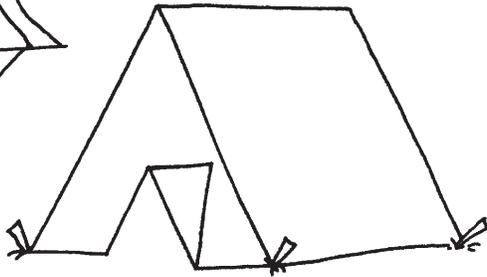
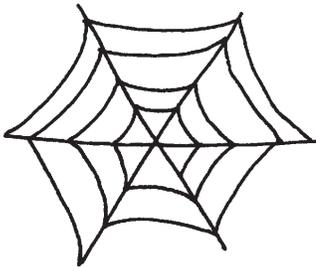
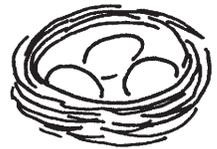
Circle, heart, triangle, square,



There are so many shapes out there.

Everywhere you look you'll see

Another shape. What will it be?



Grown-ups

Go on a shape hunt

Use the shapes on the next page to go on a shape hunt. Write the things you find inside the matching shapes or let your preschooler draw her favorite "find" inside each shape.

Eat shapes

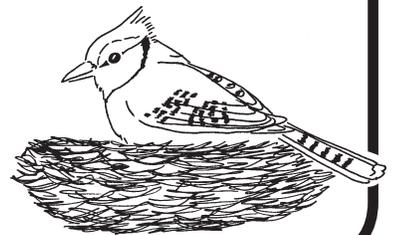
Have a circle lunch. Core apples and cut into crosswise circles. Eat cucumbers, bologna, bagels, and peas. Next time, eat squares: PB&J sandwich, cheese, crackers, and ravioli.

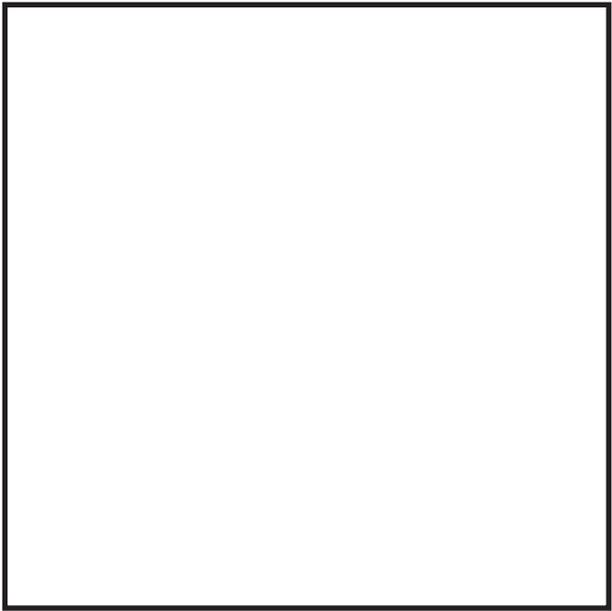
Leave what you find

As you find amazing things in nature, remember to teach your preschoolers to leave what they find. Use photographs, drawings, memories, and texture rubbings to take good memories home.

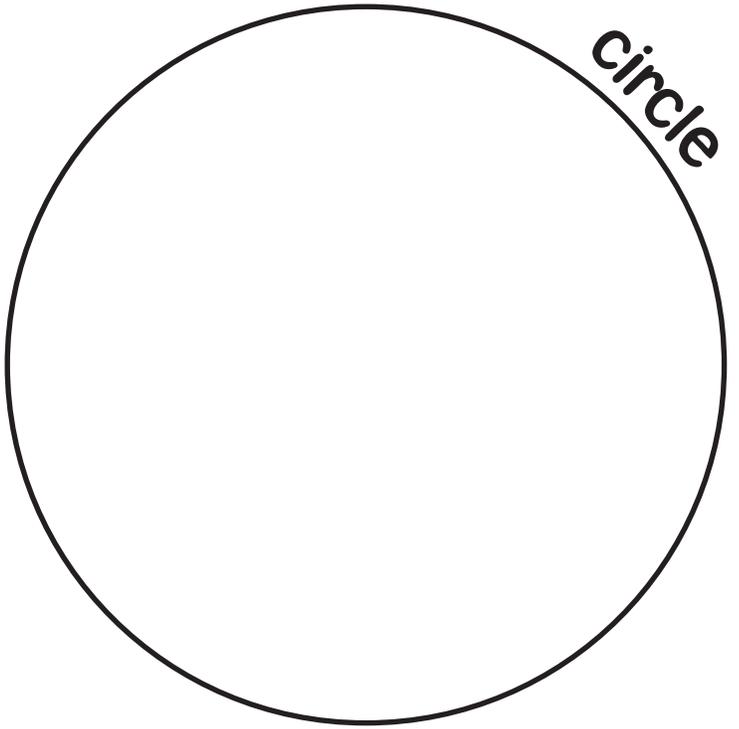
Read a story

Animal Homes by
Aileen Fischer
Shapes in Nature by
Judy Feldman

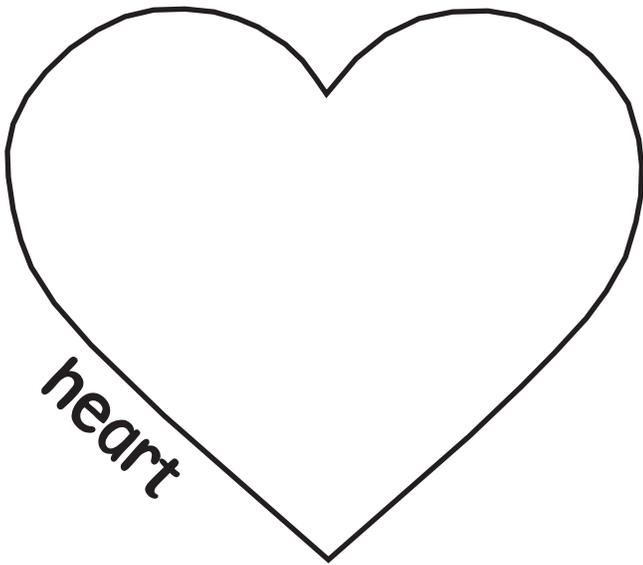




square

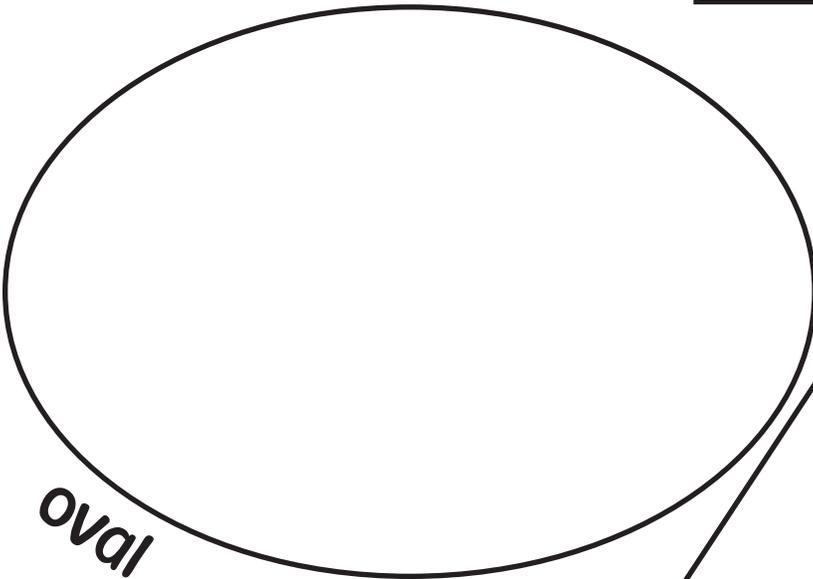


circle

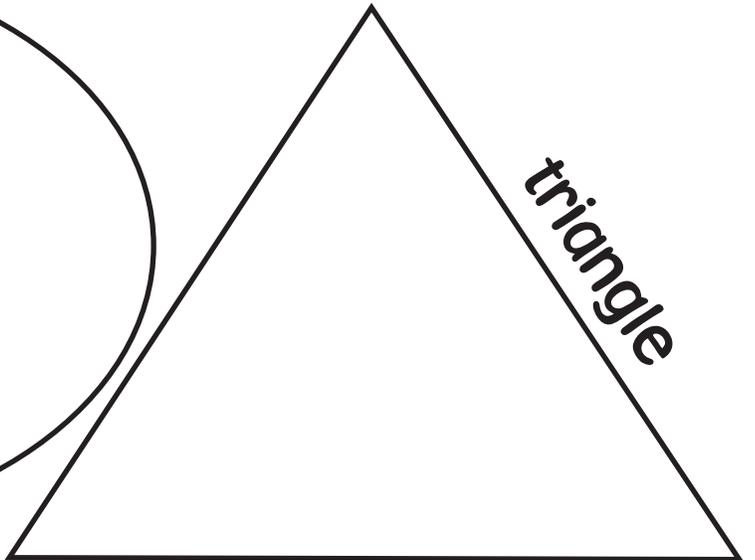


heart

rectangle



oval



triangle

Watch a Bird

Birds are fun to watch. They eat, fly, sing, chase each other, sit around, and eat some more. Is that all they do? You will have to watch them to learn their secrets.

Meet the robin

Wisconsin's state bird is the American robin. You can find robins in woods, meadows, campgrounds, and cities. Next time you see a robin, watch it closely. Did you find a . . .



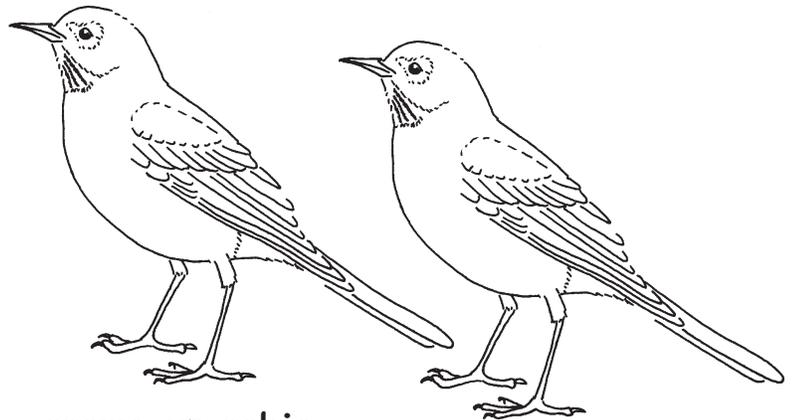
baby robin

Baby robins are helpless in their nests. They are orangish pink with just a few feathers.



young robin

Fledglings are ready to learn how to fly. They are brownish birds with orange breasts.



grown-up robin

Mother and father robins look similar. They have white feathers on their chins and lower bellies. A father robin's head and back are almost black and his breast is rusty red. A mother robin's head and back are gray and her breast is dull red.

Grown-ups

Talk like a bird

Try "talking" in bird language for 5 to 10 minutes. Chirp for food, squawk when upset, and whistle when happy. Was it fun or frustrating?

Make a nest

Using only things it finds, a bird weaves a nest that can withstand summer storms and hold squirming babies. Could you and your preschooler do that? You're allowed to use your fingers and mud, but no glue!

Start a journal

After watching robins, encourage your preschooler to draw a picture on page 9. You can add text that he dictates to you.

Leave it to the birds

If you or your child finds a baby bird out of its nest, put it back. If you can't put it in the nest, put it in a box lid with some dry grass and move it as close to the nest as possible. Don't try to adopt a baby bird. Birds are much better at raising their young than people are!

Invite birds into your yard

Food, water, and native vegetation will make your home a welcoming place for birds. For ideas, visit the National Wildlife Federation's website <www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife>.

Read a story

Robin at Hickory Street by Dana Meachen Rau
My Spring Robin by Anne Rockwell
The Robins in Your Backyard by Nancy Carol Willis

Draw a picture of your robin

Tell a story about what your robin was doing.

If you didn't find a robin, draw a bird you did see.

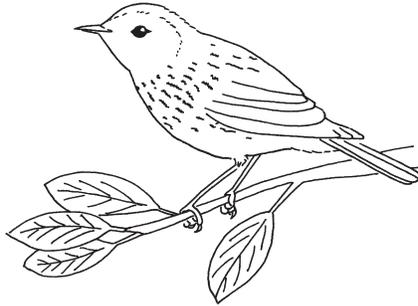
Take a bird walk

What are the birds doing? Try to mark a whole row or column (like Bingo!).
Can you pretend to be a bird doing each of these things?

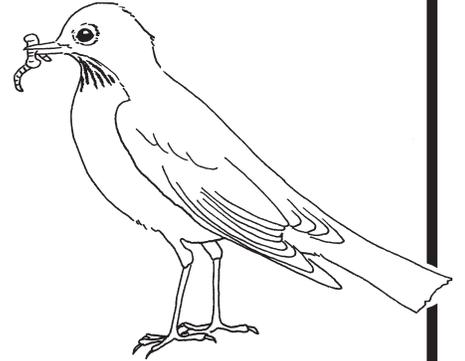
singing



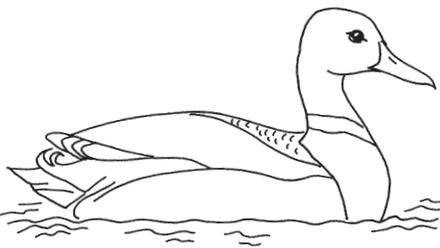
perching



eating



swimming



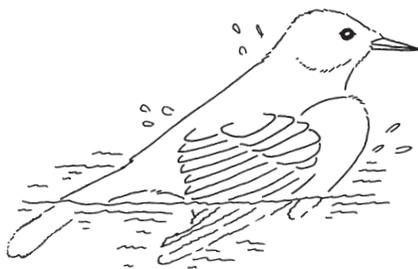
climbing a tree



wading in the water



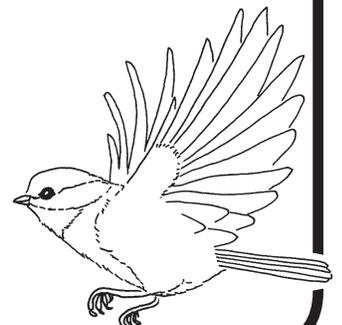
taking a bath



hopping

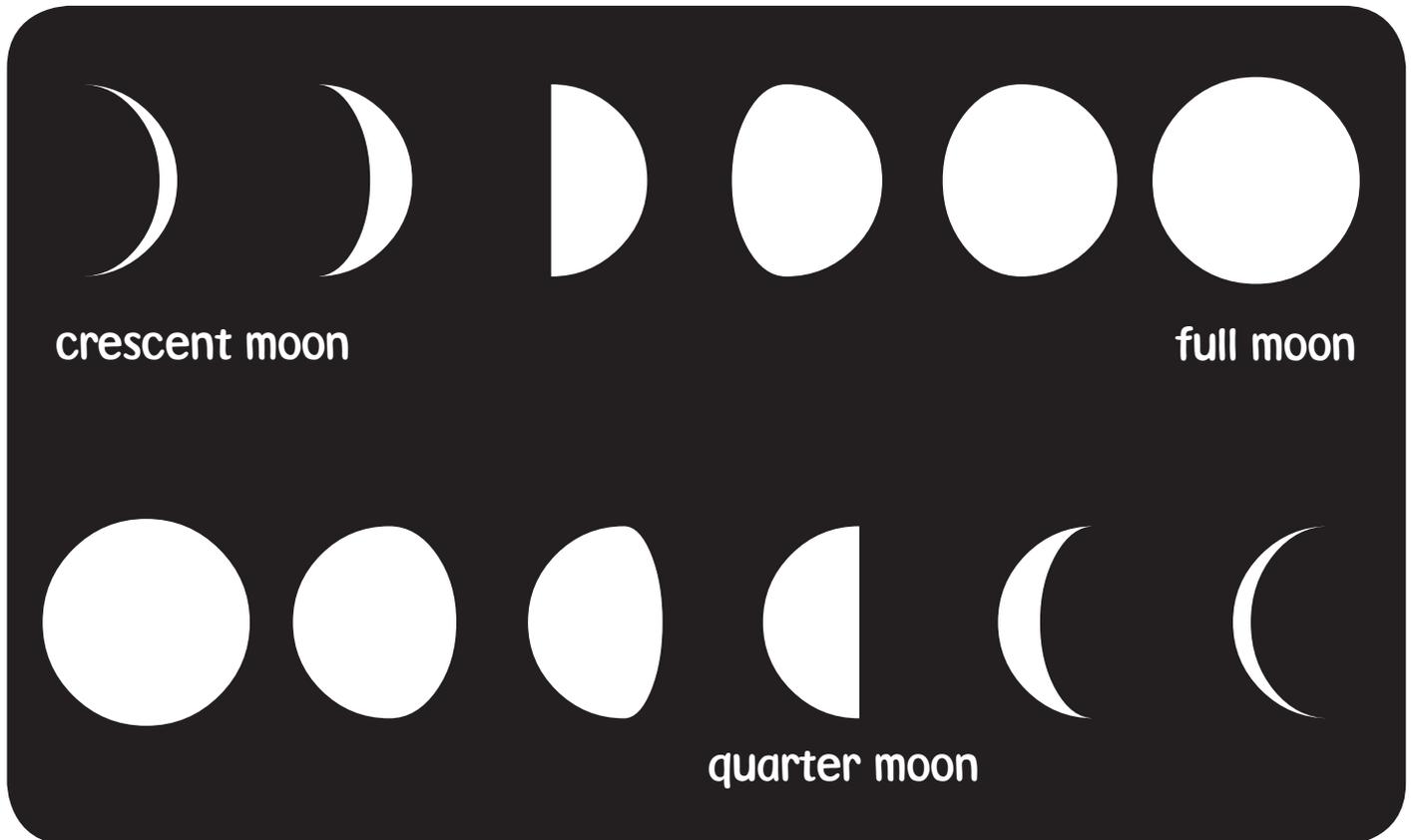


flying



Play with the Moon!

Camping is a great time to watch the moon dance slowly across the sky. Can you find the moon? Color the picture below that it looks most like today. Watch the moon every night. Is the moon getting smaller or getting bigger?



Grown-ups

Play moon shadow tag

On a night with a bright moon, find a big open area where it is safe to run around in the dark. Decide who will be IT. IT tags another player by stepping on his or her shadow.

Paint moonlight art

On page 13, have your preschooler use a white crayon to draw a night scene. When done, brush watercolors over the whole page. (You could also use the juice from smashed berries.) The white crayon resists the paint and makes a nighttime picture.



Make moon cookies

Chinese people celebrate the Moon Festival each fall with family reunions and moon cakes. Find something to celebrate with these moon cookies!

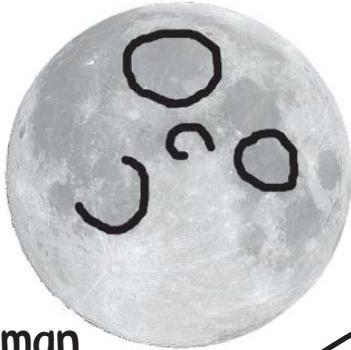
Recipe: Mix together 1/2 cup peanut butter, 1 tablespoon honey, 1/3 cup dry milk, and enough crushed graham crackers to make the mixture moldable. Lay wax paper on a plate. Using one tablespoonful at a time, make into balls and roll in powdered sugar. Chill for 30 minutes.

Read a story

I'll See You When the Moon is Full by Susi Gregg Fowler
See You Soon, Moon by Donna Conrad

Draw what you see in the moon

Some people look at the moon and see a man in the moon.
Other people see a rabbit, two frogs, or a wolf's head.
Draw what you see.



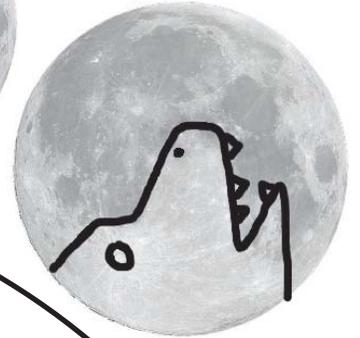
man
in the
moon



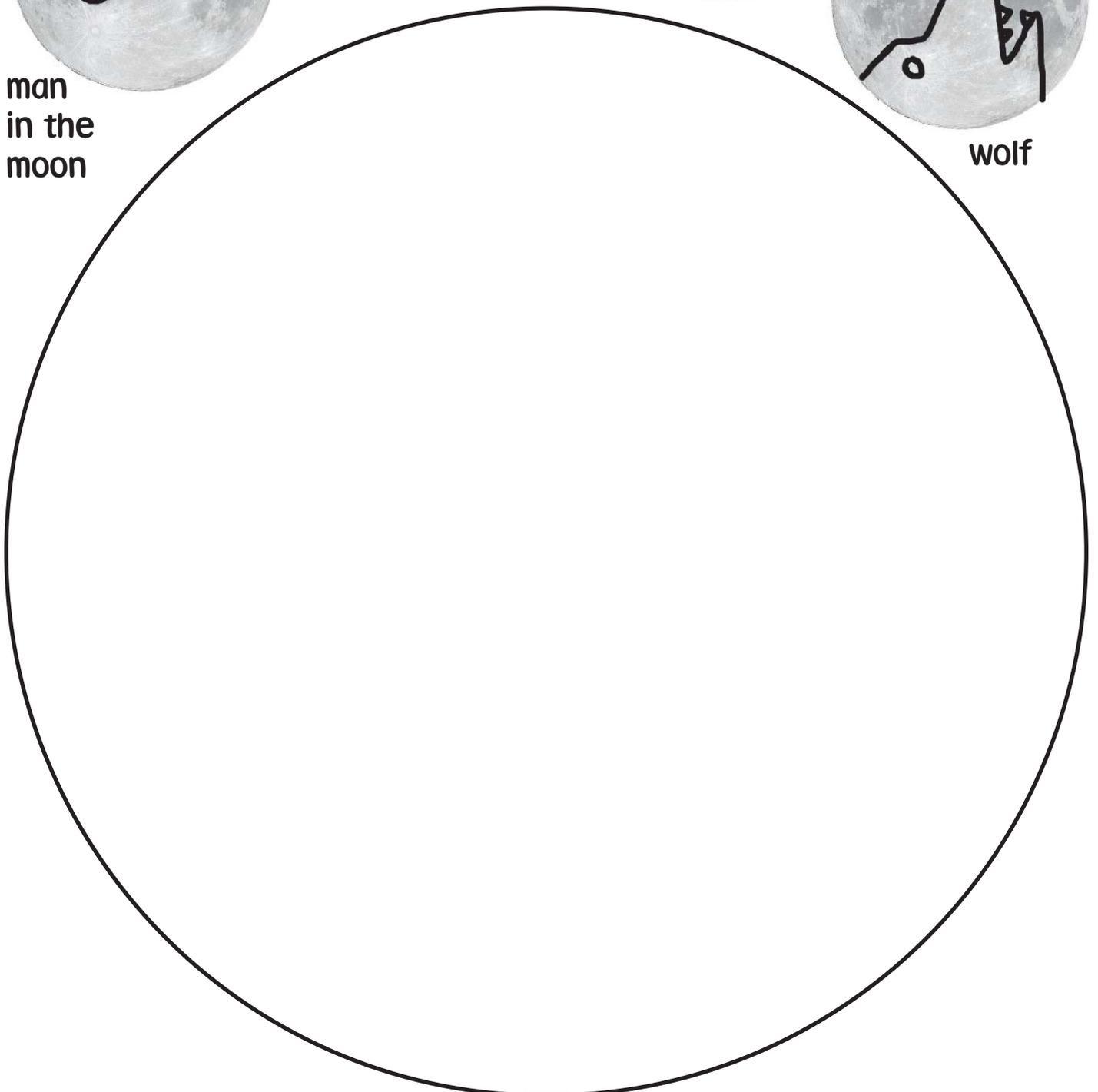
rabbit



two
frogs



wolf



Paint a moon song

Sing this song by Margaret Timmons to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Then draw a moonlit picture. See directions on page 11.

Moon glow, moon glow in the night.

Moon glow, moon glow, gentle light.

How I love to see you there,

Softly shining everywhere!

Moon glow, moon glow in the night.

Moon glow, moon glow, gentle light.

Touch Nature

Do grown-ups ever say, "Don't touch that?" to you? Sometimes they are protecting you from something dangerous. Sometimes they don't want you to break something valuable.

The good thing about nature is that you can touch a lot of things. There are only a few plants and animals that can hurt you.

Listen to grown-ups, and you will learn what you can touch and what you can't.



Trace your hand here.

Grown-ups

Take a texture walk

Collect items with a variety of textures (e.g., a piece of paper, fleece top, pot scrubber, plastic bag, hair brush). Put them in a bag and go for a walk. Pull out one item at a time and try to find something in nature that feels the same. Remember to watch out for poison ivy and wild parsnip.

Make a leaf rubbing

Working on a hard surface, put a leaf under a piece of paper with the vein side up. Invite your preschooler to rub over the paper with a crayon. Encourage him to keep rubbing until he sees the whole leaf on the paper.

Build vocabulary

When you find a new texture, talk together to describe it. If you can't find the right word, make up your own words (e.g., fuzzbumps).

Play with secret socks

You'll need a large sock, a plastic cup, and a small pine cone. Hide the pine cone inside the cup. Put the cup inside the sock. Invite your child to put his hand inside the cup and feel the pine cone. Ask him to describe the object before guessing what it is. Take turns hiding other things inside the secret sock.

Go barefoot!

Find a safe place to go barefoot. Enjoy wet morning dew, hot dry sand, and spongy moss. Ask your child to close her eyes. Put something under her feet and encourage her to identify it with her toes.

Read a story

I Can Tell by Touching by Carolyn Otto
Tickly Prickly by Bonnie Becker

Walk with your fingers

On a hike, find things that are prickly, smooth, bumpy, and rough. Make a rubbing by placing this page on top of the object. Rub over the paper with a crayon. For the best print, remove the wrapping from the crayon and use the long side.

prickly

smooth

bumpy

rough

Color the World

Look around the park. If you can only see green, you need to look closer!
Nature is full of hidden colors!

Write a poem

Take a crayon hike (see below). After your hike, read the sample poem. Then sit down with your family and write your own poem about the colorful things you saw.

Green as the grass,
Blue as the sky,
Black as an ant,
Yellow as a butterfly.



Think of the colorful things you saw and write your poem here.

_____ as _____,

_____ as _____,

_____ as _____,

_____ as _____.

Grown-ups

Take a crayon hike

Grab a box of crayons or colored pencils and go for a hike. Look for matching colors in nature. Can you find red veins in leaves, silver spots on twigs, gold eyes on frogs, and purple dots on butterflies?

Paint a nature picture

Your child can use the blank space on page 17 to experiment with nature "crayons." He can also try woodchips or campfire charcoal.

Only use plants from mowed turf areas. Many wildflowers are protected and shouldn't be picked.

Read a story

Beautiful Moments in the Wild: Animals and their Colors by Stephanie Maze

Living Color by Steve Jenkins

Red Eyes or Blue Feathers: A Book about Animal Colors by Patricia Stockland

Paint a nature picture

Rub grass, soil, dandelions, or berries on this page to paint a wild picture.

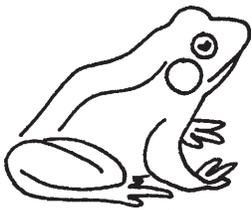
Find the colorful animals

Many animals have color as part of their names. Find one of each color on your hike through the park. Circle the animals you see. If you see a different colorful animal, draw a picture of it in the box below.

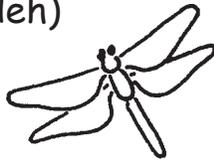
Can you say your colors in Spanish?

green

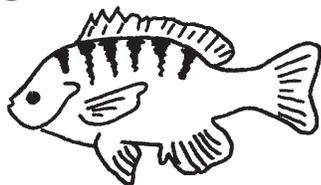
verde (BEHR-deh)



green frog



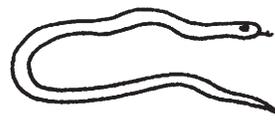
green darner



green sunfish

brown and gray

marrón (mah-RROHN) y
gris (GREESS)



brown snake



little brown bat

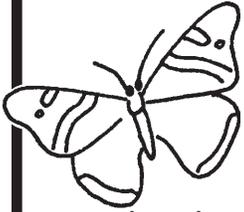


gray squirrel

Here are the other colorful animals I found!

red

rojo (ROH-hoh)



red admiral
butterfly



red fox



redbelly
snake



red-winged
blackbird

blue

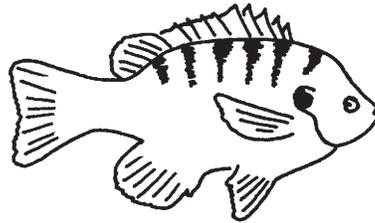
azul (ah-SOOL)



blue-spotted
salamander



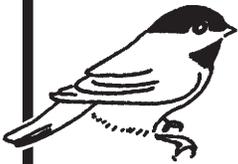
blue jay



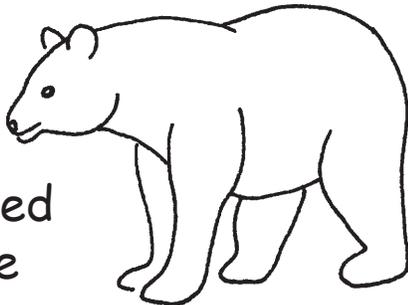
bluegill

white and black

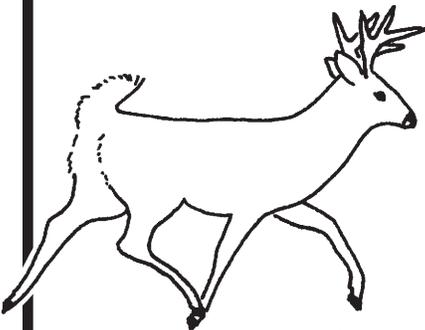
blanco (BLAHN-koh) y
negro (NEH-groh)



black-capped
chickadee



black bear



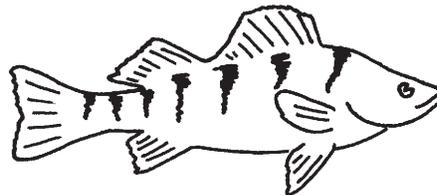
white-tailed
deer



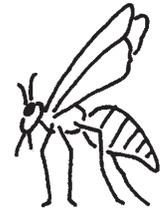
black
swallowtail

yellow and orange

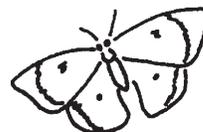
amarillo (ah-mah-REE-yo) y
naranja (nah-RAHN-hah)



yellow perch



yellow
jacket



orange
sulphur



goldfinch

Exploring nature is fun, easy, and good for you!



It's time to **Get Outdoors! Wisconsin!** Did you know that actively exploring in the outdoors reduces stress, helps fight obesity, increases creativity, and improves performance at school and work?

The Wisconsin State Park System invites you to . . .

Get Outdoors! Wisconsin to play and explore. Find events, activities, and materials to get you started. Go to www.wiparks.net and look for **Get Outdoors! Wisconsin**.

Attend nature programs to discover the natural and cultural resources around you. Visit www.wiparks.net for a statewide calendar of programs.

Follow trails, paths, or sidewalks and see what you find along the way. You'll find 99 state parks, trails, forests, and recreation areas at www.wiparks.net

Borrow nature exploration tools.

Many state properties have exploration cards, backpacks, magnifying lenses, and other equipment for loan. Visit www.dnr.wiparks.net or ask at the park office.



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