

# Nature Puzzles

UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant

*Author:*

**Ipsita Tingi**

Public Programs Intern

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Hunting for objects and solving mysteries are fun!  
Using this guide, go on a scavenger hunt and analyze  
your findings to identify each species. Will you be able  
to figure them out or will you be stumped?



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## Materials

- Paper or journal
- A writing utensil
- Your detective cap (optional)
- A camera or coloring materials (optional)

## Part 1: A Scavenger Hunt

### Observe Your Surroundings

Before you start looking for things, make sure to observe your surroundings. Using your senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch), write down or draw the world around you. What organisms do you see? What do you hear? What's the weather today?

### Scavenger Hunt

Detective, let's see if you can find as many of the items on this list as you can. Write down information about where and when you find each! For an extra challenge, look for the specific item in the parenthesis. The photo below is of Spanish moss.



- A seed (Acorn)
- A tree or bush (Yaupon Holly or Water Oak)
- A flower (Dandelion)
- An insect
- A clover (Four-leaved Clover)
- A stick (Log or stump)
- A mushroom, moss, or lichen (Spanish Moss)
- A fern

### Nature's Leftovers

Instead of looking for a specific object, such as an insect, find things in nature that help you make inferences. For example, if the ground is wet in the morning, you may make the inference that it rained last night.

Other examples include:

- If you see a leaf that has only half of it left or a leaf with holes, you may infer that an animal or insect ate part of the leaf.
- If you see animal footprints, an animal may have walked in that area.
- If you see holes drilled into trees, a woodpecker may have been looking for food (see right photo).



Write down your observations of the evidence of animal activity left behind. Then, make inferences. Can you make further inferences? Can you tell what

kind of animal made the footprint or which animal ate the leaf? I can infer on the photo to the right that a squirrel ate the second pinecone!

## Part 2: Identify Your Findings

Now that you have found the objects above, you can start to identify them.

To keep track of your identification, you can photograph or sketch the observation. Write down a description of the finding including size, color, markings, or behavior. This will help you identify and recall the finding!



### Insects

Look at the insect and try to identify its general species. Is it a butterfly, moth, wasp, bee, beetle, or something else? If you are unsure of the specific species, try searching an image of it on the internet. You can also type in its characteristics to help refine the search.

There are also ways to distinguish between species that are often confused, such as a butterfly and a moth. Butterflies are usually brightly colored, have clubbed antennae, a slender and smooth body, and have upright wings when at rest. Moths are usually dull in color, do not have clubbed antennae, a fuzzy and stocky body, and have their wings folded back when at rest. Other insects that are commonly confused are the wasp vs sawfly and a ground beetle vs other beetles.

### Trees

If you found a tree or a log, can you name its species or its age? You can look for clues of its species by looking at the leaves and the bark. You can find an identification guide to common tree species at <https://gacoast.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/TreeFactSheets.pdf>. If the tree is not listed here, you may even be able to find an online tree identificatory to help you!

If you found a log or a stump, you might notice some rings on the inside. Counting the rings can be used as an estimate for how old the tree was when it stood.

### Flowers

Flowers can be identified by many things: petals, height, shape, leaves, and time of bloom to name a few. Searching online can help you identify the flowers by either searching related images until you find the exact flower or searching an online identification tool.

You can additionally press flowers and save them to your identification journal, but make sure you are not breaking rules in the area you are searching and you have permission to do so. For a process on how to press flowers, use our guide on [gacoast.uga.edu](https://gacoast.uga.edu).