



ANIMAL SECRETS (2,500 sq. ft.)
EXHIBIT DESCRIPTION

Where does a chipmunk sleep? What does an eagle feed its young? How do mother bats find their babies in a cave? In **Animal Secrets**, families will learn the answers to these questions and more as they explore the hidden habitats and secret lives of forest animals. Using imaginative role-play and hands-on activities, children will discover nature from an animal's point of view in naturalistic environments, including a stream, meadow, woodland, cave, and naturalists' tent. **PLAY** with animals at the Stream. **OBSERVE** the sights and sounds of the Meadow. **PRETEND** to be an eagle, chipmunk and raccoon in the Woods. **EXPLORE** the mysteries of the Cave. **INVESTIGATE** the natural world in the Naturalists' Tent.

Animal Secrets is specially designed for children ages 3-8; preschool to 3rd grade school groups; and has English and Spanish text panels.

THEMATIC AREA: THE STREAM

A highly interactive stream table and its surrounding environment immerse visitors in the dry streambed area. Examine a detailed, colorful mural for clues about animal homes and behaviors, and then incorporate your findings into dramatic play and building activities.

Animals at the Stream

Create your own stories about the animals that live in and along a stream in a multi-sensory, open-ended activity. Dramatize interactions between toy animals including deer, eagles, raccoons, ducks, foxes, and bears and take care of their ecological needs, such as finding food and nurturing young ones. Find caves and nests for the animals to live in, or build homes using trees and logs.

THEMATIC AREA: THE WOODS

Explore a woodland clearing, investigate a tree's roots, play in a chipmunk's den, hide in a raccoon's log, and curl up in an eagle's nest.

Discovery Tree

Examine the trunk of a large oak tree, including a cross-section of its interior and the tree's exposed roots – all of which reveal hidden worlds. Consider how a variety of animals, including birds, mammals, amphibians, and insects, might forage for food and build their homes in the tree.

- **In the Tree Roots**

Lift a patch of leaf litter to reveal a salamander, earthworm, beetles, pill bugs, and centipedes. Lift another patch of soil and find a toad's den.

- **On the Ground**

Peek into a cozy rabbit's nest and see where baby rabbits live.

- **In the Tree Trunk**

Open a bark door to expose and trace the intricate pattern a bark beetle has eaten into the tree. Another window reveals a nest of woodpecker chicks.

- **On the Tree Trunk**

Spot a squirrel climbing on the tree trunk. See and hear a parent woodpecker search for insects.

Chipmunk Den

Don a chipmunk vest and pretend to be a chipmunk. Look through a window to spy a chipmunk in its den. Gather acorns to prepare for the winter, store them in cubbies, and then cuddle up in your soft, comfy den.

Raccoon Log

A background mural depicts a raccoon family playing on a stream bank. Act out imaginative stories with raccoon puppets inside and around the hollow log. Watch out for the hungry red fox puppet!

Eagle's Nest

Explore the secret world of an eagle's nest and then mimic eagle behavior, including building a nest, finding food, and caring for eaglets. A background mural provides clues about the natural behaviors of eagles, shows a real eagle's nest, and depicts an adult eagle feeding fish to its young.

Discovery Tree Puzzle

Assemble a large puzzle based on the Discovery Tree. The top layer of the puzzle shows the exterior of the tree. Remove the pieces to reveal details about the animals that live in the branches, trunk, and roots—just as in the Discovery Tree.

THEMATIC AREA: THE MEADOW

Natural sounds and beautifully illustrated murals, including images of wildflowers, blue heron, butterflies, and a rabbit, transport you to a grassy meadow.

Follow the Tracks

Follow four winding sets of animal tracks through the meadow to discover which animal made them. Use a measuring tape to compare your size with that of a life-size bear and raccoon.

Meadow Sounds

Listen for specific animal sounds and try to locate the animals that made them. Models of a frog, goldfinch, and mallard duck are hidden in appropriate habitats in different parts of the meadow. Use your listening skills and match each animal to its respective croak, song, or quack.

Make a Butterfly

Create your own butterfly wing pattern using multicolored mosaic tiles.

THEMATIC AREA: THE CAVE

Delight in the excitement and challenge of exploring the unfamiliar environment of a dark woodland cave. Activate your senses of sight, hearing, and touch to learn more about cave dwellers as well as cave visitors.

Whose Bones?

Outside the cave, you'll find clues to an animal whodunit. Use a magnifier and field guide to determine whose bones, fur and tracks they are and then construct an imaginative story about how the bones ended up there.

Build an Ant

Work together to assemble three-dimensional, larger-than-life ants.

Cave Explorer

Assume the role of a cave explorer. Listen high and low for skittering and flitting critters. Use tethered lights to search outcroppings and niches for geodes, raccoons, foxes, and bats.

See in the Dark

Search for seemingly glow-in-the-dark salamanders, fish, crickets, and spiders that live in the deepest part of the cave.

THEMATIC AREA: THE NATURALISTS' TENT

Role-play working as a naturalist in a canvas tent outfitted with real field equipment and environmental elements. Examine fascinating plant, animal, and mineral specimens using a variety of tools.

Animal Skulls

Examine, compare and contrast the characteristics of five different animal skulls, including a chipmunk, bald eagle, raccoon, black bear, and white-tailed deer. Flip panels below each skull encourage you to use your own observations and the provided clues to determine which skull belongs to which animal.

Whose Tracks?

Match animal tracks to the animal that made them using paw-like puzzle pieces.

Butterfly Specimens

Use a magnifier to examine a stunning collection of real butterflies which illustrate the infinite variety of wing patterns. Look through a Wentzscope to discover the intricacies of a butterfly wing.

Work Station: Balance Scale

Experiment with a balance scale to discover how it works. Weigh and compare specimens, such as shells and rocks.

Work Station: Magnifier and Light Table

Experiment with a magnifier and light table to discover how they work. Magnify and illuminate specimens, such as insects and spiders preserved in resin.

Work Station: Ruler and Measuring Tape

Experiment with a ruler and measuring tape to discover how they work. Measure and compare specimens, such as fur and wood.

Make a Collection

Inspect and sort a variety of natural artifacts, including rocks and shells, in order to curate and display an impressive museum collection. Add local specimens, such as driftwood, bones, fossils, teeth, pine cones, leaves, and flowers.

Naturalists' Desk

Interpretive staff can use the Naturalists' Desk to facilitate educational demonstrations, engage visitors in fun activities, and exhibit live creatures and plants. Host sites may also display and distribute brochures from local nature centers to encourage visitors to further explore the natural world.