THE CLUE IS IN THE POO

and other stuff too



Andy Seed

illustrated by Claire Almon

QED

Quarto is the authority on a wide range of topics.
Quarto educates, entertains and enriches the lives of our readers—enthusiasts and lovers of hands-on living.
www.quartoknows.com

Art Director: Susi Martin
Designer: Clare Barber
Editorial Director: Laura Knowles
Editor: Carly Madden
Publisher: Maxime Boucknooghe

Text © Andy Seed 2018
Illustrations and design © Quarto Publishing plc 2018

This edition first published in 2018 by QED Publishing,
an imprint of The Quarto Group.
The Old Brewery, 6 Blundell Street,
London N7 9BH, United Kingdom.
T (0)20 7700 6700 F (0)20 7700 8066
www.QuartoKnows.com

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
ISBN 978-1-78493-573-3
Manufactured in Dongguan, China TL062018

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C104723





Contents

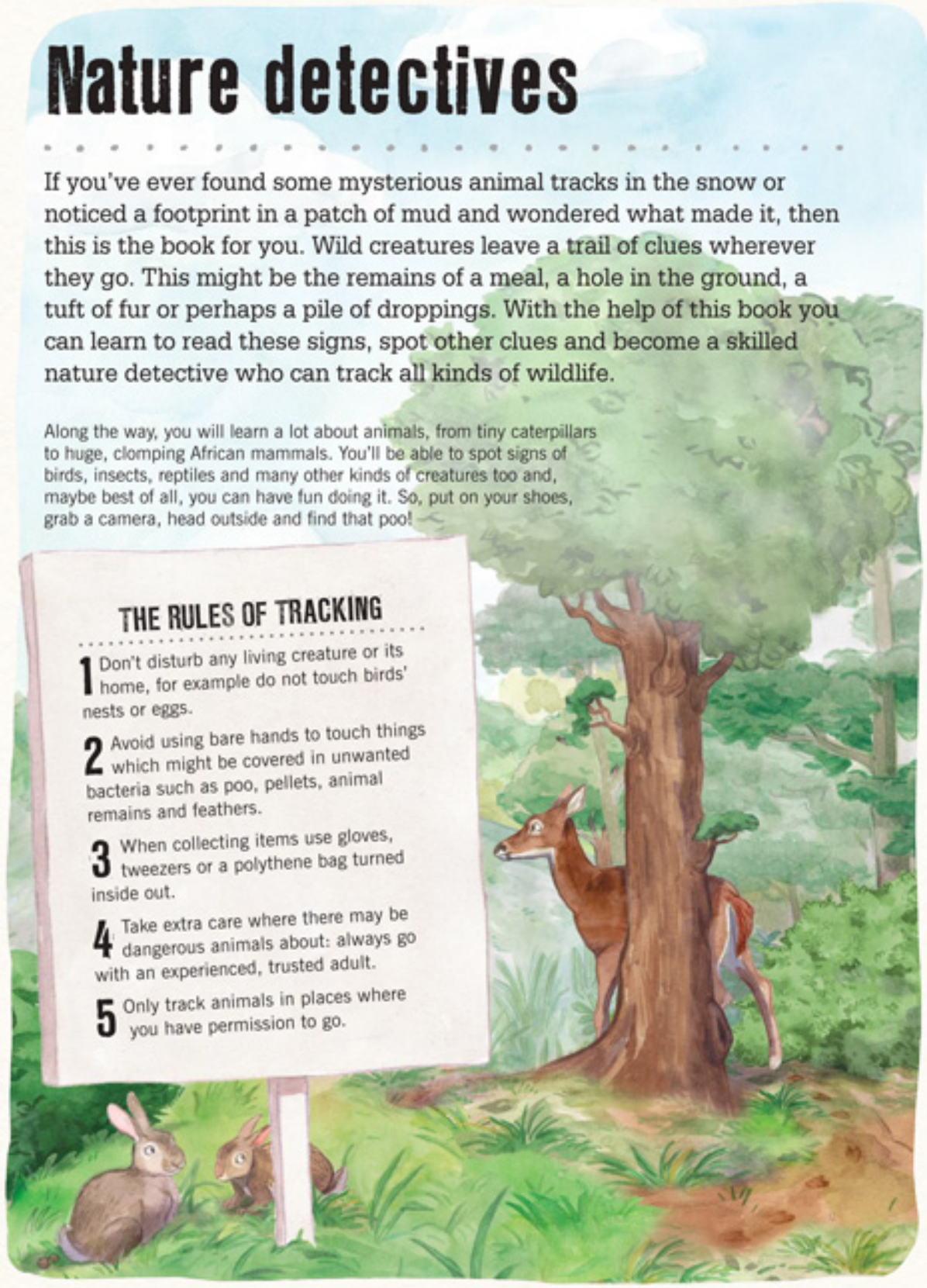
Nature detectives 4
Poo is good 6
Big poos 8
Little poos 9
Bird doings 10
Do bears poo in the woods? 12
Dinosaur doo-doo 14
Facts about faeces 16
Who dung it? 18
Dangerous things to track: lions 19
Footprint fun 20
Know your feet 22
Mammal tracks 24
Bird tracks and other trails 28
Whose footprints are these? 30
Dangerous things to track: snakes 31
What lives where 32
Beasts with burrows 34
Nest knowledge 36
Minibeast accommodation 38
Whose home is this? 40
Dangerous things to track: polar bears 41
Signs of munching 42
Animal lunch 46
Dangerous things to track: Komodo dragons 47
Grisly remains 48
Skull-duggery 50
Dangerous things to track: wolves 52
Pellet power 53
Your pellet ID guide 54
How do you like your eggs? 56
Keep your hair on 58
Feathery finds 60
Whodunnit? 62
Dangerous things to track: tigers 63
Index 64



Nature detectives

If you've ever found some mysterious animal tracks in the snow or noticed a footprint in a patch of mud and wondered what made it, then this is the book for you. Wild creatures leave a trail of clues wherever they go. This might be the remains of a meal, a hole in the ground, a tuft of fur or perhaps a pile of droppings. With the help of this book you can learn to read these signs, spot other clues and become a skilled nature detective who can track all kinds of wildlife.

Along the way, you will learn a lot about animals, from tiny caterpillars to huge, clomping African mammals. You'll be able to spot signs of birds, insects, reptiles and many other kinds of creatures too and, maybe best of all, you can have fun doing it. So, put on your shoes, grab a camera, head outside and find that poo!



THE RULES OF TRACKING

1. Don't disturb any living creature or its home, for example do not touch birds' nests or eggs.
2. Avoid using bare hands to touch things which might be covered in unwanted bacteria such as poo, pellets, animal remains and feathers.
3. When collecting items use gloves, tweezers or a polythene bag turned inside out.
4. Take extra care where there may be dangerous animals about: always go with an experienced, trusted adult.
5. Only track animals in places where you have permission to go.

A tracker's tools

A sharp pair of eyes is the most important thing you'll need when tracking signs of animals, but it might also help to take along these:



Small backpack

To keep everything in so that your hands are free. Also useful for keeping your pickled pumpkin sandwiches dry!

Camera or phone



There are often clues or tracks that you can't identify on the spot. Taking photos gives you the chance to keep a record of something so you can research it later.



Notebook and pencil

With these two low-tech wonders, you can sketch, take notes, record the size of things and jot down important facts such as where and when you saw something. Notes are also fun to look back on.

Small polythene bags



The self-seal ones are particularly good for all those things you'll want to collect: owl pellets, nibbled nut shells, rare feathers or a moose skeleton (good luck finding a bag that big).

Tape measure or ruler



If you discover a very exciting animal footprint you can't take it with you, but you can measure it to help find out which creature left it. You can also take a photo of the clue with the ruler next to it for scale.

Small magnifying lens

There's no need to haul around a hefty Sherlock Holmes-style magnifying glass. You can get a small but powerful folding lens quite cheaply which will help you to see vital details.



Small torch



Great for peering into burrows or holes in tree stumps. Also useful if it gets dark!

Tweezers



Use these to pick up small items that you don't want to touch with bare hands.

A stick



Vital for poking things! If you come across the body of an animal and want to look for signs of a predator then you need a strong stick. No need to buy one – pick one up in the woods.

Binoculars



Not essential, but helpful for looking at birds, fleeing animals and, well, anything interesting in the distance.

Survival stuff

It's probably best to have all of this too:

- Water
- Snack
- Tissues or wet wipes
- Coat, hat or wellies if it's cold, wet or muddy.



THINGS NOT TO TAKE

A beach ball
A ladder
A noisy little brother or sister
A piano
A herd of wildebeest







Poo is good

Poo is good if you are searching for signs of animals. All creatures produce waste and what they leave behind can help us to identify them – poo is a clue! Okay, sometimes it's smelly and covered in flies but many animal droppings don't pong much at all, and it's amazing what you can learn from them.

What is poo?

Poo is made up of the parts of food that the animal can't digest such as bone, fur, feathers and hard seed cases.

It also contains water, mucus, cells and lots of bacteria.

Poo is waste but to many animals it is also a way of leaving scent and marking their territory.









The bigger the animal the bigger the POO

Big creatures do big poos! When you are out and about, the size of any wild animal droppings you find gives you a clue to the size of the animal. Here is a guide to some big poos to get you started!





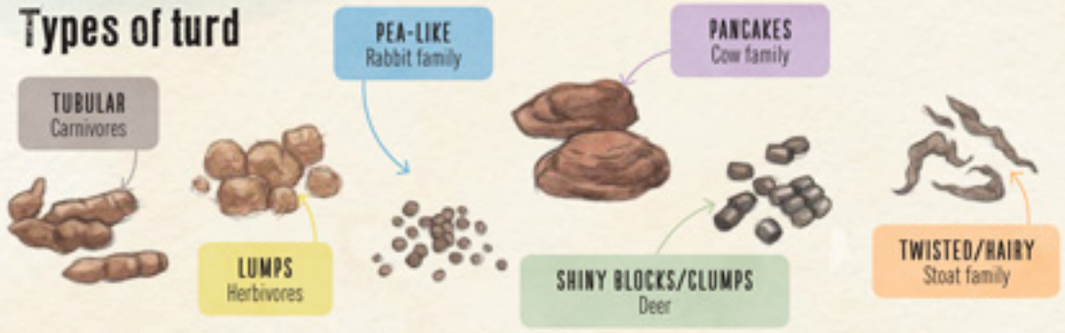
BIG poos

If you want to be a top tracker of animals and know what kind of wildlife is around then you need to be able to distinguish doo-doo! Here are some poo pointers plus some amazing facts about huge stools (and I don't mean those high chairs you sit on at breakfast!).

Really big poos

- Elephants poo about 70 kg a day (that's as heavy as a grown man).
- Giraffe poo falls a long way but it's made up of tiny pellets (so watch where you're standing!).
- Blue whales can leave a plume of poo in the ocean up to 20 m long – be careful where you swim!
- In 2014 a one-metre-long dinosaur poo was sold at an auction, although some scientists argue that this wasn't really a plop at all.
- Scientists have calculated that the largest dinosaur, Argentinosaurus, did about 15 litres of poo at a time.

Types of turd



Here are the main sorts of mammal poo. But beware, it's easy to confuse poos!

Little poos



Smaller animals tend to leave little piles of compact, grain-like poos rather than single squashy plops. Telling whose poo is whose is not easy, though. This page will help you to become a mini doo-doo detective!

Poodunnit?

Spotty windows

Little dark spots on and around windows in your home are probably tiny fly or spider poos. They are often seen in the corners.



Pencil lead in your shed?

This is a sign that you probably have house mice visiting. They leave piles of small dark cylinders like rice grains, about 6 mm long and 2 mm thick.



Pea-pellet poo piles

Rabbits leave scattered piles of centimetre-sized ball-shaped droppings all over grassy areas in the countryside.



MORE MINI POOS

- ★ Brown rat poos: 12–15 mm
- ★ Wood mouse poos: 5–6 mm
- ★ hare poos: 13–15 mm
- ★ Shrew poos: 2–4 mm
- ★ Vole poos: 6–7 mm



A loo in your loft?

Heaps of small, dark crumby pellets in a roof space may be the sign of bats.

