

The Making TRACKS Guide to Species Identification

Learn to See and Identify Species as You Enjoy Your Hike

By Sheri Amsel

Making TRACKS – A Division of the Exploring Nature Educational Resource
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Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Bird Species on the Trail:

Refer to the bird body chart.

1. Identify colors on the body and where they are located.

2. Identify distinctive body features:

a. Head Crest?

b. Tail:

long or short

held out straight or fanned

c. Tail position:

held flat as in diagram

tipped up

tail bobbing

d. Body size:

finch-sized

robin sized

crow-sized

larger

e. Beak shape and size

small and pointed (i.e. chickadee)

small and rounded (i.e. seed eater like finch)

larger and rounded (i.e. seed eater like cardinal)

long and curved downward

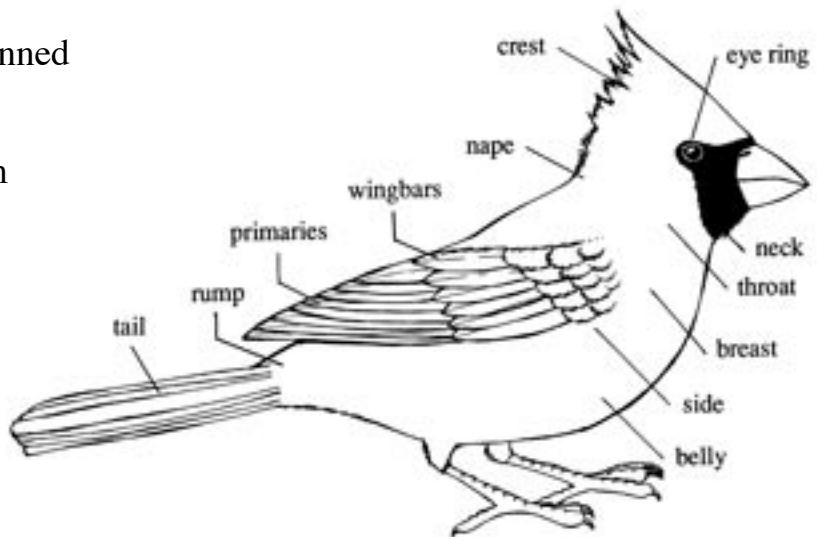
other?

f. Perching

upright on trunk (i.e. woodpecker)

pointed down on trunk (i.e. nuthatch)

perched on branch (i.e. sparrow)



Later view bird list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Tree Species on the Trail:

1. Identify if tree is deciduous or coniferous.

2. If deciduous, identify:

a. leaf shape

b. fruit shape

c. tree crown shape

3. If coniferous, identify:

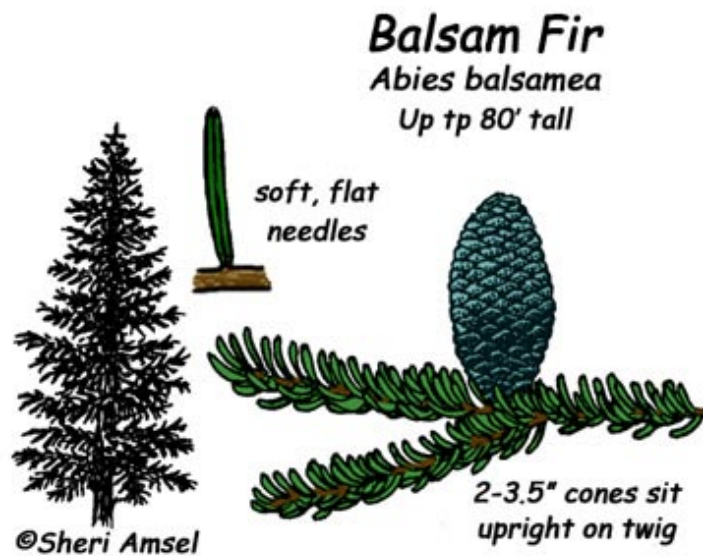
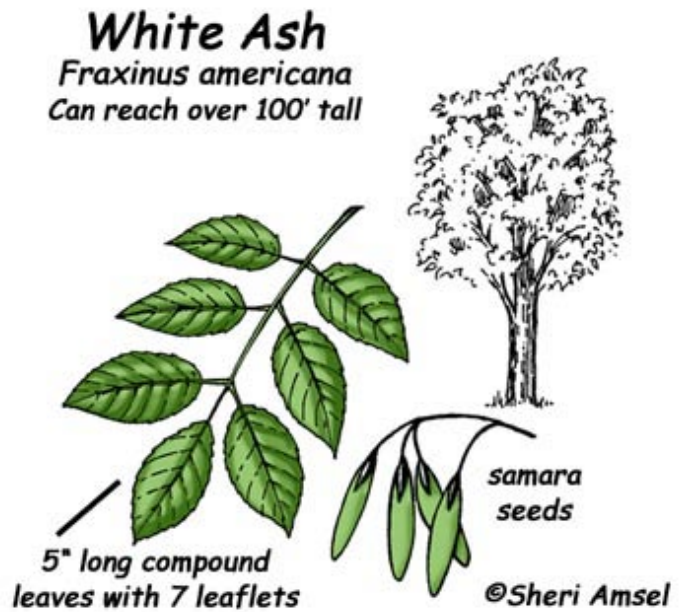
a. needle length

b. number of needles in a facet

c. needle texture

d. cone shape

e. cone position on branch and tree



Later view tree list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

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Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Wildflower Species on the Trail:

1. Identify flower color(s).
2. Identify flower shape.
3. Identify flower arrangement on stem.
4. Identify leaf shape.
5. Identify leaf arrangement on stem.
6. Identify when flower blooms.
7. Identify fruit color.
8. Identify fruit shape.
9. Identify fruit location.

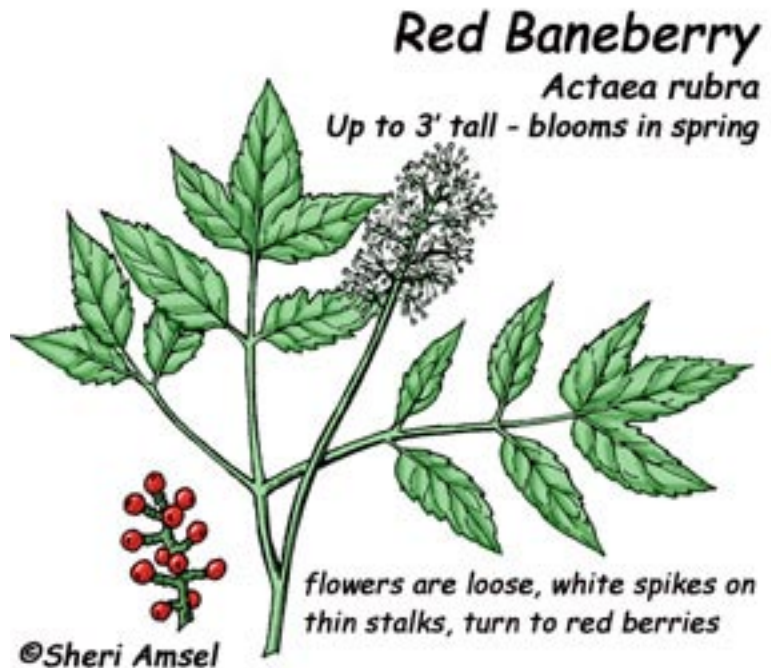


Blue Flag
Iris versicolor
1-3' high -
blooms late spring to early

3 blue-violet flower petals
and 3 yellow-veined sepals

flowers sit on top
of strong stem

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Red Baneberry
Actaea rubra
Up to 3' tall - blooms in spring

flowers are loose, white spikes on
thin stalks, turn to red berries

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Later view wildflower list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Mammals Species on the Trail:

1. Note mammal size. Are they:

mouse sized

chipmunk sized

cat sized

fox sized

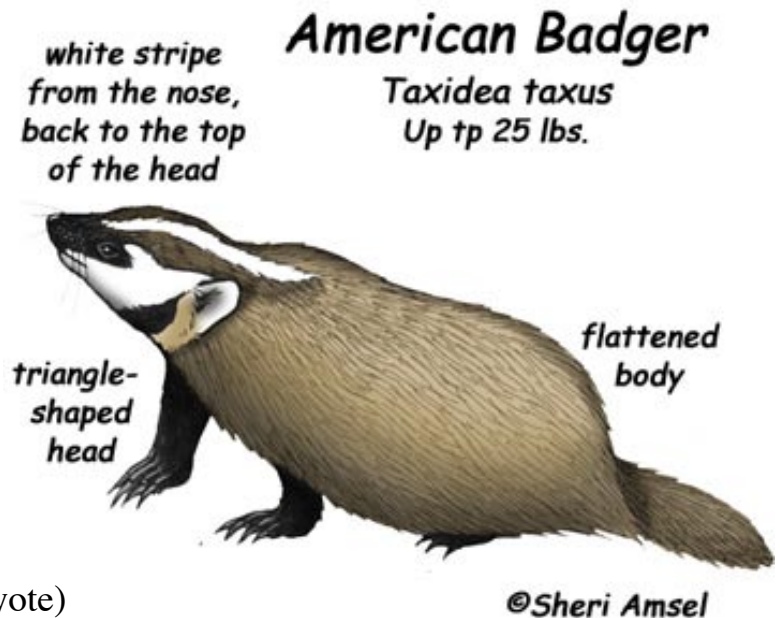
wolf sized

2. Note mammal's tail shape. Is it:

thin and hairless (i.e. muskrat)

long and bushy (i.e. fox)

held up (i.e. squirrel) or down (i.e. coyote)



3. Note mammal's tail length.

short (i.e. bunny-shaped)

shorter than the body length

as long as the body

longer than the body

4. Note coloring.

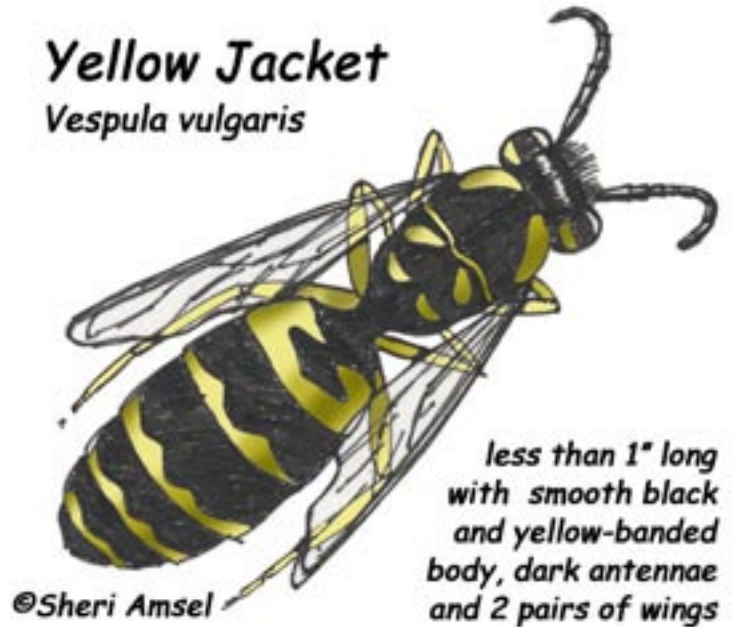
5. Note any body markings (stripes or spots).

Later view mammal list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

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Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Insects Species on the Trail:

1. Note insect's size.
2. Note insect's shape.
3. Note insect's wing shape.
4. Note insect's color.
5. Note any body markings (stripes or spots).
6. Note insect's antennae shape.
7. Note wing color pattern (i.e. butterflies)
8. Note insect's habitat (i.e. field vs. forest)



**Silvery Checkerspot
Butterfly**
Chlosyne nycteis
Wingspread is up to 2" wide



Later view insect list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Amphibian Species on the Trail:

1. Note amphibian's size.
2. Note amphibian's color.
3. Note amphibian's color pattern on body.
4. Note amphibian's habitat (water vs. land).
5. Note amphibian's shape.



Later view amphibian's list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.

Learning To See And Identify Traits – Identifying Reptile Species on the Trail:

1. Note reptile's size.
2. Note reptile's color.
3. Note reptile's color pattern on body.
4. Note reptile's habitat (water vs. land).
5. Note reptile's shape.



Later view amphibian or reptile's list and pictures in Making Tracks gallery online.