Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are!

Prey is an animal that is hunted for food. Every day is a struggle to survive as they must search for food and avoid being eaten. That’s why prey use different tricks, called adaptations, to hide from danger. For example, a skunk’s adaptation is its stinky smell, and a turtle’s adaptation is its hard, protective shell. Pretend you are a prey animal. In the box, draw yourself and write what adaptations you use to survive.

Who Am I?

Black bear, elk, and wild turkey are three animals that call Heil Valley Ranch home. Draw a line connecting each animal to the appropriate description.

I Spy With My Little Eye

Look for each of the items described below. Once you spy something, write it on the line.

Yummy yummy in my tummy.
I spy something an animal might eat.

Pick up a rock and look underneath.
I spy an insect.

Look up! I spy something in the sky.

Map Activity!

Rock Hound
Can you find the Bulldog Boulder?
Draw an X on the map where you see it.
Hint: It is located on the north side of the loop.

Legend
- Parking area
- Restrooms
- Main trail
- Other trails
- Creek
- Picnic shelter
- Bridge
Take this Mystery Guide and a pen or pencil with you as you explore. To complete your Nature Detective training at this park, complete at least 3 of the 6 activities.

Inside you will find a map of the park, which will serve as a guide. Some activities correspond to locations on the map, and some activities can be done anywhere.

Feel free to get help from grown-ups on this, but remember, these activities are for you! You can write or draw anywhere in this mystery guide. The more thoughtful and artistic, the better!

Your Case: Heil Valley Ranch

This park is home to a variety of wildlife. Tuft-eared Abert’s squirrels are often seen in this pine forest, and elk migrate here in winter from higher elevations. In the past, Native Americans, beaver trappers, gold seekers, and cattle ranchers have also called Heil Valley Ranch home.

Nature Detectives Club

Mystery Guides can be found at:

1) Agricultural Heritage Center
2) Bald Mountain Scenic Area
3) Betasso Preserve
4) Caribou Ranch Open Space
5) Carolyn Holmberg Preserve
6) Heil Valley Ranch
7) Mud Lake Open Space
8) Pella Crossing
9) Walden Ponds Wildlife Habitat

Drop completed mystery guides at each park. If you need to finish at home, mail it to us: Nature Detectives Club, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, 5201 St. Vrain Road, Longmont, CO 80503

Complete the information below so we can send you prizes and return your mystery guides!

Grown-ups, please provide:

First Name: _________________________
Middle Name: ______________________
Last Name: _________________________
Age: ________
Address: ____________________________________________________________
City, State: __________________________ Zip code: ________________________
Phone: _____________________________

We hope you enjoy exploring the park with this Nature Detective mystery guide! Due to safety concerns for your family and our staff during the pandemic, we are temporarily suspending the collection of mystery guides and distribution of prizes.

Start here!

Are You Lookin’ at Some Lichen?

Have you noticed the many colors on the rocks? Those colors are living organisms called lichen. Lichens are not plants, but actually two living things: a fungus (like a mushroom) and algae (like the scum on the sand). Have you noticed the many colors on the rocks? Those colors are living organisms called lichen. For the answer, hold a mirror to the following:

They tumbled downhill from a rock formation to the east!

Touching Rocks & Boulders

Rocks come in a variety of shapes, colors, and textures. Feel their texture and ponder their size. Rocks may be soft or hard, rough or smooth, big or small. Your mission is to find three different rocks and use your senses to describe how they look and feel. Write in the space below all the different colors of lichen you can identify:

Rock 1:

Rock 2:

Rock 3:

Bonus:

Can you guess where boulders along the Lichen Loop came from?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

A mystery awaits in this county park full of clues!

Your mission is to become a young Nature Detective, collecting clues from the world around you, and solving mysteries of the forest, prairie, wetlands, and mountains.

After completing a mystery guide we will send you a useful tool for your future outdoor adventures.

All right detective, let’s go!

(Intended for ages 4-11)