

**SPRING  
1987**

# Nature Detectives



*"Who's been here?" "What were they doing and why were they doing it?" "When did it happen?" Nature Detectives try to answer questions like these by looking for clues and evidence of the activities of creatures in the outdoors.*

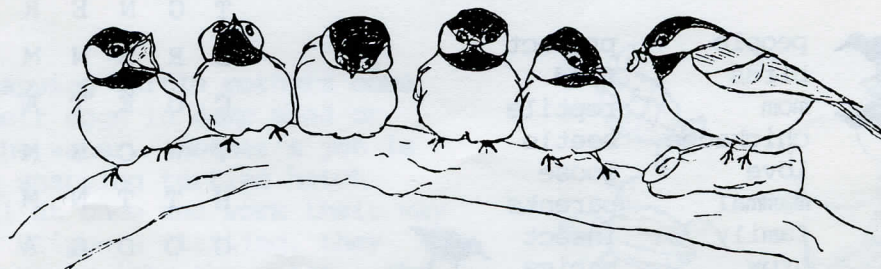
*Have you ever wondered about teeth marks on the trunk of a tree, or strange footprints in the snow or mud? If you have, then you are already a nature detective.*

## THEME:



## Animal Families

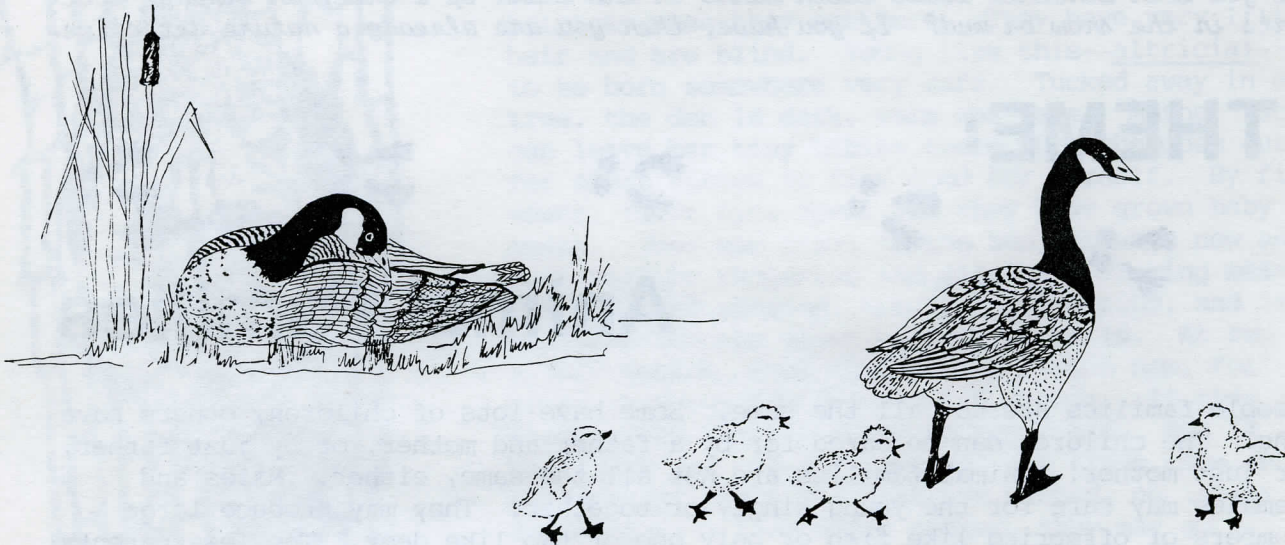
People families are not all the same. Some have lots of children, others have one. The children can be cared for by a father and mother, or by just father, or just mother. Animal families are not all the same, either. Males and females may care for the young singly or together. They may produce large numbers of offspring like fish or only one or two like deer. The less parental care given the young, usually the greater the number of offspring produced. Some animals aren't at all fussy about building a home, while others such as some birds build sturdy nests to shelter their young. Some young animals are programmed by instinct to know how to behave like a duck or butterfly. Others, such as bears and people, teach their offspring many things they will need to know to survive and become parents themselves. Some families live alone, but others live together in herds like elk or towns like prairie dogs. Some social insects such as ants and bees live in highly specialized communes. The ways which animals solve the problems of food and shelter for their young are varied and fascinating!





## Feathery Family

Canada geese care for their goslings until they are able to fend for themselves. Male and female geese keep the same partners for life. As early as February, they claim a territory, their own safe space with food and shelter to make a nest and bring up the family. A good territory may include a small island which gives a good view of approaching predators. Mother does most of the nest building. With bits of stuff she can reach easily, she builds a shallow bowl to lay her eggs. She lays one egg every other day until there are 4-12, usually 6. When the clutch is complete, she begins to incubate the eggs (keep them warm). For about a month she only leaves the nest for a couple of short feeding and grooming times each day. Father is on guard and hisses if anything comes near. Finally, the babies hatch, all within a day. They have fuzzy down, and their eyes are open. They are ready to go and can follow mother into the water when they are just a day old. Babies like this are called precocial. She doesn't need to teach them to swim, they know that by instinct--but practice makes perfect! You will see the entire goose family--mother, then babies, with father guarding the rear--walking to the pond for a swim. It takes about two months before the goslings have fledged--have feathers strong enough to fly. The family stays together until the following spring.



## Word Search

Find and circle the hidden words:



people  
birds  
mom  
chickadee  
love  
mammal  
family  
grow  
fry  
bat

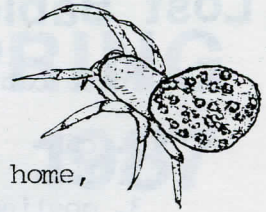
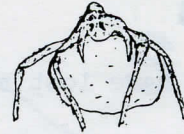
protect  
food  
reptile  
beetle  
goose  
parents  
insect  
babies  
dad  
home



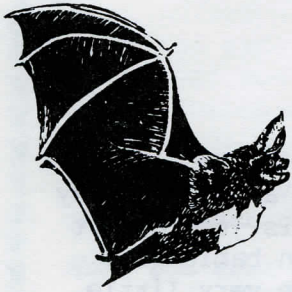
P	E	O	P	L	E	F	X	W	C	E
R	J	M	A	P	O	O	F	X	H	L
O	B	I	R	D	S	O	M	Z	I	I
T	G	N	E	R	E	D	O	Z	C	T
E	R	S	N	M	I	Q	M	Y	K	P
C	O	E	T	A	B	V	R	C	A	E
T	W	C	S	M	A	F	W	L	D	R
H	T	T	N	M	B	Y	L	A	E	F
G	O	O	G	A	G	O	O	S	E	D
F	A	M	I	L	Y	Y	V	S	A	V
R	Q	B	E	E	T	L	E	D	Z	T



## Family Short Stories



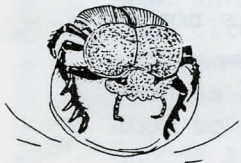
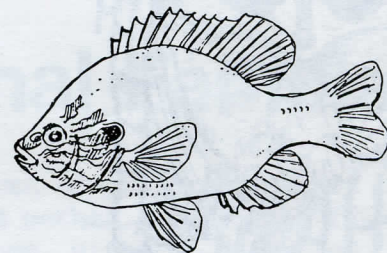
A female wolf spider is a wandering predator. Instead of having a home, she carries her egg sac along with her in a cocoon attached to her abdomen. The spiderlings develop completely in the cocoon and hatch as perfect, small copies of their parents. They cling to the hairs on the mother's back and travel with her.



Bats do not make nests for their babies--they take them everywhere! Newborn bats hold on tightly to their mother's fur during the night as she flies hunting for insects. During the day, the babies hang upside down with the mother's wings folded over them, safe and warm.

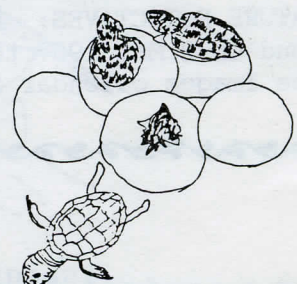
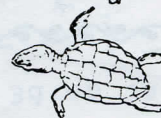
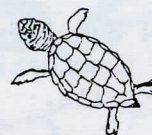


The male sunfish makes a shallow basin by the shore of a pond. The female lays thousands of eggs in the nest and leaves--her work is done. The male guards the eggs until they hatch, then he leaves, too. The tiny fish, called fry, are on their own.



Dung beetles collect the droppings of grazing animals, which contain much partly digested vegetable food. Each ball of dung is buried in a shallow pit with a single egg in it. The dung is a food supply for the larva that develops. The larva eats the dung, emerging eventually as a grown beetle.

After mating, snapping turtle mothers come ashore to lay their eggs in damp sand or mud just above the water. Mother's job is now done! Young snapping turtles hatch from the eggs all at once and work their way to the surface. Flippers flailing, they rush down to the shore into the water. The same flipper movements carry them out, swimming, across the water.





## Lost Babies

These babies have lost their mothers. Can you find them?

- |            |                |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. cub     | a. beetle      |
| 2. fawn    | b. fish        |
| 3. gosling | c. prairie dog |
| 4. fry     | d. goose       |
| 5. larva   | e. raccoon     |
| 6. pup     | f. deer        |



## Coon Cubs



Mammals are the only animals that have a built in way of feeding their newborn--milk. This is just a part of the care mammal babies get. Raccoon babies are helpless when they are born. They have very little hair and are blind. Young like this--altricial--need to be born somewhere very safe. Tucked away in a hollow tree, the den is dark, warm and safe. Mother raccoon can leave her tiny babies there when she goes out for short forays to find food for herself. By five weeks, their eyes open, and they have grown baby teeth. They may crawl to the den entrance now and soon will be exploring and playing. Playing means tumbling and chasing, biting and fighting, and is all practice for the grown-up raccoon world. At two and a half months, they begin to hunt with mom, following after as she makes her nightly rounds. If they are in danger, she quickly turns to their aid. But if they misbehave and get left behind, she finds them and cuffs them! Once the cubs are weaned, no longer drinking milk from their mother, they may go off for a night to hunt. By the end of the year they are independent. What about father raccoon? Once he has mated with the female, he takes off. He is not a stay-at-home father.

NATURE DETECTIVES: Animal Families--explore Walden Pond on 2 May 1987 to see fascinating family lifestyles. See Images calendar for details.

1e 2f 3d 4b 5a 6c

Answers to Lost Babies:

