

Your WILD challenge

DROPPINGS

THIS PAGE IS FROM FEBRUARY'S BBC WILDLIFE MAGAZINE OUT NOW!



How many of these droppings can you find? Share your sightings at www.discoverwildlife.com/forum. Download our pellets guide too!

At this time of year when daylight is short, droppings or scats can tell us a lot about which animals have been visiting our gardens, parks and countryside, and what they have been eating. A careful eye, a guarded sniff and (sometimes) a careful inspection using disposable gloves can often reveal the species responsible.

Droppings are usually left along territorial boundaries, on prominent features of the landscape or next to discarded prey such as a plucked pigeon, but you can also find them right in the middle of a path, clearing or field. Regularly used places are known as latrines.

While mammal poo is relatively easy to identify, the droppings of different birds often look the same – white splodges containing a paste of waste products. But those of a few species, including the three illustrated here, are more distinctive.

CAN YOU FIND ALL TWELVE?

How many of these droppings can you spot? You can post your pictures on our forum and we'll feature some of the best in the magazine: www.discoverwildlife.com

NEXT MONTH'S WILD CHALLENGE: SIGNS OF SPRING

Illustrations by Mike Langman. Not to scale.



Badger

Size Varies

Sloppy and wet; texture depends on diet – worms, berries, carrion. In latrines or holes at edge of territory.



Fox

Size 5–20cm

Long and twisted; berries, bone, hair, grasses. Often left to mark territory on dead animals, shoes and garden toys.



Otter

Size 3–10cm

Coarse and black; fish scales, shell fragments, fish and crayfish parts, sometimes feathers/fur. Sweet taint.



Brown rat

Size 1.7–2cm

Large and oval-shaped – like olive stones; dark when fresh. Often deposited in a scattered group.



Rabbit

Size 1cm

Pea-sized, black/light-brown/green; plant and grass pieces. Scattered at latrines, often near burrow entrances.



Brown hare

Size 1.2–1.5cm

Like a rabbit's but larger, flattened and more fibrous, and contains larger bits of plants; sweet-smelling. Scrapes.



Hedgehog

Size 1.5–5cm

Sausage-like, shiny, squidgy, maybe tapered at one end, black; berry pips and insect body parts. Lawns.



Pheasant

Size 2cm

Thick, tubular – one big mass, like soft-serve ice cream; grey-green, coated in white (uric acid). Grouped.



Canada goose

Size 8cm

Thick, cylindrical, coiled, with an outer layer of white uric acid; digested grass. Grass and paths near rivers and ponds.



Green woodpecker

Size 3–5cm

Short, thin, cylindrical, looks like cigarette ash; dark with coat of white uric acid. Ant exoskeletons. Lawns.



Pine marten

Size 4–12cm

Long, thin, twisted, tapered; fur, bone, feathers, pieces of leaves and grass. Musky or fruity. Latrines near dens.



Roe deer

Size 1–1.4cm

Small, shiny, brown, oval-shaped; one end pointed, the other indented or flat; clusters. Paths, fields, woodlands.

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