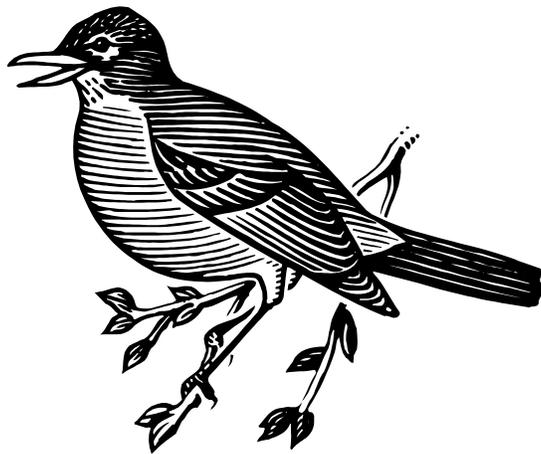




Placer  
Nature  
Center

**Natural & Cultural History**



**Habitat:**  
**A Place to Live**  
**1st Grade**



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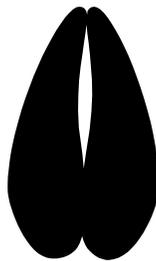
This curriculum guide has been developed by the Placer Nature Center Curriculum Committee:  
Linda Desai, Stuart Yaffe, Bob Gloyd, and Dorothy Gloyd. January 1993. Revision 2009

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# About Us & Our Programs

Started as a project of the Placer Land Trust in 1991, today Placer Nature Center functions alone as non-profit organization. We share our 60-acre Auburn site, which is owned by the State of California, with the California Conservation Corps.

Placer Nature Center's mission is to provide educational programs that evoke a sense of discovery and wonder about our place on earth. The work of Placer Nature Center helps us understand that our daily choices impact the environmental, social and economic well being of the planet. This is essential, because a healthy world means the world to us.

Upon request, Placer Nature Center will provide schools with field tips to Placer Nature Center's campus, meet you out in the field and/or deliver presentations in the classroom.

Website: [www.placernaturecenter.org](http://www.placernaturecenter.org)  
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## Program Overview

A team of trained docents use a holistic perspective to present our programs. That is, the total environment – living and non-living – will be studied while students weave together the disciplines in relation to their program theme (represented schematically in Figure 1).

The Placer Nature Center provides a three-part program, including:

- ✚ Pre-visit activities
- ✚ Field trip
  - Exhibit Hall theme orientation
  - Hands-on activities
  - Nature Walk
- ✚ Post-visit activities

Plus other relevant information is also provided to enhance the student's field trip experience.

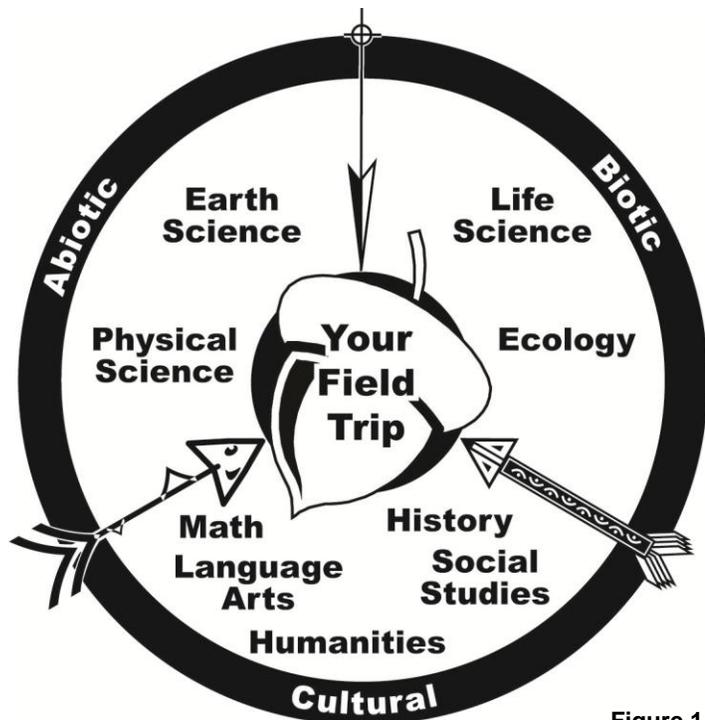


Figure 1.

# Poison Oak

## Description

Poison oak is a native shrub of the foothills and the Nature Center has many fine examples throughout the nature trail area and even atop the granite outcrop in our courtyard. Because many people react to the plant oil, it is important for our visitors to be able to identify this plant.



New Spring buds on Poison Oak,  
pretty but not nice to touch!

Poison oak is not actually an oak although its leaves have an oak-like appearance. It is found commonly among oak trees. Scientifically it is known as *Rhus diversiloba*. The species name was well chosen as it describes the diversity of lobe shapes and sizes one can find on a leaf. Here is an identification checklist for poison oak:

1. Stems are smooth. No spines.
2. Each leaf stem has three glossy leaflets.
3. Where the three leaves meet, there is a red spot.

A Nature Center docent will help you to identify this plant. Get to know the poison oak in all its forms: shrub, vine and seasonal variations (more pictures on the next page).

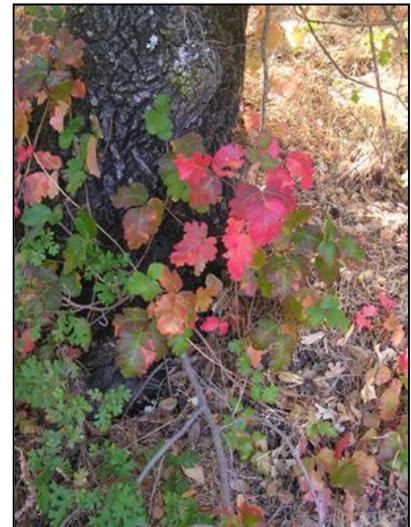
Foothill fauna depend on this native plant: deer browse on it; birds eat its berries; others den, burrow, nest or roost in it. Poison oak is an important part of the foothill ecosystem.

## Reactions

Apparently only humans (and not all humans) react to urushiol, an oil found on the plant's stems, leaves, flowers and berries. Contact with this oil can result in a rash. The oil remains active for a long time. Thus, it can pass first onto clothing or animal fur before skin contact and still be capable of forming a rash.

The best prevention against contracting poison oak is to:

1. Learn to identify the plant
2. Avoid touching the plant
3. Wear long sleeves and long pants
4. Stay on the trail
5. Wash thoroughly and immediately upon returning home, both skin and clothes



*Leaves of Three, Let them Be!*

## ***What Poison Oak looks like in each season***



### **Fall**

Mostly red – from bright crimson colors to brown dying leaves.



### **Winter**

A little more tricky to spot! Look for bunches of straight, upright twigs growing near rocks, trees and amongst other shrubbery.



### **Spring**

After the pretty red buds (see previous page), leaves turn a shiny green. May be inter mixed in black berry bushes and other shrubs, hiding under Oak Trees and around rocks.



### **Summer**

Various shades of green, yellow and red all mixed together in the same bush and sometimes on the same leaf!

# Pre-Visit Information

*Before you arrive...* Please take the time to go over the pre-visit information and activities. It helps the students and docents enjoy a more successful program!

## ***In The Classroom.***

- 1) If there is a special needs student in your group, let us know how we can best meet her/his needs.
- 2) Divide your class into groups of 10-12 students with one adult each if possible. Make sure the students know which group they are in so they can be divided quickly after exiting the bus/car.
- 3) Make name tags and wear them to the Nature Center. Following is an activity for making name tags. (see activity #1)
- 4) Review the information and accompanying sketch of poison oak. Although the docent will identify this native shrub for the students, it helps if they are aware of it before arriving.
- 5) Remind students to dress for the weather. The program will be conducted rain or shine. Closed toe walking shoes (no sandals) are a must.
- 6) Have a payment envelope ready to hand the docent as soon as you arrive. If possible, make payment by check. We are not able to make change.
- 7) If you choose to have lunch on site, all related garbage must leave with you. The Nature Center does not have a disposal service.
- 8) Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time.

## ***On The Trail***

- 1) The docent will lead the group at all times on the trail, with a parent or other adult taking up the rear.
- 2) Stay on the trail.
- 3) No picking of plants or rocks or anything. Take only memories. Leave only footprints.

We are excited to share an enjoyable, educational experience with you and your students at the Nature Center. Have fun with the pre-visit activities!

## **Activity #1: Name Tags**

### OBJECTIVE:

Students will make name tags out of the provided cut-outs and discuss the concept of habitat.

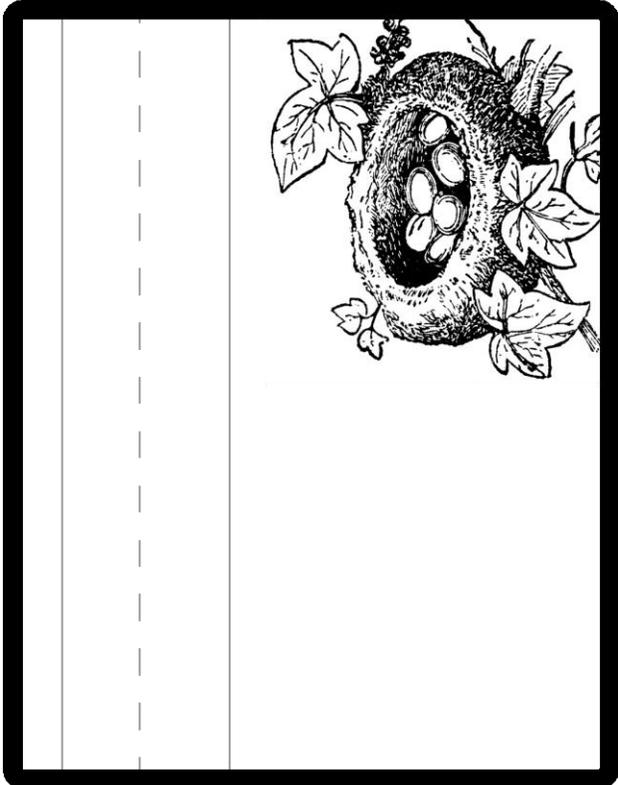
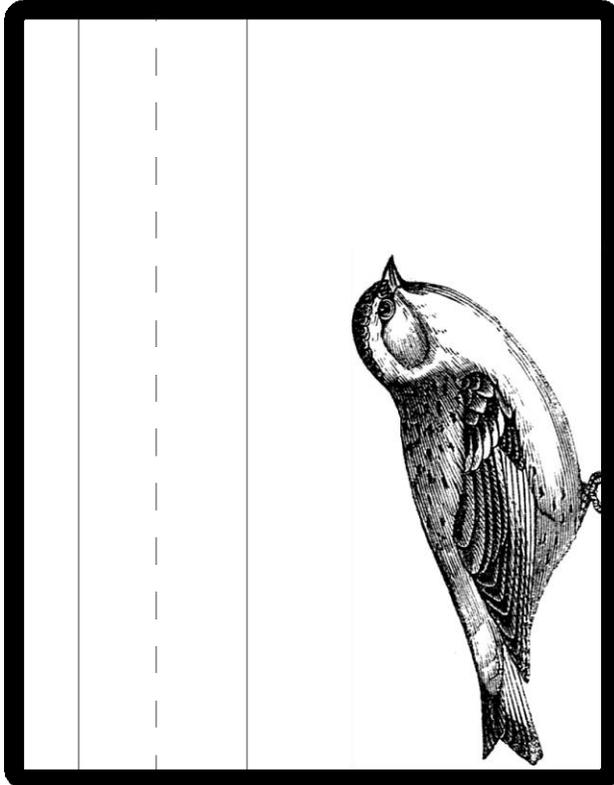
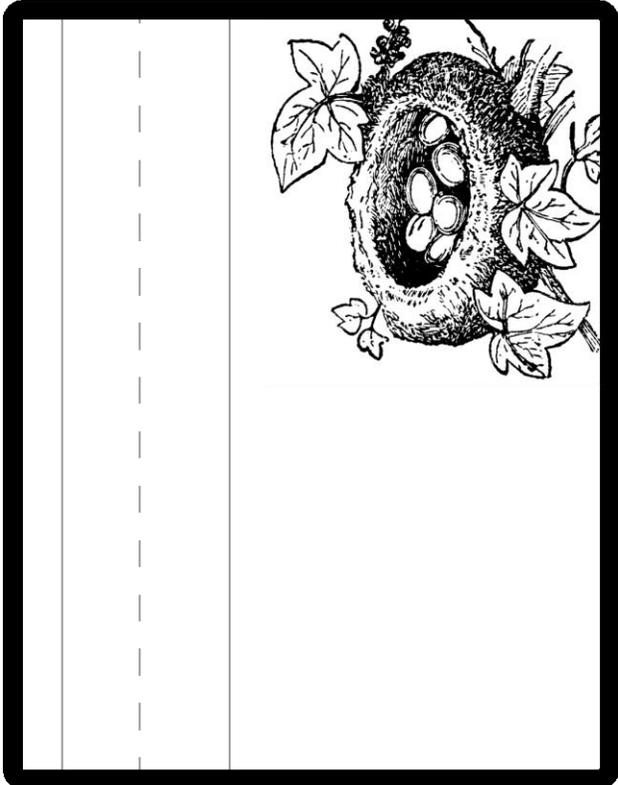
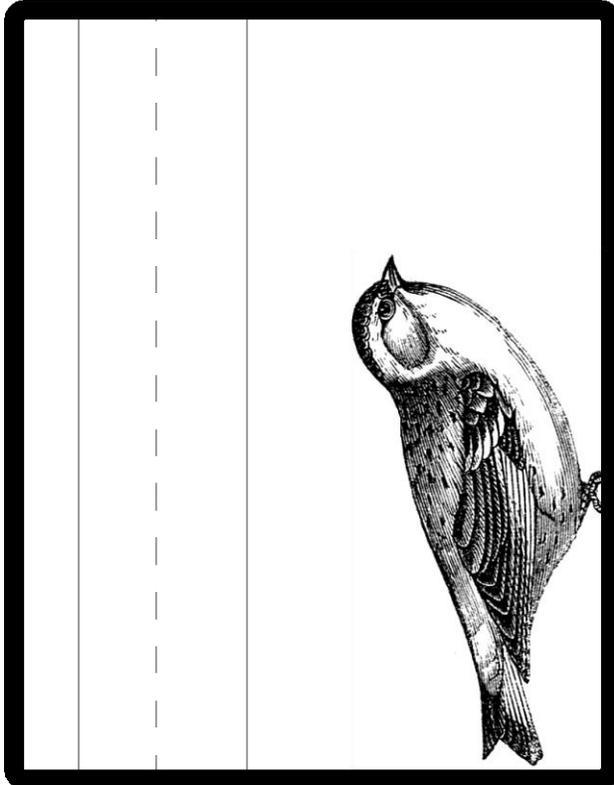
### MATERIALS:

- ✎ Crayons/felt tip pens
- ✎ Index cards or other heavy tag board
- ✎ String or pins to attach to name tag
- ✎ Glue
- ✎ Scissors

### PROCEDURE:

1. Make copies of the next page on index stock.
2. Have the student choose the bird or bird's nest. The bird's nest represents a part of the bird's habitat. What else does the bird need in its habitat to survive? Habitat must provide food, shelter, water and space. During your visit to the Nature Center, the habitats of foothill animals will be explored.
3. Have the student cut out his/her name tag.
4. Print name on name tag.
5. Color or decorate name tags.
6. Place a string through the name tag or use pins to attach to student's shirt.
7. Be sure to wear name tags to the Nature Center.

**Activity #1: Name Tags**



# Your Field Trip at a Glance

**Correlations:****Common core: SL1a,b,c;SL2a; SL3; L1b(post activity); L5c****Next Generation Science Standards: L-LS3-1;LS1.A; LS1.D**

A team of docents will meet your class in the parking lot, lead the group to the Nature Center courtyard, and point out restrooms and drinking fountain. Each docent will take a group of 10-12 students and begin their program at one of the following stations: Exhibit Hall, Discovery Room, Outside Activity, or Nature Walk. The docent will rotate through all stations to complete the program. Following is an outline of what to expect at each station for your program at the Placer Nature Center.

***Exhibit Hall*****15 Minutes**

The docent will introduce the theme of the visit. The docent will discuss what the habitat must provide for the animal's survival by first discussing their personal habitat. This discussion will result in identifying the four components of habitat:

1. food
2. shelter
3. water
4. space

Using the Foothill Ecosystem mural, students will identify many native animals and locate habitat components.

Following the docent theme presentation, students will be given some time to explore and interact with the other exhibits. A docent will answer any questions and/or ask leading questions to enhance student involvement.

***Discovery Room*****15 Minutes**

Students match puppets to their habitats of forest, woodland and grassland.

***Outside Activity*****15 Minutes**

The students will play "Animal on the Back" guessing Game. This game familiarizes the students to the diversity of animal life in the foothills.

***Nature Walk*****15 Minutes**

The docent will guide the students on the nature trail, discovering the foothill ecosystem. The docent will emphasize the theme habitat by interrelating trail observations of:

1. animal signs
2. animal/plant homes
3. animal sightings
4. animal foods

# Post-Visit Activities

The following two activities cover the same theme – a tree as a living house for critters and plants. Activity #2 uses pictures and Activity #3 uses written words.

Take a walk through the school yard with your students to find a tall tree. Have students draw what they see at different levels of the tree.

If students get stumped, using questions, guide the class in a collaborative approach to point out all types of animals, insects, birds and plants that might live in or on the tree at different levels.

Explain:

A tree is like a high-rise apartment building!

The roots underground are like a basement.

The trunk is the first floor.

The bottom branches is the second floor.

And the very top of the tree is the penthouse!

Think of all the different animals, birds, insects and plants that live in and on a tree!

## ***Activity #2: Tree House Observation***

Have students draw what they see in the worksheet provided.

## ***Activity #3: Animal High-Rise***

Have students write what they see in the worksheet provided.

For both activities examples for what would live at each level would be:

Roots: mole, gopher, worms, ants, vole, burrowing animals like skunk, toads, moss, grass, poison oak

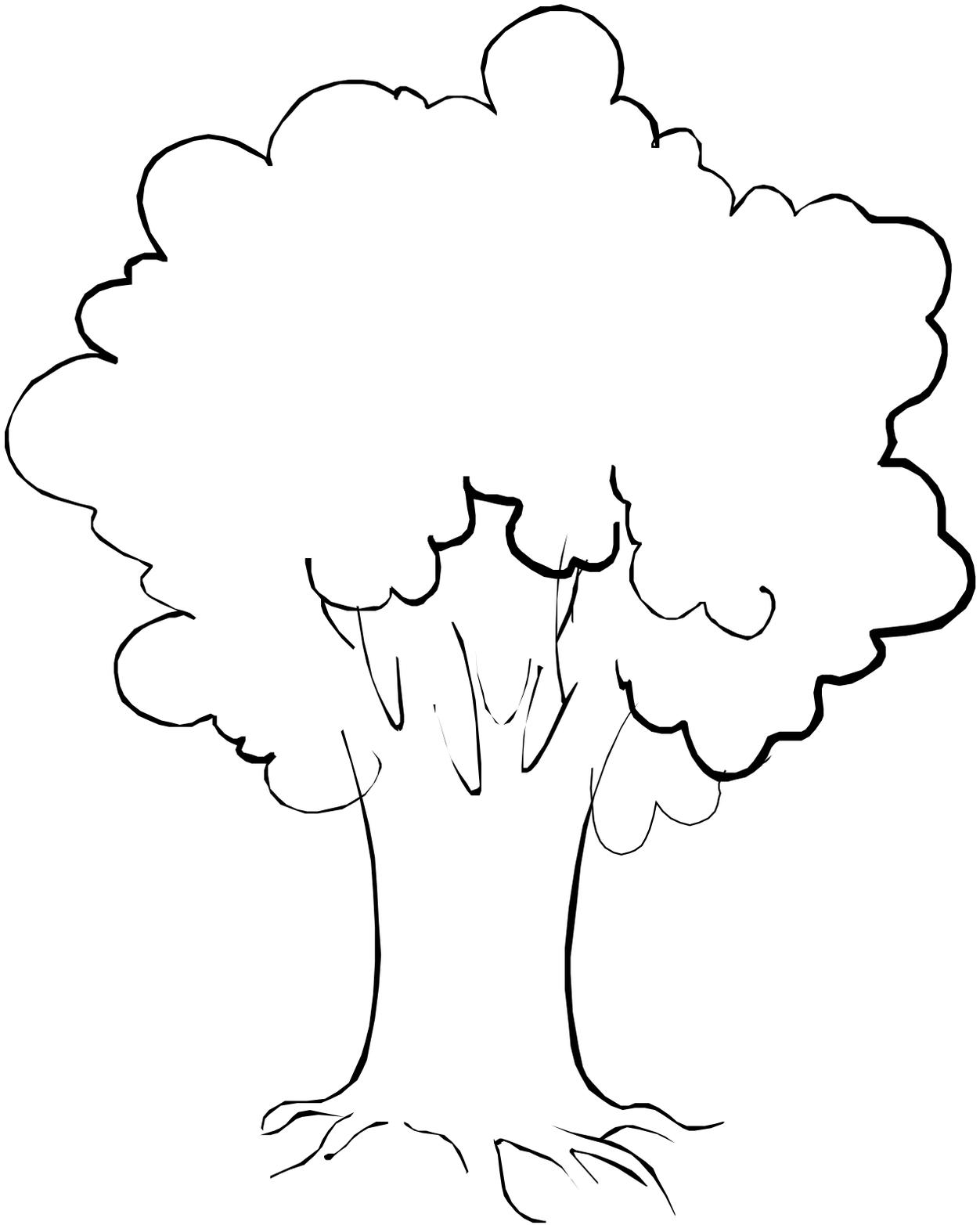
Trunk: ants, spiders, centipedes, lichen, woodpecker

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: squirrel, birds, bird nests, mistletoe, moss, galls created by insects (round balls created when the tree is stung or bitten, used as a incubator for insect larvae)

Penthouse: owls, hawks, other birds of prey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Tree House Observation***



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

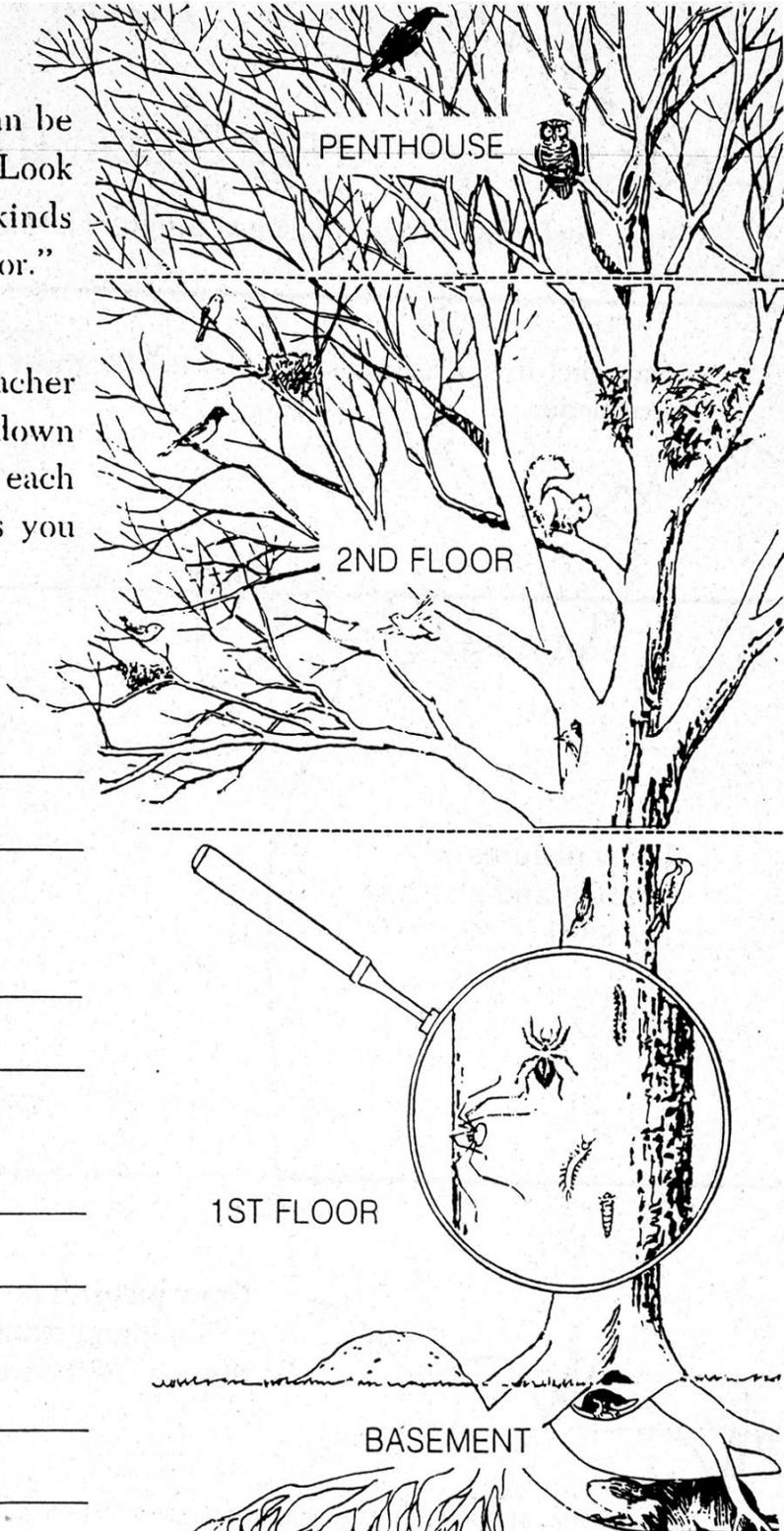
# Animal High-Rise

## FACTS FOR THIS LESSON

Many kinds of animals can be found on or in an old tree. Look at the drawing to see what kinds of animals live on each "floor."

## WHAT TO DO

Go outside with your teacher to look at a tall tree. Write down the animals you find at each level. Also note any plants you see growing on the tree.



PENTHOUSE

\_\_\_\_\_

2ND FLOOR

\_\_\_\_\_

1ST FLOOR

\_\_\_\_\_

BASEMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_