

SCAT

IS WHERE IT'S
AT!

by Lee Lamb

Poking through a pile of poo out in the woods may sound disgusting, but you'd be surprised how much you can learn about wild animals from doing just that. Scat gives you a great clue about who the animal is. It also tells where the animal has been and how long ago it was there, and is a great way to track animals. Just be sure to poke around with a stick instead of your fingers, because scat can carry diseases.

WHO GOES THERE?

Scat comes in all shapes, sizes and textures. Carnivores, or meat-eaters like wolves and wolverines, have thick, tube-shaped poop. Mountain lion and bobcat scat is similar, but shaped more like a teardrop. Pronghorn poop comes out as a pellet about the same size and shape as a jelly bean. Rabbit scat comes out as pellets, too, but they're round and only the size of a Raisinette. A chipmunk's are longer and thinner. Songbirds most often leave a white or gray paint splotch. But a sage grouse's poop is thick like a rabbit's and shaped like a J.

MOOSE, ELK OR DEER?

Deer, elk and moose scat looks very similar. They all leave pellets shaped roughly like footballs. Moose scat is easiest to identify. Like the animal itself, moose poop is huge, almost always measuring an inch long or more. And it's fat scat, thicker than elk's or deer's. Most elk scat measures at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch, while deer is usually $\frac{1}{2}$ inch or less.

WHATCHA BEEN EATIN'?

Lots of times you can tell what an animal's been dining on by looking at what's in its scat. Coyote poop often has hair, fur and little bones from voles and rabbits. Bear scat might contain grass, roots, ants and even the hooves of an elk calf in late spring and early summer. Come fall it will likely be bulging with berry seeds. During summer when elk are feasting on *succulent* or tender grasses, their poop may be a single soft blob that looks a lot like a "cow pie" from a cattle cow.

WHO'S POO IS WHOSE?
CAN YOU MATCH THE SCAT
WITH ITS MAKER?



