

# The Case of the Phantom Feathers



## STUDENT WORKSHEET

*The Case of the Phantom Feathers* is a wildlife forensic activity designed to be “hands-on” and interactive. Students may complete this activity in the classroom or virtually.

Wildlife forensics is an exciting part of solving crimes related to jobs of the Game Warden. Wildlife cannot speak for itself but when a crime has been committed towards wild animals, the Game Warden, using forensic evidence and crime scene investigation, can sometimes speak for the animal and bring the violator to justice.

You have been chosen to speak for wildlife in this activity. You will be given clues and information that you will need to research, analyze and make a final decision. Good luck!



**Pennsylvania  
Game Commission**





# THE CASE OF THE PHANTOM FEATHERS

You are a Pennsylvania Game Warden and at 10am on the 10th of May you received a phone call from Mrs. Wendy Witness who lives at 234 Winding Way. Mrs. Witness said she was just looking out her kitchen window and saw a very short man about 5' tall with red hair and a beard stop his gray Ford SUV along the road, jump out and shoot from the edge of the road at something on her property. She saw him pick up a large dark object, toss out a piece of garbage, get back into his vehicle and drive away. The license plate was XBJ4123. She said the man had on a black cap, blue jeans and green shirt. She said she walked over to the area and found some feathers and collected them.

By using the photo evidence, Feather ID chart and measurements you collect, determine what type of bird was shot, the sex of the bird and whether a violation has occurred.

By comparing the unknown feathers in the evidence photos and to the Feather ID chart, identify the type of bird that was killed.

**What was the type of bird killed?** \_\_\_\_\_

Go to the Pennsylvania Game Commission's website ([www.pgc.pa.gov](http://www.pgc.pa.gov)) and locate the Wildlife Note (click on Education>Wildlife Notes Index) that matches the type of bird killed. By gathering the following information and using the appropriate Wildlife Note, determine the sex of the bird.

**Length of the bird:** \_\_\_\_\_ inches

(In order to simulate the length of the bird that was killed, use a regular gallon jug container, measure it's height and multiple it's height by 3).

**Weight of bird:** \_\_\_\_\_ pounds

(In order to simulate the weight of the bird that was killed, fill your gallon jug container, place it on a bathroom scale and multiple it's weight by 3).

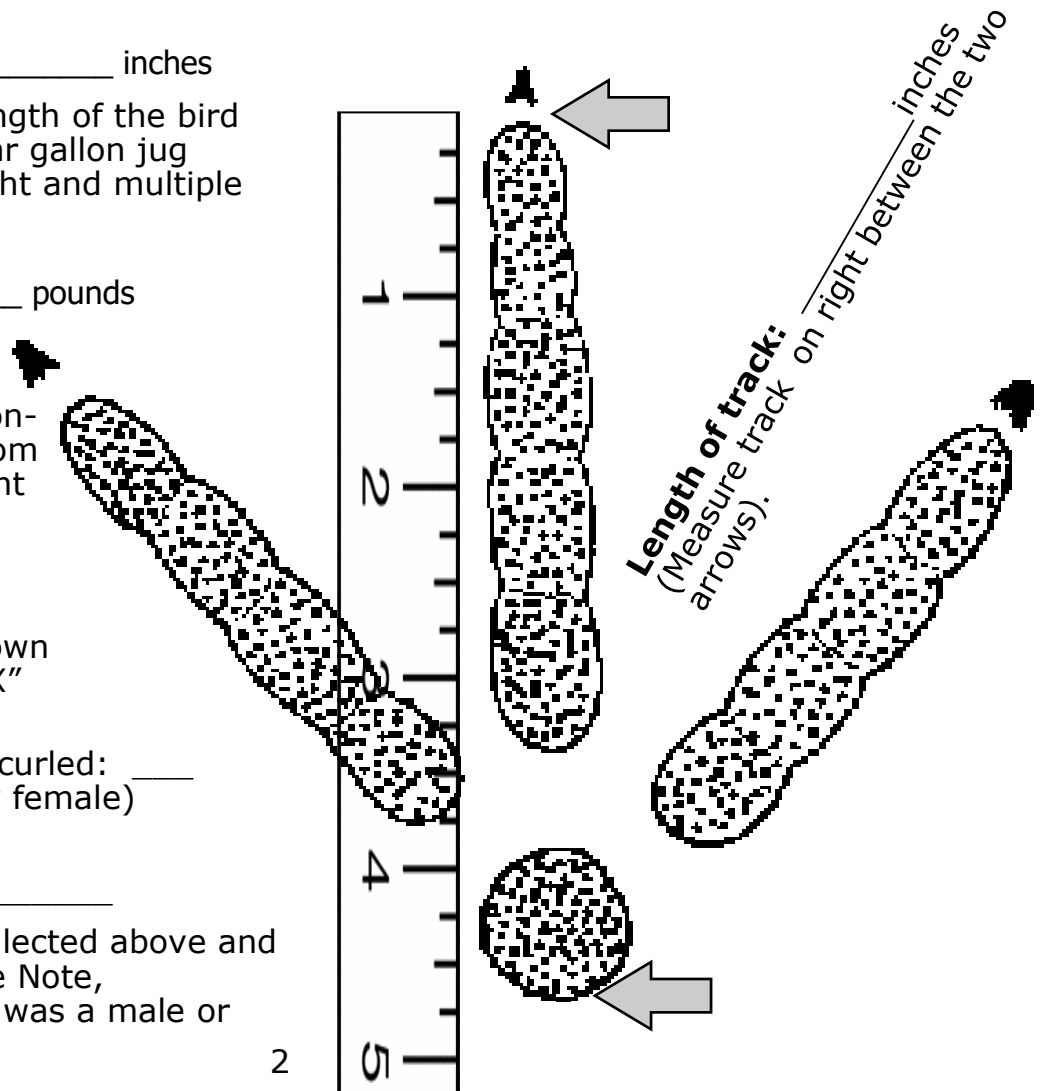
**Shape of the droppings:**

(While looking at the unknown dropping photo, place an "X" behind correct shape).

J-shaped: \_\_\_\_\_ Coiled or curled: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Normally male) (Normally female)

**Sex of the bird:** \_\_\_\_\_

By using the information collected above and comparing it to your Wildlife Note, determine whether the bird was a male or female.



**Suspect's Physical Description**

From the information provided from the witness, complete the form below. If unable to answer, write "UNK" for unknown.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Suspect's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: \_\_\_\_\_ Height: \_\_\_\_\_ Hair: \_\_\_\_\_ Eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

Distinguishing Features: \_\_\_\_\_

Vehicle License #: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: \_\_\_\_\_ Make: \_\_\_\_\_ Color: \_\_\_\_\_

When you go to the scene, you find a foot print in the fresh mud by the road. You also find a soda can lying in the grass next to the tracks left by the suspect's vehicle. You make a plaster cast of the footprint and carefully pick up the soda can with your pen and place it in a plastic bag so that you can collect fingerprints.

Examine the evidence photo of the plaster cast of the footprint and answer the following questions:

Does the tread appear to be from a running shoe or a work boot? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any distinguishing marks in the tread? \_\_\_\_\_

Using the ruler on the evidence photo, what is the length of the track: \_\_\_\_\_ inches

Using the chart below, what size shoe does the suspect wear? \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Inches</b>	<b>9 5/8</b>	<b>9 3/4</b>	<b>9 7/8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10 1/8</b>	<b>10 1/4</b>	<b>10 1/2</b>	<b>10 3/4</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Size</b>	6	6 1/2	7	7 1/2	8	8 1/2	9	10 1/2	11 1/2

**Fingerprint Evidence:** Below are fingerprints you had on file. Match them to the partial print you lifted from the discarded soda can.



A                      B                      C                      D

Suspect's  
Partial Print



**Who does it match?**

\_\_\_\_\_

Make your own  
print using ink pad  
and space below: