

Brush Piles in the Garden



What is a Brush Pile?

A brush pile is a collection of fallen branches and other organic material that can be arranged and stacked to form a refuge for wildlife.

The base of a brush pile can be started with logs and rocks. Branches (of different

sizes and shapes) are then stacked on top, in alternating directions. This creates multiple entryways for a variety of animals.

What is the purpose of a brush pile?

Brush piles provide safety to mammals, reptiles, amphibians and songbirds. It is a great place for these animals to nest, rest and hide from predators.

What specific animals use brush piles?

Birds Rabbits Groundhogs Chipmunks Squirrels Voles

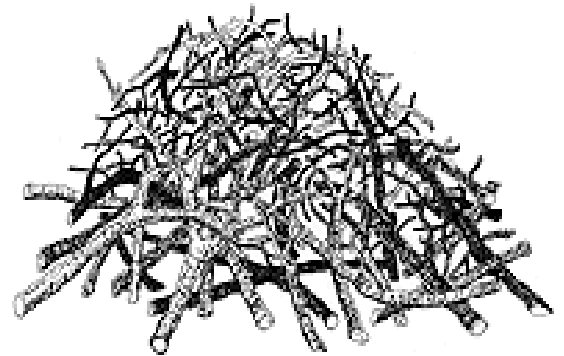
Mice Toads Turtles Snakes Lizards ...and much more!

Bonus: These piles of decaying wood attract **insects** (ants, termites, carpenter bees etc.). This provides a buffet for larger animals who feed on the insects.

A whole ecosystem exists in just one brush pile!

What time of year are brush piles used?

Brush piles are critical in the wintertime, when weather conditions are harsh and animals need a place to take cover. They are also perfect for insects (butterflies, grasshoppers, beetles etc.) seeking a stable location to overwinter.



Task 1 Observe the Brush Pile

Date _____ What time of year is it?

Circle the season: Winter Spring Summer Fall

What animals do you see in and around the brush pile?

What is their behavior?

If you cannot see any animals, are there other indicators animals have been living there?

Pro tip: Look for animal droppings (also called scat). Is there any at the site?

Is there snow on the ground or mud around the brush pile? Yes or No

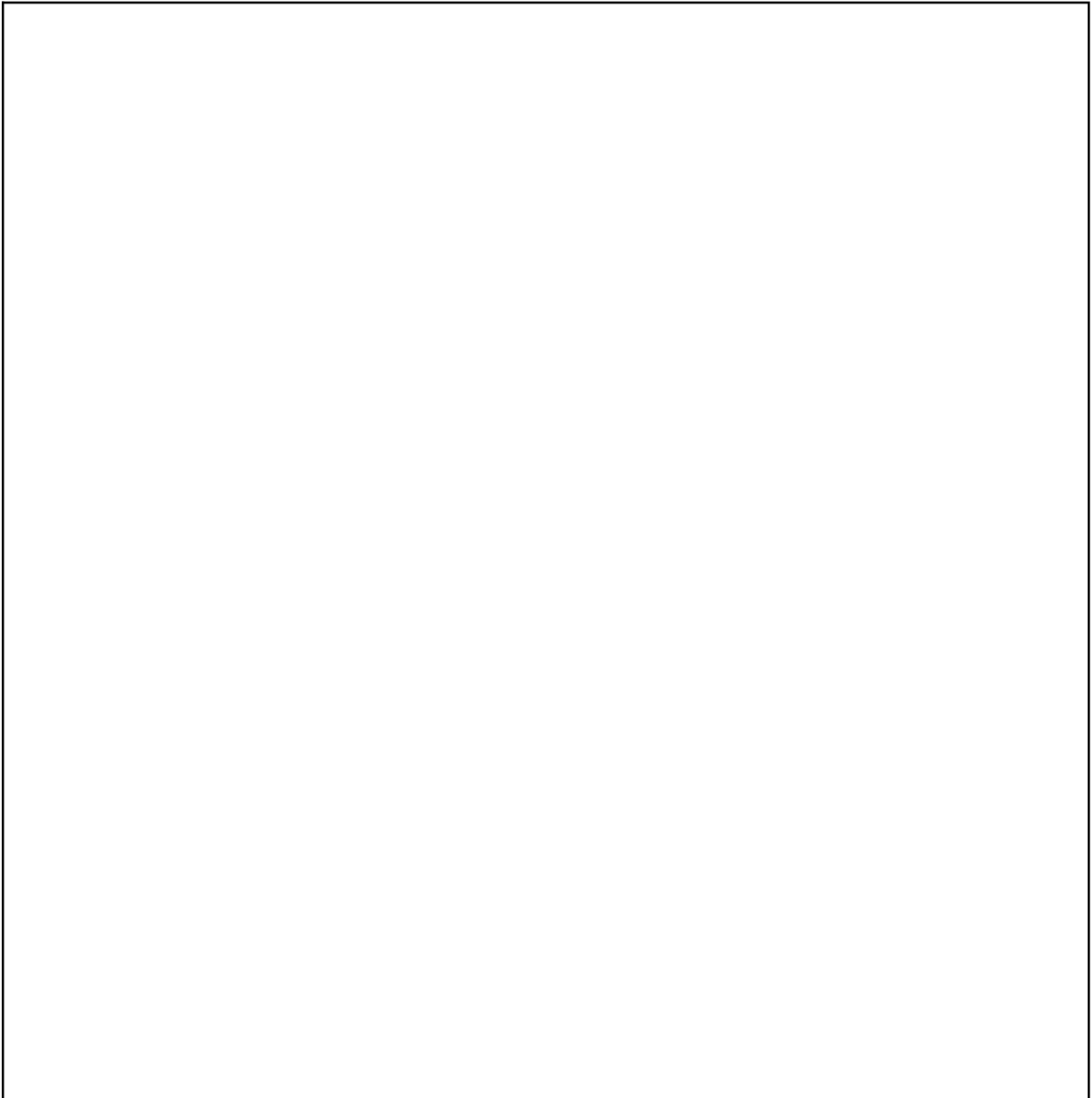
Can you see footprints or tracks? If so, draw it below!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw any footprints or tracks they observe at the site.

Task 2 Draw the Brush Pile

Draw what you observe.

Be sure to walk around the pile. Pay close attention to detail. Draw any entrances or paths you might see. Draw the animals nearby that might use the brush pile.



Task 3 Make Suggestions for the Future

Observe the brush pile and circle the answers below:

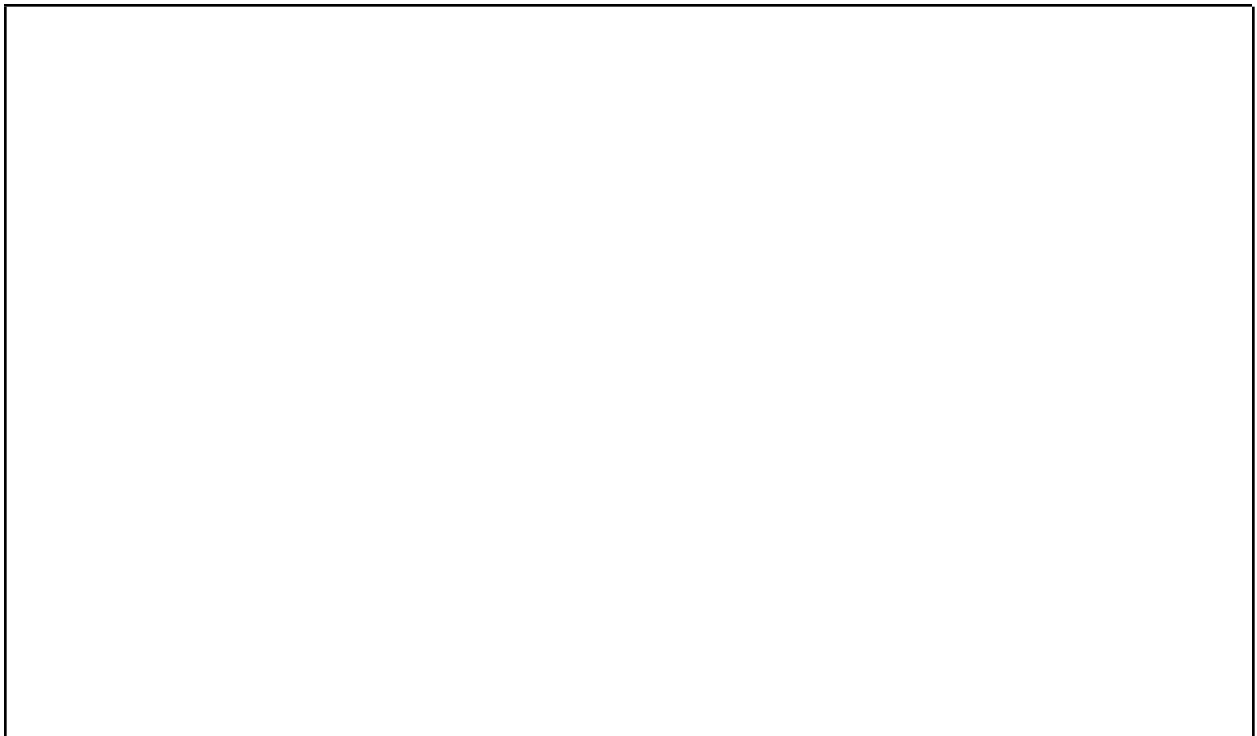
Are branches chewed up? Yes or No

Did any part of the brush pile appear to collapse? Yes or No

Is an extra layer of branches needed for more coverage? Yes or No

Is a layer of leaves needed? Yes or No

Next, draw any ideas you have to make the brush pile better.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw their ideas for improving the brush pile.