



# NATURE CARVING

## Project Skills:

- 4-H'ers will connect with the world of nature through art.

## Life Skills:

- Learning to learn

**Grade Levels:** 3 and up, in a 4-H project setting

**Time:** 30-60 minutes, depends on audience

## Supplies Needed:

- Bar of unscented “floating” soap for each participant (plus a few extra)
- Paper
- Paper plates
- Pencils
- Pictures or drawings of animals
- Popsicle sticks for carving
- Scissors
- Toothpicks (optional)
- Zip lock bags (to carry the carvings home)

## Do Ahead:

- Locate simple line drawings of animals that youth can use as patterns for their carvings.
- Form a collection of toy animals or small carved figures that youth can use as models.

## Youth Leader Roles:

- Experienced youth can work with younger members by providing suggestions and encouragement as the participants develop their patterns and position them on the soap.

## Sources:

- Created by Paula Rogers Huff, 4-H Youth Development Agent, UW-Extension, Oconto

## BACKGROUND

Nature carving is a great hobby for the outdoor enthusiast. The best carvers seem to be able to capture an animal in just the right way that makes you almost think it's alive. This skill takes not only a practiced hand in carving, but also a practiced eye in the observation of animal characteristics.

In this introduction to carving, 4-H youth will explore carving soap using a popsicle stick.

This activity plan may be used in a variety of 4-H settings, including club and project meetings, and 4-H camp.



## WHAT TO DO

### Step 1. Creating a Pattern

Have each youth choose an animal that he or she would like to carve. Encourage the youth to choose animals with simple shapes that can be drawn easily, such as a turtle, fish or duck.

Give each youth a piece of paper, pencil, and wrapped bar of soap. Have them draw a couple of outlines of their bar of soap on the paper.

Now have the youth practice drawing an outline of their animal. When they are ready, have them transfer the drawing within the soap bar shape on their paper. If they wish they can cut their drawing out to use as a pattern. Some youth might feel comfortable just drawing right on the soap. Either way works just fine!

They will also need to create a top view for what they are going to carve. That's a little trickier and it helps to look at a model.

Have available several models of what the kids will carve that they can use for reference. For example, have a good selection of toy animals, such as rubber duckies, plastic frogs or toy horses, which they can use as reference when they create their pattern. They can also use that for a model to copy while they are carving. Most carvers do much better if they have a model that they can use for reference when creating their pattern and when carving.



### Step 2. Transferring the Pattern

Have youth unwrap their soap and choose a popsicle stick. Share the following suggestions:

Using a paper plate to catch the “shavings,” gently scrape away the name of the soap. Now use a toothpick to either trace your pattern or draw on the bar of soap.

### Step 3: Carving

Carving will be new for most of the youth in your group. Remind them that they will be “finding” their animal in the bar of soap, and this means they have to slowly remove tiny pieces of the soap to create their carving. The biggest challenge is likely to be in thinking in 3-D!



County.

- Content reviewed by Robert Rosenberger, Water Management Specialist, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Rosenberger is a professional wildlife carver.

**Keywords:**

- Animals, drawing, model, pattern, shooting sports

**TALK IT OVER**

**Reflect:**

- What was it like carving in soap?
- What was the easiest part for you?
- What was the hardest part?
- What did you learn about the animal that you carved?
- What questions do you have about the animal you chose?

**Apply:**

- What might you do differently next time?
- How might knowing more about the animals help you with your carving?
- How can carving help you learn more about animals?
- Besides carving, how do people show their appreciation for animals?

**ENHANCE/SIMPLIFY**

**Enhance for Older Youth:**

- Older learners may benefit from a discussion of positive space and negative space with regard to carving.
- For additional information on carving decoys see “Fashioning the Flock” by Robert Rosenberger at <http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/2002/oct02/flock.htm>

**Simplify for Younger Youth:**

- For younger learners, consider just focusing on creating a two-dimensional animal. Youth can add surface features with a toothpick.

***Juried through the Wisconsin 4-H Learning Resources Team: November 2008***