

Mammal Outside Activity

Animal Tracks

Many mammals are big, but we still struggle to see them in the wild because they are excellent at being sneaky. Instead of trying to look for the animal itself, we can look for signs that the animal has been visiting our yard. Sometimes they leave feathers, fur, or even...poop! Most of the time, they will leave nothing but footprints, or tracks. We can look for these tracks and identify what animals are around!

In this activity, you will learn what the tracks of different mammals look like and have a chance to see if they have been visiting your backyard.

Materials:

- Chalk or paper and markers
- Ruler
- Magnifying glass (optional)

Directions:

- Look at the animal tracks included here. See if you can point out different features of each one. How many toes are there? Do they have claws? Do they have paws or hooves? How big are they?
- See if you can draw the tracks on your driveway with chalk or on a piece of paper. They don't have to be perfect!
- Take turns drawing tracks and see if another person can guess what animal made the track you drew.
- Head out into your backyard and walk very carefully. Look for tracks in the mud and dirt! If you have a magnifying glass, bring it along. It could help you identify different tracks.
- Take picture of what you find to compare to the tracks you have been drawing. Who has been visiting your yard?

IDENTIFYING ANIMAL TRACKS

An illustrated report by Craig Schaffer

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Not an exact science
 Animal tracks may vary depending on size, shape, conditions on the ground and movement of the animal. The tracks are not shown to scale.

Animal	HIND TRACK	FRONT TRACK	TRACK PATTERN
White-tailed deer			
Dog			
Red Fox			
Bobcat			
Coyote			
Cat			
Otter			
Mink			
Fisher			
Weasel			
Raccoon			
Striped skunk			
Porcupine			
Beaver			
Black bear			
Opossum			
Woodchuck			
Muskrat			
Snowshoe hare			
Gray squirrel			
White-footed mouse			
Cottontail rabbit			

Source: Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife

<https://www.greenbelly.co/pages/animal-tracks-identification-guide>