

Journal Page: Mammal Tracks!



Background: Since the time of pre-historic man, humans have depended upon finding and following animal tracks. It aided them in finding game animals as a food source and in avoiding dangerous species. In harsh climates, the ability to track was literally a matter of life and death where an unsuccessful hunt would mean starvation.

While most people do not depend on these skills today, tracks still hold the key to discovering the hidden mysteries of animal behavior and habits. Animal Tracks can tell us:

- **WHAT** kind of animal
- **WHERE** the animal was going
- **HOW FAST** the animal was traveling
- **WHEN** the animal made the tracks

Look at the Mammal Track Poster provided by NatureWatch. It features tracks from 16 common North American mammals. Then try to figure out the answers to the quiz!

Resources provided Free by Nature Watch

LIFE-SIZE TRACKS OF COMMON NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS



Animal Track Key

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Woodchuck | 9. Wolf (Gray) |
| 2. Opossum | 10. Weasel (Long-tailed) |
| 3. Fox (Gray) | 11. Rabbit (Cottontail) |
| 4. Coyote | 12. Deer (White-tailed) |
| 5. Raccoon | 13. Mountain Lion |
| 6. Skunk (Striped) | 14. Squirrel (Gray) |
| 7. Muskrat | 15. Bear (Black) |
| 8. Bobcat | 16. Beaver |

Track impressions in the wild may vary from those depicted above based on ground and weather conditions. Tracks rarely show all of the features of an animal's foot.



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Journal Page:

Mammal Track Quiz!



- 1) Which track has the longest claws?
- 2) Which track is the largest?
- 3) One animal has webbing between its toes, can you find it?
- 4) What purpose does the webbing between a Beaver's toes serve?
- 5) Which track is the MOST different from the others?
- 6) Can you name other animals that have hooves?
- 7) Which tracks look most like a human hand?
- 8) What advantages are there to having long toes or an opposing thumb?
- 9) Compare track # 9 to track #13 - what is the main difference between them?
- 10) Track #6 has very long, sharp claws for digging up insects. It also has a chemical weapon. Can you guess what animal this is?
- 11) Track #1 has strong toes and claws for digging because they live in dens underground. You often see them eating grass beside the road and even standing up for a clear view around. Can you guess what animal this is?

Answer Key

1. #15 Black Bear
2. #15 Black Bear
3. #16 Beaver
4. Swimming
5. #12 Deer -hooves instead of toes
6. Goat, Moose, Antelope, Horse, Cow, Pig, Sheep.....
7. #2 Opossum, #5 Raccoon & #7 Muskrat
8. Grasping for, climbing, or digging up foods such as roots or insects
9. #9 shows the claws while #13 does not)
10. #6 Skunk
11. Groundhog/Woodchuck



Journal Page: Track Search

Take a walk in your backyard, neighborhood or a nearby park! Pay close attention to areas with bare dirt or sand to see if you can find any tracks. Use the track poster to try to identify them. If you can't identify a particular track while you are out on the trail, take a picture so you can compare it to others in books or online when you get home. Tracking is one the MOST challenging skills to learn so don't get discouraged if you can't figure out what animal made a track. The language of nature is written in animal tracks; learning to track is learning how to read the very book of nature itself! It takes practice!

Sketch any animal tracks you discover!