

Listen and Look for Wildlife All Around

Subject: Natural Sciences- Investigation

Grade Level: K-2nd Grade

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- 1) Name their different senses and share how they use those senses in exploring nature.
- 2) Give examples of signs that an animal has been in an area
- 3) Identify the type of animal the signs come from- bird, mammal, reptile, insect, etc.

Materials:

- An outside space to walk around

Vocabulary:

Signs of wildlife- Something an animal left behind, an animal noise or movement

Scat- feces that an animal has left behind; one can determine the diet of an animal from looking at scat and how long ago the animal came through the area by how fresh or dried the scat is

Tracks- footprints or other markings that an animal leaves behind

Examples of Tracks:

- Footprint in the dirt
- Lines in the dirt from a dragging foot or tail- called a dragline
- Snail Trails
- Claw marks on trees
- Chew marks or teeth marks on trees

Activity

Directions:

1. Before heading out on a walk, ask your child...
 - a. What are your 5 senses?
 - b. Which ones do you think you will use to explore nature?
2. Go for a walk around an outside space that you have access to.
3. Ask your child to listen for **signs** of animals. Ask them what sense they are using. Have them share some different sounds that they hear. Tell them that the sounds an animal makes are one sign that an animal is nearby.
4. Ask your child to sniff in the air. Ask them what sense they are using. Have them share things they smell. Tell them that some animals leave a scent behind and that could be a sign that an animal was there or is still nearby. Ask them if they can think of an animal that may leave a scent.

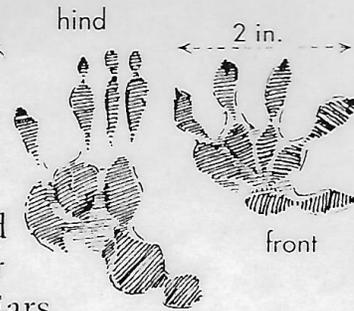
5. Have them stick out their tongue. Ask them what sense they would use with their tongue. Ask them if they think they should use taste to explore nature? NO! Explain how some plants and items in nature can be very bad for them to taste and can make them very sick. Share that this is why we do not explore nature with this sense. We may only taste our food from our plate.
6. Tell them they will look for signs of wildlife. Ask them what sense they are using as they look.
7. Tell them they may be able to use their hands. Ask them what sense they will use with their hands.
 - a. Inform them that they will only be allowed to touch what you say is safe to touch. Always look before touching.
 - b. If you see a plant with leaves of three, let it be. This is poison oak. If you are not sure it is poison oak, but it could be, then don't touch.
 - c. Look for thorns and spikes on plants. Look only, rather than touch these plants. Watch for serrated edges, like a knife, and sharp straight edges on plants too.
 - d. **Scat** should not be touched. It is safe to use a stick to pick apart scat. Never use your hands to touch scat. Be careful not to breath it in.
8. When listening for wildlife, determine what kind of sound you hear:
 - a. Is it a non-consistent chirp or whistle? - Bird
 - b. Is it a consistent, same pitch chirp? – Insect, rubbing legs together
 - c. Is it a growl? – A predatory animal
 - d. Is it a meow or low buzzing like purring? - Cat
 - e. It is a bark or whine? – Dog
 - f. Is it a higher pitched buzz? – Flying Insect
 - g. Is it a screech? – Predatory Bird
 - h. Is it a hiss? – Snake
 - i. Is it squeaking and clicking? – Squirrel
 - j. Is it movement in the bushes or grass that gets your attention?
 - k. Do you hear food being eaten, a munching sound?
 - l. Do you hear tapping sounds on a tree? – Woodpecker (bird)
9. If using scent as a sign of wildlife, describe the scent.
 - a. What does the smell compare to?
 - b. Is the scent good or bad to you?
 - c. What could the smell be?
 - d. What animal made that smell?
10. Smell may lead you to see **scat**.
 - a. Take a look at whether it appears dry or still wet, fresh.
 - b. Take a look at what is in it. It is safe to use a stick to pick apart scat. Never use your hands to touch scat.
 - c. Look at size and shape of scat to help determine what it could be.
11. Your sight may help you to see **tracks**.
 - a. Look at the size and shape of the track.
 - b. Count the number of toes.
 - c. Look for signs of long nails on the footprint
 - d. Look for webbing- skin between the toes connecting the toes.

- e. If you find sets of prints that show an animal walking, then take a look at the stride- the distance between the heel of the front foot and the heel of the back foot.
12. Sight will help you to find other signs of life:
- a. Homes/Shelter
 - i. Spider webs
 - ii. Burrows
 - iii. Nests
 - iv. Dens
 - b. Signs of eating
 - i. Chewed on seeds and fruits
 - ii. Carcasses that are partially eaten
 - c. Signs of change during a life cycle:
 - i. Exoskeletons of animals that shed their outside skeleton
 - ii. Carcasses (dead animals or parts of animals)
 - iii. Sheds of skin
 - iv. Fur
 - v. Feathers
13. Use the resources provided to determine which animal left the evidence behind. You may make educated guesses using resources and any background knowledge you already have.
14. Ask them what different signs animals leave behind to show they were in the area or are still nearby. Ask them to share which senses we use to explore nature.

Opossum



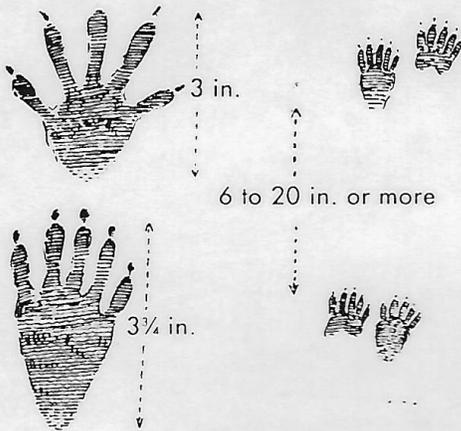
May feign death when threatened—“plays possum.” Nocturnal, omnivorous; prefers farmland or woodland. Seeks shelter in abandoned dens, culverts, hollow trees or logs, or beneath brush piles or outbuildings. Ears and tail susceptible to frostbite, so opossums are largely absent in colder regions like western mountains and Canada.



Raccoon

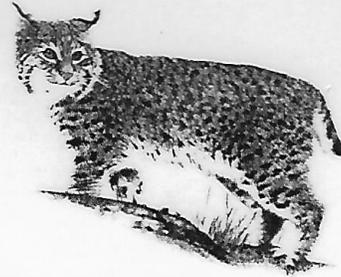


Omnivorous, often foraging along streams and lakes. Long thought to wash food before eating, but “washing” motion may simply be effective behavior for finding and catching frogs, fish, and crayfish. Adapts well to urban areas.



BOBCAT (Wildcat)

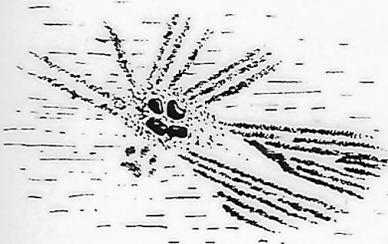
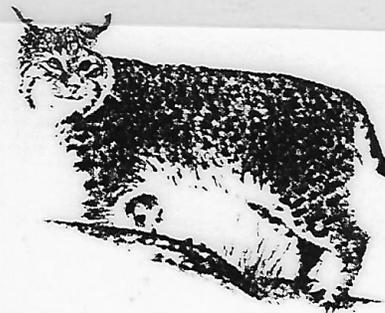
Lynx rufus



Found anywhere from wild mountainsides to chaparral, and even into residential areas. On each foot, located on each heel pad, there are two lobes on the top, and three lobes on the bottom.

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Lynx rufus



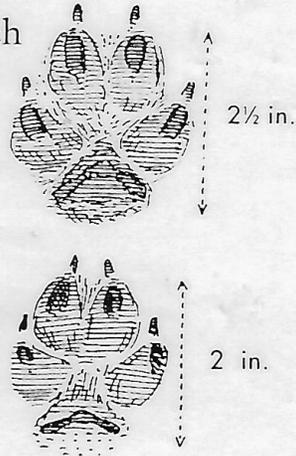
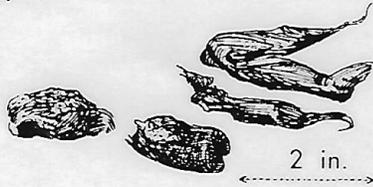
Scratching Marks

Bobcat scat is often segmented or constricted into short lengths (approximately 2 to 3 inches in length). In wetter regions the scat may be as long as 5 inches. Much like house cats, bobcats try to cover their scat by scratching soil onto their droppings. Bobcat scat can be confused with coyote scat, therefore look for scratch marks around the scat to help you with identification.

Red Fox



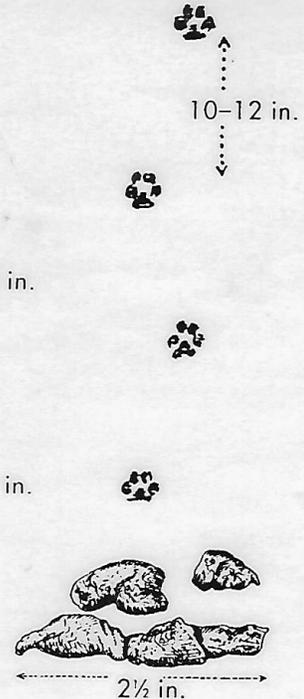
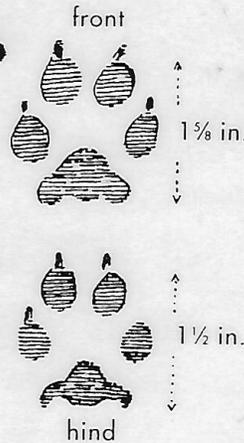
Prefers mixed woodland and open country. Characteristic trail is straight line of neat, evenly spaced tracks. Kits born March or April in dens, usually dug into hillside in porous soil. A series of fox trails criss-crossing an area may indicate an active den nearby.



Gray Fox



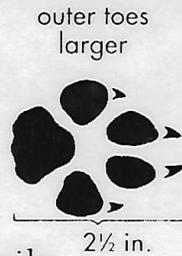
Semiretractable nails that enable gray foxes to climb trees do not always register in tracks, which could be confused with cat tracks except for the fox's smaller, more symmetrical heel pad. Prefers deeper woods than red fox, with some open country nearby.



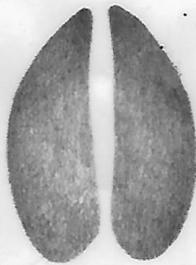
Coyote



Highly intelligent, adapts to suburban areas that invade its natural habitat. Tracks most easily distinguished from those of domestic dogs by straighter trail pattern. Often uses hiking trails, logging roads, power lines, and railroad beds as territorial boundaries, patrolling regularly and marking them with urine scent posts or scat, which frequently contains hair of prey.



MULE DEER (Black-tailed Deer) *Odocoileus hemionus*



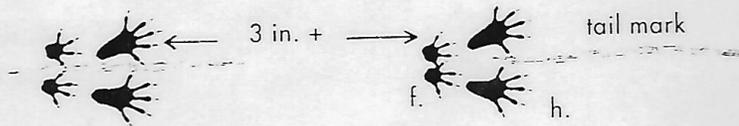
Frequently seen in meadows, open woodlands, and arid plains. Prints are heart shaped and sharply pointed.

Deer Mouse



Nests in underground burrows, tree cavities, stumps, buildings, even abandoned bird nests. Eats acorns, nuts, seeds, insects; caches food. Tail drag may register with tracks. Active year-round.

SIMILAR TRACKS: white-footed mouse, house mouse, cotton mouse, golden mouse.



TOADS AND FROGS



toad



frog



Found along fringes of waterways. Rear prints will appear to be slightly webbed, with five very long, thin toes. The front prints will have four toes and are much smaller than the rear feet. The hopping action of the frog results in two small front prints registering in front of the long-toed rear prints.



Other Resources:

Tracks Identification (ID):

<https://blog.nwf.org/2014/12/who-goes-there-identifying-animal-tracks-in-your-backyard/>

Scat ID:

<http://icwdm.org/identification/scat-id/>

Bird ID for sounds, footprints, and feathers:

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>

Signs of Feeding Animals:

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/how-to/identify-wildlife/how-to-identify-wildlife-feeding-signs/>

Signs of Animal Food Stores:

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/how-to/identify-wildlife/how-to-identify-animal-food-stores/>

Signs of Animal Holes:

<https://www.discoverwildlife.com/how-to/identify-wildlife/how-to-identify-animal-holes/>

Other resources for identification:

<https://blog.nwf.org/2014/10/10-naturalist-resources-for-identifying-wildlife/>