

Basics of Tracking

Grade 6

Title: Recognizing Tracks and Sign

Grade: 6th Grade

Time: ????

Materials:

- Student Journals
- Mammals and Tracks field guides
- Used Cardboard for cutting
- Scissors
- Glue
- Rulers
- Tempera Paint or Ink
- Poster Board or sheets of butcher paper

Vocabulary

track, sign, toe, heel-pad, claw, gait, stride, habitat, range, ungulate

Objectives:

The students will:

- Research a local animal, journal about the animal's track, gait, and behavior; then create a stamp of the track of the animal.
- Work with a team to create a track 'story' using the stamps and a piece of butcher paper - using understanding of behavior of their chosen animal.
- Using the track stories, identify the parts of a track in order to prepare for tracking in the field.

Attention Getter:

- **Animal Guessing Game:** Teacher creates labels (either pictures with animal names or just animal names) and tapes a different one to each student's back. Students must ask each other yes/no questions to guess which animal they have on their back (this could be the animal the student researches later, or not).
 - Examples: Raccoon, Pine Marten, River Otter, Striped Skunk, Spotted Skunk, Coyote, Red Fox, Bobcat, Aplodontia, Mule Deer, Porcupine, Snowshoe Hare, Nutria, Brush Rabbit, Opossum, Beaver, Western Cottontail, Mink, Elk, Black Bear, Cougar, Short-tailed Weasel (Ermine in Winter), Long-tailed Weasel, California Ground Squirrel, Douglas Squirrel (or Chickaree), Western Grey Squirrel, Townsend Chipmunk, Golden-mantled ground Squirrel, Townsend's Mole, Shrew

Introduction:

- Brainstorm a list of local species (using the cards from the guessing game).
- Encourage students to pick a species to research and record in journals. Some things to record: Common name, scientific name, range, habitat, tracks (front and rear), size, general shape, etc.

Body:

- Students spend time with field guides, books, library, internet, etc. learning about their chosen animal species.
- Once they've journaled information about their species, students will make a track 'stamp' - using cardboard, scissors and rulers, students cut out and make a cardboard stamp of their species track.
- With track stamps, students are randomly assigned (perhaps a rabbit, a coyote, a mole, and a deer) to a small group with which to create a track story - using their understanding of their species' behavior, students create track trails on the butcher paper and tell a visual story of how they interact with each other. Groups share their track stories with the whole class.
- Using the track stories, have students identify parts of a track. Guided lesson to teach about the parts of a track that help observers to identify the animal that left the track.

- Parts to consider: Toe Pads, Heel pad(s), and Claws

- Two toes (front and rear) - generally an ungulate: deer, elk, moose
- Four toes (front and rear) with claws - generally a dog: fox, coyote, wolf
- Four toes (front and rear) without claws - generally a cat: bobcat, cougar
- Five toes - varies: rabbits & hares have four and five, weasels have five, bears have five, rodents have four and five
- To learn them all takes practice and study - this is a general introduction.
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FOX

- <http://www.bear-tracker.com/mammals.html> a good place to find tracks to look closer at.
- Questions to ask when you come upon a track:
 - How many toes are there?
 - Does it have claws visible?
 - What is the shape of the heel-pad/ is it in multiple parts or singular?
 - What direction is it facing?
 - Can you find the next track?

- What are three possible animals it can be? (based on size, shape, and location)

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Closing:

- These sets of activities are to set students up to be prepared to observe and find signs of animals in the field when they attend Outdoor School. Closing can relate to that experience.