

WETLANDS EXPLORERS CLUB



Tracks - Tell a Story

Have you ever come across a track and wondered who it belonged to? When we are outdoors we do not always have the good fortune of seeing animals in action; seeing them takes luck, patience, silence, and time.

There are many ways of seeing wildlife without actually seeing the animal. One of those signs that tell us what animals are in the area and what they are doing are **tracks**.

An **animal track** is an imprint in soil, or mud, or on some other ground surface, by an animal walking across it. **Tracks** will tell a story if we learn to read them. They can tell us stories of escape, survival, and even friendship. Tracks are one of the easiest signs for all of us to find and understand.

Pay attention to these **elements**:

The single print: Look at the shape and size of the track. How many toes are there? Are there claws in the print? Is there webbing between the toes? How deep is the print? All these clues may tell you who the track belongs to and how big they are.

The track pattern: Look at the overall picture. Where are the tracks located? How far apart are the tracks? Do they form a straight line? Is one foot in front of another or are they side-by-side? These clues will also help determine who made the track and what they were doing. For example, if an animal was being chased and they were running, their tracks would be farther apart than if they were walking.

Check out this video [“Animal Track Detective! Science for Kids”](#) for more information.

LESSON



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A great place at Wetlands Park to do today's activity: **Willow Grove**

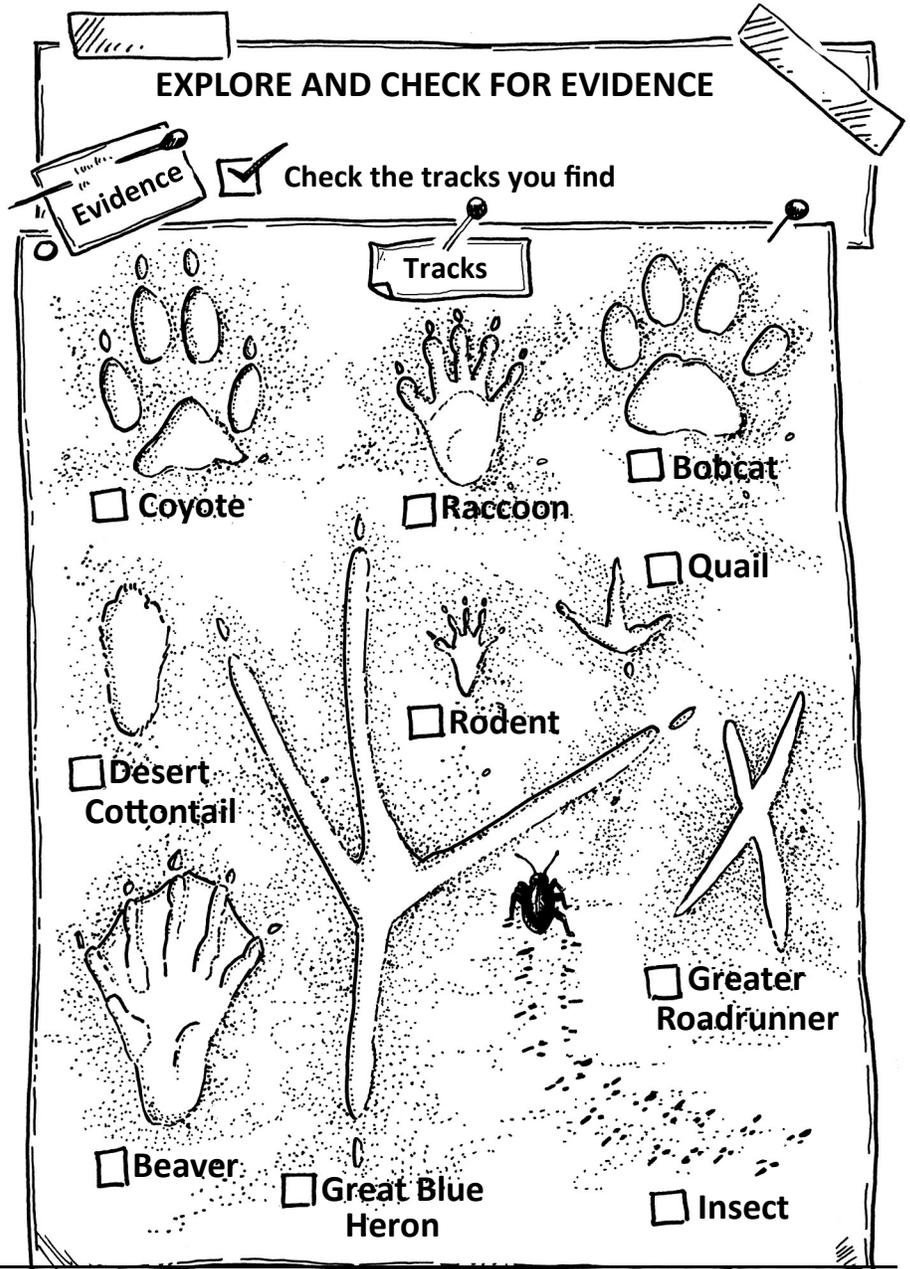
Visit Wetlands Park or your back yard. Explore and see if you can find some animal tracks.

TIPS

WHERE: Animal tracks are easiest to find in mud or sand. Look along the shores of ponds and streams.

WHEN: After a rain. Morning and late afternoon; use the long shadows cast by the sun to spot tracks.

HOW: Make a **sketch** of it in the field. Take a **photo** and some **measurements**. Measure the size of it and the distance between tracks. This will help you research and identify the animal it belongs to when you get home.



ACTIVITY

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Takeaway... A question for today: How can you tell if someone was walking or running just by looking at their footprints? [Click here to answer.](#)



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Just for Fun – Create a Story



Take a look at the scene below. **What story do you think the tracks tell?**

Some things to think about...Who might have left the tracks? Why did they visit? Where are they going? What are they doing? Create a story about what happened and write it down on the back side of this paper.



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