

Kids' KOrner

Do you recognize animal tracks?

LANCASTER — An enjoyable part of playing in the woods is the discovery of animal tracks in the snow. Tracks can be found during any season of the year, but fresh, white snow provides an excellent base for them in the winter.

Tracks tell the story of an animal's life in the woods. They reveal where the animal travels, what he eats, and where he sleeps.

It is difficult to find perfect prints that show all details of the animal's foot. Snow may melt, turn slushy, or drift over the track. Parts of the prints may be missing or the impressions may be distorted. These conditions make the tracks hard to read, but often the pattern or arrangement of the prints are more important than the details of the foot.

Here are some common tracks to look for and they are grouped according to the best place to look for them.

Woodland Tracks

Porcupine — These tracks are rarely clear, but are easily identified because porcupines plow through snow and drag their feet. Their trails usually lead from ground burrows or rock dens to feeding areas.

Gray Squirrel — The tracks of the gray squirrel usually lead from tree to tree. Interruptions in the tracks indicate where the squirrel stopped to dig for a buried nut, or some other type of food.

Look for these tracks near farm land:

Opossum — These tracks are most common on open farm land. The best places to look are in old orchards and along paths and roadways. The hind foot of the opossum has a hand-like thumb

which makes this print easy to identify.

Skunk — Even though this animal may be inactive during very cold weather, their tracks may be found in the snow. Skunks sleep in burrows or establish dens under buildings. The prints are found in a diagonal pattern.

Look for these tracks near water:

Muskrat — Muskrats like water. They make underwater burrows, dig for the roots of water plants and build houses from piles of aquatic plants.

Raccoon — Look for raccoon tracks along streams and marshes, and other water areas. The raccoon is also an excellent climber, so watch for prints at the base of trees.



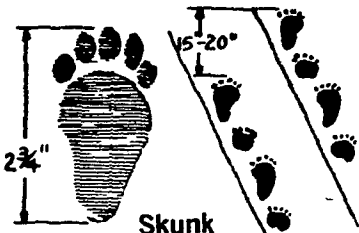
Porcupine



Squirrel



Opossum



Skunk



Raccoon



Muskrat

Make plaster casts of animal tracks

If you follow this procedure, you can take a plaster cast of an animal track in the soil or snow. Try to find a clear, clean print, and remove all leaves and branches around it.

1. You will need 2-inch strip of cardboard and a paperclip. Make a circle with the strip and secure it with the paperclip. Press this into the soil or snow around the print to make the form.

2. Mix about 1 2/3 parts plaster of paris with 1 part of water to make a thin batter. Snow will melt when the plaster is poured unless you use lots of snow to cool the plaster, or dry dust plaster of

paris in the print, to make a base. Pour the mixture carefully over the print.

3. When the plaster is hard, depending upon your batter, lift the cast and carefully remove the cardboard. Clean it gently with a brush. This is a negative cast.

4. To make a positive cast, coat the negative cast with vaseline, and repeat the casting process, in an old container.

5. When the plaster is hard, remove the negative carefully. You now have a positive cast which is a duplicate of the original print.

COLOR THIS!

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. ORANGE |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

MARYLAND. THIS STATE WAS ONE OF THE VERY EARLY COLONIES FOUNDED IN AMERICA. KNOWN AS THE "OLD LINE STATE" IT GAINED HIGH PRAISE FOR HOLDING THE LINE AGAINST THE BRITISH DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. IN 1788 MARYLAND WAS THE 7th STATE TO JOIN THE UNION. FAMOUS MARYLANDERS WERE FRANCIS SCOTT KEY, COMPOSER AND JOHN PAUL JONES, SEA CAPTAIN.

