MAKE TRACKS

Science and Engineering Education Center — The University of Texas at Dallas

Challenge

Analyze the tracks of animals and see if you can identify the animal to which each track belongs.

Materials

● Animal Track Print Outs or Resource Book ● Damp Sand or Soil (Kinetic Sand is excellent) ● Rulers

Procedure

1. **Examine** the animal tracks closely.
2. **Select** an animal track (or set of tracks) to create in the sand or soil as a team. Then, use craft sticks and other implements (including your hands) to make those tracks in the sand. Pay attention to the sizes the tracks should be.
3. **Look** at the tracks that other teams created. Can you guess what animal is associated with each set of tracks?
4. **Repeat** the process if time allows.

Experiments to try

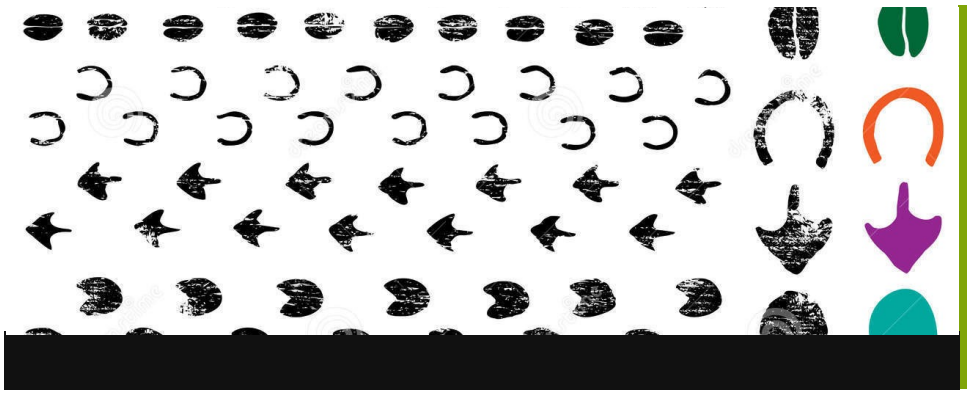
Can you name some wildlife that lives in Texas? Do you know them by their tracks? Some like the opossum and rabbit are easily recognized. Take a “walk on the wild side” and see if you can find tracks in and around your neighborhood. Guess at the animal that made them.

SCIENCE SCOOP

An animal’s tracks may be clues that help us to understand its behavior and other traits. Analysis of tracks may reveal an animal’s size, physical characteristics, habitat and food preferences. By analyzing the tracks of several animals, you might learn how they share limited resources.

Mathematical skills practiced include measurement and data analysis to document and explain evidence about the natural world. The size and number of the tracks may tell you about its physical features. How deep the tracks are in the earth or snow may tell you how much the animal weighs. How far apart the tracks are may provide clues about how long their legs are or how they move.

Identifying animal tracks & sign, as well as interpreting and trailing, are primary skills of the wildlife tracker. Historically, animal tracking skills helped people find food, avoid dangerous predators, and read the stories on the landscape. Wildlife tracking skills continue to be valuable today and are being employed in wildlife research, conservation, and outdoor education.



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Make Tracks: Investigation Log

Record the information about the tracks you see below.

Draw a sketch of the track you see.

Measure it and record the measurements of the track.

Length: _____ Width: _____

Depth: _____ Number of toe imprints: _____

Use a guide to animal tracks to investigate which species of animal might have made this track.
Write the name of the animal you think might have made the track. If you think there may be more than one alternative, indicate all possibilities and why.

Savanna elephant

Length (average)
Front 500 mm
Back 500 mm

Right front

Right back

Hippopotamus

Length (average)
Front 250 mm
Back 210 mm

Right front

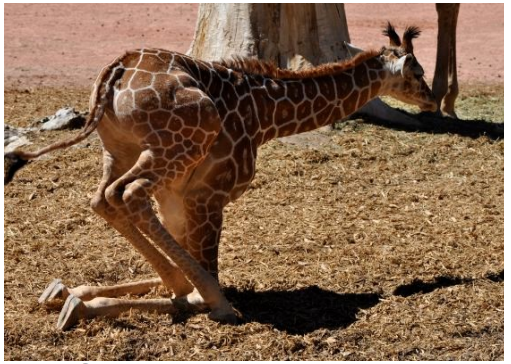
Right back

Square-lipped (White) rhinoceros

Length (average)
Front 300 mm
Back 280 mm

Right front

Right back



Giraffe

Length (average)
Front 180 mm
Back 170 mm

Right front

Right back

Buffalo

Length (average)
Front 120 mm
Back 120 mm

Right front

Eland

Length (average)
Front 100 mm
Back 85 mm

Right front

Right back

Sitatunga

Length (average)
Front 150 mm
Back 80 mm

Right front

Right back

Waterbuck

Length (average)
Front 90 mm
Back 80 mm

Right front

Right back

Roan antelope

Length (average)
Front 120 mm
Back 120 mm

Right front

Right back

Warthog

Length (average)
Front 48 mm
Back 47 mm

Right front

Right back

Bushpig

Length (average)
Front 60 mm
Back 53 mm

Right front

Right back

Track with dewclaws

Steenbok

Length (average)
Front 38 mm
Back 40 mm

Right front

Right back

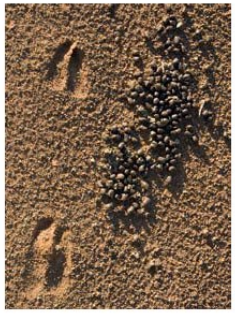
Oryx (Gemsbok in SA)

Length (average)
Front 110 mm
Back 105 mm

Right front

Right back

Hartebeest



Length (average)
Front 100 mm
Back 95 mm

Right front

Right back

Blue wildebeest (White-bearded in EA)

Length (average)
Front 100 mm
Back 100 mm

Right front

Right back

Aardvark

Length (average)
Front 100 mm (with claws)
Back 90 mm (with claws)

Right front

Right back

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

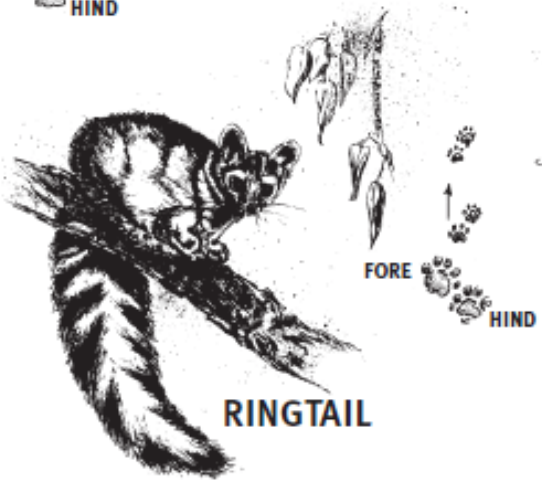
TEXAS TRACKS

Do you know them?

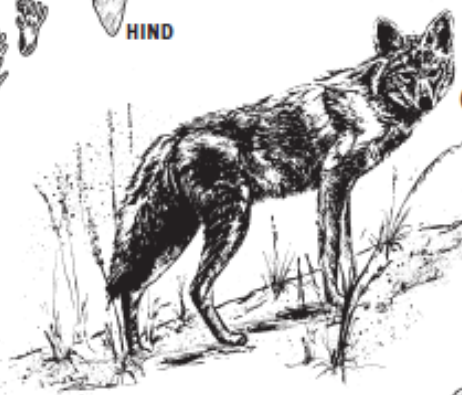
BOBCAT

RACCOON

FOX SQUIRREL



RINGTAIL



COYOTE

WHITE-TAILED DEER

OPOSSUM

COLLARED PECCARY (Javelina)

Can you identify these tracks?

You may know Texas wildlife, but do you know their tracks? Some like the rabbit and opossum are easily recognized. Others such as the coyote, collared peccary and bobcat may be confused with their domestic look-alikes the dog, pig and house cat. Tracks are easily followed in snow or loose sand. Prints made in soft mud are best for study. (Answers at the bottom of page.)

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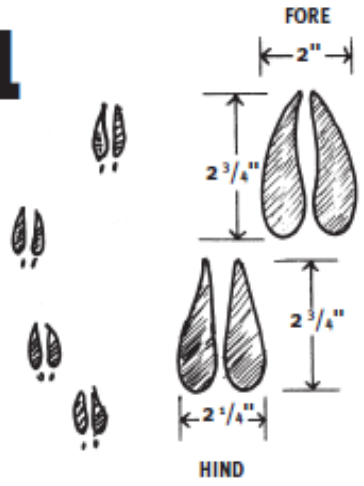

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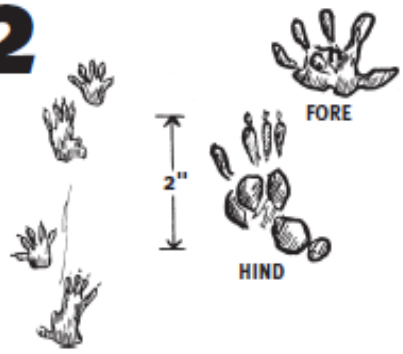

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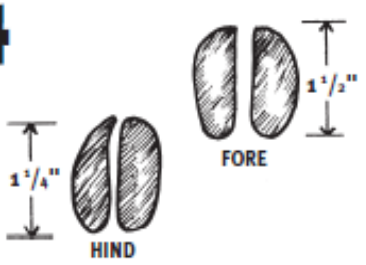

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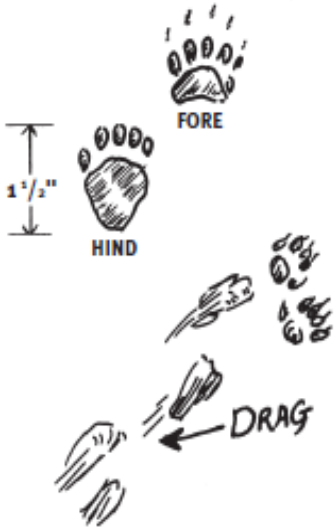

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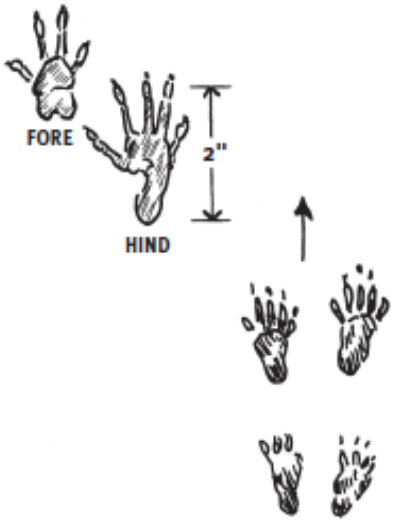

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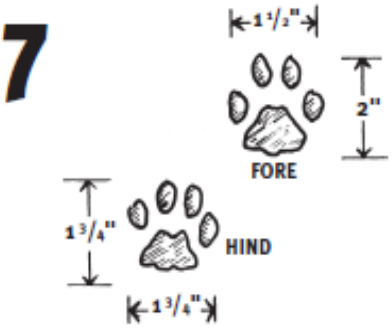

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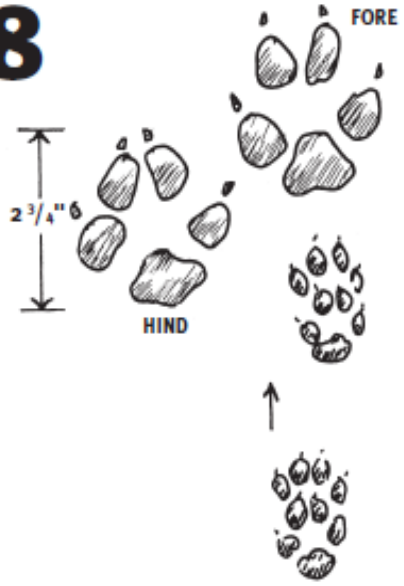

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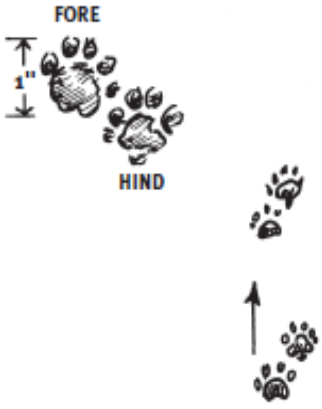

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1. White-tailed Deer 2. Opossum 3. Raccoon 4. Collared Peccary 5. Skunk 6. Fox Squirrel 7. Bobcat 8. Coyote 9. Ringtail