



Nature Play: Animal Tracks

Tracking the Animals in Your Neighborhood

On a hike, or even around the neighborhood, you might be more likely to see the signs of the animals that live in the neighborhood than the animal themselves. Even in the city where they see people every day, many animals are shy of humans and try to avoid them as much as possible. Looking for tracks can be a fun way to see what else lives in the parks or neighborhood around you.

Looking for tracks can be done year-round but can be easier after a rain when the ground is still wet, or in the winter when there is snow on the ground.

Motivating Questions: What do these tracks look like? Are all the tracks the same? What kind of animal made these tracks? Could something other than animals have made these tracks? How many different animals made these tracks? Where do they go? Do you think they tell a story? If so, what story?

NOTE for Grownups: it is fun to do these activities with your children but remember when they (not you) lead the activity they learn problem-solving skills and gain confidence.

Materials: guidebooks, white paper, colored pencils/crayons, construction paper/card stock, hole punch, string, large needle

Directions:

1. Explore the animal tracks in the sidewalks of the Playscape. These are artificial tracks printed in the sidewalk, but represent the tracks of animals that do, or might, live at the North Pond Nature Sanctuary.
2. Look around your neighborhood in muddy areas, especially after a light rain. When you find tracks in the mud, or mud on the sidewalk, stop and look at it. Make observations about the tracks: How many tracks are there? How big are they? Were they made by one animal or many?
3. Take pictures of the tracks so you can identify them later, make a rubbing of the tracks with pencil and paper, or bring a guide with you to help you identify the tracks on site.
4. If you take photos, make your own guidebook to take with you next time.
5. For a creative twist, write down a story about the animals you identify.

Online resources to learn about tracks:

<https://explorationamerica.com/free-printable-animal-tracks-explorer-id-cards/>

<https://outdooraction.princeton.edu/nature/animal-tracking-cards>

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

<https://www.greenbelly.co/pages/animal-tracks-identification-guide>

<https://www.fws.gov/refuges/features/SnowTracks.html>

<https://blog.nature.org/science/2017/01/03/field-guide-tracking-your-neighborhood-wildlife-tracks/>

<https://homeschool.rebeccareid.com/animal-tracks-measuring-activity/>

<https://childhoodbynature.com/identify-animal-tracks-in-your-backyard-or-beyond/>



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Images of Animal Tracks from the Web



FINDING
ANIMAL
TRACKS

