Identifying Animal Footprints and Paw Prints

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December 8, 2022

(from https://www.almanac.com/content/animal-track-identification)

You don't have to be deep in the forest to be an animal tracker. Animal footprints are often as close as your backyard or garden. Take a look at these animal track pictures—showing footprints as they look in snow.

How to Track Animals and Identify Animal Tracks

Tracking is something that you learn best by doing. Get out there and look! Here are a few tips:

- Animal tracks are easiest to find in mud, soft garden soil, sand, and snow.
- Study the ground closely. Get down on your hands and knees. Note the size of the track and whether it shows claw marks. You may wish to make a sketch.
- Track early in the morning or late in the day when shadows make prints easier to see.
- Watch for animal droppings called scat. The scat will also help you track the animal. If it's dry all the way through, the tracks may have been left a while ago. Scat can also tell you if you're tracking a vegetarian or a meat eater.
- If you lose the trail, search in a circle around the track until you pick up the trail again.
- The most important tip of all: **don't get lost!**

Animal Track Pictures in the Winter Snow

If you live in a snowy area, this is probably the easiest way to see and identify tracks. Take a look at these common animal tracks as they would look in the snow.

Animal Tracks

Paintings by Erick Ingraham
Tracks are not to scale.

White-footed Mouse

Long-tailed Weasel

Common Porcupine

Gray Squirrel

Eastern Chipmunk

Moose

Black Bear

American Beaver

Gray Wolf

Lynx

Striped Skunk

White-tailed Deer

Red Fox

Red Squirrel

Common Raccoon

Snowshoe Hare