

Mad about Mud

An intro to tracking

For the love of mud! Another wet winter, there's not a lot to look at when you're out for a walk at this time of year but there is a lot of mud! Actually, why don't we look at the mud... how about a bit of tracking? We're going to start off with tracking that very common animal, the human! Have a look at the mud when you're out for a walk, I bet you can see footprints, sometimes there are so many that it's difficult to tell them apart!

Lots of footprints on a very muddy path!



If you look closely you can begin to pick out individual prints. It might take a while to focus and "get your eye in". You are looking for a shape like this.



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You will notice that most prints have a different pattern, this is called the tread pattern, try to find the same tread pattern in different places.



If you manage to find the same tread pattern on the same sized footprint then it's probably the same person, see if you can follow the prints... now you're tracking!

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A lot of people will be out walking with a dog or two, the dogs are going to leave prints as well, see if you can see some, they will look like this:



Dog prints look different depending on the type of dog, some dogs have furry paws, so their print is a little “soft”, others are clearer. Unlike cats, dogs have fixed claws so have a look at the paw print to see if you can see the claws.



There are likely to be other obvious tracks you might see out on your walk...

A horse...



A mountain bike...



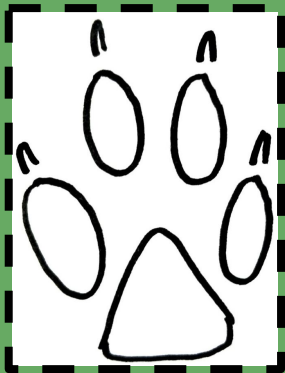
Or even a tractor!



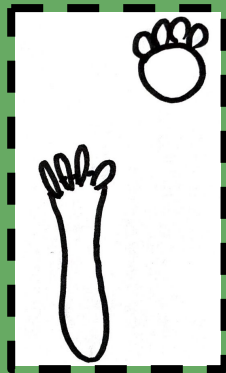
Wildlife Tracks

An intro to tracking

The best thing to find are wild animal tracks, these are going to be much harder to spot as the animals you're looking for are going to be a lot smaller than people and their dogs, so their tracks will be a lot smaller and harder to see, and more easily damaged. The most likely animal tracks you might find are:



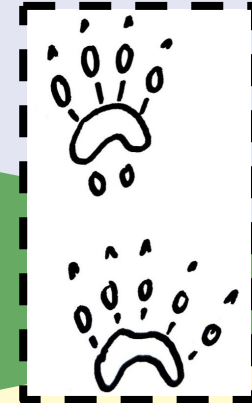
Fox print,
around
4 cm
wide
and 5
cm
long



Rabbit print,
front
paw
above,
rear
paw
below



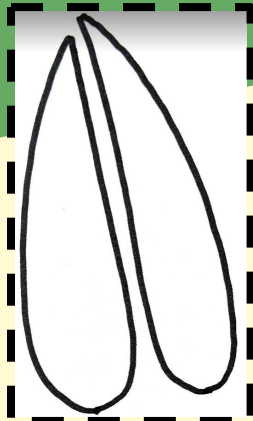
Badger print,
large
with 5
digits,
around
6.5 cm
wide



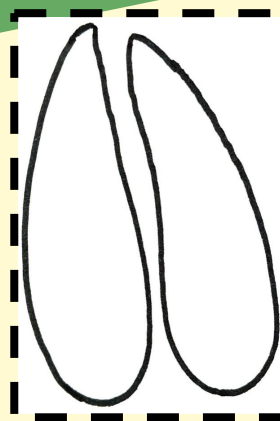
Squirrel print,
front
paw
above,
rear
paw
below

Deer prints. Deer prints are called 'slots'. Deers have cloven hooves which means that each hoof leaves two marks.

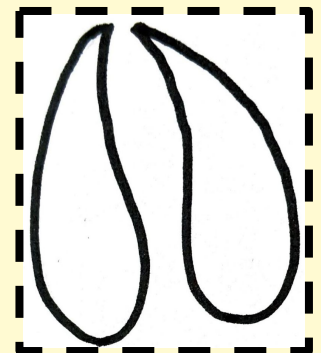
Fallow deer slots
are
around
6 cm
long



Roe deer slots
are
around
4.5 cm
long



Muntjac deer slots
are
around
2.5 cm
long



Wildlife Tracks

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So, using our tracking skills, what animals and wildlife can we see signs of around our site?

Badger - scratch marks on flint outside a badger sett



Goat



Muntjac



Cat



Blackbird - possible blackbird prints in the snow



Dog



Horse



Cow



Sheep

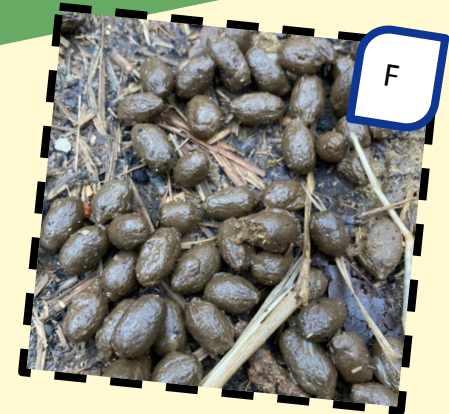
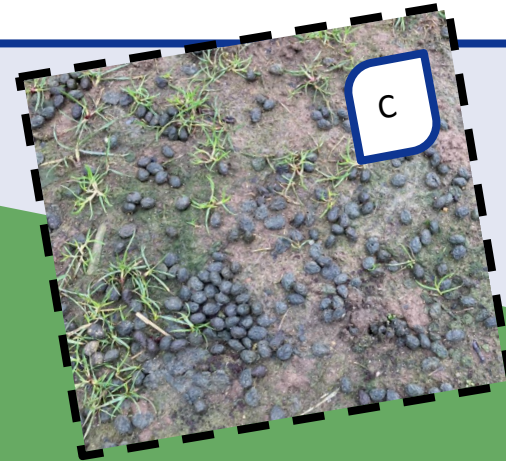


We'd love to see any interesting signs of wildlife you might find on your walks. Be sure to tag us in any photos!

An intro to tracking: Identifying animal poo

What other signs can we look for to tell us what creatures have been around our site? We can look for their poo! Poo, or '**scat**', can often help us identify which animals may be around, even when the ground may be too hard to see footprints. All of the photos on this page are of poo from our site, can you guess which animal the poo belongs to? Answers are below. There are lots of online guides to help you identify any poo you may find.

The word '**scat**' is used to describe the poo of wild animals.



If you do see any poo whilst you are outdoors and would like to know what animal is belonged to, you can make a note of its size, shape and colour and even break it apart with a stick to see if there are any signs inside it. Always remember thought that you should never touch the poo with your bare hands as it can contain harmful bacteria.

Answers: A, Fox. B, Chicken.
C, Rabbit. D, Cow. E, Sheep. F, Goat.