

Animal Tracks & Sign*

Parent Notes: Tools for this activity can be just your eyes. A magnifying glass, field guides, or an app on your phone can also be great tools, but not necessary.

Considerations: Remember to follow all **Leave No Trace (LNT) Principles; Travel and Camp on durable surfaces (Stay on the trail), Respect Wildlife, Be Considerate of Other Visitors, Dispose of Waste Properly, and Leave What You Find** (Unless it is trash and then you can be a good steward and help clean it up 😊)!

Let's Begin

When visiting public lands such as parks, preserves, and forest land, visitors often hope to catch a glimpse of wildlife. But the reality is, with so much human presence, sometimes that can be a difficult task. Animal sign, however, is plentiful if you know what to look for. The little details can tell you a story. Below is a list of the different types of wildlife sign. As you are hiking the trails or exploring the property around the place you are camping/lodging, check off as many of these as you can find.

Food Sign:

- Chewed leaves & twigs
- Remains of fruits, empty shells, chewed pine cones, seed caches etc.
- Chewed Tree trunk

Shelter Sign:

- Dens and burrows (Below Ground)
- Tree cavities (Any level of the tree)
- Nests (on the ground, shrubs, anywhere on a tree)

Signs of the Animal itself:

- Calls and Songs (birds, frogs, some mammals)
- Shed skin, fur feathers or exoskeletons
- Scat (droppings or poop)
- Tracks and trails
- Buck rubbings (on the trunk of trees) or scrapes (Areas under a tree where the leaves have been scraped away)
- Dust baths (birds will roll in dust to clean their feathers)
- Woodpecker holes
- Slides near a pond

Ask yourself these questions: What animal/animals created this sign? Is there more than one type of sign that gives you a clue to what the animal was? Location of the track, trail, and scat.

Extensions: Use the back of this paper to write and illustrate a story about the sign or clues you found.

*This activity has been modified from booklet Scat, Tracks & Other Signs produced by the National Association for Interpretation, Region 4, newsletter, FourThought. Edited by NAI Region@ 2001. Submitted by Debra Shankland & Phoebe Atkinson