

Christie Wyman

Who has been here? 100 min

Objective:

Students will explore the tracks of animals native to their local area and make and compare tracks of their own.

Big Idea:

Animal tracks are all around us, whether you live in the country or the city. Tracks leave clues about who left them, what they might have been doing, where they are coming from/going to. You can learn about the animals without even seeing them!

1. Warm Up / Anticipatory 20 min

Lesson Prep (prior to Warm Up/Anticipatory work):

Prior to student's arrival, create a series of various animal tracks with black paint on a long sheet of butcher paper. Place it in the doorway of the classroom, leading into the classroom. (See NatureTracking.com's "[Mammal Tracks and Signs](#)" page for ideas.) (Alternatively, take the class outside to look for tracks on your school grounds in snow, mud, dirt, or sand. Take photos to refer to later.)

In advance, prepare several animal track-related stations/centers, depending on the level of adult support in your classroom, which might include:

- Animal track-related books from your collection or library
- Tracks in wet and dry sand/dirt trays – provide a selection of objects for students to create tracks from shoes, cookie cutters, plastic vehicles, plastic animals, etc...
- Animal track puzzles [like these](#) or create your own from something [like this](#). Can also create a matching game from them.
- “Our tracks” mural materials – long sheet of butcher paper and paint in bowls or trays for dipping hands (or ideally feet!) into.

Warm Up/Anticipatory: Gather students together and pose some of the following questions:



- What did you see as you entered the classroom? (Note: Do not reveal which animal tracks they saw. *See Review/Check for Understanding section below.*)
- Have you ever seen real tracks made by an animal? Where?
- Are all animal tracks the same?
- Do all animals leave tracks?

If the opportunity avails itself, and not done yet, take the class outside to look for tracks on your school grounds in snow, mud, dirt, or sand. Take photos to refer to later.

If time allows, read *Who's Been Here? A Tale in Tracks* (Hodgkins), one of the books listed in the Lesson Notes below.

2. Investigation and New Learning 60 min

Pull butcher paper with painted animal tracks into a central area on the floor -- not a rug area. Explain that animal footprints are called tracks and that while you painted these tracks they are copies of what real animal tracks look like. Do they see different tracks? How many different kinds of tracks are on the paper? Compare the tracks. How are they the same? How are they different? What can we tell about an animal from its tracks?

If they are comfortable doing so, and if it is allowed, have students take off their shoes and socks, and sit at the edge of the butcher paper. Allow students to dip their feet in paint that is a different color from the pre-painted tracks. Invite them to walk around the paper leaving their own tracks. Join in the track making fun, so their are different track sizes.

Ask students what they notice about the tracks on the paper. Are everyone's tracks the same? If different, how so? How about the human tracks vs. the animal tracks?

Next, invite students to visit the various stations/centers you've prepared in advance.

If an interactive whiteboard is available, show one of the videos about identifying animal tracks. See Video links in this section.

Resources

- Animal Track Detective! <https://youtu.be/Xz02S-CizAU>
- Everything About Animal Tracks <https://youtu.be/18PfhzwW8Go>

3. Review & Check for Understanding 30 min

Gather students together again and pose the following questions:



- Is there anything that surprised you about the animal tracks we looked at today?
- What can we learn about an animal from its tracks?
- Now that you know more about animal tracks, whose tracks do you think are outside our classroom door? Outside on our school grounds? (if applicable)

If an interactive whiteboard is available, take the online track quiz in “Try It Out” together as a class. Link here through [Wonderopolis](#). It has lots of information about each part of a track.

Resources

- Do All Animals Leave Tracks? <https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/do-all-animals-leave-tracks>

Note: Resources: Who’s Been Here? A Tale in Tracks (Hodgkins) Tracks Scats and Signs (Dendy) Big Tracks, Little Tracks: Following Animal Prints (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science) (Selsam)