Integrate these resources into your classroom to maximize student learning from your educational program.

**Activity:** Bringing Life to Animal Signs  
**Source:** Forest Preserve District of Will County

**Glossary of Terms:** Animal Signs  
**Source:** Scats and Tracks of the Northeast: A Field Guide to the Signs of Seventy Wildlife Species

**Student Worksheet:** What’s Different: Animal Tracking Page  
**Source:** exploringnature.org

**Reference Page:** Animal Tracks  
**Source:** exploringnature.org

**Resource:** Mammals Resource Loan Kit  
**Source:** Forest Preserve District of Will County

**Correlated Common Core State Standards**  
**Source:** Forest Preserve District of Will County and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
Activity: Bringing Life to Animal Signs  
Source: Forest Preserve District of Will County

Summary  
Students take a walk and gather nature materials to create an animal sign scene on paper.

Materials  
Nature materials: feathers, grass, sticks, leaves, pebbles, etc.  
Paper  
Animal track handout  
Crayons, markers, colored pencils  
Pencils  
Rulers

Procedure  
1. Discuss what animal signs are and why people or scientists would look for signs of animal activity. Examples include: nests, eggs, scat, tracks, fur, feathers, sounds, holes in trees or ground, scratches in trees, chewed leaves, etc.

2. Handout the Guide to Animal Tracks and discuss various types of movement in birds and mammals.

3. Take the students on a short walk. Allowing them to take a handful of nature items to use for their scene.

4. Divide students into groups or have students work on their own to create an animal sign scene.

5. Use the handout and nature materials to create a natural scene integrating the various signs of animal activity previously discussed.

6. Once the scene is complete students can then write a story based upon their scene or switch scenes with other students or groups to decipher each other’s scenes and add a investigation element to the activity.

7. Ask questions such as: How many animal signs are in the scene? Which animals have been present in the picture? What is the scenario of the picture? What season is it? Also discuss predator/prey relationships, adaptations, behaviors, etc.
Guide To Animal Tracks

**F** - front track
**H** - hind track
**T** - tail marks may be present

**TRACK PATTERN**

**WHITE-TAILED DEER**
2 1/2" to 3"
F - 2 1/4" to 3 1/2"
H - 2 1/4" to 3"

**MOOSE**
4 1/2" to 5 1/2"
F - 2 1/2"
H - 2"

**DOG**
2 1/4" to 4"
F - 2 1/4"
H - 2 1/4"

**COYOTE**
F - 2"
H - 1 1/4"

**RED FOX**
F - 2"
H - 2"

**GRAY FOX**
F - 4 1/4"
H - 3"

**BOBCAT**
1 1/2"
F - 3"
H - 2"

**LYNX**
F - 3"
H - 3"

**HOUSE CAT**
1 to 2"
F - 2 1/2"
H - 2 1/4"

**OTTER**
1 1/2"
F - 2 1/2"
H - 2"

**FISHER**
2 1/4"
F - 2"
H - 2 1/2"

**MINN**
1"
F - 1/2"
H - 1"

**WEASEL**
1/2" to 1"
F - 1/2"
H - 1"

**Tracks are not to scale**

**TRACK PATTERN**

**RACCOON**
F - 2 1/2"
H - 2"

**STRIPE SKUNK**
F - 2 3/4"
H - 2"

**PORCUPINE**
F - 4 1/2"
H - 6"

**BEAVER**
F - 1 1/2"
H - 7"

**BLACK BEAR**
F - 2"
H - 2"

**OPPOSSUM**
F - 1 1/2"
H - 7"

**WOODCHUCK**
F - 2"
H - 2 1/2"

**MUSKRAT**
F - 2"
H - 1"

**SNOWSHOE HARE**
F - 1 1/2"
H - 5"

**COTTONTAIL RABBIT**
H - 3 1/2"
F - 1 1/2"

**GRAY SQUIRREL**
H - 2 1/4"
F - 1"

**WHITE-FOOTED MOUSE**
1/4" T
F - 1"

**CROW**
2 1/2"
H - 2 1/4"

**TURKEY**
4"
F - 1"

**RUDDER GROUSE**
.2"
F - 1/2"
Glossary of Terms: Animal Signs

Source: Scats and Tracks of the Northeast: A Field Guide to the Signs of Seventy Wildlife Species

Cough Pellet: remnants of bone and hair coughed up by many species of bird after eating their prey. Usually found near roosting, nesting, or feeding areas

Dewclaw: toe that over evolutionary time has become reduced in size and moved up and away from the foot. Example, toes 2 & 5 in deer.

Foot Axis: imaginary line down the center of the foot. Runs between toes 3 and 4 in deer and their relatives, and down toe 3 of other mammals and in birds.

Gait: term for the way an animal moves, such as walk, trot, lope, gallop, bound, etc. Determined by the muscle movement of the animal, not by speed.

Heel: portion of the foot to the rear of the pad. In mammals, the heel may be fur-covered, naked, or have one or more proximal pads. In reptiles, may be covered with tubercles (rough, pinhead sized protuberance on the sole of the foot)

Hop/Bound: gait in which both hind feet strike the ground simultaneously, side by side. Full bound indicates that both front feet hit together, half bound indicates that one front foot hits before the other.

Length: of a track, the distance from the front of the toe pads to the back of the pads, measured parallel to the foot axis. In mammal tracks, does not include claws. In bird tracks, does not include toe 1, but includes claws if they are attached and indistinguishable from the toe pad.

Line of Travel: imaginary line on the ground over which the center of gravity of an animal passes.

Pad: hard, callus-like structure on the sole of an animal’s foot. Each toe may have a digital pad, with a larger connecting pad located behind the toes.

Scat shape: Scat refers to animal waste.

Cords are long pieces of scat, typically four to ten times longer than the width. Ends may be blunt or tapered.

Ovals are pieces of scat typically two to four times longer than wide and tapered at both ends.

Nipple-dimple shaped scat is pointed at one end and depressed on the other.

Stride: the distance from the point where a foot touches the ground to the point where the same foot touches the ground again. Measured parallel to the line of travel.
Track: refers to an individual footprint.

Width: of a track, the greatest distance from the right side of the pad of the foot to the left side, whether the greatest distance is across the toes or palm pads. Measured perpendicular to the foot axis. In bird tracks, includes claws if they are attached and indistinguishable from the toe pad.
**Student Worksheet:** What’s Different: Animal Tracking Page

**Source:** exploringnature.org

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**What’s Different?**

Circle 8 things that are different in the animal-tracking scene on the bottom.

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**Answer Key**

1. ptarmigan and weasel switched
2. last hare track has feet switched
3. one deer track is reversed
4. one coyote track is a deer
5. hare facing opposite way
6. tree missing
7. moon phase change
8. deer missing antlers

It is a bobcat.

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**What’s Animal is this?**

This carnivore leaves a track with no visible toenails – because it retracts them. It is a
What’s Different?
Circle 8 things that are different in the animal-tracking scene on the bottom.

What’s Animal is this?
This carnivore leaves a track with no visible toenails – because it retracts them. It is a

www.exploringnature.org
Reference Page: Animal Tracks
Source: exploringnature.org
Resource: Mammals Resource Loan Kit
Source: Forest Preserve District of Will County

Books, skulls, bones, scat replicas, paw/feet replicas. Available for check out at Sugar Creek Administration Center, Joliet IL. Call 815.727.8700 for availability.

Environmental Education Resource Loan Kits
Mammals Kit - Contents

Checklist

**Feet & Scat**
- Beaver Feet (front and back)
- Raccoon Feet (front and back)
- Chipmunk Feet
- Deer Mouse Feet
- Grey Squirrel Feet
- Opossum Feet (front and back)
- Coyote Feet (front and back)
- Skunk Feet (front and back)
- Opossum Scat
- Mouse Scat
- Raccoon Scat

**Skulls, Bones, & Claws**
- Beaver Skull
- Raccoon Skull
- Deer Jaw
- Coyote Claw

**Books**
- Animal Lives - The Otter Book
- Animal Lives - The Rabbit Book
- Bats
- Beavers Book
- Educators Activity Book about Bats
- The Kids Wildlife Book
- Petersons Field Guide to Mammals
- Playing Possum Activity Book & Materials
- Rabbits, Squirrels, & Chipmunks
- Scat, Tracks, & Other Animal Signs
- Whitetail Deer

**Educational Materials**
- Bat Chat Audio Tape
- Bat Puppet
- Chipmunk Puppet
- Coyote Puppet
- Mammal Eyewitness Video
- Mother & Baby Possum Puppet
- River Otter Puppet
- Skunk Puppet
- Woodchuck Puppet
Correlated State Standards
Source: Forest Preserve District of Will County, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the National Research Council (NRC)

Identified ELA and Math Standards are detailed below specific to this education program.

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NGSS Standards

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Bringing People and Nature Together