

Animal Trackers

Hints for Teachers



MUSEUM INFORMATION:

Animal Trackers is a gallery activity that asks students to identify animal footprints by comparing the prints to animals on display in the New England Forests exhibition. Here are some hints for using this activity.

- The museum does **NOT** provide copies of **Animal Trackers**. Please prepare copies for your students.
- The New England Forests gallery can comfortably accommodate 10-15 children at a time. For larger groups, consider splitting into smaller sub-groups when completing the **Animal Trackers** activity.
- The New England Forests gallery has animal specimens that are not enclosed in cases. Please do **NOT** touch these animals.
- When your students arrive at the Museum, they will be given a brief greeting by a Museum staff member. After this greeting is a good time for you to talk to your students and chaperones about the **Animal Trackers** activity, if you have not already done so.

PREPARING AN ACTIVITY:

- Please make copies of the **Animal Trackers** activity for your students. The Museum will **NOT** have copies available.
- The Museum asks students to refrain from leaning on any glass cases. We recommend supplying students with clip boards or notebooks to lean on while writing.
- **Animal Trackers** has a brief set of directions printed at the top for student use. Additional information, including an answer key, is provided on the **Animal Trackers Chaperone Sheet**. We recommend photocopying this sheet for chaperones or discussing the tips with them.
- The **Animal Trackers** activity can be modified for students of different grade levels.
 - The students can identify animals by looking at pictures of their tracks and record the animal name on the line given.
 - Students can also identify which footprint is the front foot and which is the back foot by writing an "F," or a "B" next to the appropriate prints.
 - Prior to photocopying, the names of the animals can be written in so that students can focus on determining which print is from the back foot and which is from the front foot. See the answer key on the chaperone sheet for print identification.

IN THE CLASSROOM:

Extend the fun! Continue discussing tracking and animal movement in the classroom.

- Different foot patterns are created by different kinds of movement, including walking, trotting, hopping, waddling, and bounding. Research animals and see what kind of movements they use.
- Look for animal tracks in your neighborhood and schoolyard. Good times to look for tracks are after a snowfall or when the ground is muddy. Take pictures of the tracks you find to help you identify them later.
- Practice estimating the size of animal prints and comparing those estimates to the real sizes.

- The ruler on the side of the activity shows measurements in centimeters. Practice converting between centimeters and inches or discuss how the metric system is used by scientists to help them communicate with other scientists around the world.
- More information and activities about animal tracks can be found in:
 - o *Mammal Tracks: Life-size Tracking Guide* by Lynn Levine and Martha Mitchell
 - o *Ranger Rick's Nature Scope* publications
 - o *Hands-On Nature* by Vermont Institute of Natural Science

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Information for Chaperones



DIRECTIONS:

- This activity is designed to be used in the New England Forests gallery.
- This activity asks your students to match footprint to animals found in the New England Forests gallery. Your students may also identify which print matches the front feet and which matches the back feet of the animal.
- Remember: The glass cases in the museum are fragile. Please remind your students to lean on the floor or their leg when writing. Do **NOT** lean on the glass cases.
- There are animals in this exhibit that are not in cases. Please do **NOT** touch these animals.

HINTS AND ANSWERS:

Remember to let your students figure out the answers on their own. If needed, we have include hints that we recommend telling students.

GENERAL HINTS:

- Use the ruler on the side of the activity sheet to estimate the size of an animal's foot.
- Look to see if the front feet and the back feet have the same or different shapes.
- Felines (cats) have retractable claws; they pull their claws into their feet when walking. Canines (dogs) do not have retractable claws; their claws stick out when they are walking and can be seen on the footprints.

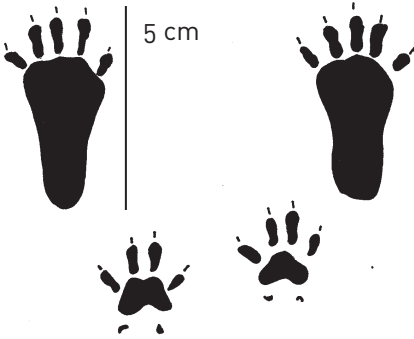
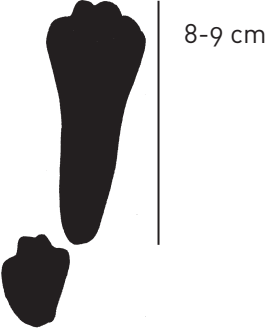
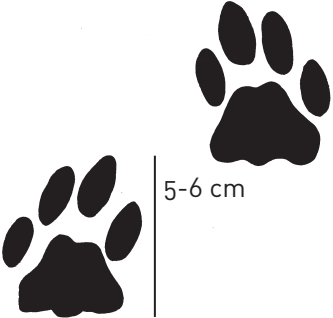
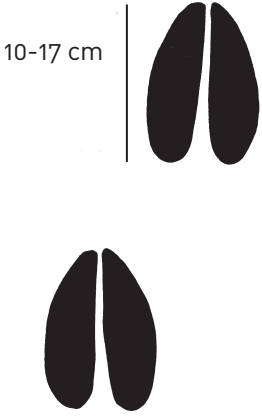
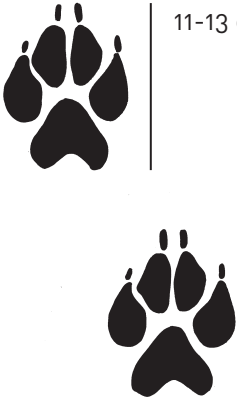

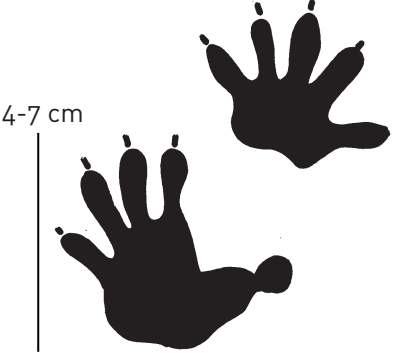
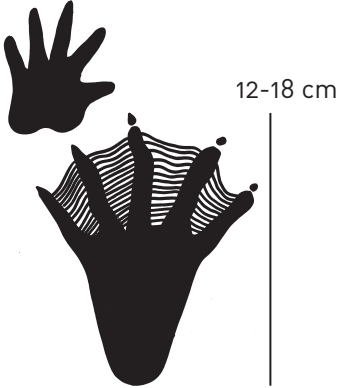

SPECIFIC HINTS AND ANSWER KEY:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Gray Squirrel (This animal has very small feet) | Eastern Cottontail (This animal has a hind foot that is much larger than the front foot) | Bobcat (Use the ruler to check the size of this animal's feet.) |
| Moose (This animal has very small prints for its size. Remember that the footprint shows only the part that touches the ground.) | Gray Wolf (Use the ruler to check the size of this animal's feet.) | Porcupine (Count the number of toes that touch the ground.) |
| Opossum (This animal has a toe that sticks out like a thumb.) | Beaver (This animal has webbed feet for swimming.) | Bear (This animal has very large feet.) |

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Activity for students

Go to the New England Forests Gallery. Find the animal that matches each set of prints and write its name on the line. Use the ruler along the side of the sheet to help you.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  <p>5 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>8-9 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>5-6 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |
|  <p>10-17 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>11-13 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>7-10 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |
|  <p>4-7 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>12-18 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |  <p>14-20 cm</p> <p>_____</p> |

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