



Nature Nuggets: Tricky Tracks

Audience: 3-7 year olds and parents/guardians.

Theme: We don't always see animals outside, but they leave signs behind to let us know they were there.

Materials:

Blankets for sitting

Books: *Whose Tracks are These?* by Jim Nail

Wild Tracks by Jim Arnosky

Scat molds

Feathers

Scat scarf

Track booklets

Track discs (Bear, Rabbit, Beaver, Deer, Skunk, Bobcat, Coyote, Raccoon)

Animal stamps (Bear, Rabbit, Beaver, Deer, Skunk, Bobcat, Coyote, Raccoon)

Ink pads

Track stamps

Crayons and markers

Track molds to make tracks for kids to find

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and thank the kids and parents for being there.

Ask the children:

- *What are tracks?*
- *If you were walking on four feet like animals, what would your tracks look like?* (Have the kids hold out their hands and look at their fingers.)

Who's Tracks are These?

Read *Who's Tracks are These?* Have children try to guess the animals that left the tracks. Allow them to investigate the pictures in the book.

Ask the children:

- *Do your hands make different tracks than your feet?* (Most animals have different front and back feet too.)

Look at *Wild Tracks* book. Point out how different animals make different looking tracks. Show them how some of their front and back feet look different.

Other Animal Signs

Gather children back together with you. Remind them that animals leave other signs too. Show scat molds, scat scarf, hairs, feathers, or even porcupine quills and owl pellets. Allow time for children to ask questions

ACTIVITY

Guess who?

Give each child a tracks booklet. Have them write their name on the front. Set up eight different stations around the perimeter of the shelter. Station a volunteer (or parent) at each station with a track plate (with a track on one

side and the corresponding animal photo on the other side) and the animal stamp that goes with their plate. Have the kids go around to each station with their sheet and try to guess what animal makes the track shown on the plate. Give hints if necessary. Once they have guessed the correct animal, stamp their tracks booklet with the animal stamp next to the appropriate track. Allow time for kids to go to all eight stations. Once they have reached all the stations, bring them back together as a group. Now they can use their track guide to go explore!

Explore

Break the group into smaller groups and have your helpers go with each group to take a short walk to look for tracks or signs of animals. You may want to make some tracks ahead of time with the track molds if the ground is soft enough, otherwise you can look for other signs of animals. Return to the program area and have each group report on what they found.

CRAFT

Have the kids turn to the blank page of their track booklet. They may pick out a track stamp and stamp the tracks on this page. Then have them draw a picture of the animal that corresponds to the track they chose. They can take their track booklets home to take on future nature hikes!

CONCLUSION

Ask the kids:

- *What did you find most interesting today?*
- *Other than tracks, what are some other signs that animals leave behind*

Recap. Animals leave signs behind to let us know they were there. Be sure to look outside your house to see what signs you can find!

Thank everyone for coming and learning about animal tracks. Encourage kids and parents to come to other programs and remind the parents of up-coming programs with the Natural Areas.