



# Guide to Common Mammal Tracks

## Animal Tracks

When examining animal tracks, it is important to answer the following questions:

- How many toes does each animal have on each foot?
- Can you see claw marks in the print or not?
- Which foot is larger- front or rear?
- What are the general pad shapes?
- What is the total length of each print? What is the total width?

## Track patterns

By examining the patterns of animal tracks, you can sometimes figure out what group of animals made it.

- Diagonal walkers: (cats, dogs and hoofed animals) Move opposite limbs together, right foreleg with left back leg.
- Bounders: (most weasels except skunks, badgers and wolverines) Hop in steady series of jumps, forelegs first and back legs pulling right behind them.
- Gallopers: (most rodents and rabbits) these animals hunch down and bring hind legs in front of back legs.
- Pacers: (wide bodied animals such as raccoons, opossums, bears, beavers, porcupines, porcupines, wolverines, badgers and skunks). They shuffle along, but move from pacing to bounding as they go faster.

**Note:** The best tracks are found in mud or soft soil or sand. Snow, on the other hand, can melt and make the tracks appear larger than they are naturally. Most of the time, the tracks you find will be overlapping and incomplete, but don't be discouraged!

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## Track Key

- Group A:** 2 toes per foot with occasional dew claws.....Page 2
- Group B:** 4 toes per foot.....Page 2
- Group C:** 4 toes in the front and 5 in the rear.....Page 3
- Group D:** 5 toes per foot.....Page 3

*All track silhouettes courtesy of Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife*

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**Group A:** 2 toes per foot with occasional dew claws\*

**White-tailed Deer**



**Group B:** 4 toes per foot\*

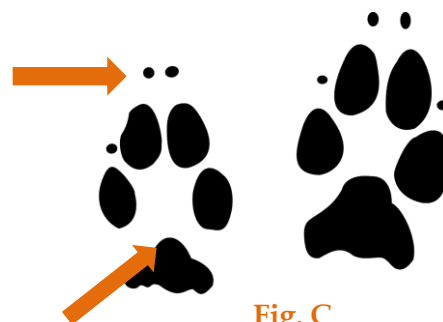
- 1. Rear track elongated and not similar to front track (**Fig. A**).....**Eastern Cottontail**
- 1. Rear track not elongated and similar to front track.....2
- 2. Claw marks not visible and top of heel pad has 2 lobes (**Fig. B**).....3
- 2. Claw marks visible and top of heel pad has 1 lobe (**Fig. C**).....4



**Fig. A: Eastern Cottontail**



**Fig. B**



**Fig. C**

- 3. Front tracks less than or equal to 1 ½ inches in length and 1 ¾ in width.... **House Cat**
- 3. Front tracks greater than 1 ½ inches in length and 1 ¾ in width..... **Bobcat**
- 4. Oval-shaped tracks, approximately 2 ½ inches long by 2 inches wide..... **Coyote**
- 4. Tracks are not oval-shaped and are less than 2 ½ inches long by 2 inches wide..... 5

- 5. Tracks 1 ¾ to 2 ½ inches long by 1 ½ to 2 inches wide. Hair marks often present in tracks (**Fig. D**)..... **Red Fox**
- 5. Tracks less than 1 ¾ to 2 ½ inches long by 1 ½ to 2 inches wide. Hair not present in tracks (**Fig. E**)..... **Gray Fox**



**Fig. D: Red Fox**



**Fig. E: Gray Fox**

### Group C: 4 toes in the front and 5 in the rear

- 1. Hind tracks greater than 2 inches in length (Fig. F)..... Ground Hog
- 1. Hind tracks less than 2 inches in length..... 2
- 2. Hind foot almost twice as long as wide (Fig. G)..... Eastern Gray Squirrel
- 2. Hind foot almost as long as wide (Fig. H)..... Muskrat



Fig. F: Ground Hog



Fig. G: Eastern Gray Squirrel



Fig. H: Muskrat



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### Group D: 5 toes per foot\*

- 1. Rear track has inner toe protruding sideways from other toes (Fig. I).....Opossum
- 1. Rear track does not have inner toe protruding sideways.....2
- 2. Front track over 4 inches in length and rear track not webbed(Fig. J)..... Black Bear
- 2. Front track not over 4 inches in length and rear track may or may not be webbed.....3
- 3. Rear track over 4 ½ inches in length is webbed (Fig. K).....Beaver
- 3. Rear track not over 4 ½ inches in length. Toes may or may not be webbed.....4
- 4. Toes slender, bulbous on ends and lack webbing (Fig. L).....Raccoon
- 4. Toes not bulbous on ends and may or may not have webbing.....5
- 5. Rear track over 2 ½ inches wide and has webbing (Fig. M).....River Otter
- 5. Rear track less than 2 ½ inches wide and may or may not have webbing.....6
- 6. Nails on front track long and well ahead of toes (Fig. N)..... Striped Skunk
- 6. Nails on front track not long and close to toes..... 7

- 7. Front and rear tracks over 1 ½ inches in length (Fig. O)..... **Mink**
- 7. Front and rear tracks not over 1 ½ inches in length..... **Weasel sp.**

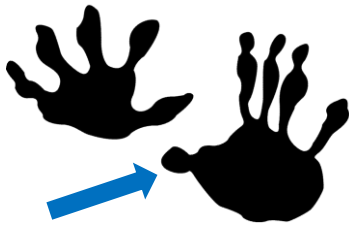


Fig. I: Opossum

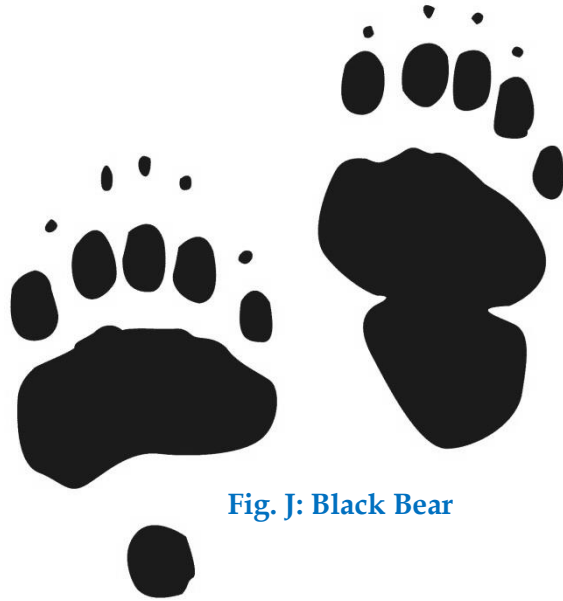


Fig. J: Black Bear

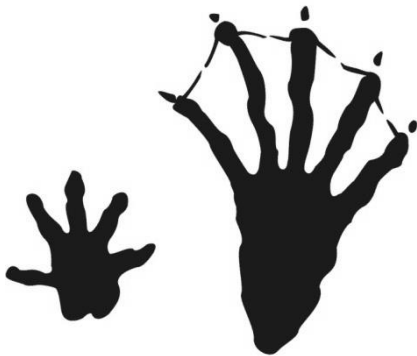


Fig. K: Beaver

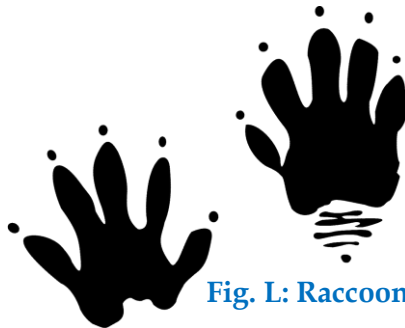


Fig. L: Raccoon



Fig. M: River Otter



Fig. N: Striped Skunk



Fig. O: Mink