

For Creative Minds

This For Creative Minds educational section contains activities to engage children in learning while making it fun at the same time. The activities build on the underlying subjects introduced in the story. While older children may be able to do these activities on their own, we encourage adults to work with the young children in their lives. Even if the adults have long forgotten or never learned this information, they can still work through the activities and be experts in their children's eyes! Exposure to these concepts at a young age helps to build a strong foundation for easier comprehension later in life. This section may be photocopied or printed from our website by the owner of this book for educational, non-commercial uses. Cross-curricular teaching activities for use at home or in the classroom, interactive quizzes, and more are available online. Go to www.ArbordalePublishing.com and click on the book's cover to explore all the links.

Animal Signs Matching

Match each animal sign or track to the animal that left it. Can you explain how the tracks were made or what the animal was doing when it made them?



Answers: 1-B bear. 2-G fox. 3-F beaver. 4-A eagle. 5-E hare. 6-D moose. 7-C human.

Animal Signs Around You

No matter where you are in the world, there are animals around you. What are some animal signs you might see where you live?

All animals leave poop (scat) and urine where they live. Some animals leave other body parts as well. Look for clumps of fur, feathers, or snake skin.

What body parts can you see?

When animals move, they sometimes leave footprints or other tracks on the ground. Look for tunnels, footprints, slides, or trails through brush.

What animal tracks can you see?

All animals need to eat. Look for signs of feeding: stripped logs or branches, chewed leaves and pinecones, bones, or a pile (cache) of nuts and seeds.

What signs of feeding can you see?

Animals need shelter or a place to rest. Look for signs of animal homes: a nest, a beaver lodge, crushed grass, dens in the ground, or holes in banks and trees.

What signs of shelter can you see?

Make a Cast of Tracks

When you look for animal tracks, carry a “cast kit” so you can preserve what you find. Your kit should include: plaster of Paris (or flour and warm water), a plastic bag, old newspaper, and circular strips cut from a two-liter plastic bottle.

Place the plastic circle on the ground so the track is completely inside the circle. In the plastic bag, prepare the plaster of Paris or mix together two cups of flour and one cup warm water. Do not pour directly onto the track—the motion may damage it. Pour your mix onto the ground just inside the edge of the circle. Let it slowly flow into the track and fill it. Wait at least 30-60 minutes.

After your mix has hardened, carefully lift it and wrap it in newspaper to take home. It may still be very fragile. Use a soft brush to clean the dirt away.

You have made a cast of the animal track!



Some animals leave marks behind. Look for markings: grooves in the dirt, muddy wallows, dust baths, or claw or antler marks on trees.

What markings can you see?

Animals make all sorts of sounds. Listen for bird calls, frog croaks, insect chirps, bellows, snorts, or barks.

What animal sounds can you hear?

Tracks and Other Signs

Snowshoe Hare

Lepus americanus

Front print: 2-3 inches long, 1.5-2 inches wide

Back print: 4-6 inches long, 2-3.5 inches wide

Hare fur changes color seasonally: brown in the summer, white in the winter. Hares are easiest to spot in the spring and fall when their coats don't match their surroundings.

When hares hop fast, their big back feet sometimes land in front of their front feet, which makes for some confusing tracks.

Snowshoe hares "scream" when in danger and thump their hind feet to send warnings.



Bald Eagle

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

Wing span: 6-8 feet

Young bald eagles are mottled brown. They develop white head- and tailfeathers when they mature at 4 or 5 years of age. Look for white spots on top of dead trees and near the trunks of live ones to spot an eagle.

Eagles return to the same nests year after year, making repairs and additions over time. Some eagle nests are 10 feet across (ten feet is like two sixth graders standing one on top of the other.) Look for nests in leafy or dead trees—not spruce trees—near lakes, rivers, and other wetlands.

Eagles mostly eat fish and dead animals (carrion). You might see wing marks and tracks in sand or snow.



Beaver

Castor canadensis

Front print: 2.5-4 inches long, 2-3.5 inches wide

Back print: 5-7 inches long, 3.3-5.3 inches wide

Beavers build dams across streams to create ponds where they can live, safe from predators. They build lodges in ponds, or dig dens along the banks of rivers.

Beavers eat bark from trees, then use the stripped logs for building. Look for gnawed trees and stumps, lodges, and dams.

In the fall, beavers cut and store branches for winter food. They secure the branches in mud at the bottom of their ponds. Look for a cache of branches near beaver lodges.



Moose

Alces alces

Prints: 4-7 inches long (11 inches with dewclaws), 3.5-6 inches wide

Moose can weigh up to 1,800 pounds. When one lies down, it can make a big dent in the snow or grass.

Moose eat willows, birch, and other plants. Look for nipped-off branches.

Moose hair catches on branches. The long, squiggly, gray and white hairs often have dark tips and are hollow. Hollow hair traps air to keep the moose warm.

Male moose lose their antlers every winter, then start growing new ones in the spring.



Grizzly bear

Ursus arctos

Front print: 5-7 inches long, 4-6 inches wide

Back print: 9-12 inches long, 5-7 inches wide

Tracks and scat are the most common bear signs. Bears' front feet and back feet make different tracks. You might fit your whole shoe inside a large grizzly bear track.

Bears rub their backs and scratch their claws on trees, leaving clumps of hair and claw marks. Hair can vary in color from light tan to dark brown. Look for these scratches on trees.

Bears sometimes bury prey they've killed, storing it for a later meal.

If you see any signs of bears, be alert! Bears can be dangerous.



Human

Homo sapiens

Hand prints: 6.7-7.5 inches long, 3-3.5 inches wide

Foot prints: 9.2-10.3 inches long, 3.5-4 inches wide

Human beings live all around the world, in all kinds of habitats. They have a variety of skin, hair, and eye colors.

Humans are the only mammal in the world to walk on two feet for most of their lives. They live in communities, family groups, and alone. They make countless noises. Humans build houses and roads, drive cars, ride bikes, walk, canoe, and swim.

Look around. There are signs of humans everywhere!

