

Animal Signs



Audubon Center
of the North Woods

Purpose: Signs and evidence of the human animal are everywhere, and one would have to travel to the world's most remote locations to find untouched places. We share our earth with members of the Animal Kingdom, that also leave signs of their presence; some obvious and some subtle. Students will begin to use their senses to develop an awareness of the secretive animals around them, discover the basics of tracking, and compare signs left by humans vs. animals.

Concepts:

- The natural world is full of signs left by the animals.
- Observation of animal signs requires use of all your senses.
- Animal signs provide opportunities for us to learn about animals' lives and behaviors.
- The practice of tracking is ancient among humans who were hunter-gatherers, and is possibly the first act of science
- Signs of human activity can be minimized in order to lessen the impact on animal habitat and wilderness places.

Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to

- Demonstrate the various movements of different kinds of MN mammals.
- Recognize and identify at least three specific animal signs.
- Analyze animal signs and tracks in order to determine the bigger picture.
- Interpret and draw conclusions about an animal sign scene.
- Respond and discuss questions about evidence of human signs.

Minnesota Academic Standards:

- 5.1.1.2.2 Identify and collect relevant evidence, make systematic observations and accurate measurements, and identify variables in a scientific investigation.
- 5.4.1.1.1 Describe how plant and animal structures and their functions provide an advantage for survival in a given natural system.
- 7.1.1.2.3 Generate a scientific conclusion from an investigation, clearly distinguishing between results (evidence) and conclusions (explanation).
- 7.1.3.4.2 Determine and use appropriate safety procedures, tools, measurements, graphs and mathematical analyses to describe and investigate natural and designed systems in a life science context.
- 7.4.2.1.1 Identify a variety of populations and communities in an ecosystem and describe the relationships among the populations and communities in a stable ecosystem.

REVISOR: Matt Swedell - 2007, Jaime Souza - 2008

CLASS LENGTH: 3 HR

AGES: GRADES 4-12

SEASON: F, W, Sp, S

GROUP SIZE: Up to 20 students

SAFETY: Students will meet in a classroom, and then spend 1-2 hours outside walking the ACNW grounds. The walk is mostly off trail and will require more attentiveness and caution than a marked trail.

MATERIALS: Human/Animal Relationship cards, Who Am I? Cards, Animals artifacts, Whose Sign is it anyway? Cards, 4 pairs of rubber animal tracks, 4 cookie sheets, container of flour, at least 100 ft of retired climbing rope, 6-8 blindfolds Great Gait lanyards, 4-5 orange cones or markers, Paper, Writing Utensils, tracking ruler, Mystery Boxes and materials, Readings

PRE-CLASS PREP: Have all the necessary materials ready and available for the specific activities that you want to do. Choose the animal artifacts that you want to use. Set out Mystery Boxes along the route. Prep for having a live animal ready to be shown to the kids. Pack your bag with all supplies you will need for the hike. Also have any additional materials for optional activities planned.

CLASS OUTLINE:

- I. **Introduction (20 min)**
 - A. Who am I? game
- II. **Minnesota Animals and Signs (20 min)**
 - A. Who Am I? Part 2
 - B. I Saw the Sign
 - C. Whose Sign is it anyway?
- III. **Tracking Training (30 min)**
 - A. Patterns & Prints
 - B. Great Gait Relay Race
- IV. **Animal Signs Hike (2 – 2 ½ hr)**
 - A. Tracking Basics & Searching for Signs
 - B. Mystery Boxes
 - C. Camouflage
 - D. Live Animal
- V. **Reflection (20-30 min)**
 - A. Footprint Activity
- VI. **The Sending (10 min)**