

Tracks in the Mud

Section 4 Wetland Activities OUTDOOR WETLAND INVESTIGATIONS

Grade Level: 5 - 12

NGSS: 5-ESS3-1.,MS-LS2-1.
MS-LS2-2.

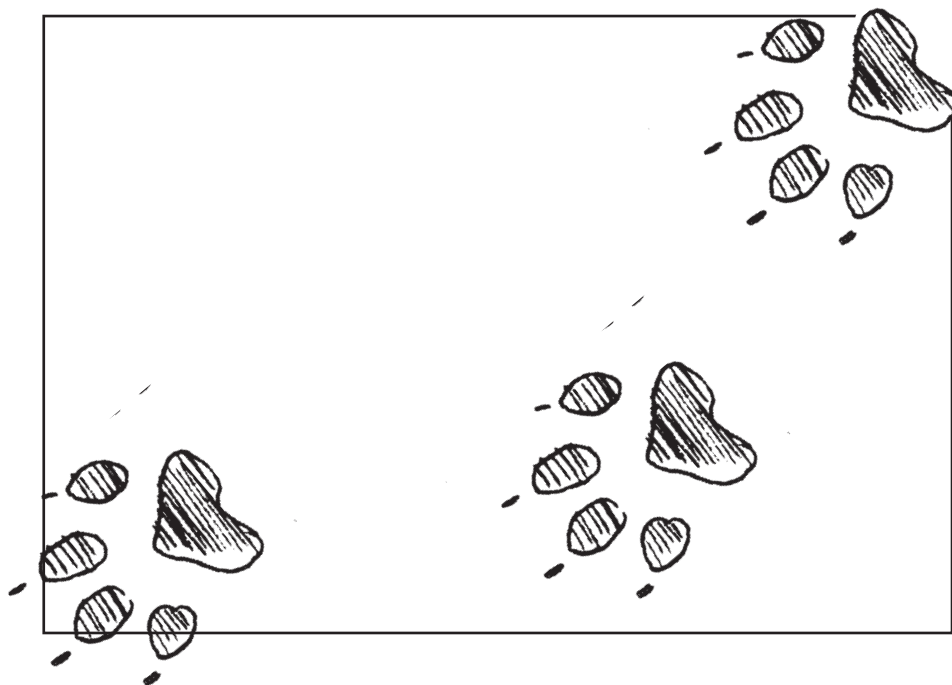
Subjects: Science, art

Skills: Observing, following
instructions

Duration: 2 40-minute sessions

Group Size: 2-4

Setting: Outdoors & Indoors



Objectives:

Students will make a plaster of Paris cast of an animal track.

Complementary Activity:

OUTDOOR: “Mammal Signs” in Section 2, *Ecosystems*.

Materials:

IN THE WETLAND – Clipboards and writing paper or field note books, pencils or pens for each student. For each pair of students: 1 /2 cup of plaster of Paris, one jar of water, 1-inch wide lightweight cardboard strip, toothbrush, forceps or tweezers, a pail of wash water, one empty jar.

IN THE CLASSROOM – Playdough (homemade from flour, water, salt, oil, cream of tartar, and food coloring), a flat box, rolling pin, felt tip pens and cards.

OPTIONAL: Sample casting as example.

Procedure:

IN ADVANCE, locate a forest site where tracks of mammals or birds are easy to find. If you are unable to locate reliable tracks, consider making tracks using a dog or pre-made tracks.

Place the Science Card and the materials at the site. You may want to set up a sample casting as an example.

IN CLASS, depending on the grade level, guide the students through the activity or send them out to follow the instructions on the Science Card.

Classroom Follow-Up:

1. Students make a track display using homemade PLAY DOUGH:

For each track combine 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 2 cups water, 3 teaspoons cream of tartar, 2 tablespoons cooking oil, and a few drops of food coloring in saucepan. Cook until stiff.



2. Students roll out a 3/4-inch thick pancake of dough. Press each track print into the dough to make replicas of the tracks found in the forest.
3. Students make labels for their replica tracks and a title sign for their display, such as "Forest Tracks." Display for other students in the school to see.

NOTE: Rubber tracks are available for loan throughout the state. If locating tracks is difficult near your school, you may choose to borrow tracks and "salt" the area with them prior to doing this activity. Contact Wildlife Education at Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Anchorage for more details. (907) 267-2168.

Curriculum Connections:

(See Appendix for full citations)

Books:

Animal Tracks of Alaska (Stall, 1993)

Animal Tracks of Alaska (Sheldon and Hartson, 1999)

SCIENCE CARD

Track Casting

Choose a partner to work together.

1. Be careful not to step on the animal tracks in this area so that other students will be able to see and use them. Select the track of one animal from this area.
2. Carefully remove sticks and leaves from the animal track with forceps or tweezers. Press a strip of cardboard in the snow or mud around the track.
3. Using the empty jar, mix a half cup of plaster powder with enough water to make a thick batter. If the track is in snow, mix snow with the water before you mix up the batter. This cold batter will be less likely to melt

the snow and ruin your track. Pour the batter inside the cardboard strip over your track.

4. It will take about 20 minutes or longer for your track casting to dry. Wash out the mixing jar so others can use it. Carefully pick up your track casting and gently clean off any dirt using the toothbrush. Then take the track casting back to class.