



Animal Tracks

Location of activity provided by staff

Summary

Intro discussion: 5 mins

Activities: 15-20 mins

Grades: (suggested) 4-8

Subject: Mammal tracks

Activity Objective:

To provide students with activities that illustrate how and why various mammal tracks look the way they do.

Materials & Preparation:

PROVIDED:

- Set of rubber mammal foot replicas
- Sand & a sand container
- Pictures of mammals
- Animal Track Bingo game
- Book: *We Walk in Sandy Places*



PREP: Check out the materials, select the activities to be used, leader may wish to do additional research on animal tracks (The Peterson Field Guide Series Book: *A Field Guide to Animal Tracks* is a good resource)

Key Vocabulary Terms: plantigrade, digitigrade, unguligrade, tracks

Intro Discussion: (5 mins)

(The depth of the discussion will depend upon the age level of the group.)

Ask students, **How do we use our hands and feet?** Our hands are quite different from our feet. **Do the front (fore) feet of animals differ from the back (hind) feet?**

Tell the students:

Mammals have three types of feet:

1) **Plantigrade** (walking on the sole of the foot)

The flat surfaces which bear the animal's weight extend from toe to heel and are in contact with the ground at some point during the step. These are slower moving animals.

...To illustrate this foot type, ask the children to "walk" their hands on the ground using the entire flat of the hand.

...Examples:

bear, raccoon, coatimundi, skunk, human beings

2) **Digitigrade** (walking on toes)

These animals walk on their toes, with the heel permanently raised. These are faster movers than the plantigrade animals.

...To illustrate this foot type, ask the children to "walk" their hands on the ground with only fingers touching the ground, and the "heel" of the hand raised up.

...Examples:

bobcats, mountain lion, wolf, coyote, fox, rabbit, squirrel, mouse

3) **Unguligrade** (walking on hooves)

These animals move on the tips of their toenails. The toenails have evolved into enlarged nails we call hooves. This group includes the fastest moving animals.

...To illustrate this foot type, ask the children to "walk" on their hands with the fingers bent under so that they are "walking" on their fingernails.

...Examples:

deer, pronghorn, javelina

Talk about how the type of foot helps the animal in walking, running, climbing, getting food, defense...etc.

Activities: (15-20 mins)

1. Make mammal track prints in the sandbox- make a story in the sand using the tracks. Here are some ideas. The students will come up with many more.
 - ❖ A rabbit hopped along. A coyote follows the rabbit. The coyote catches the

- rabbit. How could you make track prints to show this story?
- ❖ There are many javelina tracks around a prickly pear cactus. What is happening?
 - ❖ A deer was walking along browsing on plants. A mountain lion appears. The deer bounded away.
 - ❖ A skunk walked along. A coyote came near. The coyote ran away.
2. Play the "Animal Track Bingo" game.
 3. Read excerpts from We Walk in Sandy Places by Byrd Baylor.

Clean Up:

AFTER EACH GROUP: Collect all materials and return them to the appropriate boxes.

KEEP TRACK OF THE TRACKS- use the inventory list in the kit to check that everything has been returned. Upon completion of all sessions arrange all materials in the activity kit.

If any of the foot replicas are in need of re-gluing let the camp staff know so that repairs can be done.

Return the box to the table in *Biznaga* building.

