



TRACK THOSE TRACKS

MATCH ANIMALS TO THE TRACKS THEY MAKE

Episode: "Follow Those Footprints" (11 min.)

On Nature Art Day, Nature Cat proudly unveils a statue of himself made out of acorns...but where's its head? By following animal tracks, the gang can find the culprit.

Episode curriculum goal: Animal tracks give clues about the kind of animal that made them, where it was going, and what it was doing.

Clips on PBSKids.org: "Nature Art Day"

*To view clips, visit PBSKids.org/video, click on Nature Cat and select Browse.

Goal of Activity:

Compare tracks from different animals, and learn to identify an animal by its tracks.



The Basics:

Number of children: This group activity works best with 3 to 20 children. (When playing with more than 6 children, have children play in teams of 3 or 4.)

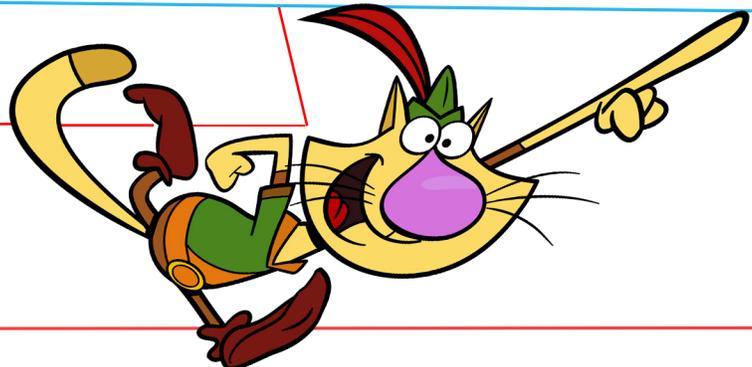
Space: This works best in a medium to large room.

Time: Approx. 10-15 minutes.



What You'll Need:

- Printouts of animal cards (2 sets of the attached printables)
- Printouts of animal tracks (20-25 of each printable)



Preparation (before children arrive):

- Choose the animals you want to use - one for each team. Make two copies of each animal's printable card. Make 20-25 copies of the printable tracks for each animal.
- Pick several animal "hiding places" around the room. Put one animal card face down (so the animal can't be seen) in each hiding place. For example, tape the deer card face down to a wall, or place the squirrel card face down on a chair.
- Choose one starting point in the room, where everyone begins their search. Make several trails by laying paper tracks on the floor, in a path from the starting point to the hiding place. The curvier and windier the better! Be sure to match the tracks in each trail to the animal in the hiding place.



Tally Ho! What to do:

- 🍂 Gather the children near the starting point. "Let's pretend some sneaky animals are hiding in this room. What clues can we use to find them?" Discuss how animals (and people!) leave tracks that are shaped like their feet.
- 🍂 Give each team (or each child, when playing with a small group) an animal card that matches one of the hidden animals.
- 🍂 **Optional:** Before showing the card, give a clue, and ask kids to guess what it is: "This animal...
[Squirrel] ...climbs trees and has a long bushy tail."
[Duck] ...has feathers and likes to swim in lakes and ponds."
[Rabbit] ...has long ears and likes to eat vegetables."
[Deer] ...lives in the woods and has antlers on its head."
[Robin] ...has feathers and makes a nest in a tree." (Note: If kids guess "bird", consider it correct. Show the picture and tell them this bird is a robin.)
[Bear] ...is large and furry, and sleeps all winter long."
- 🍂 Which tracks came from each animal? Encourage children to compare the animal feet on the cards to the tracks on the floor. Have them choose a trail, follow it, and turn over the face down card at the end of the trail. Did they find the right animal? If not, try a different trail.
- 🍂 **Optional:** After finding the animals, shuffle the cards, and have teams search for other animals. At the end, bring everyone together to discuss: How did they figure out which animal tracks came from their animal? Compare the size and shape of the various tracks: How are they similar or different? Which ones come from bigger or smaller animals?

Onward and Yonward! Take it Further:

Things to talk about: Compare the printable tracks to discuss how features of the tracks give clues about the things the animals do. How do duck tracks give you a clue that ducks can swim? (They have webbed feet.) How do squirrels' feet help them climb trees? (They have claws to grip the trees' bark.) Why are rabbit and squirrel tracks side by side, but deer tracks zigzag? (Because deer walk, but rabbits and squirrels jump with their feet together).

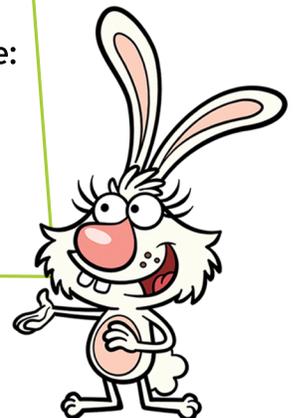
Things to do: Take kids outside to find real animal tracks. Or have kids make footprints of their own in mud, snow, or dirt. How can they tell whose footprints belong to each kid? Whose footprints are biggest or smallest? Do the treads on everyone's shoes make different patterns?

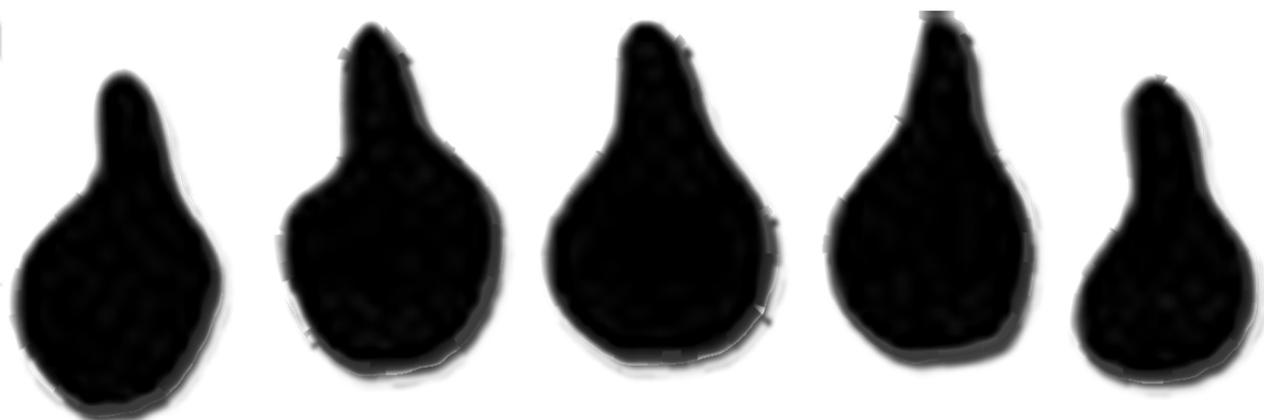
Visit [PBSKids.org/naturecat](https://www.pbskids.org/naturecat) for more nature activities!

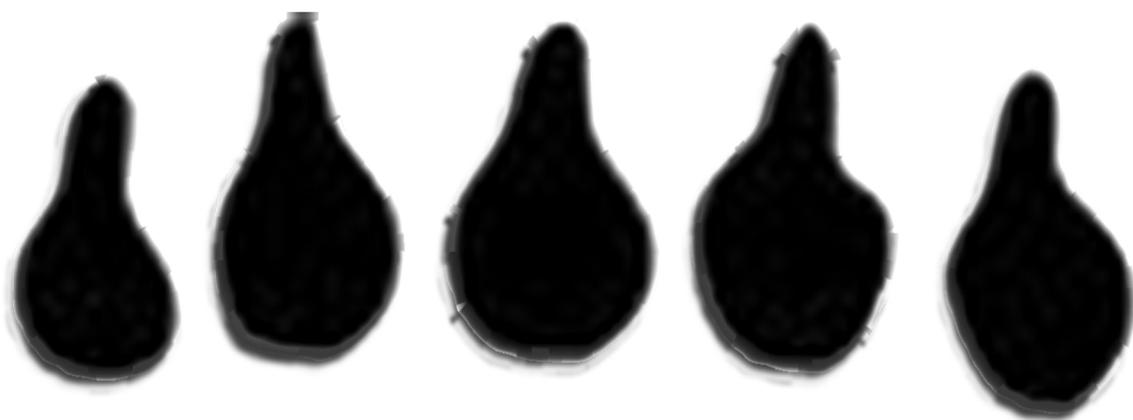
Look in a Book:

For more fun with animal tracks, check your local library for books like these:

- 🍂 Posada, Mia. **Who Was Here? Discovering Wild Animal Tracks.** Millbrook Press, 2014.
- 🍂 Dorros, Arthur. **Animal Tracks.** Scholastic, 1991.





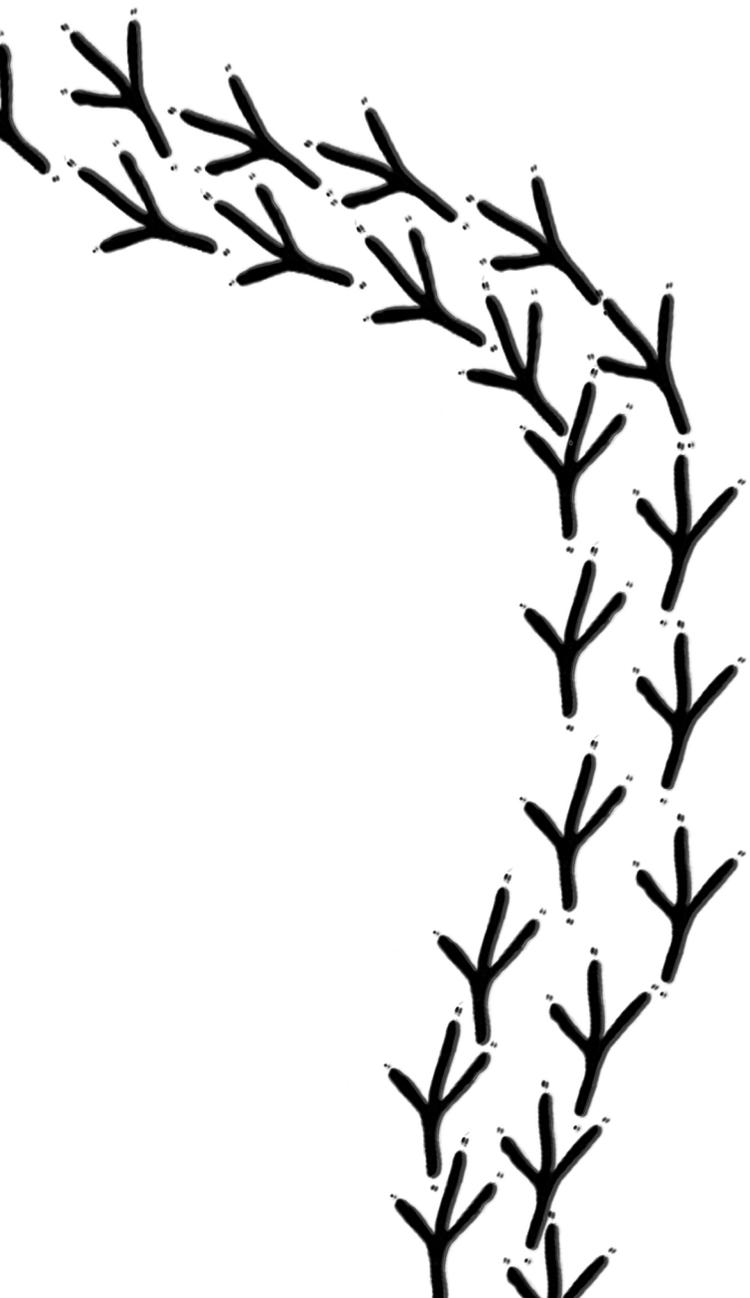










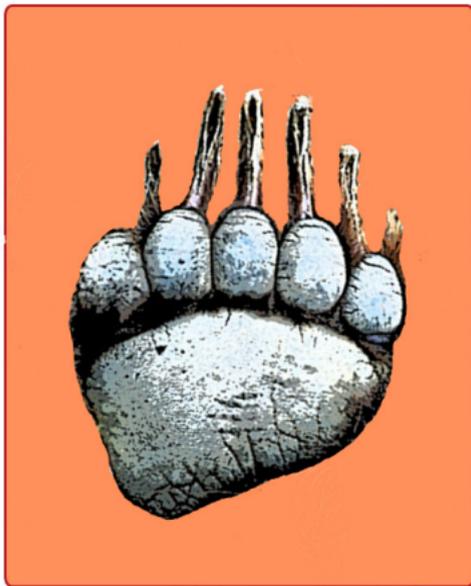








Bear



**Forepaw
(front foot)**



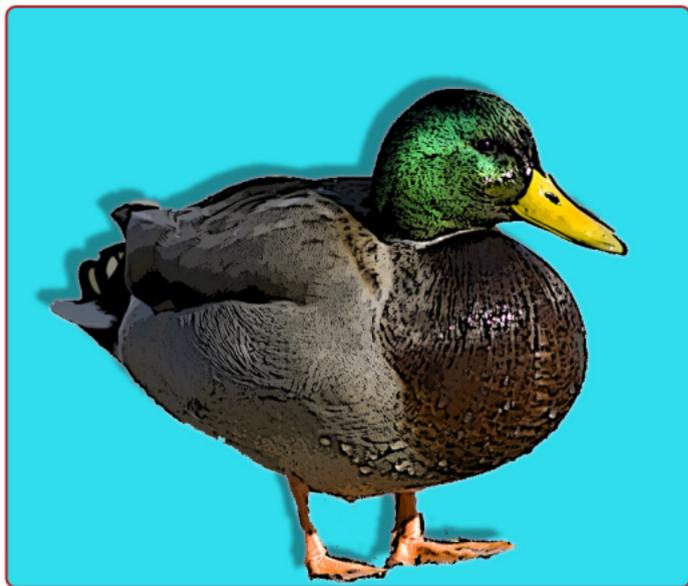
**Hind paw
(back foot)**



Deer



Hoof



Duck



Foot



Robin



Foot



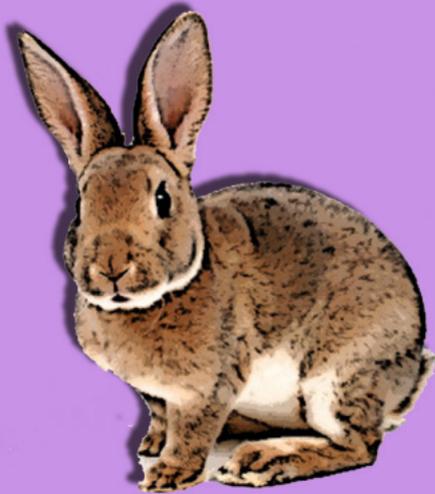
Squirrel



**Forepaw
(front foot)**



**Hind paw
(back foot)**



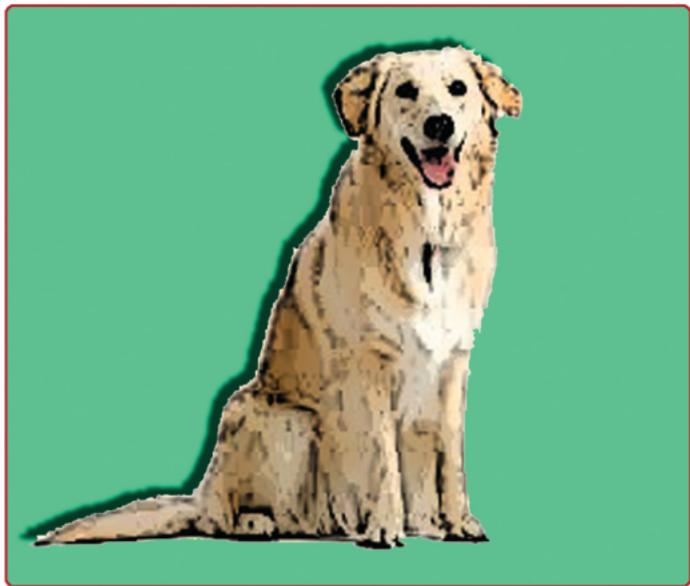
Rabbit



Front Foot



Hind Foot



Dog



Paw