



# Animal Signs Pre-visit

## Classroom Activities

### Brief Synopsis

*The lives of wild animals can be very mysterious. Students will discover ways to learn about the wild animals around them through the clues or signs they leave behind. These animal signs tell us what animals have been up to while we weren't looking.*

**Ages:** Designed for 5th–8th grade

**Time Considerations:** 20 minutes to introduce the project, 60 minutes to complete the presentations and discussion

**Materials:** large sheet of paper and drawing materials.

**Vocabulary:** Tracks, scat, territory markings, eat marks, predator, prey

#### Outcomes:

- Students will know the basic types of animal signs
- Students will discuss what kind of information you can deduce about an animal from its signs.
- Students will have a detailed understanding of the animal signs for one common Minnesota animal, and a general idea about several other species.
- Students will be introduced to the idea of predators and prey animals.

#### Minnesota Academic Standards:

##### Language Arts:

5.I.B.1-5, 5.I.C.3, 5.II.D.1, 5.II.E.2, 5.III.A.1-5, 6.I.B.1-4, 6.I.C.1, 6.II.D.1, 6.III.A.1-3&6, 7.I.B.1, 7.II.D.3, 7.III.A.1-2&7-8, 8.I.B.1-8, 8.I.C.1, 8.II.D.3, 8.III.A.1-2&6-7

##### Science:

7.IV.F.5



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### Background:

In the *Animal Signs* class at Eagle Bluff, the students will explore the surrounding habitat to find clues about the animals living there. To prepare for this class, the students will research a common local animal and the types of signs they create during their daily activities.

### Activity: Animal Signs Posters

#### Procedures:

1. Assign a local animal to each small group of students from the list of common Minnesota animals below, keeping the animal a secret from the other students.
  - White-tailed Deer
  - Raccoon
  - Cotton-tailed Rabbit
  - Opossum
  - Coyote
  - Red or Gray Fox
  - Wild Turkey
  - Red or Gray or Fox Squirrel
  - White-Footed Mouse or Meadow Vole
  - Ruffed Grouse
  - Pileated Woodpecker
  - Barred Owl
  - Weasel (short-tailed, long-tailed, Mink)
  - Feral Cat
2. Have them research a list of signs that the animal may leave in its habitat. Make sure the signs include:
  - Tracks (foot prints, wing prints)
  - Homes
  - Scat
  - Territory markings
  - Eat marks
  - A description of sounds they make, and
  - Any body parts they may leave behind (fur, feathers, scales, etc.)
3. Each group will use their research to create a poster about their animal featuring all of the animal signs they leave behind in their daily activities, but leaving out the name of the animal. Have the poster as general or as detailed as you want. Have students make the poster to scale, etc.



4. Reserve a time in class for each student to present their poster.
5. Have students in the class try to guess what kind of animal is being illustrated in each poster. As a part of the discussion, introduce the ideas of predators and prey. Can students guess if each animal is a predator or prey based on the animals signs? How can they tell the difference?
6. Have students reveal their animal. They can also point out any other information that can be gathered from looking at the animal's signs.

### Optional Activity:

Allow the students to investigate animal tracks online:

[http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/young\\_naturalists/tracks/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/tracks/index.html)  
"Who made these tracks?" introduces the reader to the idea that tracks can tell a story about the animals that left them and what that animal was doing. Following the introduction, there are 12 tracks with a description of where the tracks might be found. The answer is revealed by clicking on the title above each picture.

### Teacher Tips:

- Use the poster project to include the concept of scale. Have students carefully measure their drawings to make sure the different animal signs are the correct scale for their animal. If the signs are too large (like a deer bed for example), have them mark the drawing to explain the change in scale for that portion of the poster, etc.
- Use any other local animals you may want your students to learn about.
- If your school has the use of digital cameras and areas that may contain lots of animal signs, challenge your students to get a picture of at least one animal signs for their poster.



### Additional Resources:

<http://www.enature.com>

Allows you to search online field guides for over 5,000 species!

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/animals/index.html>

The Minnesota DNR web page to basic information for many common animals in Minnesota

<http://www.hopkins.k12.mn.us/Pages/District/NatCor/default.html>

A collection of photos taken by students of the Hopkins school district, including animal tracks and homes in their natural settings.