

Tracks and Scat Identification

If encountering tracks or scat, please take a photo to send to us! It is extremely difficult, or even impossible to identify the animal who made a track or scat, even for us! We've included this identification sheet for you, but we know it is very difficult to identify an animal like this, so please send us a picture when you find either sign in the wild.

Black Bear

Bears have 5 toes on each foot. The front tracks are wide, 4.5 x 4.0 in, and the claws are as long or even longer than the toes. The smallest toe often does not get registered in their footprint. The hind



track is longer than it is wide, 7.0 in x 3.5 in, and the pad makes up the majority of the foot with an arch on the side. Bear scat are cylindrically shaped, measuring 7.0 x 1.0 in, and often contains vegetation and has a sweet smell which attracts ants. Scat from carcasses digestion are black to brown containing hair and bones. The tips of the scat have a taper.

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Moose

The track of moose appears like that of the white-tailed deer, two crescent-shaped halves. However, the track size of an adult moose ranges from 4-6 inches long which is much larger than that of the deer. The front track is slightly larger, 6.0 x 3.5



in, than the hind, 5.6 x 3.25 in. They often feed on twigs, bards and buds by shredding them since they lack upper incisors. Their scat are mostly scattered dry pellets. However, when it is moist it can have a "nipple-dimple" shape, while in the winter time it is oval. The size of the scat is around 0.6 in.

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Deer

The tracks are heart-shaped with a convex wall. Their pads occupy most of the track, with the subunguinis being very narrow. The front tracks are usually



larger, 3.0 x 1.9 in, than the hind ones, 2.6 x 1.5 in. Their scat can be nipple-dimple or oval shaped, measuring 0.3 in. They are usually dry and disintegrate when they hit the ground. Photo credit to [Wiki Commons](#) Photo credit to [Wiki Commons](#)

Coyotes, *Canis latrans*



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Coyotes have 4 toes that often register on the track, and curved claws that also often register. The palm pads (below the toes) are triangular, but sometimes the palm pads on the hind feet do not fully register, leaving a smaller, central oval shape. The front track is usually around 2.5 - 3.7 inches long, and 1.7 - 2.8 inches wide, while the hind track is around 2.4 - 3.3 inches long, and 1.7 - 2.6 inches wide.

Coyotes leave urine and piles of scat to mark territory, with the same location sometimes being used repeatedly. Tracks and scratch marks may be found near scat piles since they use the odor on their feet to mark territory. Scat varies greatly depending on diet, with meat and insect scat being dark, sometimes even black, and fruit scat taking more of the color of the fruit ingested. Scat is often tapered at the ends into long tails and may contain hair and insect parts. It is usually around 3.0 x 0.6 in.

Gray fox, *Urocyon cinereargenteus*



Photo credit to [Ohio Department of Natural Resources](#)

Grey foxes have 4 toes that often register on the track, and very small claws that are also likely to register, these claw marks differentiating them from domestic cats. The tracks are smaller, shorter, and broader than that of a red fox, as well as lack the ridge of callus on the palm pad. They are also smaller than the tracks of coyotes. Front tracks are usually around 1.8 x 1.6 inches, while hind tracks are usually 1.7 x 1.6 inches.

Impossible to distinguish from red fox scat, red and grey fox scat is highly variable, though often has a tapered tail, is blackish when meatish, and larger and more long and round when composed of fruit. Rabbit fur is most common, but fur of other small mammals, berries, and insects are also common, along with plant remains. It is usually around 2.0 x 0.6 inches.

Red fox, *Vulpes vulpes*



Photo Credit to [Yellowstone National Park](#)

Red foxes have 4 toes and small claws that often register on the track, along with a distinctive ridge of callus on the pads of the track that sometimes registers. The pads are triangular, but the hind pads often register as round. The front track is around 2.0 x 1.8 inches, while the hind track is around 1.9 x 1.7 inches.

Impossible to distinguish from grey fox scat, red and grey fox scat is highly variable, though often has a tapered tail, is blackish when meatish, and larger and more long and round when composed of fruit. Mouse or rabbit fur, berries, and insects are common, and bird feathers and plant remains may also be found. It is usually around 2.0 x 0.6 in.

Bobcat

The tracks of the bobcat are similar to that of the domestic cat, but larger. Bobcats have four toes that register as footprints. Their fifth toe and claws are not prominent. The front tracks are wider than they are long, 2.0 x 2.1 in, and have a pad that is divided into two lobes. Their hind tracks are longer than they are round, 2.1 x 1.9 in, and the lobes are absent. On all tracks the leading toe is the third one. The scat tends to be narrow and cuts off where it's dry. A dry scat loses its integrity while a fresh one can form a cord that has a uniform in size, 3.0 x 0.8 in.



Photo credit to [Wiki Commons](#)

American Mink, *Mustela vison*



Photo credit to [Ohio Department of Natural Resources](#)

American Minks have five toes, most commonly evenly spaced, though the inside toe is smaller and may not register on tracks, and their claws may register. Tracks tend to be found near muddy banks, with front tracks most often larger than hind tracks. Webbing may be found in tracks. Front tracks are usually 1.7 x 1.8 inches, while hind tracks are usually 1.8 x 1.9 inches. Scat is often left on logs near the water's edge, and is used to mark territory. Scat is black or brown in long, thin cords, that may fold back on itself. May contain fur or feathers, along with the remains of fish or crayfish, and may have a fishy odor. It is usually around 2.0 x 0.25 in.

Fisher

The tracks of the fisher are distinguishable by its 5 toes, arranged in a 1-3-1 grouping. Their front footprint has a pad and heel that can be seen. They also have short claws. Their front and hind tracks are very similar in size: 2.5 x 2.8 in and 2.6 x 2.4 in, respectively.

The scat, black or brown in color, frequently contains porcupine quills and hair. It is usually long and folded on itself, 3.5 x 0.5 in. Both ends of the scat are tapered.



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Marten

Similar to fishers, martens have five toes with 1-3-1 grouping and claws. They also have a pad and heel that is shown in their front footprint. Their front hinds measure 2.1 x 2.0 in while the hind tracks are 2.3 x 2.1 in. Unlike the fisher, martens have very furry feet in the winter which can make their footprints indistinguishable.

Martens have scats that look similar to that of fisher: they are long and often folded back on itself with a black or brown color, tapered on the ends. They may have hair, but unlike the fisher they do not have porcupine quills. Their approximate size is 2.0 x 0.25 in.

Ermine, *Mustela erminea*



Photo credit to [Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#)

Ermings have five toes, though the inside toe is smaller and may not register on tracks, and their claws may or may not register. They often leave winding tracks. To differentiate between tracks of similar species (long-tailed weasel and least weasel), track size may be used, with Ermine tracks averaging between 0.43 - 0.75 inches long and 0.43 - 0.87 inches wide on front tracks, and hind tracks averaging between 0.43 - 0.98 inches long, and 0.39 - 0.87 inches wide. Similar to long-tailed weasels, ermines often leave their scat on prominent objects such as logs, and in latrines near active dens. Scat is blackish, twisted, and usually pointed at each end, and is often found on prominent objects such as tree stumps. It is around 2.0 x 0.2 in.

Long-tailed weasel, *Mustela frenata*



Photo credit to Ken Sturm/USFWS; Wayne Watson/USFWS [National Wildlife Refuge System](#)

Long-tailed weasels have five toes, though the inside toe is smaller and may not register on tracks, and the paw is often fully furred, which may cause a distortion in the dimensions. Their claws may or may not register, but if the weasel is sprinting, they may be the only impression. They often leave tracks with many sharp turns that begin or end at water. To differentiate between tracks of similar species (ermine and least weasel), track size may be used, with long-tailed weasel tracks averaging at 0.5 x 0.6 inches for front tracks and 0.6 x 0.7 inches for hind tracks.

Similar to ermines, long-tailed weasels often leave their scat on raised objects, and in latrines near active dens, sometimes with food scraps as well. Scat is typically black and twisted, with pointed ends, and often folds back on itself. It is usually around 1.5 x 0.1 in.

Striped Skunk, *Mephitis mephitis*



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Striped skunks have 5 toes, with the inside toe being the smallest, and long, wide claws. They have a front track of about 1.5 x 1.25 inches and a hind track of about 1.9 x 1.4 inches. Hind tracks have an extended heel pad, and thus may appear larger. Skunks may waddle and stop often, leaving extra tracks on the trail. Both their front and hind tracks appear pigeon-toed. Scat may be found near burrow entrances, in underground latrines, or in a skunk's route, sometimes near prominent objects the skunk often passes. Scat is cylindrical with blunt ends, looking somewhat like a wave-like squiggly line, is sometimes made entirely of insect parts, and is usually around 5.0 x 0.75 in.

Porcupine

The tracks of porcupines are distinguished through the rough texture made by their nubs. The front tracks are smaller, 1.7 x 1.3 in, than the hind, 2.7 x 1.7 in, with the front track having 4 toes and the hind having 5 toes. Toes often do not appear in their footprints. However, their claws do appear.

Scat are oval shaped with taper and can measure up to 0.5 in. Winter scat is red from feeding on conifers. In the summer, they feed more on plants which makes their scat brown to black. May have individual pellets or connected ones by fibers.



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Opossum

They have 5 toes on each foot. The hind tracks, 2.2 x 1.9 in, have a toe that is similar to the human thumb, located on the side, separate from the other toes. The outside toes of the hind tracks are further apart from the middle toes while on the front track, 1.5 x 2.1 in, all the toes are about the same distance apart. The front tracks are wider than they are long; the reverse is true for the hind tracks.

Their scats are extremely variable due to their omnivorous diet. They can measure 4.0 x 0.5 in.



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Northern Raccoons, *Procyon lotor*

WARNING: Raccoon scat may carry a parasite that is fatal to humans if inhaled or ingested. Do not smell scat, and if touched, wash hands.



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Northern raccoons have 5 elongated toes that look somewhat like fingers with bulbous ends. Their claws often register as triangles. Tracks average at 2.5 x 2.5 inches for front tracks and 4.0 x 2.3 inches for hind tracks.

Raccoons often leave piles of scat in communal latrines along with other raccoons. Scat can be blackish, brown, tan, or yellowish but is most often black in the shape of a cylinder with even diameter and blunt ends. May contain crayfish, fruit, grain, seeds, or insect remains. It is usually around 3.0 x 0.7 inches.

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