Kids Explore!

Be a Track Trapper!

Here's a fun way to "trap" the tracks of animal visitors.

Wild critters can be pretty sneaky! Sometimes they live nearby and you don't even know it. If you want to find out who's creeping, crawling, and hopping right near where you live, try the following activity.

Materials

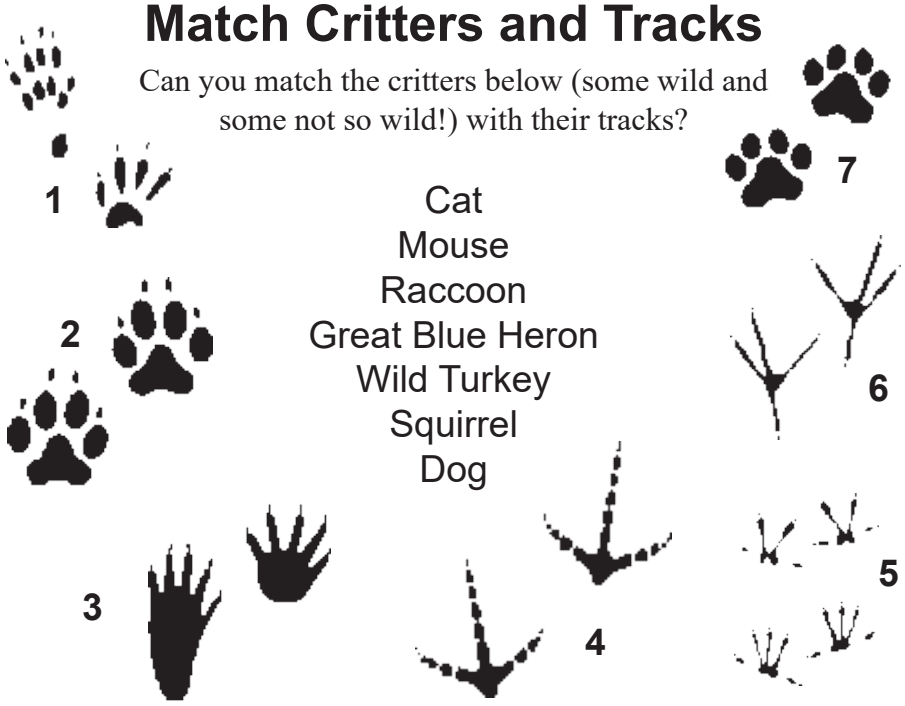
- Sturdy piece of cardboard, at least 12" x 12"
- Flour
- Rolling pin
- Peanut butter

1. Sprinkle about 1/8" of flour evenly over your cardboard.
2. Use a rolling pin to make the flour extra smooth and even.
3. Put a spoonful of peanut butter right in the middle of the flour-covered cardboard.
4. Carefully pick the cardboard up and put it outside in your garden, yard, patio, or balcony.
5. Leave the cardboard out overnight
6. Check your trap the next morning. Did you have any visitors? Examine any tracks on the flour for clues about who visited. How many toes did the critters have? Were there claws? Do you see any marks left by a tail? How big was the animal?

Match Critters and Tracks

Can you match the critters below (some wild and some not so wild!) with their tracks?

Cat
Mouse
Raccoon
Great Blue Heron
Wild Turkey
Squirrel
Dog



Curious about Critters?

You can learn even more about your visitors by experimenting with more than one trap.

- Put track traps in different locations. Try an open space, under a tree, right beside a house, or another spot you think animals might like.
- Put different types of food in the center. Try things like fruit, nuts, or cheese.

Do some animals have a favorite location or type of food?

Track Hunting in Nature

Try some track hunting in nature! Winter is an especially good time to look for tracks. Try these places:

- Fresh snow
- Sandy beaches
- Muddy trails
- Wet riverbanks

Answers: 1 = Squirrel, 2 = Dog, 3 = Raccoon, 4 = Wild Turkey, 5 = Mouse, 6 = Great Blue Heron, 7 = Cat