



WILD Kids



Signs of "Wild" Life

Almost everywhere you look you can find clues that wildlife leave behind. These clues are called **sign**. Some sign are easy to spot. A nibbled plant, tracks, nests, a hole in a tree, and burrows are all signs that animals live nearby. Wildlife sign can tell us many things about the animal that left them, such as the size of the animal, what it eats, where it lives, and what it's good at. Let's take a closer look at some wildlife sign.

Tracks Tell A Tale

As animals move about they leave footprints. These footprints, called tracks, tell a story about the animal that made them. By looking at the size and shape of the tracks, number of toes and whether toenails show in the tracks, you can tell many things about the animal that left them.



Mt. lion front foot

Members of the cat family (house cats, bobcats, and mountain lions) have 4 toes and retractable claws. Retractable means they can pull their claws in.

This helps keep them razor sharp for hunting. Cat tracks usually show no

claw marks. Tracks from members of the dog family (coyote, wolves, and foxes) look similar to cat tracks but are not as wide, and may show claw marks.

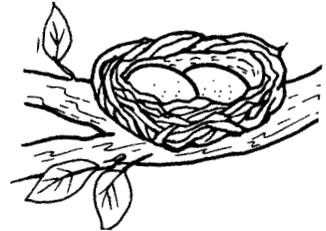
Raccoon tracks look like small human hands and feet, with long toes. Beaver tracks tell us what it is good at. Their back feet are webbed for swimming and their front feet look like small hands with claws for grasping. Other animals, such as birds, leave tracks too. As a roadrunner runs about in search of lizards, it leaves tracks that look like skinny "X's".



Raccoon front foot

Name That Nest

Nests are a sign that birds live here. Birds build nests for shelter and to raise their young. The size, shape, nest material, and location tell us much about the bird that made the nest.



Hummingbirds build tiny cup-shaped nests, just big enough for two tiny eggs. The nest is made of small sticks and spider webs. Cactus wrens build football-shaped nests in trees and cacti.

Cliff swallow nests are made of mud and are lined with grass and feathers. These nests have a small side entrance and are found on the sides of bridges, cliffs, or buildings. Verdins, small gray-colored birds, build hanging, gourd-shaped nests of thorny twigs. Verdin nests are lined with grass and feathers and have a side entrance.

Whooooo Was Here?

Owls eat rodents (mice and rats), snakes, and birds. They eat their food whole or tear it into pieces with their sharp beaks. About 12 hours after eating, owls cough up the undigested fur, feather, and bones in an oval-shaped pellet.

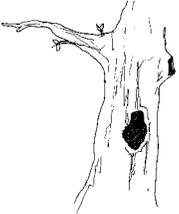
If you look closely on the ground, under a tree where an owl perched, you may find a pellet. By taking apart the pellet you will discover a skull, bones, and fur. If you reconstruct the skeleton, you can identify the owl's favorite food! Pellets are a sign an owl may live nearby. Eagles, hawks, ravens, and some songbirds cough up pellets too.

Whose Scat Is That?

All animals must eat to survive. After digesting their food, animals rid their bodies of waste by leaving behind droppings, called **scat**. Scat is a sign that gives us clues about local animals. Herbivores (plant-eaters), such as deer and rabbits, leave piles of small, round droppings.

Carnivores (meat-eaters) leave scat that is larger, in clumps or cords, and may contain hair and fur. Coyote and bear scat often contain plant material and berries. If you come upon what looks like a pile of dead ants – it may be horned lizard scat! Don't be afraid to take a closer look to find out whose scat is that.

Play Animal Sign Bingo! Cut out each square below. Glue squares on a sheet of paper. Glue 4 squares across and 4 squares down - just like they are here, but in any order you like. Title your card "Animal Signs Bingo." Using your bingo card, explore your schoolyard or backyard for animal signs. If you get 4 across, 4 down, or all 4 corners – You've got a Bingo!

<p>Anthill</p> 	<p>Half eaten fruit</p> 	<p>Nibbled branch</p> 	<p>Bumps on a leaf</p> 
<p>Web</p> 	<p>Hole in a tree</p> 	<p>Bird nest</p> 	<p>Mound of dirt</p> 
<p>Hole in the ground</p> 	<p>Nibbled plant</p> 	<p>Scat</p> 	<p>Pieces of eggshell</p> 
<p>Feather</p> 	<p>Free Square</p>	<p>Bird singing</p> 	<p>Holes in a leaf</p> 