

TRACKS

BY ANNIE AGUIRRE
MARKETING COORDINATOR

IN WINTER, WILDLIFE LEAVE STORIES IN THE SNOW WITH EVERY STEP THEY TAKE. EACH TRACK IS A MYSTERY WAITING TO BE REVEALED. ON YOUR NEXT OUTDOOR ADVENTURE, USE THIS GUIDE TO CRACK SOME OF THESE COLD CASES AND REVEAL THE CRITTERS BEHIND THE CLUES.

BOUNDERS

SPECIES: OTTERS & WEASELS

HAVE SHORT LEGS AND LONG BODIES. THEY MOVE LIKE AN ACCORDION – THEIR BACK FEET LAND WHERE THEIR FRONT FEET STEPPED AS THEY BOUND.



RIVER OTTER



WADDLERS

SPECIES: RACCOONS, BEAVERS, OPOSSUMS, MUSKRATS, SKUNKS

SHORT LEGS AND ROUND BODIES. THEIR WALKING PATTERN RESEMBLES WADDLING, WITH AN ALTERNATE SIDE-TO-SIDE MOTION. WADDLERS APPEAR TO MOVE ONE SIDE OF THEIR BODY AND THEN THE OTHER SIDE WHEN THEY WALK, AS THOUGH THE FRONT AND BACK FOOT ARE CONNECTED BY AN IMAGINARY STRING.



RACCOON



BEAVER



HOPPERS

SPECIES: RABBITS, SQUIRRELS, CHIPMUNKS & MICE

HOPPERS MOVE BY PLACING THEIR REAR FEET SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF THEIR FRONT FEET AND PUSHING OFF SO THEIR FRONT FEET LAND FIRST, AND THEIR BACK FEET LAND IN FRONT. THEIR HOPPING PATTERN IS SOMETIMES CALLED "LEAP-FROGGING".



RABBIT



SQUIRREL

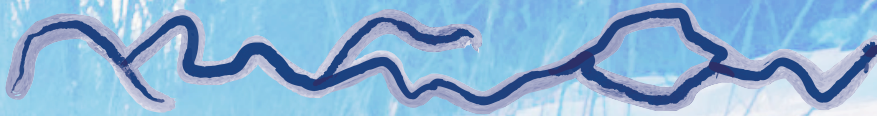


BURROWERS

IN DEEP SNOW, VOLES PREFER TO REMAIN BENEATH THE SURFACE IN TUNNELS. AS THE SNOW MELTS, THESE WINDING, SNAKE-LIKE TUNNELS BECOME EXPOSED.

SPECIES: VOLE

VOLE



TROTTERS

SPECIES: CAT, DOG, COYOTE, FOX, DEER, & LARGE BIRDS.

TROTTERS MOVE WITH A SMOOTH ZIG-ZAGGING PATTERN. MANY TROTTERS CONSERVE ENERGY BY LANDING THEIR BACK FEET IN THE TRACKS WHERE THEIR FRONT FEET PREVIOUSLY FELL. THIS SIMPLE LEFT-RIGHT PATTERN GIVES THE ILLUSION OF ONLY TWO FEET LEAVING BEHIND TRACKS, AND IS EASY TO SPOT.



DEER



TURKEY



WHICH PAW IS WHICH?

CANINES AND CATS CAN BE TOUGH TO PICK APART. HERE'S SOME FIELD MARKS TO HELP YOU GET A PAWS-ITIVE ID.

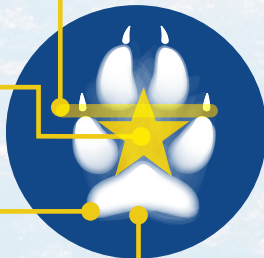
SLIGHT GAP BETWEEN TOP & BOTTOM TOES (NO OVERLAP)

FOX

STAR-SHAPED NEGATIVE SPACE BETWEEN PADS

FUZZY PAWS SOFTEN TRACKS

NARROW PAD SHAPED LIKE BOOMERANG



DOG

BLUNT CLAWS OFTEN VISIBLE

NO CLEAN GAP BETWEEN TOP & BOTTOM TOES (SHOWS OVERLAP)

LARGE ROUND TOES ALWAYS SPLAY OUTWARD

SHORT WIDE PALM PAD



COYOTE

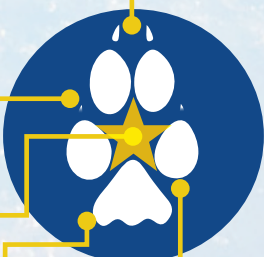
SHARP MIDDLE CLAWS OFTEN POINT INWARD

SHARP OUTER CLAWS HARD TO SEE

STAR-SHAPED NEGATIVE SPACE BETWEEN PADS

THREE BUMPS AT BOTTOM OF PAD

NARROWER PAW COMPARED TO OTHER CANINES



CAT

NO CLAW MARKS

C-SHAPED NEGATIVE SPACE BETWEEN PADS

TWO BUMPS AT TOP OF PAD

PROPORTIONALLY LARGE PALM PADS

THREE BUMPS AT BOTTOM OF PAD

