

Learning Laguna Classroom Activity: Tracks

Goal: To familiarize students with the variety of wildlife that live in the Laguna watershed. To discuss the differences of characteristics in animal feet and to introduce the concept of adaptation. To introduce the concepts of carnivore, herbivore and omnivore.

Version 1 - Set-up: Pick out different feet from the box. **Place one foot at each student's place** so that the feet are on the table before the students sit down. (Note: Do not set out paper and ink pads yet). A good selection might be:

Goose or Duck	River Otter	Frog	Coyote
Badger	Bobcat	Deer	Raccoon

Discussion: Here we are going to learn about tracks of some Laguna animals. Ask students what a track is. Tell students not to guess what animal their foot belongs to until you call on them. Pick one student and ask them:

- Tell us one thing about the foot you are holding. Or, What can you tell us about the foot? (They may answer with descriptions such as big, claws, pads, webbed. Try to get students to compare their foot with others at the table).
- How is your foot similar or different to the student next to you?
- Can you tell how big the animal might be?
- Where does this animal live?
- What foot is best adapted for living in water? How?
- What does it eat? How can we tell what an animal eats by looking at its feet?
- What family of animals has pads on their feet? Think of an animal that might live at your house (dog and cat).
- What family has retractable claws? What family does not?

Examples: If you ask the student with the duck foot the first question and their answer is, "The foot is webbed" then you can ask, "Is there another foot that has webbing?" You can have the students compare the river otter and frog with the duck.

Webbed feet indicate that the animal is adapted to living in water (frog, duck, goose).

Ask the student with the raccoon foot the first question. They answer "It has claws." You ask, "Who else has a foot with claws?" Get the student with the badger foot to compare with the raccoon. Ask "Who else has a foot with pads?" Then add in that the bobcat that has retractable claws.

Padded feet belong to predators (bobcat, coyote, river otter, badger). Predatory animals have padded feet which minimize the amount of noise they make so they can hunt quietly and secretly. Animals with **Hands** are omnivores (raccoon, opossum, skunk).

Hoofed animals are herbivores (deer).

Other animal signs besides tracks that we may see are scat, burrows, nests, bones, fur, feathers, sounds, chew marks.

Activity: After the students have identified their foot, pass out paper, ink pads and pens. Have them put their name on one side, turn it over and make as many prints as they can, labeling them if they want to. If the table is covered with paper they can practice on the paper covering the table first.

Version 2 – Set-up: Put out a **picture of an animal** at each student's place. Have next to you all the corresponding feet that go with the pictures. Do not set out paper and ink pads yet. A good selection might be: **Goose/Duck, River Otter, Badger, Bobcat, Deer, Raccoon, Coyote**

Discussion:

1. Tell us 1 thing about the animal that is in the picture.
2. Where does this animal live?
3. What does it eat? How can we tell what an animal eats by looking at its feet? Introduce concepts of predator, omnivore and herbivore. (See Example #2 below)
4. Can you tell how big the animal is?

Pass out 1 foot at a time, asking the students to look and figure out which foot belongs to which animal. What foot is best adapted for living in water? How? What can you tell from the foot? What family has retractable claws? What family does not?

Examples:

1. If you ask the student with the duck foot the first question and their answer is, "The foot is webbed" then you can ask, "Is there another foot that has webbing?" You can have the students compare the river otter and frog with the duck.
 2. If you ask the student with the Raccoon foot the first question, they answer, "It has claws." You ask, "Who else has a foot with claws?" Get the student with the badger foot to compare with the raccoon. Then add in the bobcat that has retractable claws.
- **Padded** feet are predators. (Bobcat, coyote, river otter, badger) What is a predator?
 - **Hands** are omnivores. (raccoon, opossum) What is an omnivore?
 - **Hoofed** animals are herbivores. (deer) What is an herbivore?
 - **Webbed** feet indicate that the animal or bird spends time in the water.(frog, duck, goose)

Activity:

After they have identified their animal and foot, pass out paper, ink pads and pens. Have them put their name on it and make ONE print, labeling it if they want to. If the table is covered with paper, they can practice on the table first. Then have them pass the tracks & ink pads to the right so everyone can stamp each foot on his/her own bookmark.

Other information: Most of the time, when we go into the wilderness we only catch a glimpse of these animals and birds, but we do find evidence, like tracks. There are 57 different species of mammals and over 200 species of birds that live in the Laguna.

Other animal signs that we may see are scat, feathers, holes or nests, bones, fur, chew marks.