











Search for tracks and trails


Educator Notes

Age				
Early Years	4-7	8-12	12-15	16+
				

Time				
> 10 mins	> 30 mins	> 60 mins	> 2 hours	Long term
				

Season				
All year	Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
				

Curriculum Links	
Expressive Arts	
Health & Wellbeing	
Literacy & English	
Mathematics	
Sciences	
Social Studies	
Technologies	



Location		
Indoors	Outdoors	Either
		

Equipment list
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed activity sheet Magnifying glasses (optional) Identification guides, e.g. for footprints (optional)

Instructions

- Before heading out on your walk, make sure you read the [Visiting Woodlands Safety](#) sheet (next page)
- Encourage everyone to think like animal detectives! Bring along your printed spotter sheet(s) to help guide what you look for. If you have any guidebooks or magnifying glasses, hand them out too. Remember to look high, low and close up in search for animal signs.
- Look closely at the ground to see if you can find animal footprints. Soft mud, frost and snowy ground are good areas to explore as footprints show up more clearly.
- Animal droppings (i.e. poo!) are excellent signs to find. If you find some poo, why not investigate it? Who's poo is it? What does it smell like? You could also break it apart (using a stick) to see what the animal had eaten - look for fur, tiny bones, berries and seeds in the poo.
- Never touch animal poo with your hands as it carries bacteria and can cause illness, and always stay away from dog poo. Wash hands after you've been exploring outdoors.

If you find a footprint on your walk and would like to add an extra element to this activity, follow the instructions on our activity guide (on following pages) for [how to plaster cast it](#) and take it back with you to keep and identify!

Visiting Woodlands Safely

If you are taking your group out to visit the woods, it is important to do so safely! Before your trip, it is important to assess the site you are visiting and complete a comprehensive [risk assessment](#). We have included some things to keep in mind below.

Take a read of the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) before you go. These guidelines are there for your safety and the protection of nature. They also have resources and activities on their website that you can use with your group.



Things to keep in mind before and during your trip:

- It is important to [check the weather forecast](#) before setting off and keep an eye on it whilst you are out – you can find this by visiting the MET office website [here](#). Remember it is not safe to visit woods during high winds.
- Always [dress appropriately](#) for your visit and the weather. Many layers if it's cold, alternatively, sun cream and hats if it's warm. Always check for weather warnings before heading out. We recommend sturdy shoes too.
- Look up your [nearest public toilet](#) before heading out. You could contact cafe/leisure facilities ahead of time to ask if your group can use their toilets too.
- Be aware of limited [phone reception](#) in remote places. Keep a mobile to hand. Know your nearest landline (a nearby café?).
- Keep to [designated paths](#). This helps us avoid disturbing wildlife and keeps us safe. Beware of uneven, unstable or slippery ground (rocks can end up particularly slippery!)
- Don't [touch or taste anything](#) you aren't sure of when exploring the woods.
- Stick together. Having your group wear brighter clothing can help. A great way to [set boundaries](#) with children is to get them to identify the boundaries themselves. Explain what the activity is and then ask them to suggest where is on limits and where is off limits.
- Pack a bottle of [hand sanitiser](#) to clean hands, especially before touching eyes, noses or mouths.
- Treat [woodland wildlife with care](#). Don't take any creatures home with you – they need to stay in their habitat to survive and thrive!
- Take [your rubbish home](#) (and any rubbish you can see and pick up safely). Bring a rubbish bag with you.

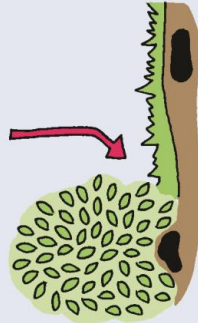
Discover animal tracks and signs



wildlife
watch



Look for animal footprints in mud, sand or snow.



Look under hedges and in banks for rabbit holes.



Animal fur can get caught on barbed wire and fences.



Owls spit out bits (pellets) of their prey they can't digest.



Birds shed their feathers when they are damaged.



Look for hedgehog poo with bits of beetles in it.



Look for pine cones that have been stripped by hungry Squirrels.



If the trail is continuous, it's a slug. If broken, it's a snail.



Nests are a surefire sign that birds are breeding. Hooray!



Molehills are signs that moles are nearby



Mammals can leave flattened grass in their tracks.



Song thrushes leave behind broken snail shells after meals.

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How to go plaster casting

wildlife
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Scottish
Wildlife
Trust

What you need:

- plaster of paris
(from a pharmacy) 
- an old 500g margarine tub for mixing it in 
- a stick or spoon for stirring 
- water 
- strips of card, 10cm wide and long enough to fit around the footprint 
- paperclips 


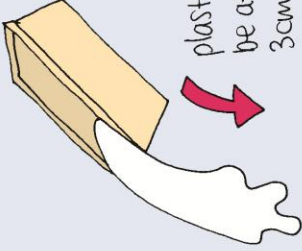
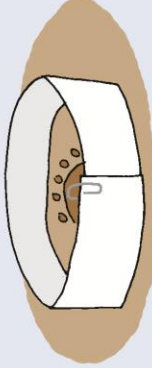
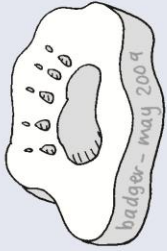
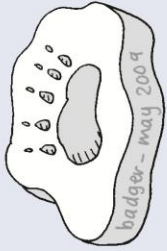
- 1 Find a footprint and clear away any twigs and leaves from the area around it 
- 2 Make a circle with the strip of card, join the ends with the paperclip, and push it into the ground around the footprint 
- 3 Mix 5 tablespoons of dry plaster with water until it is like smooth cream 
- 4 Pour the plaster into the card collar. Wait 5-10 mins for it to set then dig it out 
- 5 Take home, wash, identify and label 

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