



Be a Nature Detective

Beyond tracks and scat!

Tracks

When we think about signs of wildlife, the first things we often consider are tracks. Tracks tell us what kind of wildlife has traveled through.

(Tip—claws=canine, no claws=feline)

Look at spacing, stride.



Scat

You may think scat or frass or castings—all scientific words for “poop” is silly but we can learn many things from scat. What did the animal eat, what is their presence in the area, are they healthy. Naturalists use scats to do all kinds of research.



Holes

Holes tell us something may have lived here.



Paths

Wildlife trails show us where critters travel.



Nests

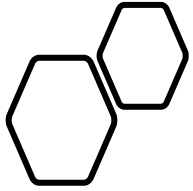
Nests may have sheltered some bird eggs or a squirrel.



Rubbing and chewing

Deer and other animals rub against trees and everything from insects to bears may nibble on leaves and shoots.





Scents and sounds

Sometimes we know wildlife is around by the sounds we hear—birds cheeping or crickets chirping. And sometimes we know wildlife has moved through by scents we smell—skunk stink, or rotting flesh.



Webs

Did you know that over 20 critters leave webs including crickets, silverfish, glow-worms, ants, bees, wasps, flies, caterpillars, lacewings, and sawfly larvae.



How many other clues can you find?

- Scratches
- Feathers
- Silk strands
- Pellets
- Drillings
- Chewings
- Slime
- Drag marks
- Shells
- Bark stripped
- Snake trails
- Egg shells
- Piles of dirt
- Garbage scattered
- Moltings
- Vegetation density
- Seeds scattered
- Scent markings



Whose been here?

Whose been here
And how I tell,
Perhaps a track
Or scat I smell,
Or path or hole
Or web or nest,
I'll use my senses
To find the rest.



Is There Wildlife in the Clearing
to the tune of *She'll Be Coming*
Around the Mountain

Is there wildlife in the clearing

How to tell?

Was there wildlife in the clearing

What to see?

Webs and nests, paths, tracks and scat

Rubs and chews will tell you that

There's been wildlife in the clearing

I can tell!





Create your own tracks!

Make your hand into a fist, then press the knuckles onto a stamp pad and make prints.



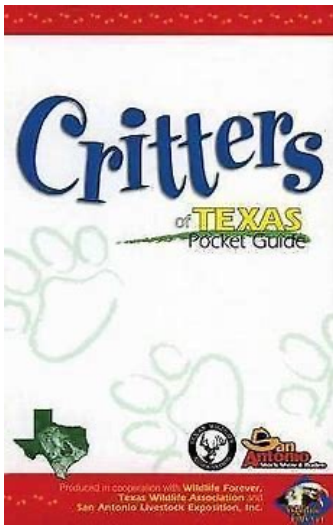
How many ways
can you make
scat and tracks?

Rice cakes or round crackers

And pretzels and Milk Duds
and chocolate minichips?

Draw a track in peanut butter
on a cracker?





Books

Tracks, Scats and Signs by Leslie Dendy

Critters of Texas Pocket Guide by Ann E. McCarthy

