



ANIMAL SIGNS DETECTIVE



KEY IDEAS

Winter is the perfect season to become a detective and search for signs of nearby animals!

Skills | observation; language; creativity; gross motor skills

Duration | 20-30 minutes

Setting | outdoors

Materials | paper, pencil, clipboard, optional: camera, magnifying glass, track identification guide



ACTIVITY

1. Imagine that you are a detective! Head outside a few days after a snowfall with your paper, pencil, and clipboard.
2. Look for signs that animals have been in the area. Keep an eye out for things like:
 - **Tracks** | Animals can leave prints as they move from place to place. Look at their shape and size.
 - How many legs does the animal have?
 - What direction was it going?
 - **Feathers** | Dropped feathers can tell us what kinds of birds are in the area. Take note of their colour and pattern
 - **Tunnels** | Small animals like mice and voles tunnel under the snow to keep warm and stay out of sight of predators. Look for tracks leading to holes in the snow and keep an eye out for the remains of tunnels after a thaw.

- **Scat (poop)** | Scat is a great clue for figuring out what animals are in your area. Look at the shape and size.
 - Are there clues that tell you what the animal was eating (e.g., seeds, fur)?
 - **Browsing marks** | Claw marks, nibble marks, or a tree trunk stripped of bark can give clues too.
3. When you find evidence of an animal, draw it on your paper or take a photo.
- Optional: Use a magnifying glass to examine some signs in more detail.
4. Back at home, look over your photos or drawings of the animal signs you found.
- Optional: Use a track identification guide to help you identify what you saw.



QUESTIONS

- What animals do you think left the signs you discovered? If you're not sure, think about it and make a few guesses!
 - Were they big or small?
 - Do they have feathers or fur?



SAFETY

- Ask an adult to go on your walk with you.
- Dress appropriately for the weather.
- Never touch scat with your hands! If you want to examine it, use a stick.

