

Animal Tracks



Red Fox

The red fox is the most common type of fox in the world, and also the largest. Foxes hunt for their food, but are also hunted by humans, using dogs. Fox hunting has been banned in many countries.

Where: in the countryside and in urban areas – you might find their tracks near rubbish bins, where they have been looking for food.

Description: four toe pads with claws, triangular heel pad

Size: 5 cm (2 inches) long

Movement: often trot in a straight line

Can be confused with: dogs have broader paw prints and wander rather than trot



Dog

If you find paw prints in snow, mud or sand with human footprints nearby, they are likely to belong to a dog.

Where: anywhere dogs are taken for walks

Description: four toe pads with claws, heel pad with two lobes

Size: depends on the breed of dog

Movement: domestic dogs mostly have lots of energy – often move in zigzags rather than straight lines

Can be confused with: foxes, who are relatives of theirs. A fox's heel pad is shaped more like a triangle



Cat

Pet cats can be found throughout the world. There are still wild cats living in parts of Europe, including Scotland and Italy

Where: near homes and farms

Description: four toes, large heel pad with three lobes.

Cats leave no claw prints: their claws are pulled in when they walk

Size: 2.5-4 cm (1-1.5 inches) long

Movement: walk or run, usually in a straight line

Can be confused with: dog or fox - smaller than a fox and wider than a dog



Rabbit

Wild rabbits have back legs that are much longer than their front legs.

Where: in grassland, near hedges or trees

Description: five toes on their short front feet and four on their long back feet

Size: back feet are roughly twice as long as front feet. Back feet around 8 cm (3 inches) long

Movement: hopping, with the back legs moving together

Can be confused with: hares, who have larger footprints and run rather than hop



Badger

Badgers are very hard to see as they only come out when it's dark. Sometimes finding their footprints is the only way to know they are there.

Where: woodland and open countryside

Description: five toes arranged in a curve, with claws longer on the forefeet. A broad heel pad

Size: 6.5 cm (2.5 inches) across

Movement: a waddle-like walk, but can also run fast, climb and swim

Their tracks are very distinctive, so you are unlikely to confuse them with another animal.



Grey Squirrel

Squirrels are rodents, so their tracks look quite like those of rats and voles.

Where: squirrel tracks almost always begin and end at a tree, in gardens, parks and woodland

Description: four toes on front feet and five on back feet, claws that help them climb. They look a little like tiny hand prints

Size: front 3.5 cm (1.4 inches) long; back 4.5 cm (1.7 inches) long

Movement: squirrels bound across the ground
Can be confused with: red squirrels, which have slightly smaller tracks but are much less common



Sheep

There are over a billion domestic sheep living all over the world. They have cloven or split hooves with two long toes, like goats, deer, pigs and cattle.

Where: landscapes where it is difficult to grow crops, such as hills, where they graze on grass and small plants
Description: their hooves are made from two long toes, each surrounded by a hard wall of horn, like very thick toenails

Movement: sheep usually walk, often one behind the other, forming paths in the grass

Can be confused with: deer, but are more rounded



Roe Deer

Roe deer live in small groups in the winter but tend to live on their own the rest of the year. They are the most common type of deer in the UK.

Where: countryside

Description: cloven hooves. If the prints are in very soft ground you can sometimes see two dots behind the hoof print, made by 'dew claws', like small hooves a little further up their legs

Size: 4.5 cm (1.7 inches) long

Movement: deer walk, grazing on bushes and other plants, and they run when frightened

Can be confused with: other deer – roe deer prints are smaller than others apart from muntjac; deer hooves are more pointed than sheep hooves



Bird

Birds leave their prints in mud, snow and on wet sandy beaches. Their feet are suited to their habitat.

Where: different birds prefer different locations, such as rivers, marshland, gardens, the sea

Description: many birds, including songbirds such as blackbirds and robins, have three toes pointing forwards and one backwards, which is ideal for

perching on a twig. Water birds have webbed feet to help them move through the water, or long toes for wading when looking for food.

Movement: birds move in different ways on the ground – some hop, others waddle, and large birds must run to take off



Horse

The tracks left by wild horses are different to those left by domesticated horses. If you see a horse being ridden, it will be wearing shoes - U-shaped pieces of metal attached to their hooves to protect their feet on hard surfaces.

Where: wild horses and ponies can still be found in areas of Europe including Exmoor in England and the Camargue area in France

Description: a wild horse hoof print is made by the hard part of the hoof, which protects the soft foot

Size: 7.5-10 cm (3-4 inches) long

Movement: wild horses spend most of their time walking, grazing with their heads down. They only gallop when they are startled