## OPPOSUM

Opossum are slow moving marsupials that fake death when threatened by predators. They may have as many as 16 young per litter and are opportunistic feeders. Opossum will eat most anything available to them

Front
2” wide

Hind

## STRIPED SKUNK

Skunks are famous for their bad smell. While skunks are very abundant, people don’t notice them until they have sprayed. While their main diet consists of insects, they will eat rodents, birds, small amphibians and are efficient nest predators.

Hind
1-1/2”

Front

## RACCOON

Raccoons are very adaptable to their environment, whether it’s an urban neighborhood or rural farmland. Raccoons are considered nocturnal, but can be active during the day. Raccoons are not true hibernators, but will slumber in dens for several weeks during extreme winter weather.

Front
2-1/4”

Hind
3-1/4”

## FISHER

Fisher are woodland animals, and among the most effective predators on land. They are also the fastest American animal in trees. Fisher are solitary animals throughout most of the year. The diet includes small mammals, birds, insects, and berries. Fisher are one of the few predators that readily prey on porcupines.

Front

Hind

## MARTEN

Marten inhabit the northern forests, where heavily timbered areas provide excellent habitat. Marten prey upon rodents, insects, small birds, and squirrels. Because of their small size, marten also preyed upon by foxes, coyotes, and various raptor species.

Front

Hind
1-3/5”

## SHORT-TAILED WEASEL

The metabolism of the short-tailed weasel is extreme, they must constantly search for prey and water. Despite their tiny size, they eat mice, other small mammals, and a few birds. Animals that prey on them include the long-tailed weasel.

Hind

Front

## LONG-TAILED WEASEL

By weight, the weasels may be the most aggressive predators. They will prey upon animals bigger than themselves, such as rabbits. Weasels will cache food to eat later. The male short-tailed weasel is similar in size to the female long-tailed weasel.

Hind

Front

## BADGER

Badgers are powerful diggers. They have strong front legs and long, heavy claws. They eat rodents, such as gophers, ground squirrels, prairie dogs and moles. The badger is the state mammal of WI and a protected species.

Front
2”

Hind

## BOBCAT

Bobcat are easily recognized by their brown fur, spotted underbelly and a black tipped tail. Their diet in WI consists of rabbits, other small mammals, and white-tailed deer. Bobcats are shy and rarely seen. Even so, bobcats are abundant and expand their range in Wisconsin annually.

Front
2”

Hind

## RED AND GRAY FOX

Red fox come in several color phases, but most are red, with a white tipped tail. Red fox prefer open agricultural areas, but can be found in other habitat types. Gray fox are found throughout WI, and prefer brush land woody habitats. Gray fox are also tree climbers. Their diet includes rodents, birds, insects, and wild fruits.

Front

Hind
1-3/4”

## COYOTE

Coyotes are one of the most studied and talked about animals in the country. Coyote are abundant and very adaptable to a changing environment. While rodents and carrion make up most of their diet, coyotes will kill and eat a domestic pet.

Front

Hind
2 1/2”-3”

## GRAY WOLF

Wolves are efficient predators. They have good hearing, a well developed sense of smell, and sharp eyesight . The white-tailed deer is the primary prey in WI, but wolves also eat beaver, elk, rabbits and other small mammals. Wolves hunt as a pack. Average pack size in WI is 5-7 animals. Wolves will use dens between March and June while raising pups.

Front
4-5”

Hind
4”

# *Mammal Tracks on Wisconsin*


Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program
Dept. of Natural Resources
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921
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DNR Publication
WM-359

## *Mammal Tracks*

The secretive ways of most mammals make them rare sights. Tracks are like an animal's fingerprints in the wild. They're telltale signs of what has come and gone. Animals trails can tell how many of what kind of animals went where, and at what speed. Biologists study tracks to discover how many animal species live in a given habitat.

Track size and spacing vary with the animal's sex, age, speed, and movement as well as the softness of the soil or substrate. For example, tracks found in muddy, sandy or wet substrate look bigger compared to tracks found on dry earth. This is due to the animal's toes spreading outward as the foot exerts downward pressure on slippery substrates.

Some animal tracks are confusing. Consider track size, animal weight, habitat type, and what animals you know to be in the area when determining what species left the track. Don't forget about domestic cats and dogs leave tracks too!

To record what you see, keep a track photo album or sketch book. For your records, keep a field book of information on the locations, habitat, condition of the soil or snow, and any other note-worthy field observations

Making plaster casts is a good way to build a track study set. Plaster of Paris powder can be stored and toted in small containers with tight-fitting lids. In the field, mix it with water or snow. Make a batter that pours easily yet is a bit sluggish. Spraying snow tracks with aerosol wax or a fine water mist can seal it with a thin layer to prevent the plaster from pouring through fine holes in the track. In all seasons, fill the entire track, pouring the piaster at close range to avoid disruption. To remove the cast, simply loosen the hardened plaster with a knife. You may want to rinse the cast lightly with water to wash away any soil.

If you think you're onto something rare, please report the unusual observation to your local wildlife manager. If possible, send along a plaster cast, photograph or sketch. Consult field guides on mammals for additional tracks and information about mammals.

## *Tracking Tips*

- ***Study the size, shape and total pattern of the toe and foot pads.***
- ***Look at more than one track and compare before making an identification. Try to examine both front and hind foot tracks.***
- ***Measure the stride between tracks.***
- ***Look for tail or belly drag marks.***
- ***Check for toenail marks. (Dog tracks are more apt to show toenails than cat tracks. Cats have retractable claws, especially on uneven terrain, cats use their claws for balance).***
- ***Keep an eye out for other signs such as scat (feces), urination marks, hairs, and clipping or gnawing marks on nearby vegetation.***
- ***Watch for behavioral clues***
- ***Mammals aren't the only track-makers. Especially near pond edges, watch for tracks of birds, turtles, snakes and even insects.***

## *What are Furbearers?*

The simplest definition of furbearers is that they are animals whose fur combines a dense undercoat or hair called "underfur", and longer "guard hairs" on top during the winter. The fur is attractive, warm and weatherproof.

All furbearers are mammals, but not all mammals are furbearers. This brochure describes 16 furbearer species found in Wisconsin. Some are mammals that have an annual trapping and/or hunting season. Others are protected species. Big game mammals, such as bear, elk, deer, mountain lion, and moose are NOT described here, even though their fur is useful These large animals are hunted primarily for meat, not fur.

For the purpose of this brochure, we grouped furbearer based where their tracks are more likely to be found: semi-aquatic and upland.

### *Semi-aquatic Furbearers:*

Beaver
Muskrat
Mink
River Otter

***Tracks and sign of these mammals are often found in wetland areas or near a water source...lakes, ponds, and streams.***

### *Upland Furbearers:*

Opossum
Striped Skunk
Raccoon
Badger
Long-tailed weasel
Short-tailed weasel
Marten
Fisher
Bobcat
Canada Lynx
Red and Gray Fox
Coyote
Gray Wolf

***Tracks and sign of these mammals are often found in upland areas as well as near the waters edge.***

## *Managing Furbearers*

An area of land can support only a certain number of each kind of animal. The maximum number it can support all year round is called the "carrying capacity." The carrying capacity reaches a low point in late winter, when food is the most scarce. In the long run, the only way to increase wildlife is to increase or improve the habitat available for it.

Most species produce a "surplus" population each year. That is, they have more young than the habitat can support year round. The surplus population is killed by predators, by disease, or by starvation. Surplus wildlife cannot be saved from year to year, like adding to a bank.

Those species currently classified as endangered cannot legally be hunted or trapped. This classification works to recover their population levels.

Regulated hunting and trapping provides for the removal of some of the surplus for human benefit and utilization. Harvesting furbearers does not change the total number of animals that will survive throughout the year. Destruction, loss and change in habitat are the prime influence on animal populations and abundance of each species, not man's use of these renewable resources. Keeping track of the animals that are harvested by man also helps biologists monitor the size and health of the animal population.

That is why the state regulates hunting and trapping. Before you do any hunting or trapping, check the state regulations for that species.

## BEAVER

Beaver are best known for their lodges and dams. An interest in beaver and the fur trade settled North America in the 1600's. While beaver activity provides excellent wetland habitat and benefits many animals, it can also damage timber and agricultural lands.


Front
3"


Hind
6 1/2"

## MUSKRAT

Muskrat are like beaver in many ways. They live in dens along streams, or build lodges in wetlands. They are rodents, so their incisors grow constantly. They eat mostly plants (such as cattail and bulrush), but occasionally items such as crustaceans, fish and frogs.


Front
1 1/2"


Hind
3"

## MINK

Mink have a rich, brown coat with just a white spot or two under the chin. Females are about half as large as males. Mink prefer habitat that includes water, where prey like small fish, crawfish, frogs, rodents, and muskrats are available


Front
~1"


Hind
1 3/4"

## RIVER OTTER

Otter are the largest member of the weasel family. Prime habitat is a clean stream or river abundant with trout and other fish, as well as areas inhabited by beaver. Their torpedo shaped bodies work well for sliding on snow and ice. They often slide over the snow when they travel in winter.


Front
2 1/2 - 3"


Hind