

Tracking is Easy!

As you wander the dusty trails, notice the intricate patterns of animal tracks on the ground.



A variety of animals can be found at Big Basin. Some are fairly common, such as squirrely, while others (such as mountain lions) are rarely seen. Use this handout to identify some of the tracks you're likely to find in the forest. Even if you don't see the animal itself, you will still be able to identify it from its tracks.

Tracking *Tips & Tricks*

Go out in the early morning before many hikers have been on the trails. The more people that have been ahead of you, the more likely it is that the tracks have been trampled.

Keep the track between you and the sun so that the shadows stand out.

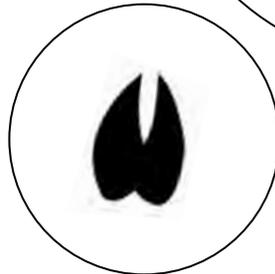
Look near water, since mud holds detailed tracks for a long time. Fine dust on trails is also likely to preserve tracks.



Tracks are everywhere, not just in the forest. When you go home, look for tracks in your own neighborhood. You may be amazed at the many animals who share urban and suburban areas with us.



Whose tracks are these?
Look inside to find out!



Big Basin Redwoods State Park



Animal Tracks of the Big Basin Redwood Forest Habitat

www.parks.ca.gov/bigbasin
831-338-8883
21600 Big Basin Way
Boulder Creek, CA 95006

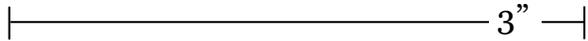


Have you seen evidence of creatures here in the forest yet? Keep looking!

Feline Tracks: Mountain Lions and Bobcats

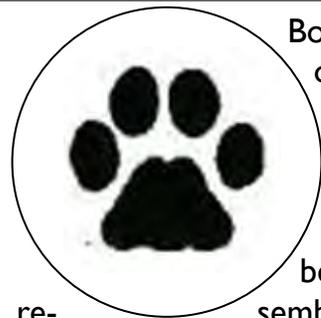
Mountain Lion

These big cats are the largest predators found in the park. Their tracks can be three inches (7.5 cm) across. The line below represents 3”:



Compare that with bobcat tracks, below, which are usually less than two inches across, and then with those of domestic cats at a little over an inch!

Bobcat



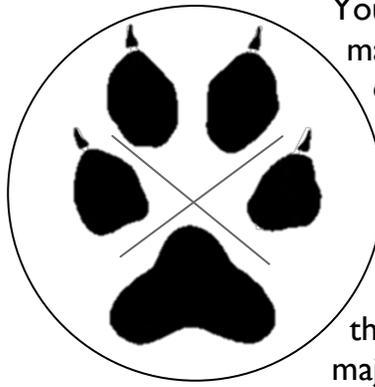
Bobcats are the smaller of the two wild cats here at Big Basin. They are bigger than a house cat, though, and they leave behind tracks that

resemble a domestic cat's in shape. Note that mountain lion and bobcat tracks, unlike tracks from animals in the dog family, do not often show claw marks because cats have retractable claws that they keep sheathed if they are not hunting or climbing.

Tracks shown are **not** to scale or true to size.

Canine Tracks: Coyotes, Foxes, and domestic dogs

Large Dog

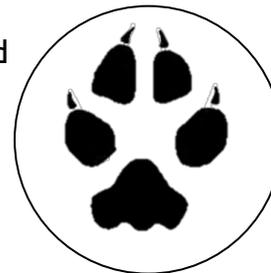


You are likely to see many domesticated dog tracks here in the park, and telling their tracks apart from those of their cousins can be tricky. First though, note the major differences

between canine (dog) tracks and feline (cat) tracks to the left. First, draw an imaginary “X” between the outer toes and the front of the heel pad. Felines lack this. Second, note that the claws are visible on canine tracks.

Coyote

Coyote tracks are much narrower and oval-shaped than dog tracks. The outer toes are also larger than the inner toes, which is opposite on a dog.



Gray Fox



Though similar in size to tracks made by house cats, fox tracks are clearly dog tracks because of the “X” you can imagine in the middle, as well as the visible claw marks.

Squirrels



Gray squirrels are common in the campgrounds. You'll see them harvesting acorns, which they store in the ground. Forgotten acorns often sprout into new trees.

Opossum

Opossum tracks are distinctive and easy to ID. They have opposable thumbs on the rear feet, and their front paws have widespread fingers.



Striped Skunk



Notice the long claws on the front foot track. The back tracks don't always show the heel mark, but when they do, they look like baby feet.

Raccoon

Raccoon tracks resemble human hands and feet. Five long fingers and toes give these intelligent creatures the ability to turn doorknobs and unhook latches. Find their tracks near water sources.



Black-tailed Deer

Deer have two cloven toes, with the pointed end showing the direction that they were traveling.

