

Winter Ecology Tracking Booklet

Most common found tracks in Kananaskis Country



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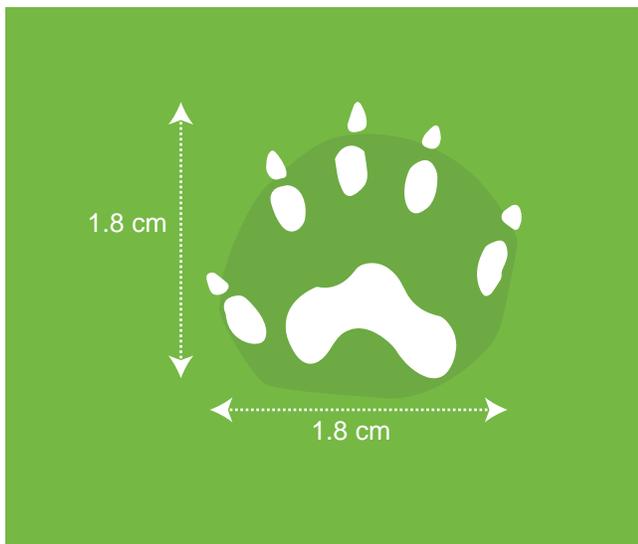
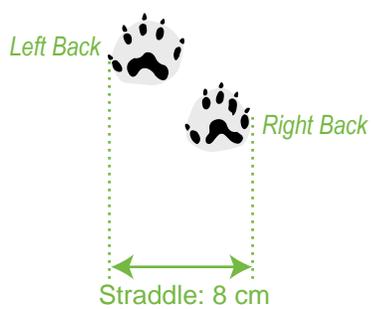
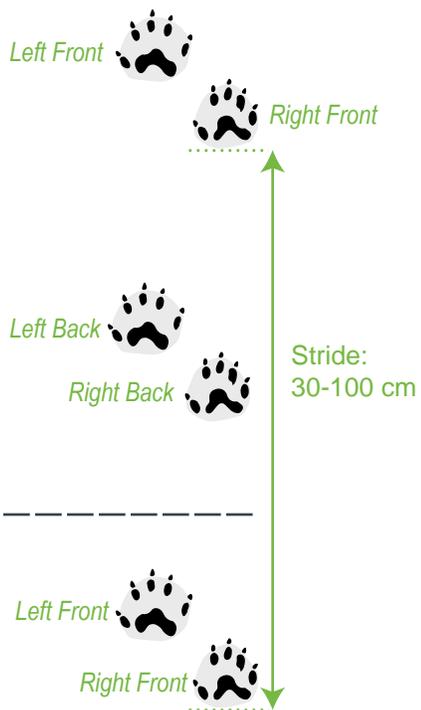
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	Weasel	Pine Marten	Coyote	Wolf	Lynx	Deer Mouse
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	Meadow Vole	Red Squirrel	Snowshoe Hare	Deer	Moose	Grouse
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	Not to scale					

WEASEL (short-tailed)



WEASEL (short-tailed)



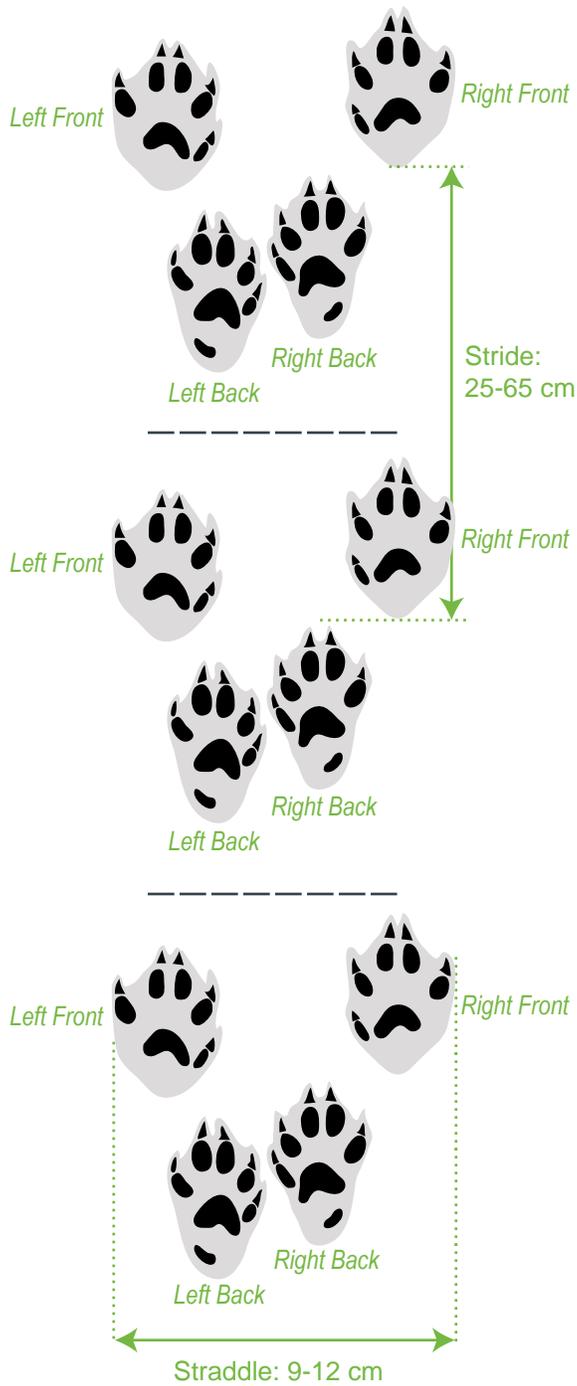
“True” weasels (least, short-tailed, long-tailed) will grow new coats with the changing seasons to better camouflage with their surroundings. However the black tip on their tail is the only part that will not change colour.



Members of the weasel family will often display their scat and may be full of hair from prey.

To stay warm in winter, they need to eat their body weight (worth of food) in one day! Which is mostly mice and voles.

PINE MARTEN



PINE MARTEN

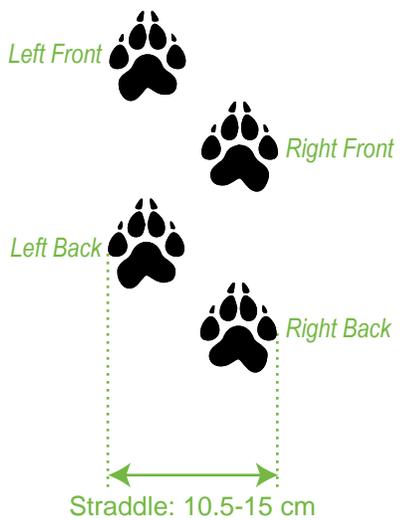
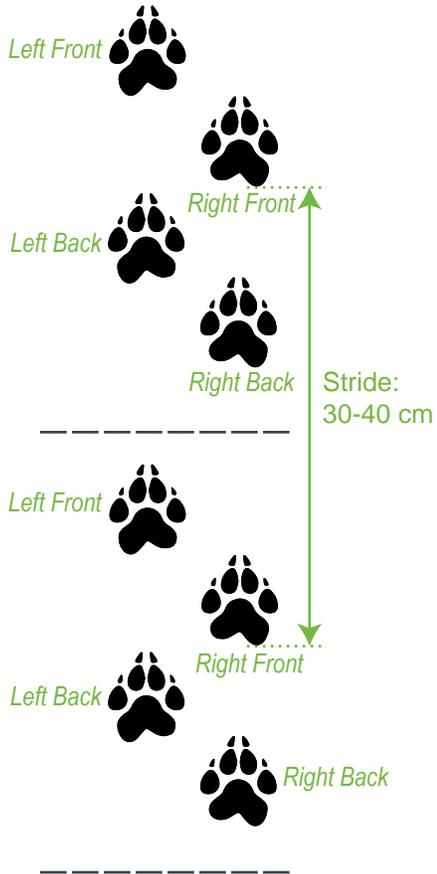


The Pine Marten is part of the Weasel Family. Their favourite food is the Red Squirrel. Pine Martens are exceptional tree climbers. They can turn their wrists 180 degrees so they can climb down a tree head first.



Members of the weasel family will often display their scat on rocks and on trails.

COYOTE



COYOTE



Coyotes can be seen diving head-first into the snow to hunt mice.



Coyotes have thicker tails and larger ears—proportionate to their bodies—than wolves.

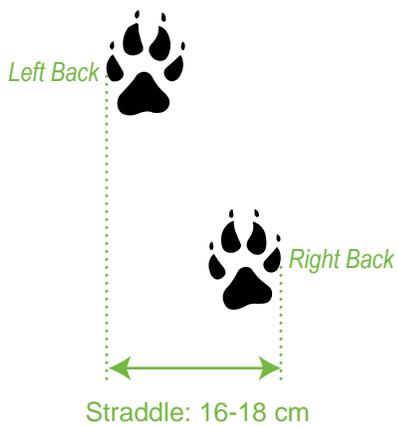
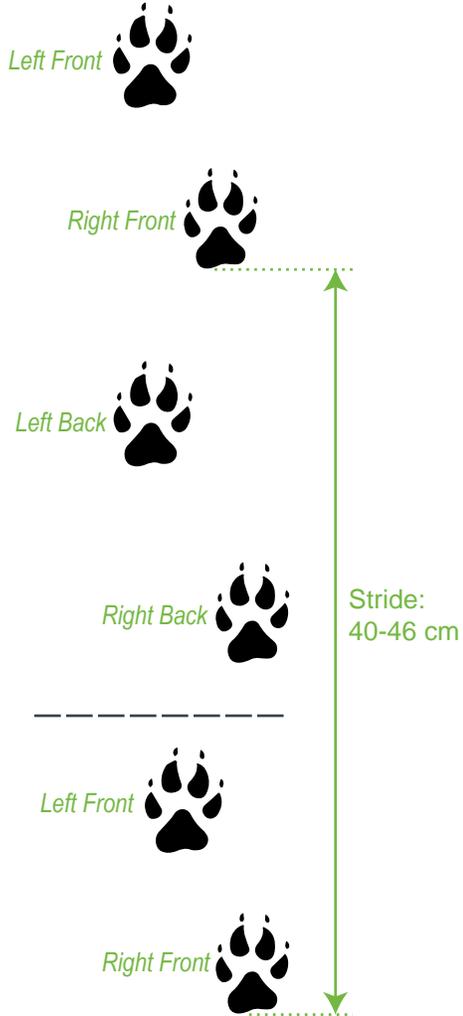


Coyote scat is significantly smaller than wolf. Scat will be full of hair from their prey as wild dogs will eat the entire animal—hair, meat and bones.
Scat = 2.5 cm in diameter



Coyote tracks can be difficult to differentiate from domestic dog tracks.

WOLF



WOLF



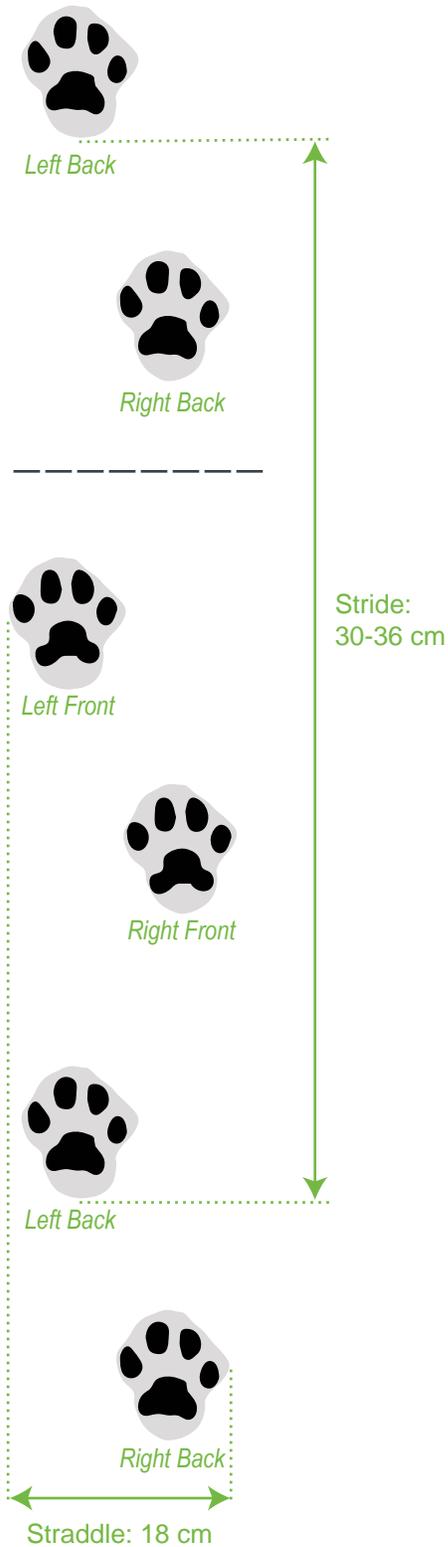
Compared to coyotes, wolves are much larger and their ears and tails don't look as large because they are more proportionate to their body. Unlike coyotes, wolves can be a variety of colours.



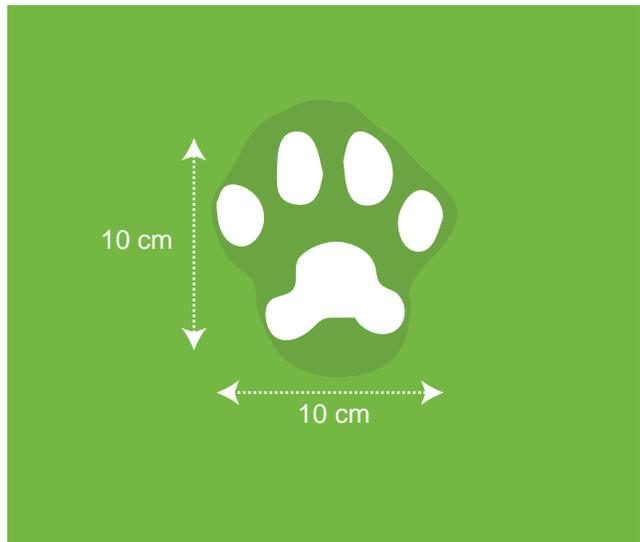
Wolf scat is slightly larger than a coyote's. Wild dog scat is usually full of hair, and can be white from the undigested bone of their prey. Cat scat won't be white as they don't eat bone.
Scat = 2.5 cm in diameter

Ideally, wolves hunt in packs. In winter, they prefer to hunt large game: elk, deer & moose. A wolf can eat 20 lbs of meat in one sitting! This is a kill sight.

LYNX



You will NOT see claw marks on a cat track, as you do with dogs, as they have protractile claws.



LYNX

Lynx can be identified by their ear tufts, large feet and short tail with a black tip. They are the second largest of the three wild cats in Kananaskis Country. Cougars are the largest and bobcats are the smallest.

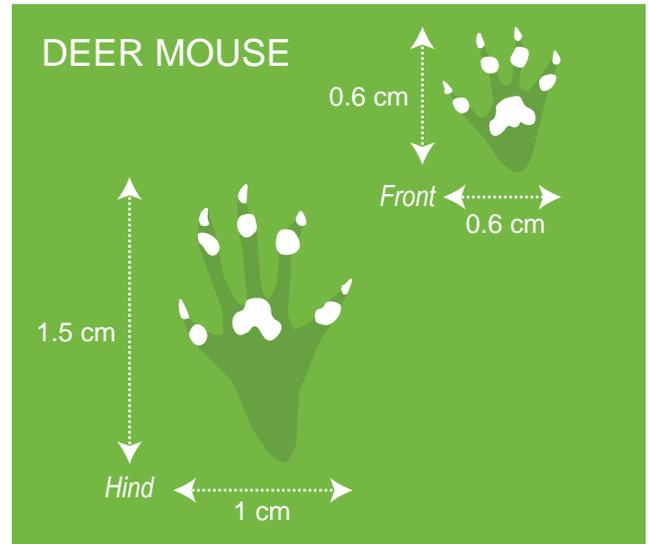


Scat deposited in a prepared scrape—a shallow hole—is a definite sign that it belongs to a feline. There is also no white—calcium from bone—in the scat as they do not eat bones like dogs.
Scat = 2 cm in diameter

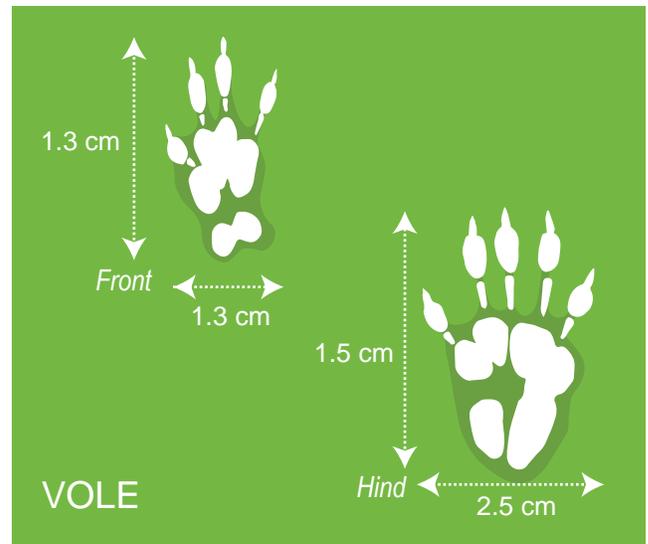


80% of a lynx's diet is snowshoe hare. When hare populations are at their highest a lynx can eat up to 200 hare in one year!

DEER MOUSE/VOLE



Often you will see a mark in the snow from a deer mouse dragging their long tail.
Straddle: 3.5-5 cm
Stride: 5-13 cm



A vole has a shorter tail than a mouse, so the drag mark from the tail isn't as prominent.
Straddle: 3 cm
Stride: 1.3-4 cm

DEER MOUSE/VOLE



Deer mice are characterized by their large ears, and reddish-brown back and white belly. The deer mouse was the model for Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse!

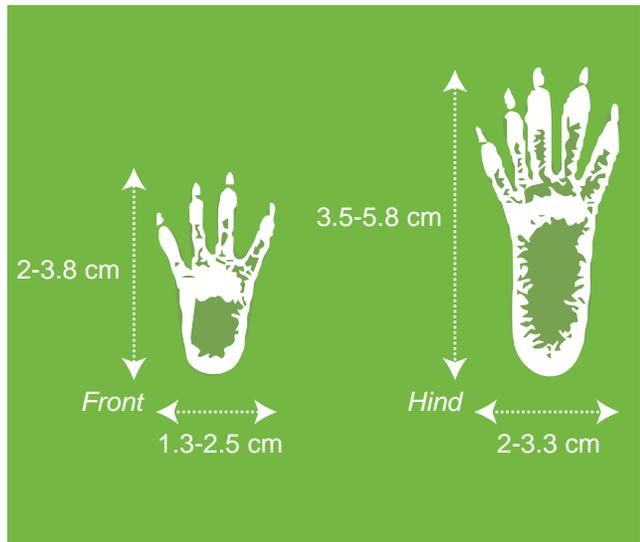
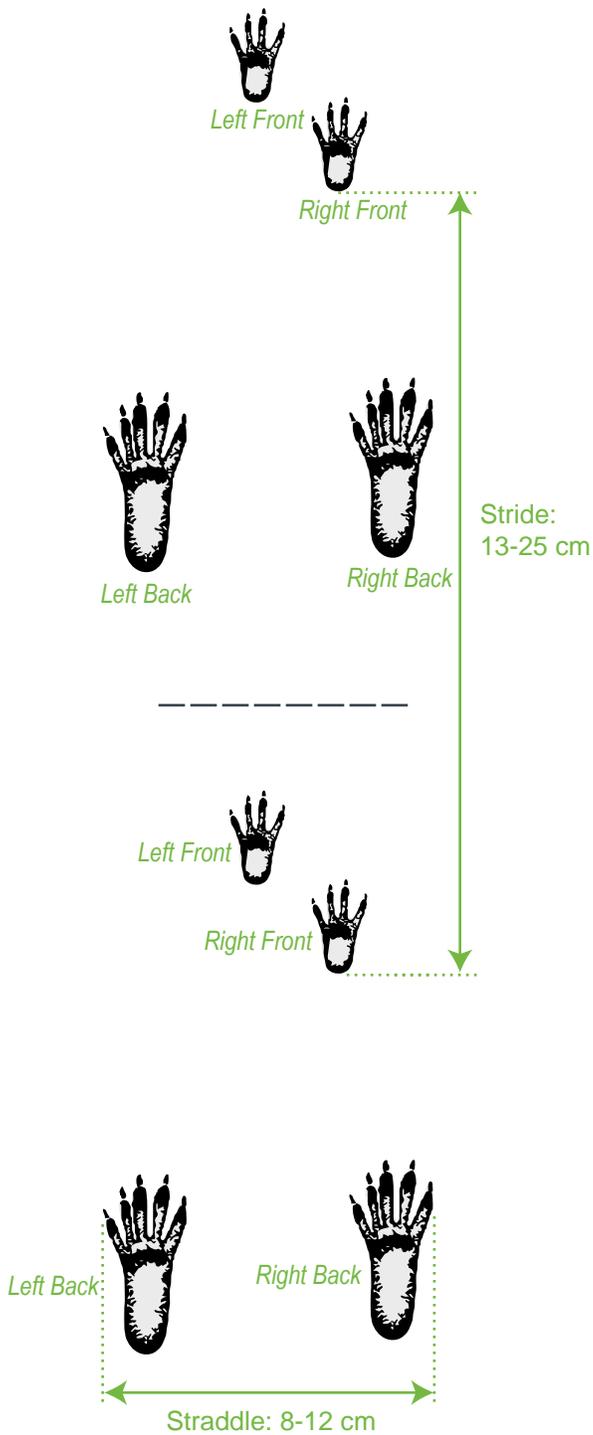


Voles have smaller eyes and ears compared to the deer mouse. They also have much shorter tails in comparison.



When the snow melts, you can see the tunnels that the mice have made in the snow and the ground.

RED SQUIRREL



RED SQUIRREL



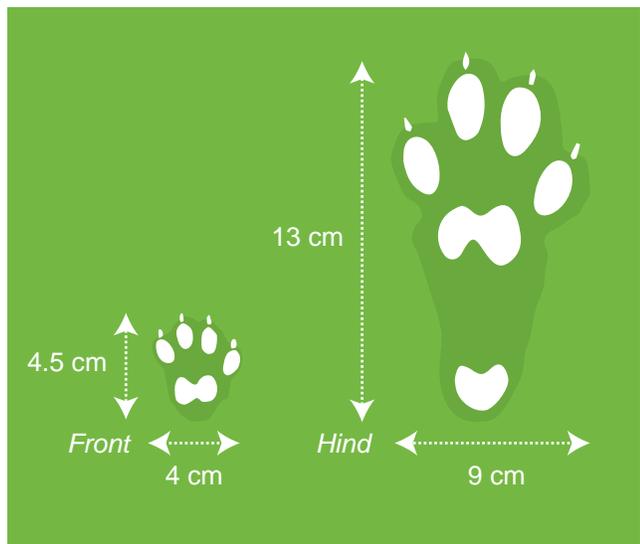
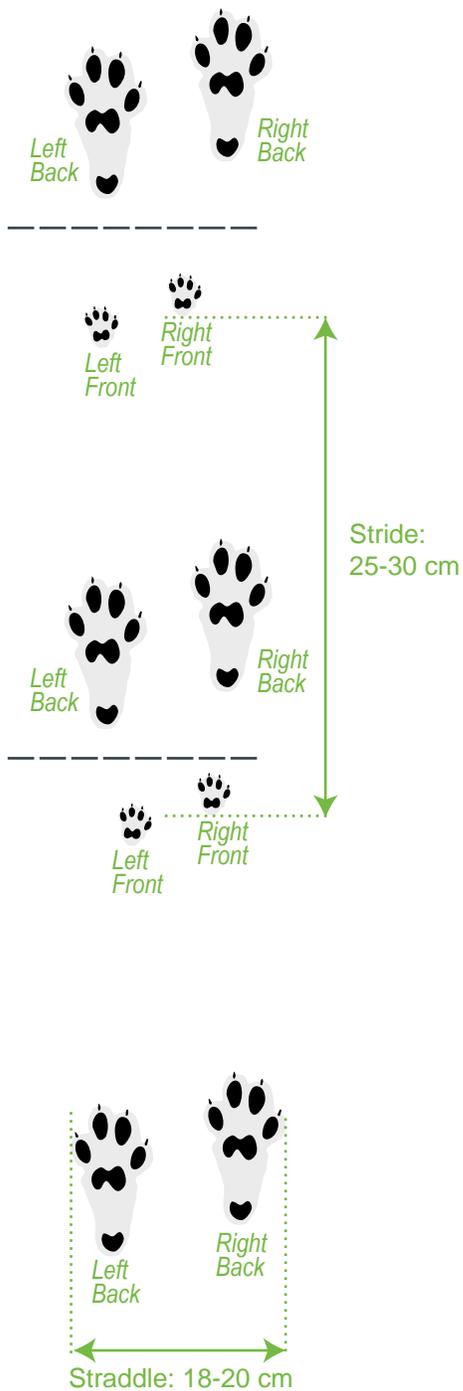
Squirrels can be heard chattering to protect their territory and food caches.



Squirrels will collect up to 15,000 cones a year to get ready for winter. They collect spruce, fir and pine cones. Squirrels make large piles of left-over cone scales called middens. A large midden can reach up to 5 metres wide and 1 meter deep.

During cold temperatures in the winter, squirrels will live in their middens and survive on their collected food.

SNOWSHOE HARE



SNOWSHOE HARE



Snowshoe hare will grow a new coat in the summer and winter for camouflage.

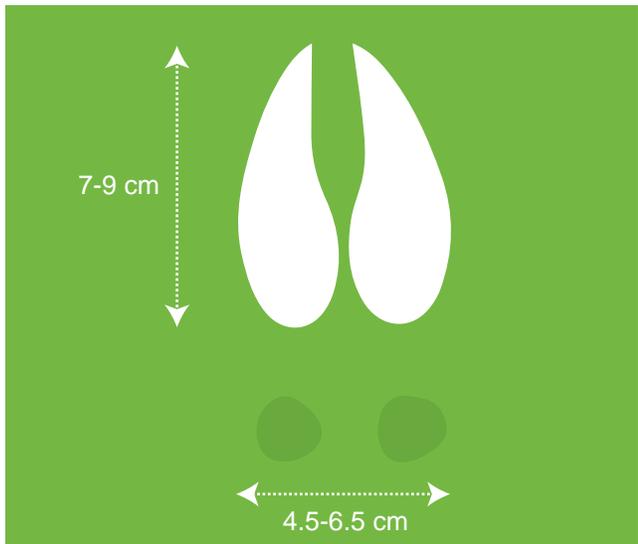
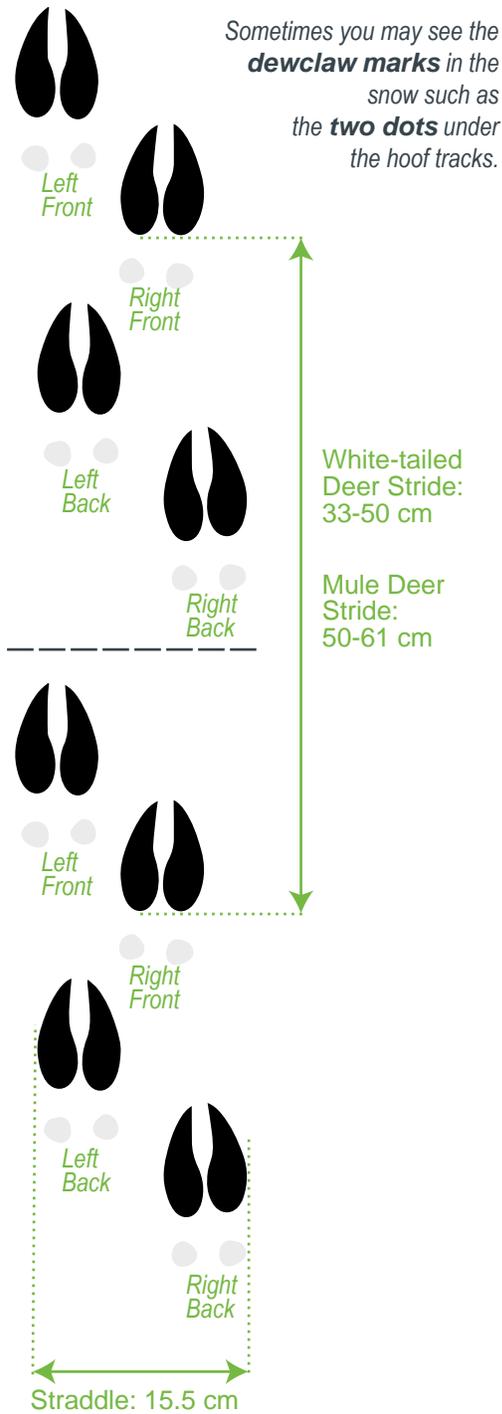


A hare's scat—like any herbivore—are in pellets that are round. Hares will also eat their scat to get all possible nutrients from their food.



A snowshoe hare's primary predator is the lynx. Every ten years the population of hares will peak, leaving an abundance of food for the lynx.

WHITE-TAILED DEER & MULE DEER



WHITE-TAILED DEER & MULE DEER



White-tailed deer have a brown rump, with white underneath the tail. When tail is up, the white under-part looks like a little white flag.



Mule deer have a white rump with a black tip on the end of their tail.



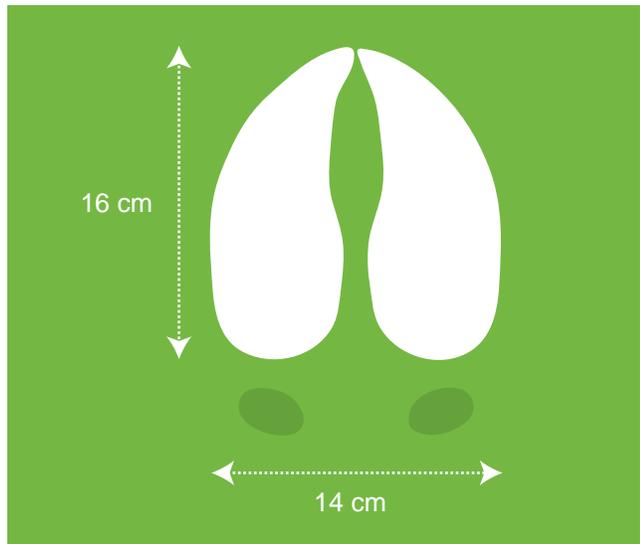
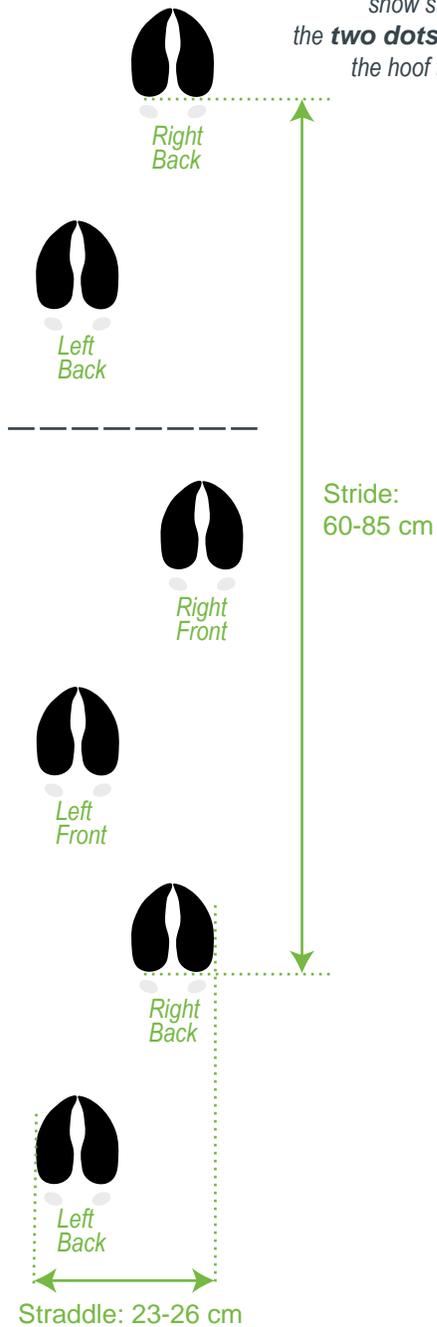
Members of the deer family will tear the tips off branches for food. This is called a **browse**.



All herbivore scat will be grouped into pellets. Deer scat is the size of chocolate covered peanuts!

MOOSE

Sometimes you may see the **dewclaw marks** in the snow such as the **two dots** under the hoof tracks.



MOOSE



Sometimes you can see a depression in the snow where a moose may have made their bed. This is called a **bedding**.

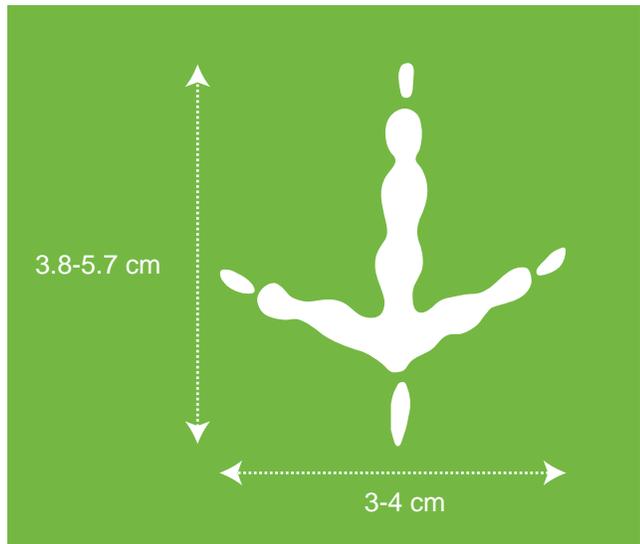
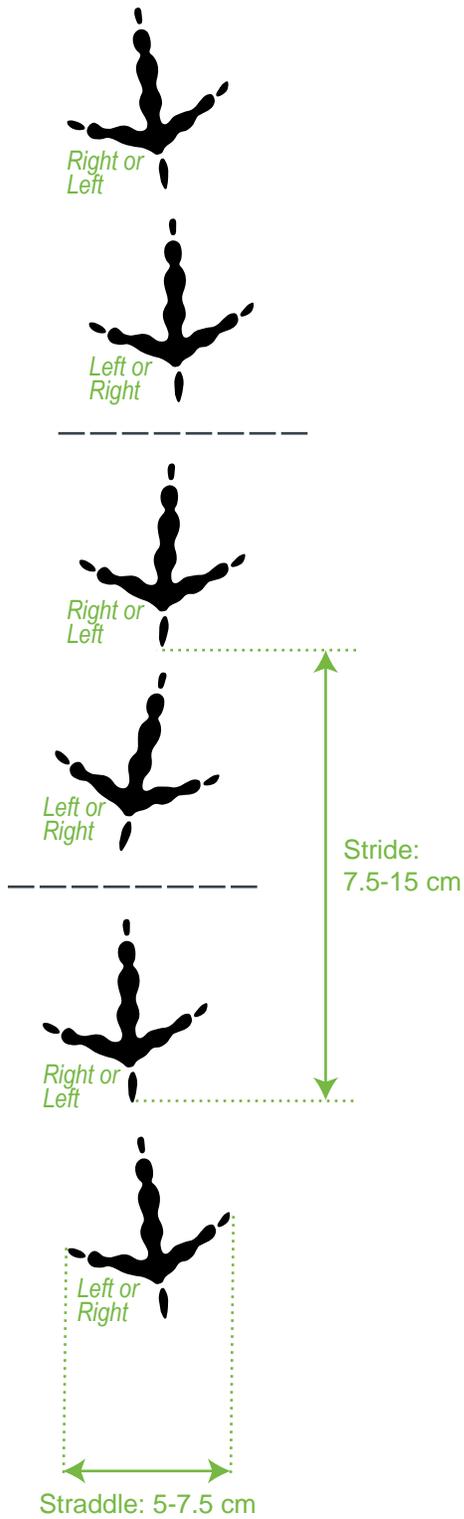


Members of the deer family—moose, elk and deer—get their nutrients in the winter from branches of willows. The gnawed tip of a branch is called a **browse**. The height of the browse may help determine what animal made it.



Moose scat is easy to identify. It looks just like chocolate covered almonds!

GROUSE



GROUSE



Ruffed grouse



Spruce grouse



Scat looks like “*All Bran*” cereal.



To insulate from the cold, grouse will dive into the snow to make warm tunnels for themselves.