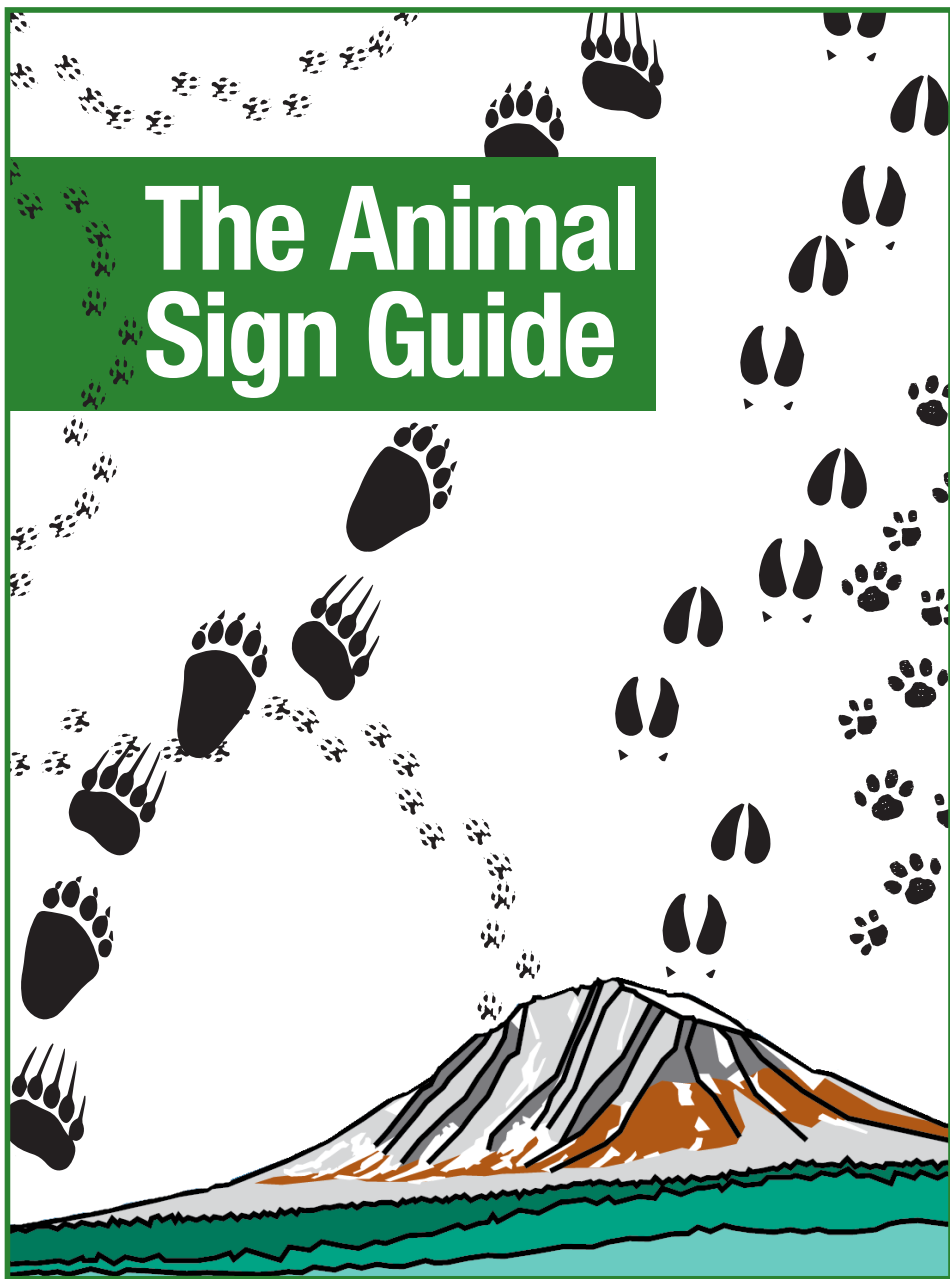




Nááts'ihch'oh
National Park Reserve

The Animal Sign Guide



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada

Caribou

Tracks:

- Curving, “half-moon” hooves, with angled dew claw behind
- Found in a variety of habitats, from the alpine tundra to lush valley bottoms



epé

Moose

Tracks:

- Pointed tips, rounded dew claw
- Long, nearly-parallel hooves
- Often found in moist, boggy areas or close by



jts'é



Caribou scat



Moose scat



Fur

Caribou shed their winter coats (wiry guard hairs and softer fur) in summertime.

Scat

Caribou scat has jelly bean-sized pellets that are oval-shaped and dimpled. In summertime, when caribou eat leafy greens, these pellets clump together, but their winter diet of lichens keeps pellets separate. Moose feces are larger – roughly the size of chocolate-covered almonds. They look like compacted sawdust in spring and fall, when moose feed on woody stems. But a diet of leafy vegetation in the summer makes pellets dark and smooth.

Antlers and Rubs

Keep an eye out for peeled, roughed-up bark on willows and other woody plants. Male moose rub vegetation with their antlers in shows of strength during rutting (mating) season. You may also come upon old, discarded antlers from either species. Caribou are the only ungulate species in which both sexes grow antlers; males shed theirs after the autumn rut, while breeding females lose them after calving in the spring. Though it's tempting to take antlers as a souvenir, please leave them in the park – they're a source of nutrients for porcupines and other rodents.

Black Bear

Tracks:

- Curved upper edge of palm pad and alignment of digits
- Relatively short claws



sah dezene

Grizzly Bear

Tracks:

- Flatter upper edge of palm pad and alignment of digits
- Long, thick claws



sahcho



Scat

Scat from both species looks similar, containing seeds, berries, and insects. Feeding on meat, however, makes for black, smelly scat. Grizzly feces are more likely to contain roots.

Digs

With strong arm muscles (their characteristic shoulder 'hump') and sharp claws, grizzlies can dig for roots, insects, and burrowing rodents. Their dig sites feature overturned soil and moss, scratch marks, and other sign – like scat and tracks.

Rubs

When bears stop to scratch on a tree, they leave some fur behind. Grizzlies have wavy, brown strands, while black bears have straighter hairs which range from blonde to black in colour. Favourite rub trees have smoothed bark on one side.

Culture note

Showing proper respect for *sahcho* is very important. The Sahtu Dene and Métis have long recognized the power of this animal. Elders speak about "the big guys" indirectly to avoid drawing their attention.



Wolf



Tracks:

- Canine shape: symmetrical, with lobed palm pad, but larger than those from most domestic dogs
- Outer digital pads splay outward
- Claws may be visible if tracks are preserved in mud, clay, silt or snow



díga

Scat

Wolf scat looks ropey and tapers at one end. It often contains bone shards and lots of fur, so it breaks down slowly over many months.

Howls

At night, listen for the unmistakable, mournful howling of wolf packs. Wolves are nocturnal and make these sounds to communicate, sending warnings or signals to others.

A well defined wolf track.



Lynx



Tracks:

- Distinctly rounded track outline and digital pads
- Digital pads large relative to palm pad
- Bottom edge may be softened by dragging fur, especially in snow or sand
- No claw marks visible



nóða

Scat

Lynx, like domestic cats, take care to bury or cover their feces, so their scat is hard to find. It is black and smelly.



OTHER CANIDS AND FELIDS



nogére

Wildlife cameras have recorded a small number of fox sightings in the past years, such as this photo on an alpine ridge. Foxes have smaller, more oval tracks than wolves, and they typically take meandering routes. Cougars may live in the park, which lies just outside of their known northern range, but no confirmed sightings have been made.

Wolverine



A ferocious but evasive species, wolverine are unlikely to be encountered by park visitors. Feeding on scavenged kills and small rodents makes their scat ropey and full of fur. It tapers at both ends.

Culture note

Wolverines are highly regarded by the Sahtu Dene and Métis for their quickness and cleverness. Respect is shown for wolverines by keeping away from carcasses and not speaking negatively about them.



nógha



nqfə

Pine Marten



These secretive hunters, preying on small rodents and birds, are solitary and rarely seen. They roam over large individual territories. Their meat-based diet lends scat a black colour, and it has a curling, coiled shape. If you hear a raspy “raah!” call that sounds like a hybrid of cat and bird calls, you may be listening to one of these elusive mustelids.

Porcupine

These slow-ambuling rodents live throughout the park. With an appetite for bark and wood, porcupines leave extensive chew marks on shrubs, trees, and wooden structures. Their scat appears relatively smooth, is green to brown in colour, and forms peanut-sized pellets. Tracks show their characteristic long digits, which help them climb trees. They often use trails made by other species for easier walking.



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Squirrels

Red and Arctic Ground

Sign from these little rodents includes rounded brown pellets that are similar to a TicTac® in size, mushrooms drying on tree branches, and hulled conifer seed cones. Listen for ground squirrels' high-pitched squeaks and the rapid-fire chirp of the red squirrel. But if you see sign of either species, keep careful watch over your snacks – they might try to help themselves while you're not looking!



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tsele

Beaver

Their amphibious lifestyle makes beavers a unique mammal within this guide. Although they're relatively shy, you will probably see sign from these busy, tree-chewing animals while in the park. Beavers have distinct tracks owing to webbing between their digits. Their scat is coarse and woody, resembling pellets of compacted sawdust. Visitors are most likely to encounter chewed logs, tree stumps, and beaver-built "structures". Beavers dwell in lodges, mounds of partly-submerged woody debris. They also block flowing water with dams to create ponds and wetlands.



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