

# Tracks and Trails of Mississippi Wildlife

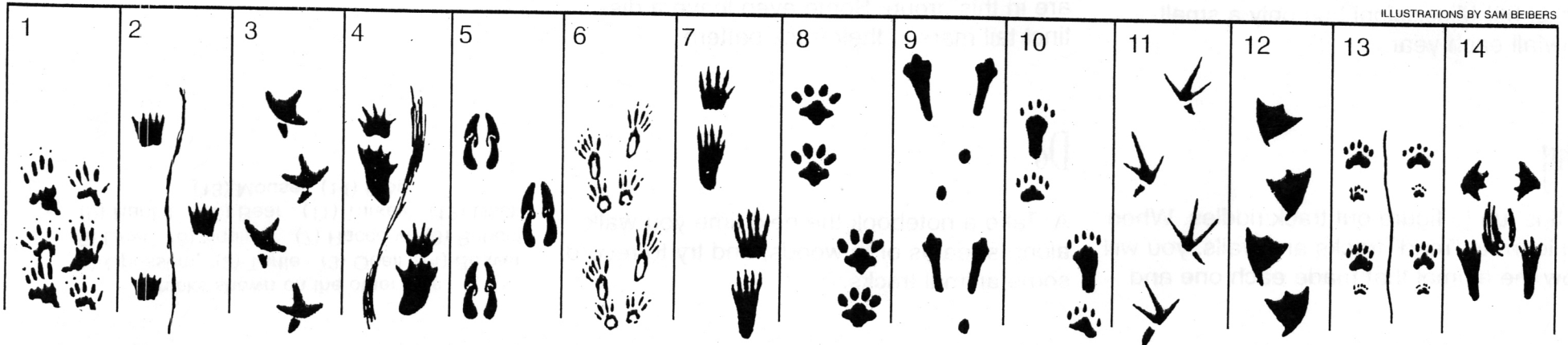
Here are the tracks of some of our most common wild animals. Can you name them? Use these two clues:

- All of the animals are pictured on this page.
- The blanks show how many letters are in each animal's name.

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 14. _____ |



ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAM BEIBERS



# Track Notes

The opposite side of this paper shows some of the most common wild animals in Mississippi. Their tracks are also shown, but in more detail than is usually seen in nature, for the purpose of identification.

## Where

How sharp is your eyesight when you walk in the woods or alongside a stream? In Mississippi you will often find wild animal tracks at the edge of rivers, lakes and ponds, or in the sand along the Gulf Coast. You may even see wet tracks on rocks. Following a rain you may be able to see tracks wherever there is exposed soil because mud tracks are usually most distinct. Snow also provides a good surface for tracks, but Mississippi has only a small snowfall each year.

## Why

It is fun to figure out track riddles. When you learn to “read” tracks and trails, you will know the animal that made each one and

you may be able to figure out what the animal was doing. Follow tracks toward the sun, if possible, because the shadows will make them appear deeper and sharper. Whether crawling, running, walking, or hopping, animals leave the story of their activities in the tracks made by their feet, claws, and tails.

## How

Shape, size, and track patterns are characteristics to watch for when one is learning to recognize animal tracks. Some animals, such as rabbits, squirrels, and mice travel by bounding; their hind footprints are in front of the marks made by their forefeet. Other animals walk on the toes of their feet. A cat or fox will put one foot before the other to form a single line. Many animals walk deliberately, touching heels and toes to the ground. The bear, raccoon, and opossum are in this group. Some even leave a distinct tail mark in their track pattern.

## Do

A. Take a notebook the next time you walk along streams or in woods, and try to record some animal tracks.

B. Just for fun, try to tell a story about wild animals by drawing their tracks. Show where they run and hide from enemies. Show their tracks stopping when the animals eat or rest under a shrub or tree.

C. Visit your library. There are many books to help you pursue this interesting hobby of tracks and trails.



Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, the Fannye A. Cook Memorial, a division of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. Jackson, Mississippi 6-2002

Tracks shown on the other side:  
(1) Opossum (2) Turtle (3) Quail (4) Beaver  
(5) Deer (6) Squirrel (7) Raccoon (8) Bobcat  
(9) Rabbit (10) Bear (11) Turkey (12) Duck  
(13) Mouse (14) Frog