

# CAN YOU TRACK IT?

MAMMALS

Become a nature detective by learning  
the tracks and signs of ten  
different mammals!

by Maggie Felsch and Shannen Yauger



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**H**ave you ever noticed animal tracks in the mud or the snow? Do you know what animal left those tracks? Did you pause to consider where that animal was going, what it was doing, or where it lived? A tree with claw scratches, a tuft of fur, a paw print, or a dropped feather may be all you have to go by.

In this book, become a detective of mammal tracks and signs by searching for clues in the scene. See if you can figure out what animal left the tracks and signs, and then turn the page to see if you are right!

? What mammal makes a home here?

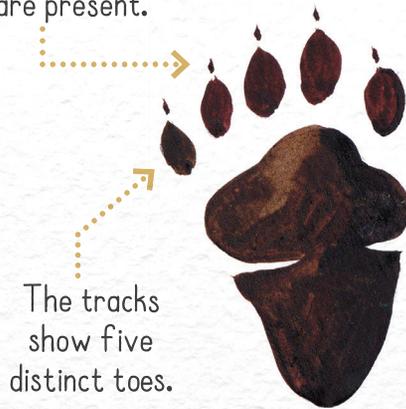


Do you see the circular holes? What do you think those are from?

What kind of mammal digs for its dinner?

## Track Facts:

Claw marks are present.



The tracks show five distinct toes.



15"

125"

What mammal sheds black and white fur?

The hollow log looks like a lovely place for this mammal to sleep.

Something ate berries and took bites out of the mushrooms.

This mammal loves to eat nuts, vegetables, and fruits.

## ? Did you guess that a skunk was here?

Characterized by their black-and-white fur, these slow-moving animals live along forest edges, woodlands, grasslands, and deserts. Skunks usually nest in burrows they build themselves or borrow abandoned burrows constructed by other animals, but they also live in hollow logs or even abandoned buildings.



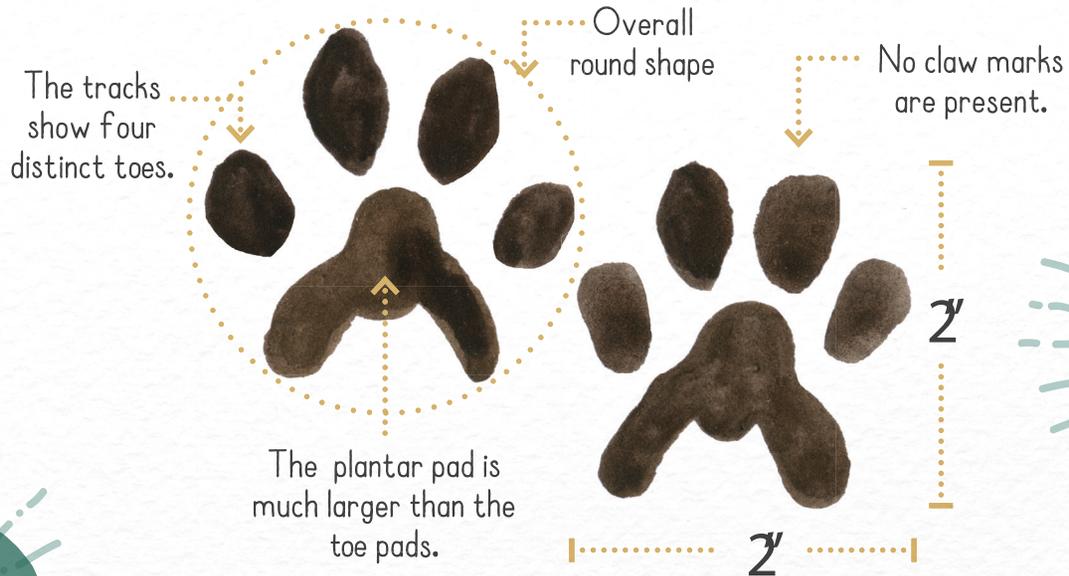
### Quick Facts

- The skunk family includes 10 species of skunks found in North and South America and 2 species of stink badgers found in Southeast Asia.
- The official name for the skunk family is Mephitidae, which means "stink."
- Although the most common fur color is black and white, some skunks are brown or gray, and a few are cream-colored.
- Some skunks are striped, and some are spotted or have swirl patterns on their fur.
- A group of skunks is called a [surfeit](#).

Can you see a tuft of tan fur on a branch?

This animal left scratch marks on the tree.

## Track Facts:



Look at the feathers! It looks like this mammal pounced on a bird.

This animal left tracks leading down to the stream where it went to get a drink of water.

The tracks eventually lead to this mammal's den.

## ! Look! It's a weasel!

Found across the world, except for Antarctica, Australia, and most oceanic islands, weasels live in a variety of habitats, from abandoned burrows to rock piles. They can live just about anywhere as long as the location is safe and has lots of options for food. These little mammals eat over 40 percent of their own body weight each day! You can find them in forests, grasslands, sand dunes, and sometimes even in your backyard.

These long, slim-bodied mammals have short legs and five small, clawed toes on each foot. Their necks are long, with small heads and eyes. This weasel has brown fur with paler fur on its belly, though some weasels will shed their brown fur and grow white fur in the winter to blend in with the snow. These weasels will often retain a bit of black, either on their faces or the tip of their tails.



When a weasel has white fur, it is called the “ermine” phase. Do you see how this works to camouflage the weasel in the snow?



? What mammal lives here?



## ! A beaver built its home in the stream!

Beavers work together to build dams made of wood and mud to stop up water in streams and rivers. These dams provide still, deep water to protect it against predators like wolves, coyotes, and bears. The water also provides a way for the beavers to float big logs and sticks to their homes for use as building material and food. Once the dams are completed and ponds formed, beavers build a **lodge**—their home—in the middle of the pond. Like the dams, the dome-shaped lodges are constructed with wood and mud. The entrance to the lodge is underwater, making it difficult or impossible for most other animals to enter. The den of the lodge, which is above water on dry ground, usually has room to house up to four adults and six to eight young beavers.



### Quick Facts

- Beavers are the second largest rodents in the world, after the capybara.
- They are mainly nocturnal, staying busy building dams and lodges throughout the night, though they can be seen out and about during the day.
- Beavers grow to around 3 feet long and can weigh 50 pounds or more.
- The beaver has poor eyesight but a good sense of hearing, smell, and touch.
- If a predator approaches, a beaver will use its broad, scaly tail to slap the water as an alarm signal to other beavers.
- Beavers are excellent swimmers with webbing between the toes of their large hind feet. They can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes.
- Beavers are herbivores, eating mainly the wood of a variety of trees.
- Beavers produce an oily substance in their fur called castoreum, which makes their coats waterproof.



Now that you have become a mammal tracks detective, take notice of tracks and signs where you live. Next time you go outside, look around you. There are living creatures leaving little clues (and sometimes big clues)! Enjoy discovering how animals get food, where they find shelter, when they sleep, what they do while they are awake, and what kinds of tracks and signs they leave.





*Marvelous*  
**MAMMALS**  
*from*  
**DOWN UNDER**  
*by*  
**Heather Horn**



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Follow me!  
Let me show  
you around this  
amazing place.

INDIAN  
OCEAN



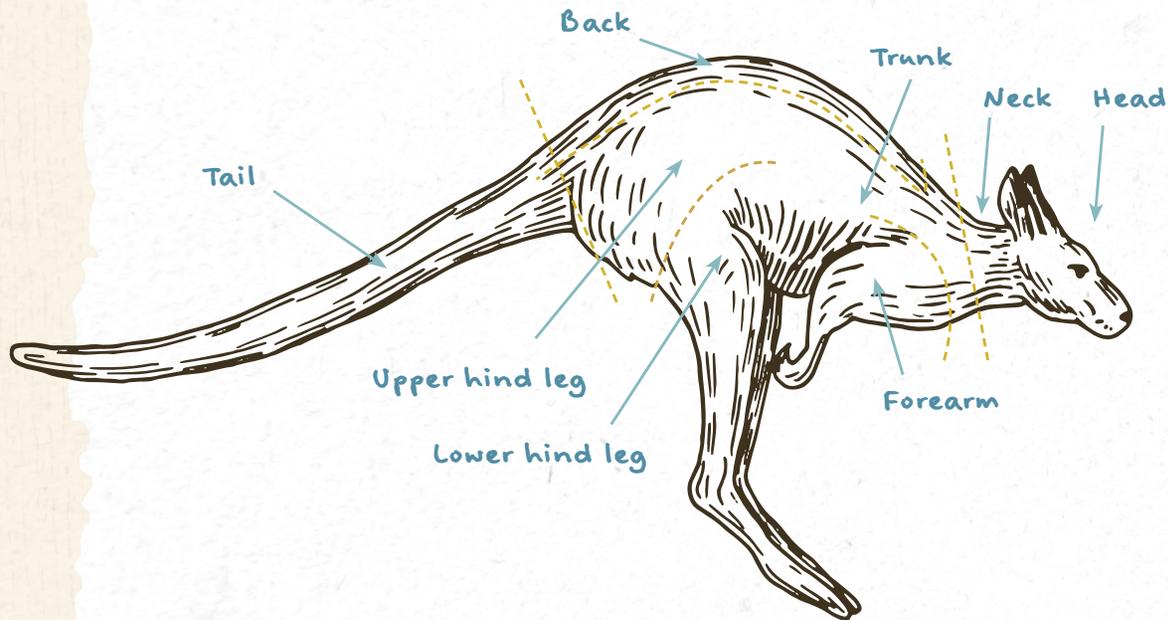
What do you  
find unique about  
this joey and his  
mother?



Do you see the little joey standing next to his protective mother? His father is called a boomer while his mother is called a flyer, though sometimes they are called jack and jill. His family lives with many other kangaroos in a group called a mob. It was not too long ago that he was a baby hiding in his mother's pouch. Kangaroos are mammals, meaning the mothers have live births and make milk to feed their babies. They belong to an order of mammals called "marsupials." A marsupial mother carries her babies inside her body for a much shorter time than other mammals, about a month, and gives birth to a very tiny baby, smaller than a kidney bean. The baby then makes his way into his mother's pouch, or marsupium, which is a pocket on the front of his mother's tummy. Inside, he stays tucked away safe and warm. Over the next few months, he will continue to grow until he is bigger and jumps out from the safety of his mother's pouch to see the world outside.



## Anatomy of a Kangaroo



Kangaroos do not walk like other animals. Their hind legs and feet move together when they jump. In fact, they cannot move their legs one at a time on land at all because their feet are so long, which is where their tails can help. Zoologists have studied how kangaroos use their tails, and they have learned that the tail is used to help push the kangaroo forward when jumping. In a way, it is like the kangaroo has a third leg.

# WALLAROOS AND WALLABIES

Kangaroos are the largest species of macropods. Macropod means “large foot,” but there are medium and small macropod species too. Wallaroos are the medium macropods, while wallabies are the small macropods. Like kangaroos, wallaroos and wallabies jump everywhere.

Wallaroos are not much smaller than kangaroos, but they are stockier and have a different stance. They stand with their shoulders back, elbows tucked, and wrists raised. Their noses are also moist and black. While kangaroos live in the open grassland, wallaroos are found in the more rocky, mountainous areas. Most wallaroos prefer to live alone rather than with a group. Their name comes from a mix of their smaller and larger relatives: the wallaby and the kangaroo.





At one year old, she will leave her mother, and her mother will have another baby. She will be on her own to find food and protect herself, making her home alone in the trees. Spending many hours sleeping, between 18-20 each day, koalas miss most of the daytime. They need this large amount of rest for their bodies to break down their diet of toxic eucalypt.



Another interesting fact about the opossum is that the mother's pouch opening is not placed upwards like other marsupials. It is more of a vertical opening toward the tail end of the mother, like another mammal, the Australian wombat, whose pouch opening faces her tail.



What do you think  
this Tasmanian  
devil will eat for  
his evening meal?



Look there, hidden near that hollow stump. A Tasmanian devil is curled up, taking an afternoon nap. Since he is nocturnal and awake all night, he is resting up for the evening. The warm sun is setting, and nightlife in the wild of Tasmania is just beginning. The Tasmanian devil stirs from his sleep and steps away from the log. Tasmanian devils don't really hunt. They search around for leftovers other predators have left behind, so he uses his keen sense of smell to find his next meal.

Mother platypuses hide away in burrows, so it took a long time for scientists to learn that they lay eggs. The mother carries the eggs inside her body for three weeks before laying her eggs. She then incubates them by lying on them to keep them warm for another week before they hatch. Once hatched, the baby platypuses crawl over to their mother to start drinking milk.



# ECHIDNA

There is only one other egg-laying mammal species living today, and that is the echidna. Much smaller than a platypus, he is nicknamed the spiny anteater.



With spines like a porcupine or hedgehog and a slender snout like an anteater, it is a fitting nickname, though the echidna is not related to either animal.



# GOD'S WONDERFUL DESIGN



1

Echidna



2

Kangaroo



3

Koala



4\*

Opossum

\*Found in North America



5

Platypus



6

Possum



7

Tasmanian devil



8

Wallaby



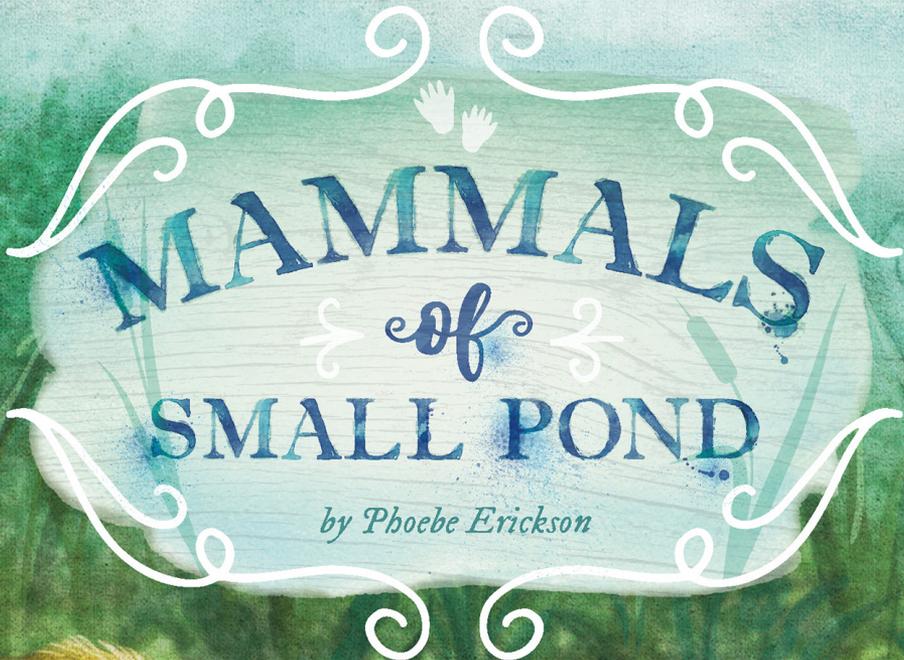
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Wallaroo



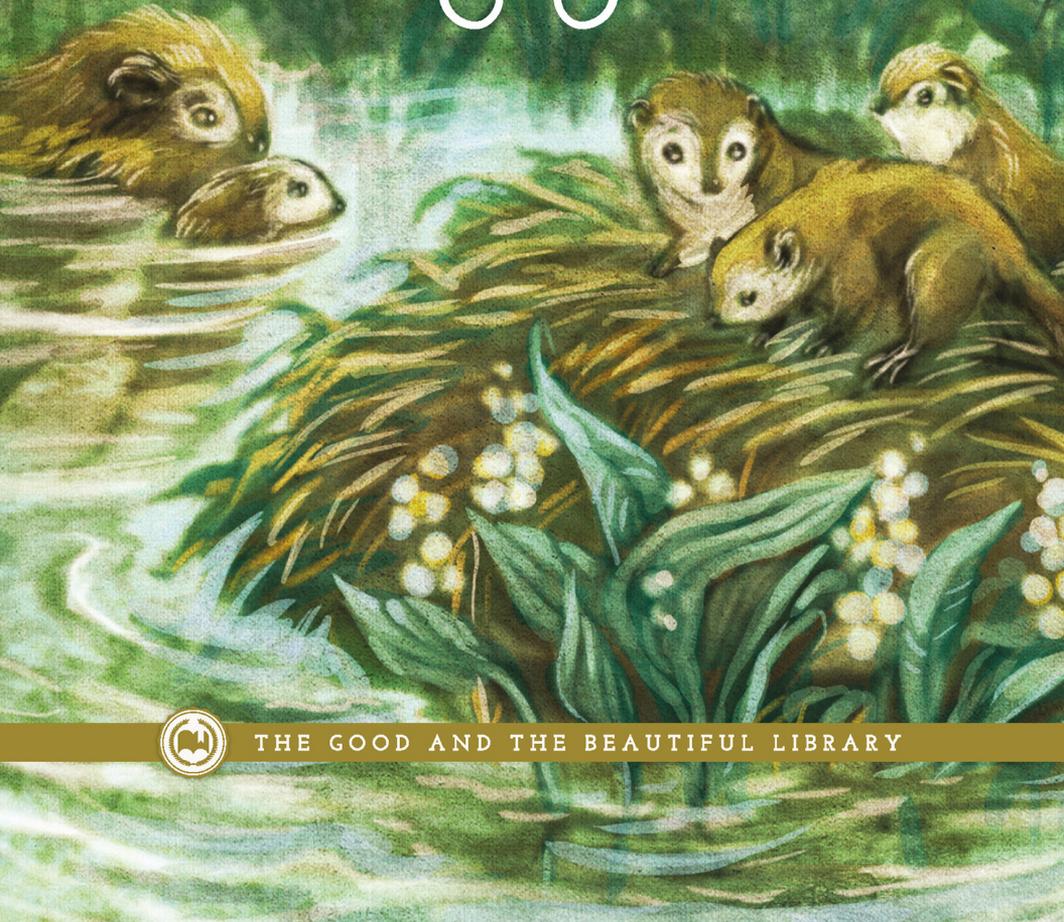
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Wombat

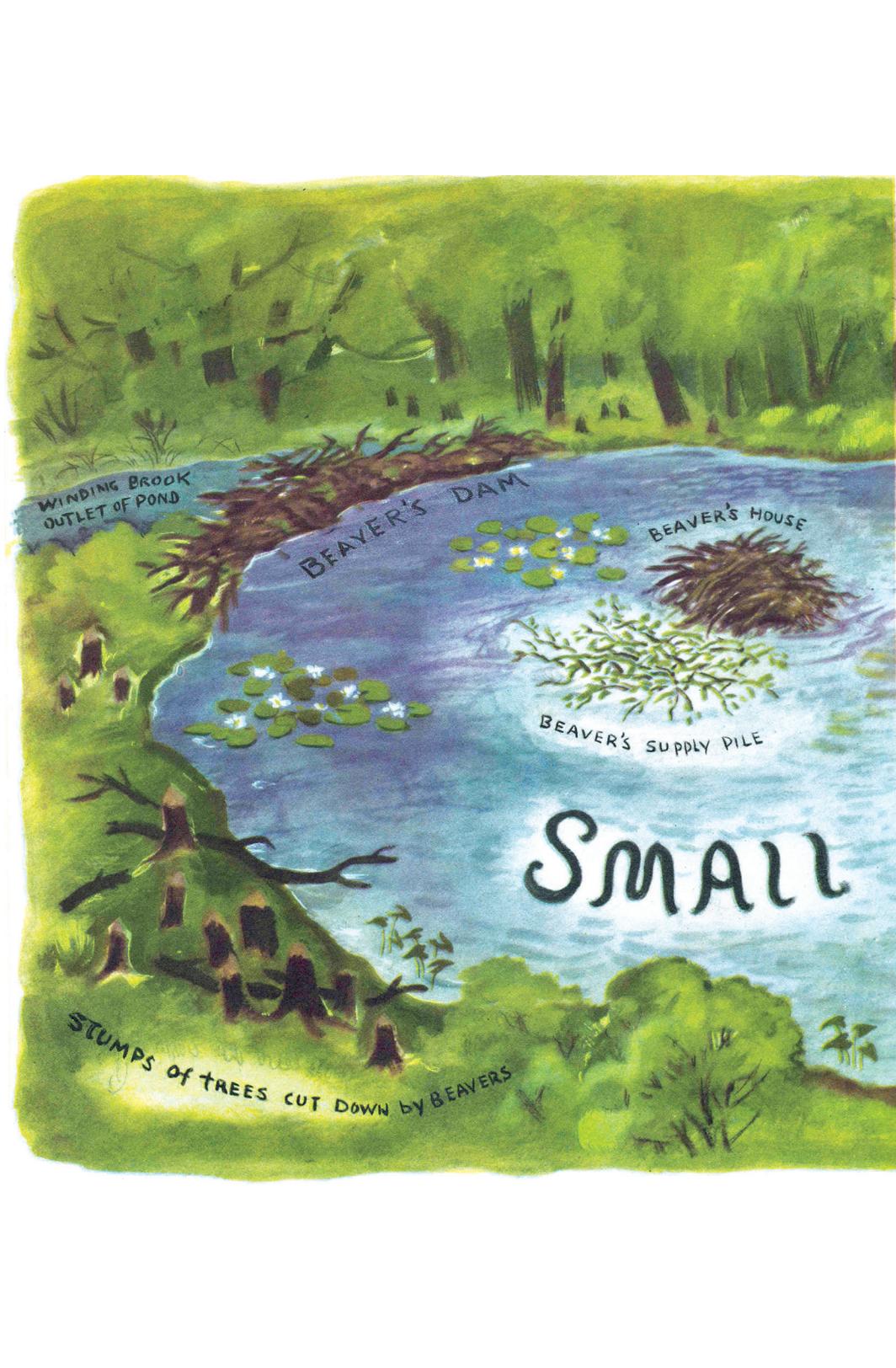


# MAMMALS of SMALL POND

*by Phoebe Erickson*



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WINDING BROOK  
OUTLET OF POND

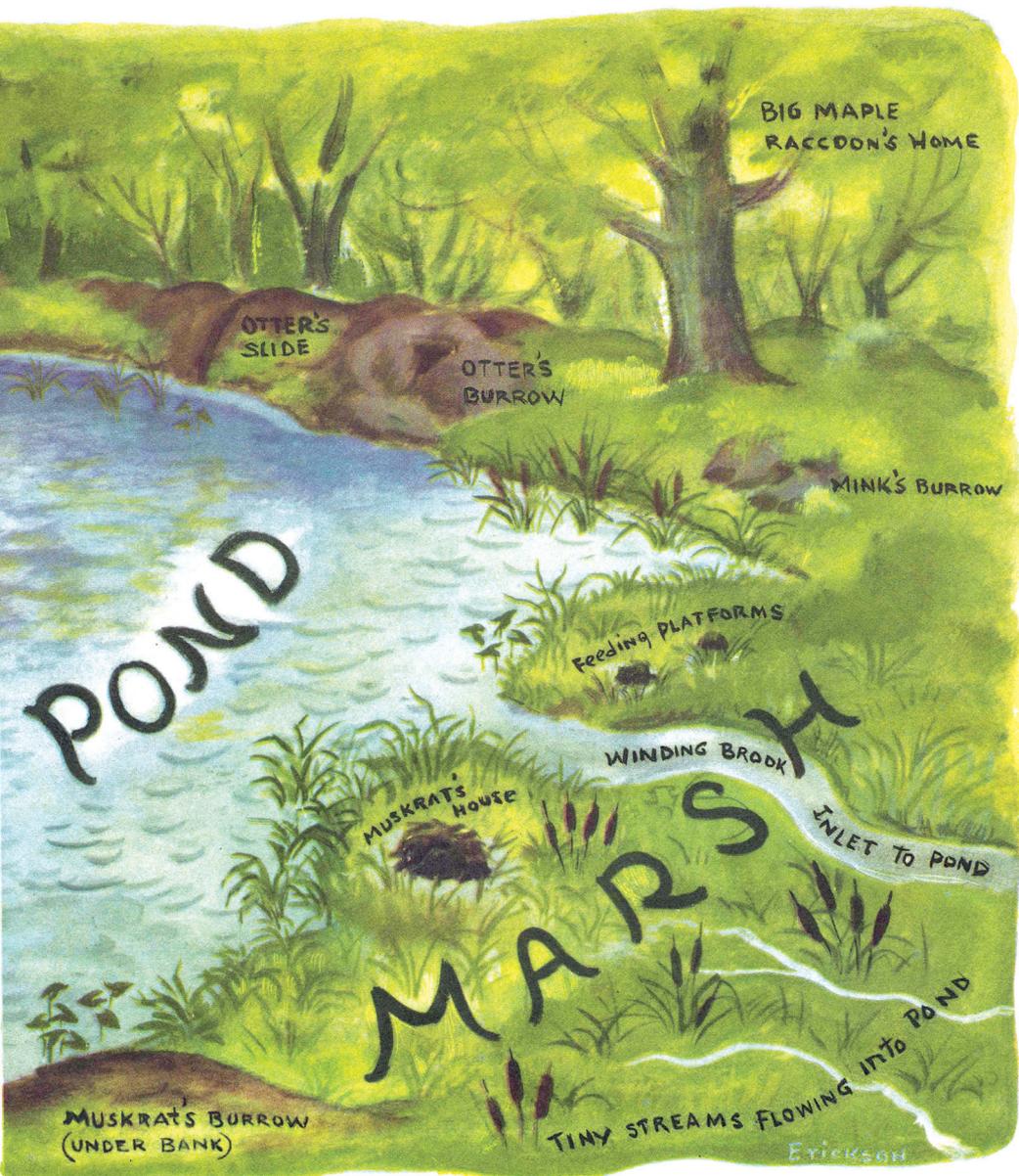
BEAVER'S DAM

BEAVER'S HOUSE

BEAVER'S SUPPLY PILE

Small

STUMPS OF TREES CUT DOWN BY BEAVERS



BIG MAPLE  
RACCOON'S HOME

OTTERS  
SLIDE

OTTERS  
BURROW

MINK'S BURROW

POND

Feeding PLATFORMS

MUSKRAT'S  
HOUSE

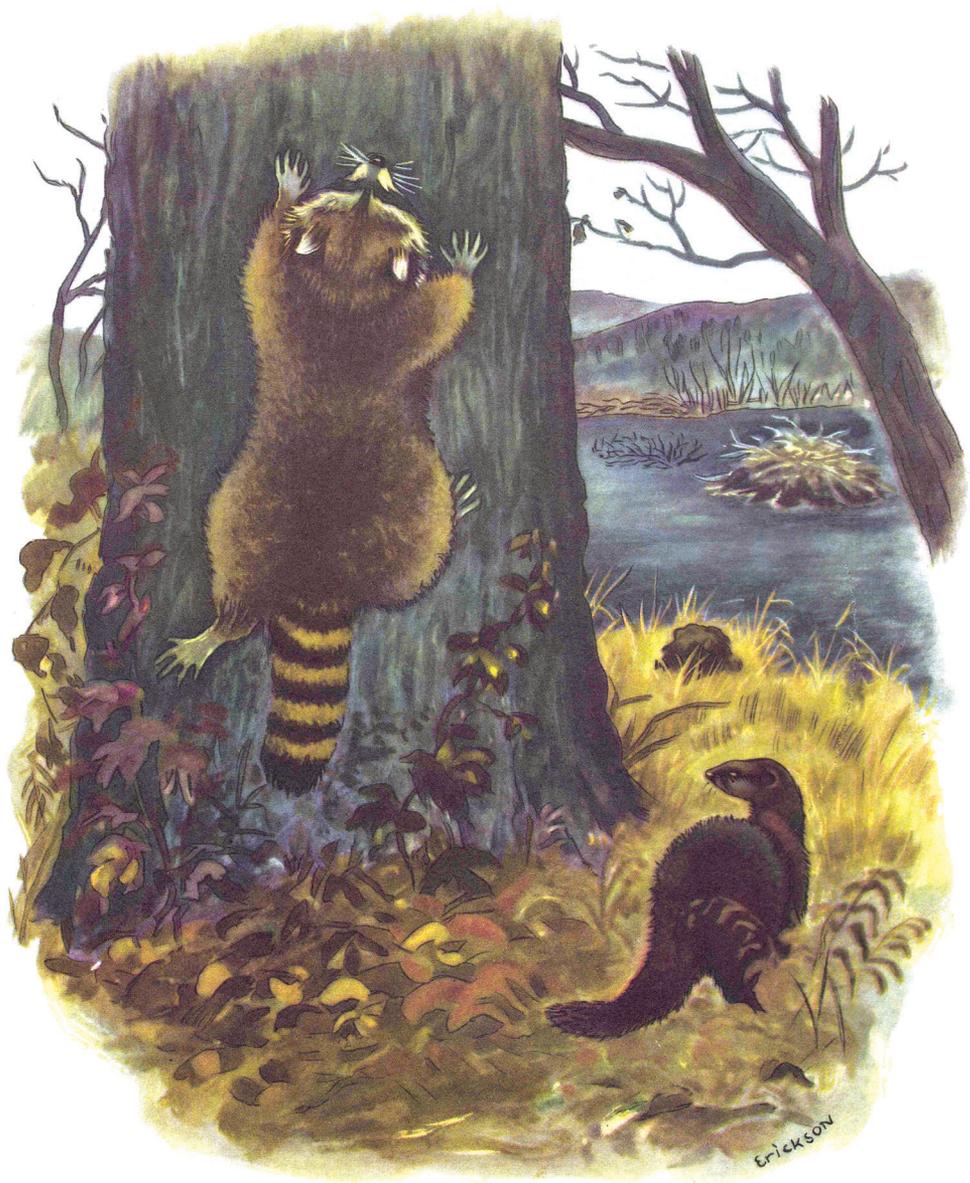
WINDING BROOK  
INLET TO POND

MARSH

MUSKRAT'S BURROW  
(UNDER BANK)

TINY STREAMS FLOWING INTO POND

Erickson



Erickson



# WINTER

The Mink slipped out of his burrow near the edge of Small Pond. He sniffed the cold air. Then he turned to see what was stirring the dried leaves.

A plump Raccoon waddled past. She had just crossed the frozen marsh. But she had found no food. The frogs and the clams and the turtles were buried deep in the mud. The grubs and the worms were hidden in the frozen ground.

The Raccoon was ready for her long winter sleep. She climbed the rough trunk of a big maple. Her winter home was in a deep hollow in the trunk of the tree. When she reached the opening she squeezed her fat furry body into it, and



climbed down to her nest below. Soon she was fast asleep.

The Mink was hungry. He slipped through the dry marsh grass until he reached the Beavers' Dam at the far end of Small Pond. There he saw some fish swimming under the ice. At first he thought he could catch them. The ice looked thin, but he couldn't break through it.

Just then the Otter climbed up on the Beavers' Dam. He sat very still, watching the Beavers swimming under the ice. Fish swam past the Beavers who paid no attention to them. But the



Otter trembled. All those fine fish and no way to get at them!

The ice had locked the Beavers into Small Pond. They swam back and forth inspecting their dam. One of them dived to the bottom and brought up clumps of mud and roots. They patted and poked it into the side of the dam.

The Beavers had made Small Pond by building

# SPRING

Tap-tap-tap! A woodpecker beat at the bark of the big maple tree.

The sound awakened the Raccoon. She opened her eyes and yawned. Then she climbed to the opening and made her way down the trunk of the tree. She had been out before, but this time the air felt different. It was warmer, and she could hear the brook.





A strong west wind ruffled her fur as she waddled through the melting snow. She was very thin, and very hungry. At the edge of Winding Brook she dug into the mud with her slender paws. All she found were a few grubs and snails.

Rain fell and melted the snow. One day, the Beavers heard a loud snapping and cracking in the ice above them. Spring had come, and the ice in Small Pond was breaking up.

The Beavers hurried to their dam. Big pieces of



ice were pushing against it. Some of the sticks and mud were torn loose. The Beavers were worried, but there was no time to lose. They climbed up on the bank to look around for sticks and fallen branches. One of them began to gnaw at the trunk of a tree.

Beavers' teeth are sharp and strong. At last the tree began to tremble. Then it fell with a crash. They cut off the branches and gnawed the long trunk into pieces. It was hard work. They puffed and grunted and pushed and pulled.

While the Beavers were working, the ice piled up against the dam. Suddenly it broke through