



CAN YOU TRACK IT?


MAMMALS

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

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Have 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"

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.



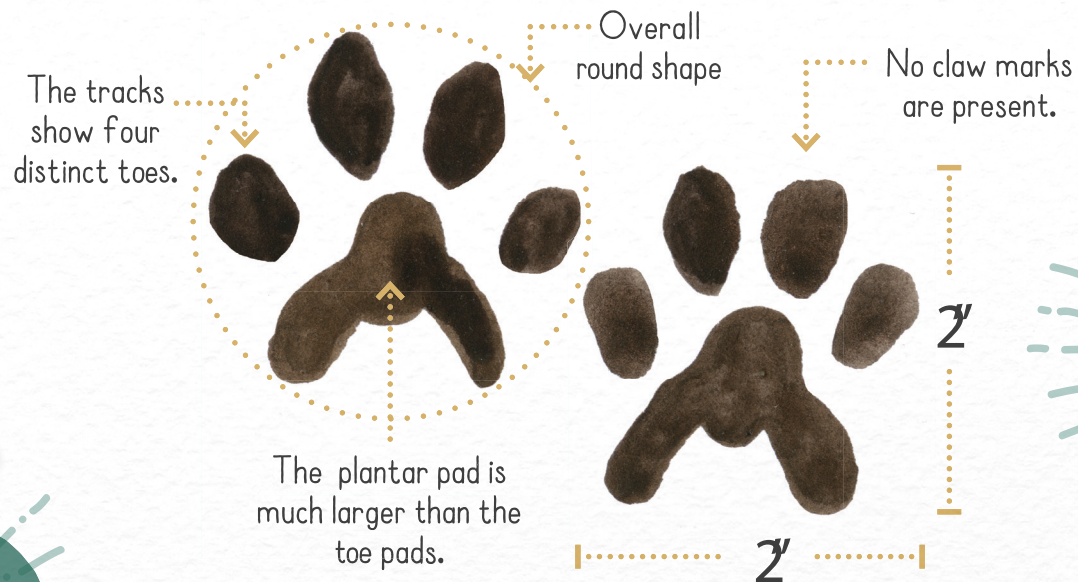
Quick Facts

- 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?




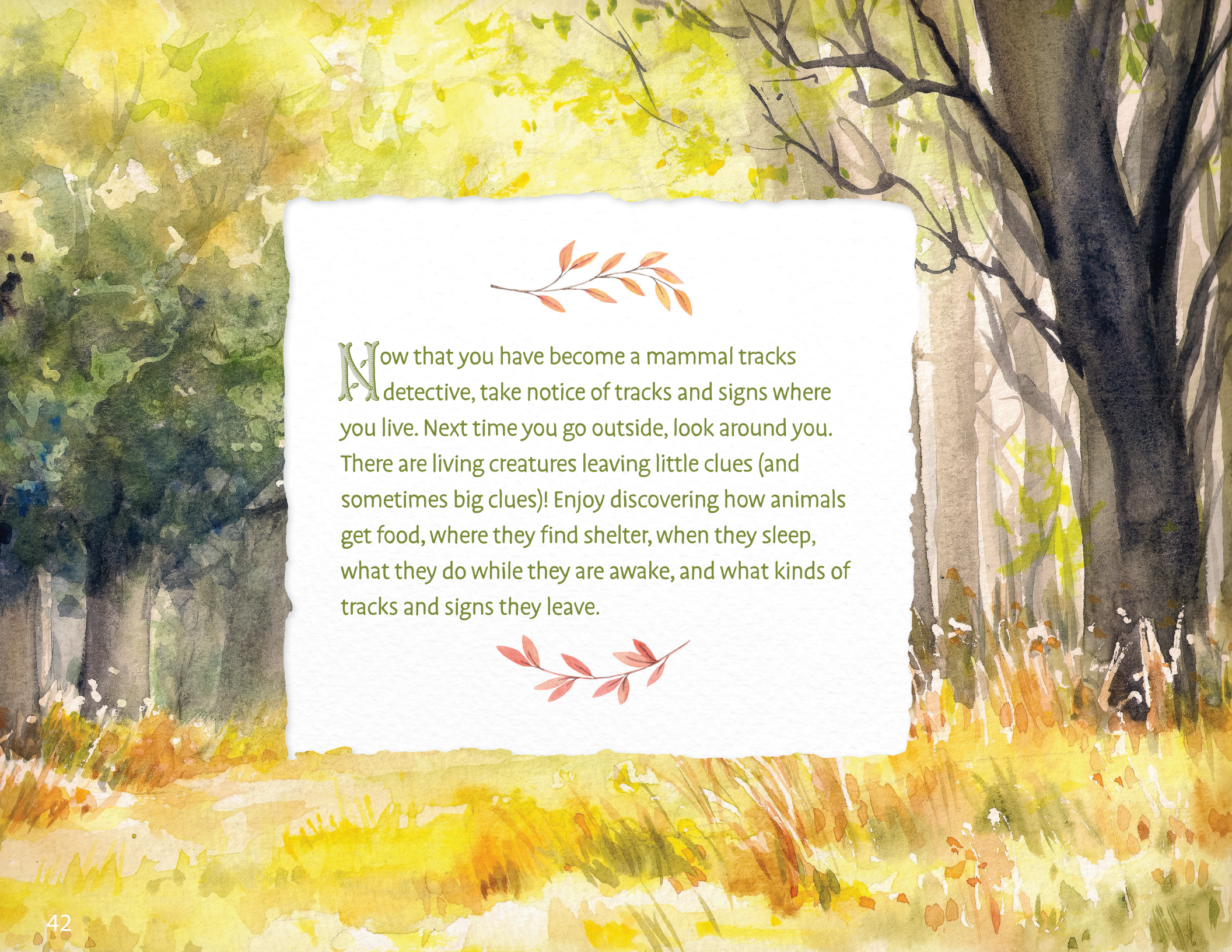
! A beaver built its home in the stream!

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.

