SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT

Animal Tracking and Wildlife Signs

60-Minute Practical Lesson Plan

Duration 60 minutes	**Location** Woodland, field or suitable outdoor area	**Delivery** Demonstration and team activities
Group Scouts	**Approach** Observe, identify and record	**Theme** British wildlife

1. Learning Objectives

• Recognise common British animal footprints, including paw prints and hoofprints.
• Identify other wildlife signs such as feeding marks, feathers, fur, droppings and trails.
• Understand how weather and ground conditions affect the appearance of tracks.
• Record observations using notes, sketches or photographs.
• Observe wildlife responsibly without disturbing animals or their habitats.

2. Equipment Required

Animal tracking guide or Scouts Bushcraft book • Wildlife identification sheets and prepared track photographs • Magnifying glasses and rulers or tape measures • Clipboards, notebooks, pencils and erasers • Camera or suitable mobile device; binoculars • First-aid kit and handwashing facilities or sanitiser

3. Lesson Structure

Time	Activity	Delivery and learning points
0–5 min	**Introduction**	Explain tracking: identifying animals from the evidence they leave behind. Set boundaries and expectations.
5–15 min	**Footprint identification**	Compare fox, badger, deer, rabbit and squirrel tracks. Look at shape, toes, claws and hoof patterns.
15–25 min	**Wildlife signs**	Explore feeding marks, feathers, fur, droppings, rubbing marks and animal pathways using pictures or prepared examples.
25–40 min	**Tracking challenge**	In small teams, search the designated area for signs. Record clues and suggest which animal may have made them.
40–50 min	**Wildlife observation**	Practise quiet observation, using binoculars and natural cover. Watch from a distance without disturbing wildlife.
50–55 min	**Field recording**	Sketch or photograph a track. Note its size, location, ground conditions and possible identification.
55–60 min	**Review and assessment**	Discuss findings, compare evidence and recap safe, responsible wildlife observation.

4. Practical Activity – Wildlife Detective Challenge

Divide Scouts into small teams. Each team should try to:

• Find at least three different wildlife signs.
• Identify one animal footprint or trackway.
• Find evidence of feeding activity.
• Look for an animal trail or pathway.
• Record findings in a wildlife observation notebook.

Challenge question: Can the team work out which animals have visited the area without actually seeing them? Ask teams to explain the evidence supporting their conclusions.

5. Skills Demonstrated

Observation and attention to detail • Wildlife identification • Understanding animal behaviour • Outdoor awareness and fieldcraft • Recording and interpreting evidence • Teamwork and communication • Environmental responsibility

6. Safety and Environmental Considerations

• Inspect the site beforehand and establish clear activity boundaries and suitable supervision.
• Keep Scouts together and away from hazards such as steep banks, deep water, unstable ground and dense brambles.
• Do not approach, chase, feed or handle wild animals; observe from a safe distance.
• Never disturb nests, dens, setts or burrows. Do not enter animal shelters.
• Do not touch droppings, dead animals, unidentified remains, feathers or fur; use photographs or visual observation instead.
• Wash hands after outdoor activities and before eating. Provide suitable handwashing facilities.
• Check weather conditions and ensure appropriate clothing and footwear.
• Respect access restrictions, wildlife protection requirements and the countryside; leave no trace.

7. Assessment and Learning Review

• What features help identify an animal footprint?
• How might weather affect the appearance of a track?
• What can feeding marks or trails tell us?
• Why should we avoid disturbing nests and dens?
• How can we observe wildlife without affecting its behaviour?

Assessment: Observe participation in the tracking challenge, the care taken when recording evidence, and the Scouts' ability to explain their identification choices.

8. Learning Outcome

Scouts should leave with a basic understanding of animal tracking and wildlife signs, and the confidence to identify, record and interpret evidence of British wildlife while respecting animals and their habitats.

SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT
Observe • Discover • Learn • Respect Wildlife