

Durham BioBlitz – Animal Tracks

Sandy Creek Park

April 15 – 30, 2021

Sandy Creek is an ideal place for finding animal tracks in the mud. It is fun and simple to make plaster casts of these. The process begins by looking in locations where the soil is damp and where animals may have walked (usually at night). The process is simple, carefully remove any leaves or sticks from around the print, placing a ring around the print, mix some plaster and pour it in the ring. The following YouTube links will take you to sites that explain the process in a little more depth.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4WTmgo4zeA>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_ksi4lh_wU

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cmz0gkWdr6s>

From the YouTube videos, you should learn that you need the following materials before you come to the park

1. Some plaster of Paris or dental plaster
2. A container filled with clear water
3. Some material--heavy paper, cardboard, flexible plastic, etc.-- to form a ring around the print
4. Something to stir your plaster-water mixture
5. Paper and pencil to take notes
6. A phone or camera to take pictures

I recommend putting a ring around your print to contain the plaster, so that you don't waste too much plaster. I understand that dental stone plaster works better than plaster of Paris, but it is considerably more expensive.

You should be able to find tracks of deer, raccoon, beaver, coyote, opossum, squirrel, rabbit, and if you are lucky, perhaps an otter. On two separate Spring days, we had a black bear in the park too, but this is rare. You will see lots of dog prints along trails where people have walked their dogs. Unless you really want dog tracks, skip these.

You are encouraged to post pictures on the Friends of Sandy Creek Park and Durham Parks Foundation Facebook pages – or tag us! Don't forget to report your sightings of any wildlife prints on iNaturalist.