

Animal Tracking in the Dunes

Overview: Students search for signs of animals in the open sand, and identify animal tracks based on their characteristics.

Objectives:

1. Name some animals that live in and use the dunes.
2. Discuss the importance of tracking and how it can be used to study wildlife.
3. Identify basic tracking edict and some general rules to follow when tracking.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials:

Animal Tracking Cards

Procedure:

1. Stop the group before heading down the slipface into the open dunes. Engage the group about what kinds of animals may live in the dunes. Talk about tracking and how we can study tracks to learn more about the wildlife that live here.
2. Discuss tracking etiquette: Walk, do not run, down the slipface so as not to destroy tracks, approach tracks carefully and avoid stepping on them or kicking sand over them.
3. Next explain that you should always keep the track between yourself and the sun. This will make it easier to see the track clearly. Explain to not just look for tracks, but track patterns. An easy example is the gray fox and its very straight line of prints due to direct register (placing back paw exactly where front paw was).
4. Take out the animal tracking cards and show students how to use them (look first at the tracks, then flip over to see what animal makes tracks like those). Have each student get a partner and pass out the cards, one set per pair.
5. Lead the group down the slipface, reminding students not to run and to look out for tracks
6. Have the group spread out and attempt to locate and identify tracks. Allow them to attempt to identify tracks on their own, but help them with it if they become frustrated. Help them ID tracks and guide them to the right answer, rather than just telling them what the track is.