

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- identify animals based on their tracks
- explain why animals have differently shaped feet
- infer why the shape of their feet is important for an animal's survival

Connection to Colorado Social Studies Standards:

- 4th grade: 1.1c

Next Generation Science Standards:

- 4-LS1-1.

Materials: A copy of the Animal Track card and a Pencil/Pen

Time: 1 class period

Background

In order to survive trappers had to know what footprint or track belonged to which animal. Know which animal each track belonged to was important to the Mountain Man successfully trapping beaver for trade and for him to find his next meal. The trapper didn't want to go hunting a deer only to find out it's a bear!

During the Fur Trade there were no grocery stores or mercantile stores in the west. The forts were not close by nor were there very many of them. When their supplies from the rendezvous ran out, the only food and drink they consumed was what they could find for themselves. They sometimes ate the beavers they trapped and killed if they were desperate for food, but they claimed that the only part that was any good was his tail which they would boil.

For the trapper, there were times of plenty and times of near starvation depending on how close they were to buffalo and other animals. Most mountain men loved the taste of buffalo meat and fat and feasted to their heart's content when one was killed. The "hump ribs," or the shoulder meat, was especially well liked, but they also hungrily eyed the bone marrow, intestines, and liver which they liked to eat raw. Another delicacy for the trapper was the buffalo tongue. This was also well liked by the people in the East, and thousands of tongues each year were packed in salt to keep them fresh and sent back to the large cities.

If they were getting ready to travel a long way through an area with little game, the mountain men would cut meat into thin slices and dry them in the sun to preserve them. They called this "mekkin' meat;" we know it as jerky. Another way to preserve meat was to make pemmican out of it. Pemmican is dried meat that is pounded into a powder, mixed with hot fat and dried fruits or berries that were pressed into a loaf or small cakes. The Mountain Men learned to make pemmican from the Native Americans they traded with.

There were times, though, when the trappers ran out of food or drink, and they had to make do with anything

they could put their hands on. It sometimes got so bad that they would eat their dogs, moccasins, or anything else made of leather, or even the ears of their mules!

Very rarely, trappers were lucky enough to be near a fort that Indians such as the Mandan and Arikara were supplying with corn, beans, and squash. Indians would come to the fort and exchange their corn, one bushel equaling a dollar's worth of goods. Fort Union even had a small garden of its own, where they raised garden peas, radishes, potatoes, beets, and turnips.

Suggested Procedure:

One of the skills of the mountain man found most necessary was his ability to identify different animal tracks. This helped him in tracking animals when hunting and collecting furs, and in avoiding the more dangerous animals. Drawn below are footprints of several different animals that a trapper might run across.

1. Using the animal prints below, have students speculate as to why the animals have different shaped feet.
2. In small groups, have students research why the animal's feet are shaped differently.
3. Finally have the students report back to the rest of the class as to why the shape foot helps that animal survive. i.e.: Sharp claws for predators. Webbed feet for swimmers, etc.

Animal Footprints



Mountain lion



GRIZZLY BEAR



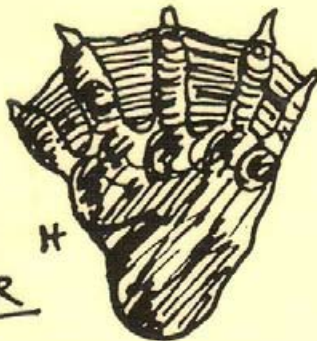
WOLF



ELK



F
BEAVER



H



F
RACCOON



H



F
PORCUPINE



H



F
MUSKRAT



H