

**Aims:**

Make a footprint trap and to try and find some animal footprints!

Background:

The technique used to monitor for the non-native American mink is to look for its presence by finding its footprints. To make this easier we create a footprint trap – as a way of easily detecting prints.

For mink we do this using a clay pad on floating raft (see **Activity 5.3**) but there are some other easier ways that you could try footprint tracking:

In the mud/sand/snow:

You will need: nothing

1. Simply take a walk and check likely looking spots for prints – sand or mud on the edge of rivers are great locations. Take photos of what you see to identify later.

Set up a clay pad print trap:

Ideal for small – medium sized mammals; stoats, weasels, mink, pine marten, mice, voles, rabbits etc.

You will need: Small plastic storage basket with open slatted sides, floral oasis block, sand, non-air-drying clay.

1. Place the oasis foam into a plastic basket and soak in water. You might need to cut the oasis to size.
2. In a bucket mix sand and clay together with a little water*.
3. Press the clay on the top of the wet oasis and wipe the surface smooth.
4. Dig a small hole in the ground so you can drop the basket in. Ideally in wet boggy ground as this will keep the oasis damp and stop the clay drying out.
5. Build a tunnel (from pieces of wood / rocks) to cover the clay (this helps keep the clay clean and attracts animals to explore it).
6. Check your clay for prints! Try and identify them and/or take a photo (with a coin for scale). Smooth over the clay (a little water helps) and re-set.

Set up a small mammal ink print trap:

Ideal for small mammals – mice, voles, weasels etc.

You will need: A4 card, sponge, fountain pen ink

1. Fold the piece of card into three, lengthways, so you form a long triangular tunnel. (think Toblerone!)
2. At each end stick a thin piece of sponge to the bottom of the tunnel (slice of washing up sponge is ideal) and lightly soak with ink.
3. Tape the top of the triangle closed and place outside, remembering to weight it down or peg down.
4. Once mice walk over the ink they'll leave a trail of inky footprints on your tunnel. Don't leave it out outside too long – it won't survive poor weather!

Handy notes:

Remember if you are just looking for prints on the ground – the most common one you are likely to find is a dog!

The clay pad print trap is a version of what we use on our mink rafts.

*Clay mix – Use three-parts sand to one-part clay, should be sticky enough to hold together but not too compact so you get a good footprint.

Footprint traps

Set your footprint trap along an animal trail or likely looking place where animals regularly walk.

Add bait in your tunnel to attract creatures in E.g. bird seed or biscuit crumbs.

The ink print trap is single use, but you can make a larger more robust one from a thick card (cut up a cardboard box) or even plywood. The same principles apply but add a sheet of white paper for the animals to walk on, which you can change.

Handy [footprint identification guide](#)