

Canada Goose

Branta canadensis

Where found: Lake shallows, gentle rivers, coastal bays, and marshy areas throughout BC. Often grazing on green grass. Occasionally solitary but usually in flocks from spring to fall. Active during the day (**diurnal**).

Tracks: Webbed, three-toed prints meandering in the sand or mud. Often many prints are seen together as geese frequently walk on land in groups.

Scats: You'll often see lots of our short, **cylindrical** (long, round but flat on each end) scats scattered on the grass, beach or mud.

Other signs: Call is a loud "*ha-ronk, ha-ronk, ha-ronk*".



Raccoon

Procyon lotor

Where found: Brushy or wooded areas at low elevations near water on Vancouver Island, Haida Gwaii, and the southern mainland of BC. Also in suburban areas and cities with access to garbage or pet food. Solitary or in small family groups. Primarily active at night (**nocturnal**). In colder areas, raccoons stay in dens for much of the winter but venture out on warm days.

Tracks: A raccoon's **gait** creates a two-print pattern where the hind foot falls next to the front foot of the opposite side. Prints resemble skinny human hands, sometimes claws are visible.

Scats: Scats are brown or black **cylindrical** (long, round but flat on each end) shapes. Raccoon scats may carry parasites that are dangerous to people and pets. Wear protective gloves and face masks if removing them.

Other signs: Signs are scarce with the exception of messes left around garbage cans, gardens, and human habitations.



Cougar (aka: Mountain Lion or Puma)

Puma concolor

Where found: Throughout southern BC and Vancouver Island in forests and semi-wooded areas from sea level to the subalpine. Not found on Haida Gwaii and rare in northern BC. Mostly active at twilight (**crepuscular**) and solitary. Active year-round.

Tracks: Cougars have the largest cat prints in the Americas. Like other cats, they're rounded with four toes and don't show claws. They walk leaving a close **straddle alternating** pattern and, when chasing prey, their tracks are a gallop with a four-print pattern. Cougar trails are usually straight and may lead to favoured climbing trees. Their tails may leave marks at sitting spots.

Scat: Cougar scats are **cylindrical** like dog scats but often contain fur and bone bits.

Other signs: Cougars leave scratched up urination spots along trails to scent their territories. As they often **cache** large prey under snow or plants, their trails may include drag marks of the **carcass** they're carrying.



Mule Deer



White-tailed Deer



Mule Deer *Odocoileus hemionus* and White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*

Where found: White-tailed deer are found in the eastern half of BC in montane forests and brushlands in summer, and valley bottoms in winter. Mule deer are widespread throughout BC and migrate from higher elevation forests in summer to lower hillsides in the winter. Both kinds of deer are usually solitary but form small herds in winter. Active both day and night (**cathemeral**), especially at twilight (**crepuscular**).

Tracks: The small, sharply pointed, heart-shaped tracks are very similar for both species of deer. They generally walk in an **alternating** track pattern. In snow or deep mud the **dewclaws** can be seen behind the 'heart' shape and the toes can **splay** apart. Legs cut a narrow 3-5 cm wide slot in deeper snow.

Scat: Small, oval, **pellet** scats look like rabbits' or hares', but their scats drop while they hop, whereas deer stop when they plop (leaving lots of **pellets** at once), often along trails.

Other signs: Deer leave evidence of torn off vegetation where they graze. Sometimes hair will be left in the grassy "beds" where deer rest. Deer shed their antlers annually in winter. In spring the antlers are regrown. By the end of summer, the antlers finish growing and harden. The outer "velvet" layer is then rubbed off against the trunks of trees and can be seen as scrapes in the bark.



Deer Mouse

Peromyscus maniculatus

Where found: Commonly found year-round throughout BC in grasslands and any dry habitat from valley bottom to subalpine. Also may be found in mattress stuffing or cupboards and drawers in cabins. Active at night (**nocturnal**) and solitary but sometimes found in great numbers in an area.

Tracks: In early and mid winter, deer mice travel through tunnels under the snow. In spring they begin to emerge on the firmed-up snow. When moving fast, they hop in a squirrel-like manner with front feet hitting the ground first, followed by the larger back feet. Claws prints and short tail marks are sometimes visible. Because they are so small and light, deer mice rarely leave prints on surfaces besides snow.

Scats: Small, dark, rice-size scats are rarely seen on snow or the ground, but very often seen in invaded cabins. Deer mice are one of the main carriers of hantavirus, a serious disease. Disturbing the droppings should be avoided. Use a mask and glove for clean up.



Red Squirrel

Tamiasciurus hudsonicus

Where found: Common year-round throughout B.C. in coniferous and mixed forest. In winter, red squirrels are active on warm days, but go into a deep torpor sleep when temperatures drop. Active during the day (**diurnal**) and solitary.

Tracks: Squirrels often travel by jumping from tree to tree between branches, but in winter when branches are snowy, they will run down the trunk and leap across the snow to the next tree, into a food **cache** or into a snow tunnel. Fore-paws hit the snow first, then the back feet land. The four-print tracks look like the back paws are in front. Four fingers and five long toes with little claws are visible in their prints.

Scats: Scats are small, long, and dark in colour. They are rarely seen.

Other signs: A loud “tchrrrr!” call made from high in the trees is used in **territorial** displays. Squirrels shuck the scales from tree cones to access the seeds. These seeds are a large part of their diet and over the years, large piles of cone scales and cobs known as “**middens**” accumulate at the base of trees.





Coyote

Canis latrans

Where found: Throughout BC including the Lower Mainland, but excluding other coastal areas and coastal islands. Found year-round in grasslands, deserts, forested hills, mountains, and increasingly in suburban areas. Mostly active at night (**nocturnal**), but sometimes out during the day or at twilight. Sometimes solitary or in small packs.

Tracks: Coyote prints are the triangular shape characteristic of the dog family, and about as large as those of a collie-sized domestic dog. However, coyote tracks usually follow a straight path, unlike domestic dogs that run all over. Coyotes grow winter bristles on the pads of their feet to help them move through snow.

Scats: Scats are dog-like, but with hair and sometimes pieces of bone. Coyotes often place their scats in the middle of trails and roads to make their presence known.

Other Signs: Coyotes are very vocal and will bark, yip, and howl together to promote bonding within the family group, while also serving as a **territorial** display.



Varying Hare/Snowshoe Hare

Lepus americanus

Where found: Found year-round in thickets, woodlands and mixed forests up to subalpine elevations throughout BC. Does not occur on coastal islands. Active at twilight (**crepuscular**) and at night (**nocturnal**). Solitary.

Tracks: Known as a Varying Hare in its brown summer coat, this hare becomes a Snowshoe Hare in winter when it develops a white winter coat and large, furry winter feet. Tracks are most visible in snow, making a four-print track pattern as the hare hops. It appears as if the back feet are in the front because the front paws quickly touch the ground, then are followed by the rear feet landing. As speed increases, the track sets become further apart.

Scat: Dry, brown, round **pellets** from feeding on grass, wildflowers, leaves, twigs, shrubs, evergreen needles and buds. Hares often eat their own partially digested **pellets** to extract more nutrients. The scat looks similar to that of deer, but deer stop when they plop (lots of **pellets**), while hares disperse their scat while on the hop.



Black Bear

Ursus americanus

Where found: Lives in forests, wet meadows and **riparian** areas throughout much of BC. Found in sub-alpine habitats from spring to fall, hibernates in dens at lower elevations in winter. May be seen where food is available including along trails, and near campgrounds and cabins. Bears are active during the day (**diurnal**) however, in higher risk areas, such as those with human activity, they may become more active and feed at night. Solitary unless a female with cubs.

Tracks: Black bear tracks somewhat resemble human footprints but are stubbier in shape. Their track pattern is **alternating** with slightly inward-turned prints. Prints sometimes include claw marks. Bears often follow their own trails.

Scat: Black bear scats are large chunky, dark plops that often include partially digested bits of the food whatever food they've been eating.

Other signs: Black bears leave slanting claw marks on tree. Overturned rocks or logs may indicate where a black bear has been digging for roots, insects or larvae. Stripped branches of berry plants are also an indication of feeding. Bears tear off the berries, leaves and all. They are often found along streams and rivers feeding on salmon in the fall.



North American River Otter

Lontra canadensis

Where found: Throughout the lakes, wetlands, waterways, and coasts of BC. They establish a burrow close to the water's edge and are equally versatile on land and in water. River otters stay active year-round. They are most active at night (**nocturnal**) and during twilight (**crepuscular**) hours. They are social animals, hunting and playing in family groups.

Tracks: The best place to look for River Otter tracks is on soft ground at the water's edge. They walk in an **alternating** pattern. When bounding, they leave tracks in pairs. Front and hind feet are partially webbed with five toes on each foot. The toes appear pointed because the claws are close to the ends of the toes. The tails sometimes leaves a mark when dragged along the ground.

Scat: Otter scats (known as "spraints") are regular shaped cords or blobs with tapered or blunt ends. They often contain crustacean shells, fish scales, and aquatic prey. The scat is often deposited on top of logs, rocks or other landmarks.

Other signs: River Otters have a very pungent odour that may be smelled before the animal is seen. They scent mark for intergroup communication using scat, urine, and musk from scent glands.



Domestic Cat

Felis catus

Where found: Domestic cats live throughout BC in areas of human habitation. They include house cats who live indoors at least part time, barn cats who generally live in and around outbuildings and are supported by an owner, and feral cats who live outdoors in a wild state. While somewhat active during the day, they are generally twilight (**crepuscular**) and nighttime (**nocturnal**) hunters. Solitary while hunting, but may live in social groups.

Tracks: Domestic Cat prints display four toes above a central pad. There are no claw marks, as cats retract their claws when not in use to keep them sharp and to move silently. They walk in a “pacing” **gait**, moving both legs on one side of the body before the legs on the other side. At higher speeds they switch to opposite hind and fore legs moving simultaneously.

Scat: Cat scat is **cylindrical** and more regular in texture when the cat is fed prepared foods. Domestic Cats will often bury their scat, leaving a mound with scraped sides.

Other signs: Domestic Cats are **territorial** and will scent mark their **territory** with urine. They also scratch trees and posts leaving marks to display their presence.



Domestic Dog

Canis familiaris

Where found: Domestic Dogs live throughout BC in areas of human habitation. This includes dogs kept as pets and stray dogs who are unowned. Without human influence, dogs tend to be most active at dusk and dawn (**crepuscular**). However they are strongly influenced by their social environment and will follow the schedule of the household. Highly social.

Tracks: The variety of sizes and shapes among dog breeds means that their tracks are also variable. Generally, dog prints consist of four toes above a triangular central pad. Unlike cats prints, dog prints have visible claw impressions at the ends of the toes.

Scat: Domestic dog scat is **cylindrical** and typically has an even consistency when the animal has been fed a prepared diet.

Other signs: Dogs scent mark with urine to communicate with one another.



Porcupine

Erethizon dorsatum

Where found: Fairly common in coniferous woods year-round throughout mainland BC. Does not occur on coastal islands. Mostly active at night (**nocturnal**) but sometimes active in daytime. Solitary.

Tracks: Porcupines plod along making an inward-turned **alternating** track pattern with their toes and sharp claws visible. There may be quill drag marks. In snow, their bodies plow through creating a trough, dragging their feet and make an S-shaped swishing with their swinging tail. Their trails run between dens and trees or shrubs.

Scat: Lumpy, oval scats are found at the base of trees or at winter dens.

Other signs: Porcupines climb trees to chew off the bark to get at the sugary cambium layer underneath. When chewed off all around, the tree trunk can't grow taller and a branch or two might take over growing upwards.

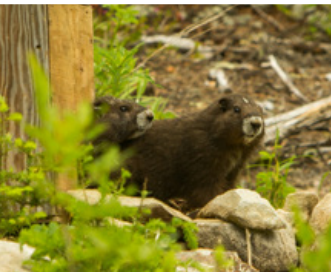
Porcupines also crave salt, and will gnaw at wood outhouse seats and sweat-soaked wooden handles, canoe paddles and tools. They chew plywood, cardboard and even rubber tires and brake lines of unattended cars parked overnight in the woods. They den in boulder or log piles where they spend most of the winter. Dropped quills can sometimes be found around a den. Occasionally they shelter in culverts or under cabins.



Hoary Marmot



Yellow-bellied Marmot



Vancouver Island Marmot



Hoary Marmot *Marmota caligata*,

Yellow-bellied Marmot *Marmota flaviventris*,

Vancouver Island Marmot *Marmota vancouverensis*

Where found: Yellow-bellied Marmots live in low elevation dry grasslands of the Southern Interior. Hoary Marmots inhabit high elevation alpine meadow slopes throughout the BC mainland. Vancouver Island Marmots are endangered and live only in subalpine meadows of South-Central Vancouver Island. All marmots are daytime (**diurnal**) herbivores, live in small colonies and hibernate for eight months from fall to spring.

Tracks: Marmots leave **alternating** two-print pattern tracks when ambling along or four-print tracks when jumping away. Their tracks and trails lead to and from their dens. They don't venture very far.

Scat: Irregular, tubular scats are often found around rocky dens and sunning boulders.

Other signs: Marmots announce a disturbance with a loud, sharp, high-pitched "Eeeeeep" from the Yellow-bellieds, or a longer "Eeeeeeeee" from the Hoaries (also known as "whistlers"). Vancouver Island Marmots have the largest vocal repertoire of the marmots, with five distinct whistles and trills.

Marmot sentinels can often be found perched up on a boulder, on the lookout for danger. They live deep in grass-lined rocky burrows.



Beaver

Castor canadensis

Where found: Streams, rivers, ponds and lakes throughout BC. Mainly active at night (**nocturnal**) and at twilight (**crepuscular**) and usually seen solitary or with young. These semiaquatic rodents are most active on land in the spring, summer, and fall. They **cache** plants under water for winter food.

Tracks: Beavers walk leaving an **alternating** track pattern which often shows their large, webbed hind feet with toes, and wide, snaking tail and body drag marks. Occasionally their hind footprints fall beside their front footprints. Drag marks from branches being carried by beavers are sometimes visible.

Scat: Beavers don't leave scats on the ground, only in water.

Other signs: Beaver build dams of gnawed wood across streams and rivers to hold back water, they also build domed lodges of sticks and mud in ponds and lakes. Gnawed aspen, birch, or willow trees and limbs may be found on land nearby. Their broad teeth marks are visible in the pointed stumps of trees they've felled along the shoreline. Beavers alert family members to potential danger with a slap on the water with their flat tail, making a loud "*thwack!*" sound.



Striped Skunk

Mephitis mephitis

Where found: Widely distributed throughout BC in marshes, farmland, wetland areas and dry land. Most common in the Lower Fraser Valley; not found on coastal islands. Mostly active at night (**nocturnal**) but may be active any time.

Tracks: Skunks walk or trot leaving irregular, **alternating** prints. They drag their feet in snow and their bodies drag in deep snow.

Scat: Skunk scats are **cylindrical** and chunky.

Other signs: Skunks often scratch or dig around in the ground for food. They scent-mark their territories and also release a strong odour when threatened or in distress.



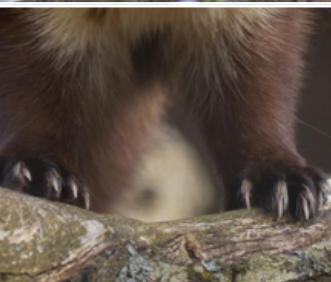
Short-tailed Weasel/Ermine

Mustela erminea

Where found: In a variety of habitats throughout BC including meadows, wetland areas, rock slides and forests, and especially common in subalpine meadows and surrounding forests year-round. Solitary and active day or night. They are long, lean, brown weasels with white bellies until winter when they turn all white with a little black-tipped tail. Then they camouflage with the snow and are called Ermine.

Tracks: They spend a lot of time chasing rodents in snow (**subnivean**) tunnels through the winter, popping out to run across the snow to the next tunnel hole. Their front feet hit the snow and then their back feet land exactly where the front feet were. They leave off-set double prints about the size and shape of a human fingerprint with large spaces between each set. They climb trees and slip down into rodent burrows. They can also swim.

Scat: Scats are rarely seen little tubes.



Pine Marten

Martes americana

Where found: Throughout BC year-round in coniferous forests up to subalpine areas. Absent from open grasslands in the BC interior. Primarily active at night (**nocturnal**) and solitary.

Tracks: Pine Martens are brown, cat-sized weasels with thickly furred soles in winter. Their **loping** tracks are offset in pairs with large spaces between each set, like other weasels. Their two front feet hit the ground first, pushing off, then the back feet land where the front feet were. Sometimes they walk creating singular, offset tracks. Trails run through forest clearings and down holes in the snow through **subnivean** tunnels. They climb up trees to shelter in tree cavities (holes). A “plop” mark may be visible where they have landed when jumping out of a tree.

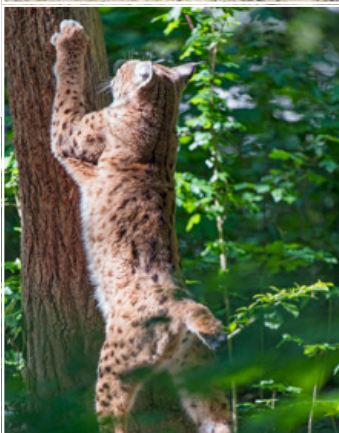
Scat: Irregularly-shaped **cylindrical** scats.



Lynx



Bobcat



Lynx *Lynx canadensis* and

Bobcat *Lynx rufus*

Where found: Lynx are found in high elevation, boreal and coniferous forests and openings throughout the BC mainland, but not in coastal areas. Bobcats are found in lower elevation deserts, forests and rural areas on the mainland and coastal areas in southern BC. Bobcats are not found on coastal islands, including Vancouver Island. Both are most active at dusk and dawn (**crepuscular**) but can be active any time (**catheymeral**) year-round and solitary except for when in family groups in winter.

Tracks: Prints look like those of huge house cats: rounded with four toes and no claw marks. Lynx tracks are much bigger than those of Bobcats. Both walk in a close **straddle alternating** pattern and sometimes gallop in a four-print pattern. Feet are placed lightly and deliberately. Trails meander through the forest and cross forest openings.

Scat: Scats are cylindrical and in segments, containing hair and bones of prey. Often covered over, leaving scratch marks in the snow or soil.

Other signs: Shallow resting beds in snow or grass are sometimes visible. Both species leave scratched up ground with smelly urination spots to mark territories.



Moose

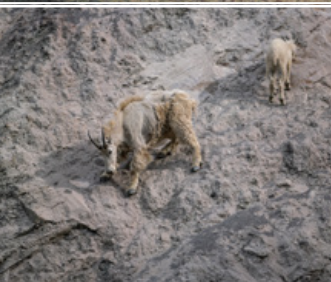
Alces alces

Where found: Occurs throughout most of BC east of the Coast Mountains. Found in subalpine meadows and marshy areas in shrubby, mixed conifer-hardwood forests. In the winter, they are found in river valleys or dense stands of conifers, avoiding areas with deep snow. Moose browse on willows and feeds on aquatic vegetation in **riparian** areas. Usually solitary or a cow and calf, but sometimes share feeding areas and trails with one or two others in winter. Active during twilight (**crepuscular**) and daylight (**diurnal**).

Tracks: Moose walk or trot making a neat **alternating** track pattern with two heartshaped, big-toed hooves and **dewclaws** behind. In deep snow they cut 10cm or wider **slots**. They can also swim.

Scat: **Pellets** are oval and often seen on moose trails and beds.

Other signs: In winter, moose leave ice-crusting beds in snow. Look for nibbled and torn vegetation, scraped tree bark and long, dark moose hair. Moose antlers, which fall off each winter, can sometimes be found.



Mountain Goat

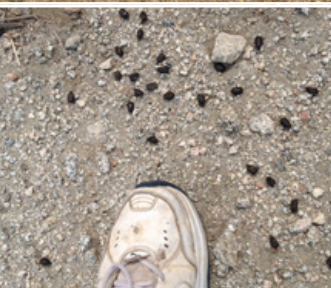
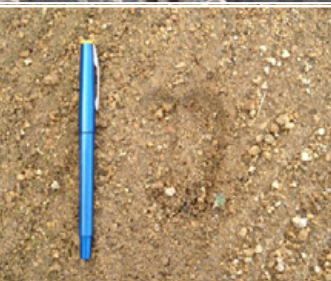
Oreamnos americanus

Where found: Rugged mountain slopes, crags and cliffs in high altitudes in all mountain systems in BC except absent on Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. In summer they may descend into valleys for natural mineral salt licks. Active in daytime (**diurnal**) and solitary or in small herds year-round.

Tracks: Mountain Goats walk in an **alternating** track pattern. Their long, narrow, two-toed hoofs are often **splayed**. Sometimes they drag their feet leaving toe groove marks. Their trails often wind along rocky ledges and up to cliff edges.

Scat: Small, round **pellet** scats along trails look like deer scat.

Other signs: Nibbled mountain grass, shrubs and twigs are sometimes evident, or where they've bedded in snow or among plants. Fluffy, white hair can be found stuck to bushes in early summer when they **moult**.



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Bighorn Sheep/Mountain Sheep

Ovis canadensis

Where found: Open mountain slopes in summer and mountain valleys in winter, in the Southern Interior and Southeastern regions of BC. Active in daytime (**diurnal**) in herds year-round. Sometimes seen on mountain highway edges, especially in parks around Banff and Jasper, seeking salt.

Tracks: The two-toed hoof prints of Bighorn Sheep are bigger and more squared (less pointed) than deer. They walk in an **alternating** track pattern. They cut 5-6cm wide **slots** in snow and commonly drag their feet through. Herds make well-packed trails.

Scat: Small, round **pellet** scats along trails look like deer scat.

Other signs: Bighorn sheep paw away the snow to find grass and other plants. They leave dusty bedding-down spots littered with black droppings.



Grizzly Bear

Ursus arctos

Where found: Lives throughout BC except absent from Haida Gwaii. Found on mountain slopes, coastal meadows, and riverbeds while fishing. Solitary unless with cubs. Active day or night (**cathemeral**), March to November.

Tracks: Grizzly Bears have big tracks that resemble large, wide human footprints. They make an **alternating** inward-turned walking pattern similar to a Black Bear, but larger with longer front claws. Sometimes their hind feet overstep their front footprints. Occasionally they may briefly **lope** in a four-print pattern.

Scat: Grizzly scats are similar to Black Bear's but larger. Chunky, dark plops that often include partially digested bits of the food they've been eating: vegetation in the spring and early summer, meat and berries later in the year.

Other signs: Disturbed ground and bark may be found where Grizzlies have been digging for roots and tubers, grubs, or marmots and ground squirrels. They claw, rub and mark trees, but do not normally climb them. You might see shallow day beds near a den. If you find a **carcass** covered in leaves, plants and soil, this is recent Grizzly **cache** – Do not disturb and leave the area.

Glossary

Alternating: one foot after the other in two parallel rows.

Cache: place to store food.

Carcass: dead animal.

Cathemeral: active any time.

Crepuscular: active at dawn and dusk.

Cylindrical: long, round but flat on each end.

Nocturnal: active at night.

Diurnal: active in daytime.

Dewclaw: a digit (hoof or claw) above the foot of some animals, including deer and dog-relatives.

Gait: the pattern of movement of the limbs of animals, during locomotion. How an animals walks or runs.

Lope: walk or run with a long bounding stride.

Midden: a heap of conifer cone scales and cobs discarded by squirrels at the base of their home trees.

Moult: when animals shed their protective winter hair, fur, or feathers in spring.

Pellet: a small round or oval scat.

Riparian: vegetation that grows alongside a stream or river.

Slots: path through snow made by the legs of an animal.

Splayed: spread apart. Usually hoofs.

Straddle: width between tracks in a trail.

Subnivean: under snow (usually tunnels).

Territory: habitat for one animal or family that is marked and defended.