

To enhance and encourage
the public use and awareness
of Sessions Woods



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Winter 2018

The Friends of Sessions Woods was established
as an all-volunteer organization in 1998 to facilitate
projects and programs that enhance the value of
Sessions Woods.

Friends of Sessions Woods
c/o Sessions Woods WMA
PO Box 1550
Burlington, CT 06013-1550
www.fosw.org

Winter Wildlife Tracking 101

Although we might be ready to overwinter inside, many mammals are still active outside during cold, winter days. Some of the most common tracks that can be spotted in mud or snow on the trails at Sessions Woods include coyote, fox, white-tailed deer, raccoon, rabbit, and squirrel. Since some of the animals are related and have similar tracks, it is easier to group the prints by families and orders to assist in identifying a mystery track.

The canine family, which includes coyote, domestic dog, and fox all leave similar tracks, exhibiting four toes on both front and back paw pads. Claw marks are usually visible. The feline family, which includes domestic cat and bobcat, display a rounded track with four toes on both front and back pads. The pad also will show three lobes on the sole of the foot.

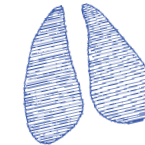


COYOTE



BOBCAT

Cat claws are retractable, therefore claw markings are usually not visible distinguishing these tracks from the canine family. The deer family, which includes white-tailed deer and moose, are probably one of the most commonly seen and distinguishable tracks in and out of snow. These tracks are heart-shaped with a line down the middle. Moose tracks are larger versions of the deer track.



DEER

The mustelid family, or weasel family, contains fisher, river otter, mink, and weasel. The tracks of these animals show claw marks and five toes on both the front and hind feet. There is variation between species.

The rodent family also shows disparity between species but the tracks have four front toes and five rear toes.

RABBIT



The order lagomorph, or the rabbit order, has easily recognizable tracks because the back feet are two to four times larger than the front, creating a Y-shape in the snow.

The raccoon, opossum, and bear families have tracks which look somewhat similar to humans, with five toes on both the front and hind feet.

Understanding an animal's gait, or the way it walks, can also play an important role in identification. Four main gaits can be observed: walking, trotting, galloping, and jumping. Walking can show even-spaced prints, depending on the animal. Trotting is when two diagonal feet move concurrently, with the hind foot usually forward to the front foot. Galloping is usually the fastest gait and, at one point, all four feet are taken off the ground. And finally, jumping is similar to galloping where all four feet are taken off the ground at one point. Some animals push off the ground using their hind feet and land on their front feet.



RACCOON

Another important aspect to animal tracking in winter is to be careful and take in your surroundings. Winter can be a crucial time for animals because food sources are limited and more energy may be needed to find them. Never track an animal back to its den or nest to avoid disturbing overwintering animals. And finally, remember to enjoy your time outside and learn from the tracks left behind by these mysterious animals.

Article by Katerina Hutchins
Illustrations by Paul Fusco

Welcome New Friends!

The Friends of Sessions Woods would like to welcome the following new members:

John Correia

Nick & Abbey Lombardi Family

Sessions Woods Calendar of Events

The Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center's Public Program Series is a cooperative venture between the CT DEEP Wildlife Division and the Friends of Sessions Woods. Please pre-register for these programs by calling 860-424-3011. Programs are free unless noted. An adult must accompany children under 12 years old. No pets allowed!

Membership Renewal & Special Projects Fund Donations

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

Check one:

I am a new member _____

I am renewing my membership _____

Check one:

Annual Membership Levels:

Student (under 21) \$6

Individual \$15

Family \$20

Patron \$50

Corporation \$100

\$_____ Donation for Special Projects Fund
Memberships run annually from July 1 through June 30 of the following year. Each membership receives *Connecticut Wildlife* magazine.

For new members only: Memberships received during the months of January to June are effective through June 30 of the following year.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We gratefully accept your contributions. Fees and contributions are fully tax deductible. My check for \$_____ is enclosed. Please send your check, made payable to Friends of Sessions Woods, to:

Friends of Sessions Woods
PO Box 1550
Burlington CT 06013-1550

Caps & Bags!

The FOSW will soon be offering caps and messenger bags with the beaver logo for sale during programs and special events. Buy one for yourself and one for a friend and support the FOSW!



A Snowy Owl Winter?

Wildlife photographer Paul Fusco will be displaying several beautiful owl images in the Sessions Woods Art Gallery Hallway. Included in the display is an image of the snowy owl, a resident of the far north. This year is likely to be an irruption year for snowy owls, which means a time when many of these beautiful birds travel south and can be seen in open habitat in northeastern states. Several snowy owls have already been reported in Connecticut, in the towns of Stratford, Milford, and Madison. Unfortunately, snowy owls seen for a couple of days earlier in the winter season in New Hartford and Waterbury have since succumbed due to a collision with an automobile and likely poor health. The mounted snowy owl on display at Sessions Woods died in Niantic a few



years ago during another irruption. Usually, irruption years indicate an abundance of young produced on the breeding grounds.

January 1, 2018 (Monday), 10:00 a.m.

First Day Hike

Begin 2018 with fresh air and a hike led by Friends of Sessions Woods Director Jan Gatzuras. The 5.5-mile loop hike will include The Great Wall and the backside of the Beaver Marsh. The terrain is moderately difficult but the pace will be comfortable. If participants are lucky, they may even see some river otter tracks! Please meet at the kiosk in the Sessions Woods parking lot. Registration is not necessary but recommended in case of a cancellation due to severe weather.



January 25, 2018 (Thursday), 6:00 p.m.

Bobcats in Connecticut

Join Wildlife Division Biologist Jason Hawley for a presentation on bobcats. Jason will discuss a new research study underway by the CT DEEP Wildlife Division to evaluate the diet, habitat use, and abundance of bobcats in Connecticut. This presentation will be held in the large meeting room of the Sessions Woods Conservation Education Center.



February 13, 2018 (Tuesday), 6:00 p.m.

Stories in the Stars

Join Friends of Sessions Woods Director Josh Peters for a look at the night sky. Josh will interpret the stories behind the constellations, maybe even including a few featuring wildlife! Bring binoculars if you have them or borrow a pair from the Friends of Sessions Woods. Participants should wear warm clothing and meet in the parking lot of the Sessions Woods Conservation Center.



February 20, 2018 (Tuesday), 1:30 p.m.

Children's Program: Wildlife Tracks & Sign

Wildlife may not be readily seen in winter but with good observational skills, evidence of their presence can be found. The program, led by CT DEEP Wildlife Division Natural Resource Educator Laura Rogers-Castro, begins indoors with a lesson on identifying common wildlife tracks seen in Connecticut and then the group travels outside for a short walk to look for animal tracks and signs. All children must be accompanied by an adult during the program. Please remember to dress appropriately for winter weather.



SAVE THE DATE:

Sunday, April 29, 2018, Annual Meeting with A Place Called Hope & Live Birds of Prey