

Raccoon



Fore Print
 Length: 2-3 in (5-7.5 cm)
 Width: 1.8-2.5 in (4.5-6.5 cm)

Hind Print
 Length: 2.4-3.8 in (6-9.5 cm)
 Width: 2-2.5 in (5-6.5 cm)

Straddle
 3.3-6 in (8.5-15 cm)

Stride
 Walking: 8-18 in (20-45 cm)
 Bounding: 15-25 in (38-65 cm)

Size
 (female is slightly smaller)
 Length: 24-37 in (60-95 cm)

Weight
 11-35 lb (5-16 kg)



walking



bounding group

RACCOON

Procyon lotor



The inquisitive Raccoon, common throughout all three states, is adored by some people for its distinctive face mask, yet disliked for its curiosity—often demonstrated with residential garbage cans. A good place to look for its tracks is near water. The Raccoon likes to rest in trees. It usually dens up in cold weather.

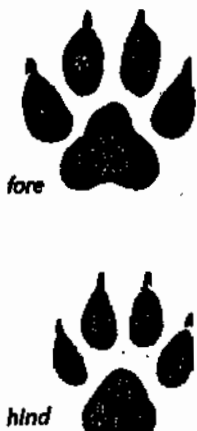
The Raccoon's unusual print, showing five well-formed toes, looks like a human handprint; its small claws make dots. Its highly dexterous forefeet rarely leave heel prints, but its hind prints, which are generally much clearer, do show heels. The Raccoon's peculiar walking track pattern shows the left fore print next to the right hind print (or just in front) and vice versa. When a raccoon walks in deep substrate, such as mud, it may use a direct-registering walk. The Raccoon occasionally bounds, leaving clusters with the two hind prints in front of the fore prints.

Similar Species: Unclear Opossum (p. 42) prints may look similar, but the Opossum drags its tail and has a distinctive thumb. In snow, also check the River Otter (p. 48).

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Domestic Dog



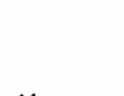
Fore Print
 (hind print is smaller)
 Length: 1-5.5 in (2.5-14 cm)
 Width: 1-5 in (2.5-13 cm)

Straddle
 1.5-8 in (3.8-20 cm)

Stride
 Walking: 3-32 in (7.5-80 cm)
 Loping/Galloping: to 9 ft (2.7 m)

Size
 Very variable

Weight
 Very variable



slow trotting



loping to galloping

DOMESTIC DOG

Canis familiaris



Dogs come in many shapes and sizes, from the tiny Chihuahua with its dainty feet to the robust and powerful Great Dane. Consequently, Domestic Dog tracks vary enormously. Dog ownership is high in many residential areas, and the popular pastime of dog walking can result in many dog tracks being left scattered about, especially in wet mud or sand.

The forefeet of the Domestic Dog, which are much larger than its hind feet and support more of the animal's weight, leave the clearest tracks. When a dog walks, the hind prints usually register ahead of or beside the fore prints. As the dog moves faster, it trots and then lopes before it gallops. In a trot or lope pattern the prints alternate fore-hind-fore-hind, whereas a gallop group shows (from back to front) fore-fore-hind-hind.

Similar Species: Dog tracks are usually found close to human tracks or activity. Red Wolf (*C. rufus*) or Coyote (*C. latrans*) tracks may look like a large Domestic Dog's, but they are very rare in the region. Fox (pp. 30-33) tracks may be confused with a small dog's.

Mountain Lion

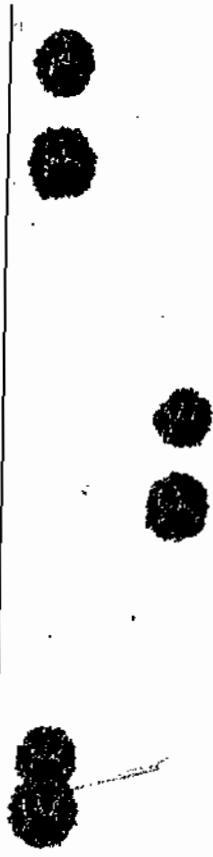


fore



hind

Fore Print
 (hind print is slightly smaller)
 Length: 3-4.3 in (7.5-11 cm)
 Width: 3.3-4.8 in (8.5-12 cm)
Straddle
 8-12 in (20-30 cm)
Stride
 Walking: 13-32 in (33-80 cm)
 Bounding: to 12 ft (3.7 m)
Size
 Height: 25-32 in (65-80 cm)
 Length: 3.5-5 ft (1.1-1.5 m)
Weight
 70-200 lb (32-90 kg)



walking (fast)

MOUNTAIN LION
 (Puma, Cougar,
 Panther)
Puma concolor

Panther



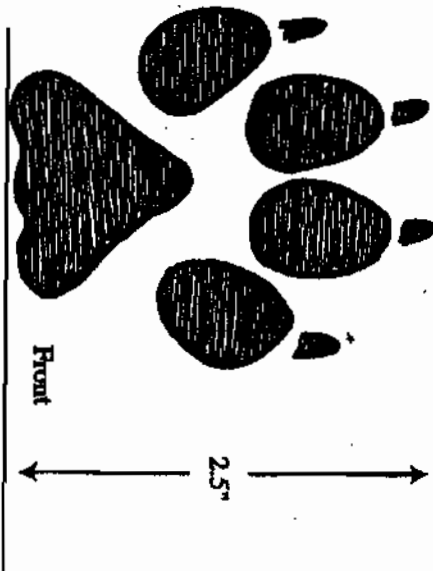
The magnificent Mountain Lion is shy and nocturnal in nature, and each cat requires a big home territory, so finding its tracks is usually the best that trackers can hope for. It is desperately holding onto its last regional stronghold in the swamps and inaccessible parts of Florida.

Mountain Lion prints tend to be wider than they are long. The retractable claws never register. In winter, thick fur on the foot enlarges the print and may stop the two lobes on the front of the heel pad from registering clearly. When a Mountain Lion walks, the hind print either direct registers or double registers on the larger fore print. As the walking pace increases, the hind print tends to fall ahead of the fore print. In dust or sand, the thick, long tail may leave a dragline that can blur some footprint detail. A Mountain Lion seldom gallops, but when it needs to catch prey, it is capable of long bounds. Also look for partly buried scat and kills covered for later eating.

Similar Species: A large Bobcat's (p. 36) prints may be confused with a juvenile Mountain Lion's.

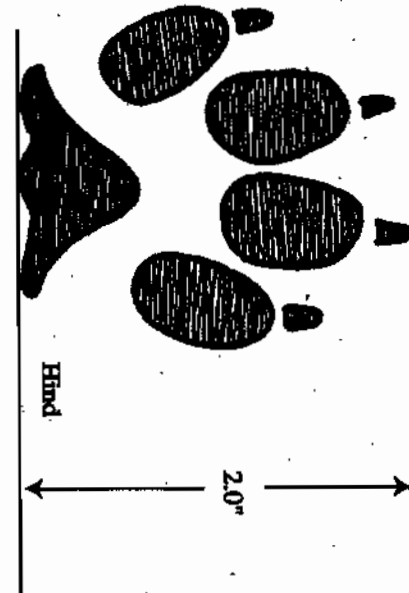


Coyote (Canis latrans). Note that the heel pads of all four paws have three lobes at the rear, but that those of the hind feet tend to print only partially leaving a "manicote" imprint.



Front

Coyote



Hind

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL



fore



hind

Fore Print

Length: 1-1.8 in (2.5-4.5 cm)

Width: 1 in (2.5 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 2.3-3 in (5.8-7.5 cm)

Width: 1.1-1.5 in (2.8-3.8 cm)

Straddle

3.8-6 in (9.5-15 cm)

Stride

Bounding: 0.7-3 ft (22-90 cm)

Size

Length with tail: 17-20 in (43-50 cm)

Weight

14-25 oz (400-710 g)



bounding

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL

Sciurus carolinensis



This large and familiar squirrel can be a common sight in the region's deciduous and mixed forests, even in urban areas. Active all year, the Eastern Gray Squirrel can leave a wealth of evidence, especially in winter as it scurries about digging up nuts that it buried during the previous fall.

The Eastern Gray Squirrel leaves a typical squirrel track when it runs or bounds. The hind prints fall slightly ahead of the fore prints. A clear fore print shows four toes with sharp claws, four fused palm pads and two heel pads. The hind print shows five toes and four palm pads; if the full length of the heel registers, it shows two small heel pads.

Similar Species: The Fox Squirrel (p. 76), with prints as large or larger, occupies the same range. A Red Squirrel (p. 78), which can be found in northern Georgia, has prints that are smaller. A rabbit (pp. 58-61) makes a longer print pattern, and its fore prints rarely register side by side when runs. Eastern Chipmunk (p. 72) tracks and Southern Flying Squirrel (p. 80) tracks have similar patterns, but they leave smaller straddles and prints.

Eastern Cottontail



hind



fore

Fore Print

Length: 1-1.5 in (2.5-3.8 cm)

Width: 0.8-1.3 in (2-3.3 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 3-3.5 in (7.5-9 cm)

Width: 1-1.5 in (2.5-3.8 cm)

Straddle

4-5 in (10-13 cm)

Stride

Hopping: 0.6-3 ft (18-90 cm)

Size

Length: 12-17 in (30-43 cm)

Weight

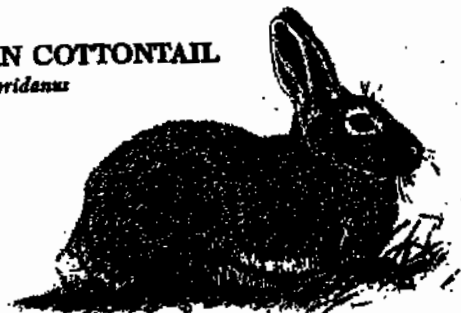
1.3-3 lb (0.6-1.4 kg)



hopping

EASTERN COTTONTAIL

Sylvilagus floridanus



This abundant rabbit is widespread throughout all three states. Preferring brushy areas in grasslands and cultivated areas, it might be found in dense vegetation, hiding from predators such as the Bobcat (p. 36) and foxes (pp. 30-38). Largely nocturnal, the Eastern Cottontail might be seen at dawn or dusk and on darker days.

As with other rabbits and hares, this rabbit's most common track is a triangular grouping of four prints, with the larger hind prints (which can appear pointed) falling in front of the fore prints (which may overlap). The hairiness of the toes will hide any pad detail. If you follow this rabbit's tracks, you could be startled if it flies out from its 'form,' a depression in the ground in which it rests.

Similar Species: The New England Cottontail (*S. transitionalis*), of open areas in northern Georgia and Alabama, leaves similar tracks. The Marsh Rabbit (p. 60) and the Swamp Rabbit (*S. aquaticus*) make similar tracks in wet habitats. The Snowshoe Hare (*Lepus americanus*), with larger prints (especially the hind ones), may be encountered in the mountains. Squirrel (pp. 74-81) tracks show the fore prints more consistently side by side.

Opossum



Fore Print

Length: 2-2.3 in (5-5.8 cm)

Width: 2-2.3 in (5-5.8 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 2.5-3 in (6.5-7.5 cm)

Width: 2-3 in (5-7.5 cm)

Straddle

4-5 in (10-13 cm)

Stride

5-11 in (13-28 cm)

Size

Length: 2-2.5 ft (60-75 cm)

Weight

9-13 lb (4-6 kg)



walking



fast walking

Nine-banded Armadillo



Fore Print

Length: 1.5-1.8 in (3.8-4.5 cm)

Width: 1.4-1.7 in (3.6-4.3 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 2-2.5 in (5-6.5 cm)

Width: 1.5-1.8 in (3.8-4.5 cm)

Straddle

2-3 in (5-7.5 cm)

Stride

3 in (7.5 cm)

Size

Length with tail: 24-32 in (60-80 cm)

Weight

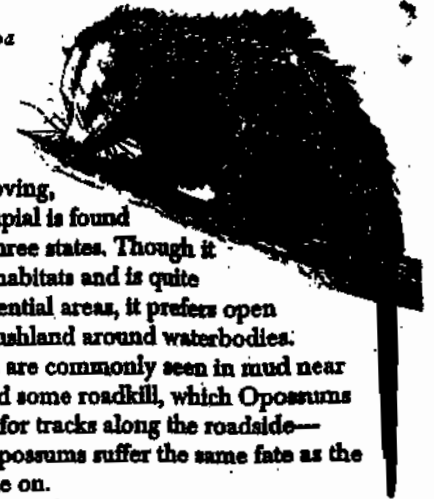
8-17 lb (3.6-7.5 kg)



walking in sand

OPOSSUM

Didelphis virginiana



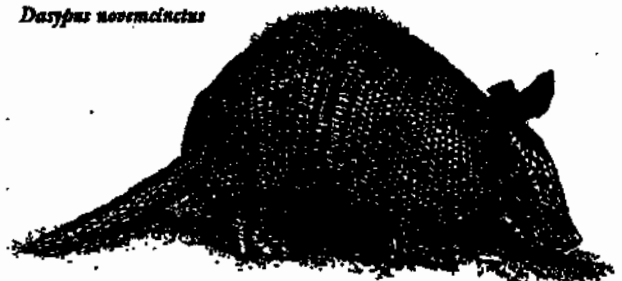
This slow-moving, nocturnal marsupial is found throughout all three states. Though it occupies many habitats and is quite tolerant of residential areas, it prefers open woodland or brushland around waterbodies. Opossum tracks are commonly seen in mud near water. If you find some roadkill, which Opossums like to eat, look for tracks along the roadside—though many Opossums suffer the same fate as the carrion they dine on.

The Opossum is an excellent climber, so its trail may lead to a tree. It has two walking habits: the common alternating pattern, with the hind prints registering on the fore prints, and a Raccoon-like (p. 40) paired-print pattern with each hind print next to the opposing fore print. The very long, inward-pointing thumb of the hind foot does not make a claw mark. In sand or dust, the dragline of the tail may be seen as a thin, gently swerving trail.

Similar Species: Prints in which the distinctive thumbs do not show may be mistaken for a Raccoon's.

NINE-BANDED ARMADILLO

Dasyurus novemcinctus



This comical, well-armed character of Florida, southern Georgia and Alabama constantly snuffles in the dirt in a pig-like manner. If an armadillo is preoccupied with its affairs, you can get surprisingly close to observe it in action. Hassle it too much and you may get a kick from its strong legs, or it may run off in a straight line and right into a tree! It can run quickly if necessary, but often curls up to protect its vulnerable underside.

Armadillo tracks, often found in an alternating walking pattern, are usually most plentiful near dens and burrows—look in loose, sandy soils that make for easy digging and foraging. When clear, a fore print shows four clawed toes and a hind print shows five, but draglines from the tail and armor often blur the tracks. During hot-weather mud baths, the bony armor may leave imprints. The armadillo may swim rivers or walk across on the bottom.

Similar Species: Clear armadillo tracks are very birdlike. Unclear tracks in sand or dust may be mistaken for White-tailed Deer (p. 20) prints, so look around for other signs if you are unsure.

Eastern Spotted Skunk



fore



hind

Fore Print

Length: 1-1.3 in (2.5-3.3 cm)
Width: 0.9-1.1 in (2.3-2.8 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 1.2-1.5 in (3-3.8 cm)
Width: 0.9-1.1 in (2.3-2.8 cm)

Straddle

2-3 in (5-7.5 cm)

Stride

Walking: 1.5-3 in (3.8-7.5 cm)

Bounding: 6-12 in (15-30 cm)

Size

Length: 13-25 in (33-65 cm)

Weight

0.6-2.2 lb (0.3-1 kg)



walking

bounding

EASTERN SPOTTED SKUNK

Spilogale putorius



This beautifully marked skunk, smaller than its striped cousin, is distributed throughout the region, except for southeastern Georgia. It enjoys diverse habitats—such as scrubland, forests and farmland—but it is a rare sight, because of its nocturnal habits, and because it dens up during cold spells, coming out only on warmer nights.

This skunk leaves a very haphazard trail as it forages for food on the ground. Occasionally, and with ease, it climbs trees. The long claws on the forefeet often register, and the palm and heel may leave defined pad marks. Although this skunk rarely runs, when it does so it may bound along, leaving groups of four prints, hind ahead of fore. It sprays only when truly provoked, so its powerful odor is less frequently detected than that of the Striped Skunk (p. 54).

Similar Species: The larger Striped Skunk, found in all three states, has larger prints and less scattered tracks with a shorter running stride (or it jumps); it does not climb trees.

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River Otter



fore



hind

Fore Print

Length: 2.5-3.5 in (6.5-9 cm)
Width: 2-3 in (5-7.5 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 3-4 in (7.5-10 cm)
Width: 2.3-3.3 in (5.8-8.5 cm)

Straddle

4-9 in (10-23 cm)

Stride

Loping: 12-27 in (30-70 cm)

Size

(female is two-thirds the size of male)
Length with tail: 3-4.3 ft (90-130 cm)

Weight

10-25 lb (4.5-11 kg)



loping (fast)

RIVER OTTER

Lontra canadensis



No animal knows how to have more fun than a River Otter. If you are lucky enough to watch one at play, you will not soon forget the experience. Widespread and well-adapted for the aquatic environment, this otter lives along waterbodies in all three states. Expect to find a wealth of evidence along riverbanks in an otter's home territory. An otter in the forest is usually on its way to another waterbody. The River Otter loves to slide down muddy riverbanks, leaving troughs nearly 1 foot (30 cm) wide.

In soft mud, the webbing on the River Otter's five-toed feet, especially the hind ones, may be evident. The inner toes are set slightly apart. If the forefoot's metacarpal pad registers, it lengthens the print. Very variable, otter trails usually show the typical mustelid 2x2 loping. However, with faster gaits, they leave groups of four and three prints. The thick, heavy tail often leaves a dragline.

Similar Species: Although the Mink (p. 50) can leave similar signs (but on a much smaller scale), the size and abundance of the River Otter's signs make identification easy.

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BOBCAT (Wildcat)

Lynx rufus



The Bobcat, a stealthy and usually nocturnal hunter that is widely distributed in Florida and in southern parts of Georgia and Alabama, is seldom seen. Very adaptable, it can leave tracks anywhere from wild mountainsides to chaparral and even in residential areas.

A walking Bobcat's hind feet usually register directly on its larger fore prints. As the Bobcat picks up speed, its trail becomes an ambling pattern of paired prints, the hind leading this fore. At even greater speeds, it leaves four-print groups in a lope pattern. The fore prints show particular asymmetry. The front part of the heel pad has two lobes and the rear part has three. In deep sand or mud, the Bobcat's feet may leave draglines. The Bobcat marks its territory with half-buried scat along its meandering trail.

Similar Species: Juvenile Mountain Lion (p. 34) prints can be similar. Large Domestic Cats (p. 38) have similar prints but a shorter stride and a narrower straddle, and they will not wander far from home. Canid (pp. 28-33) prints are narrower than they are long and show claw marks, and the fronts of their footpads are once-lobed.



fore



hind

Fore Print
(hind print is slightly smaller)
Length: 1.8-2.5 in (4.5-6.5 cm)
Width: 1.8-2.5 in (4.5-6.5 cm)

Straddle

4-7 in (10-18 cm)

Stride

Walking: 8-16 in (20-40 cm)

Running: 4-8 ft (1.2-2.4 m)

Size

(female is slightly smaller)

Height: 20-22 in (50-55 cm)

Length: 25-30 in (65-75 cm)

Weight

15-35 lb (7-16 kg)

36

Gray Fox



fore



hind



GRAY FOX

Urocyon cinereoargenteus



Found throughout all three states, this small, shy fox is nocturnal in nature. It can sometimes be seen in abandoned fields and farmland that border the woodland and shrubby areas that are its preferred habitat. The only fox to climb trees, it does so either for safety or to forage. The Gray Fox often dens among rocks or in a hollow tree.

The freckled variety—kitten shown above—has the same basic pattern.

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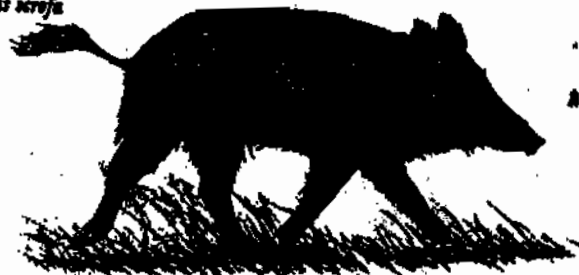
Fore and Hind Prints
(with dewclaws)
Length: 2.5-3 in (6.5-7.5 cm)
Width: 2.3 in (5.8 cm)
Straddle
5-6 in (13-15 cm)
Stride
Trotting: 16-20 in (40-50 cm)
Size (male>female)
Height: 3 ft (90 cm)
Length: 4.3-6 ft (1.3-1.8 m)
Weight
77-440 lb (35-200 kg)



trotting

FERAL PIG (Wild Pig, Wild Boar)

Sus scrofa



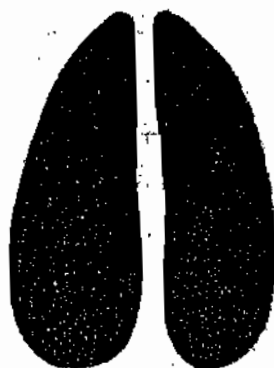
Descended from animals introduced by European settlers, the wild Feral Pig interbred with escaped Domestic Pigs. Populations of this sturdy beast of the dense undergrowth can be found scattered through some parts of the region, most notably in Georgia. Armed with tusks, this pig can be quite threatening.

A Feral Pig's print shows two prominent, widely spaced toe marks, and usually, except on firm surfaces, a clear, pointed dewclaw mark off to the side. The hind print is slightly smaller than the fore print. Feral Pigs are keen foragers, so their tracks can often be numerous, especially when they travel in a group. They usually trot, generally making an alternating track pattern typical of four-legged animals, with a double register of hind over fore print. Other signs of the Feral Pig are wallows and diggings.

Similar Species: White-tailed Deer (p. 20) tracks are similar but more pointed, with a longer stride, dewclaws to the rear (not the side) and a narrower gap between the toes. Although the Domestic Pig is the same species, its tracks have a wider straddle and are less neat, often forming two separate lines.



White-tailed Deer



Fore and Hind Prints
Length: 2-3.5 in (5-9 cm)
Width: 1.6-2.5 in (4-6.5 cm)
Straddle
5-10 in (13-25 cm)
Stride
Walking: 10-20 in (25-50 cm)
Galloping: 6-15 ft (1.8-4.5 m)
Size (buck>doe)
Height: 3-3.5 ft (90-110 cm)
Length: to 6.3 ft (1.9 m)
Weight
120-350 lb (55-160 kg)

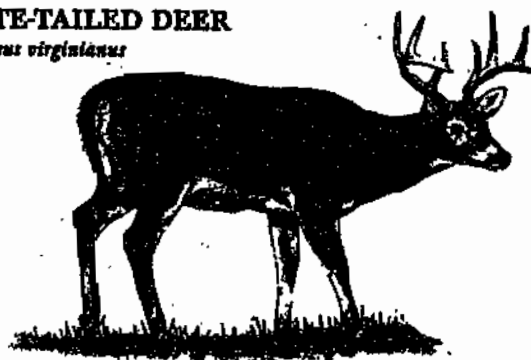


walking

gallop group

WHITE-TAILED DEER

Odocoileus virginianus

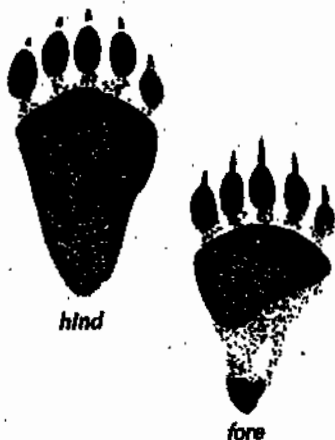


The keen hearing of this deer guarantees that it knows about you before you know about it. Frequently, all that we see is its conspicuous white tail as it gallops away, earning this deer the nickname 'flagtail.' The White-tailed Deer, widespread throughout the three states, may be found in small groups at the edges of woodlands. It often ventures out into open areas and is frequently seen in farmland and close to residential areas.

This deer's prints are heart-shaped and pointed. Its alternating walking track pattern shows the hind prints direct registered or double registered on the fore prints. In deep substrate, such as wet sand or mud, the dewclaws register. This flighty deer gallops in the usual style, leaving hind prints in front of fore prints, with toes spread wide for steadier, safer footing.

Similar Species: The White-tailed Deer is the only wild deer in the three states. The Feral Pig (p. 22) usually registers its prominent dewclaws.

Black Bear



Fore Print

Length: 4-6.3 in (10-16 cm)

Width: 3.8-5.5 in (9.5-14 cm)

Hind Print

Length: 6-7 in (15-18 cm)

Width: 3.5-5.5 in (9-14 cm)

Straddle

9-15 in (23-38 cm)

Stride

Walking: 17-23 in (43-58 cm)

Size (male>female)

Height: 3-3.5 ft (90-110 cm)

Length: 5-6 ft (1.5-1.8 m)

Weight

200-600 lb (90-270 kg)



walking
(slow)

BLACK BEAR

Ursus americanus



The Black Bear inhabits the southernmost part of the region, where it prefers wild terrain in forested, swampy areas, and the mountains of northern Georgia, where it may sleep deeply through the colder months. Finding its bear tracks can be a thrill, but take care—the bear may be just around the corner. Never underestimate the potential power of a surprised bear!

Black Bear prints somewhat resemble small human prints, but they are wider and show claw marks. The smallest inner toe rarely registers. The forefoot's small heel pad often shows and the hind foot has a big heel. The bear's slow walk results in a slightly pigeon-toed double register with the hind print on the fore print. More frequently, at faster pace, the hind foot oversteps the forefoot. When a bear runs, the two hind feet register in front of the forefeet in an extended cluster. Along well-worn bear paths, look for 'digs'—patches of dug-up earth—and 'bear trees' whose scratched bark shows that these bears climb.

Similar Species: No other animal in the region leaves clawed prints this big.

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Alligators, Crocodiles & Caimans



fore

hind

ALLIGATORS, CROCODILES & CAIMANS



American
Alligator

The American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) has a considerable reputation, for obvious reasons. This inhabitant of marshes, ponds and rivers—including brackish water—in Florida and southern regions of Alabama and Georgia is North America's largest reptile: it can grow to the impressive length of over 19 feet (5.8 m).

The fore print shows five toes, and the hind print shows four (webbing may be evident between them). However, other signs are more obvious than the tracks. This relic from the past frequently basks on riverbanks, but it can quickly slide into the water, so look for crushed vegetation and riverside mudslides. If you come across a mound of broken vegetation and mud up to 7 feet (2.1 m) in diameter, it is probably an alligator's nest. Err on the side of caution, because the female is a caring parent and will defend her nest and young. Do not be too tempted to look at any tracks close to the water!

In southernmost peninsular Florida, similar tracks may be from the American Crocodile (*Crocodylus acutus*), which is still hanging on after years of persecution and habitat loss. The much smaller Spectacled Caiman (*Caiman crocodylus*), introduced from South America, is also restricted to the far south.

White-tailed Deer: Pointed and split heart-shaped print.

Feral Hog: Widely spread marks and rounded.

Black bear: Resemble small human prints, but they are wider and show claw marks.

American Alligator: Web toes and the front/fore print shows five toes and the back/hind print shows four. Usually a dragging tail is shown in the sand or mud.

Eastern spotted skunk: Long claws on the front/fore feet.

Northern River otter: Webbing on the five-toed feet. The inner toes are set slightly apart. Hind toes are elongated and webbed, much like a scuba diver's swim fins.

Bobcat: Retracts their claws. Four (4) toes on each foot, and all four feet approximately the same size. Track is more rounded than a coyote or dog. Size compared to panther/smaller. Front of heel pad, toward toes, is concave (inward) different than other cats.

Gray fox: Long print for all four feet/Sometimes retracts their claws.

Raccoon: Well formed five toes that look like a human hand print. Small claws make prints.

Domestic Dog: Claws and four (4) toes in all tracks.

Virginia Opossum: Inward pointing thumb on the hind/back foot. Five toes usually apart with claws. Hind/back four toes pointing forward with claws and 5th toe is long and thumb like pointing inward or to the rear.

Nine-banded Armadillo: Strong digging claws toes in the front/fore four (4) and five (5) toes in the back/hind. Sometimes you will see a tail drag print. Innermost toes of front and hind feet much smaller and more off set than the other toes.

Eastern Gray Squirrel: Front/fore shows four clawed toes and the back/hind shows five clawed toes. Tracks of front feet rounded and tracks of hind are elongated. Similar to rabbit tracks but smaller.

Eastern cottontail rabbit: Large hind/back print. Four (4)-toes on all four feet. Front feet are nearly round and hind feet are elongated. Claws generally show in tracks.

Coyote: Claws/narrow track/hind print is shaped like a "mustache"

Panther: No claws/retracts its claws. Four (4) large toes. Three (3) lobes on pads.