

FIELD PROCEDURE: FISH AND WILDLIFE SIGNS



EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- the five senses
- field guides if you have them & are inclined to use them
- data sheet, clipboard, pencil

Anytime you visit your reach, you will note any signs of fish or wildlife. You'll be most likely to observe animal signs when you first arrive at your site, but be open to observations that may occur at any time. How detailed and technical you wish to get is up to you, but even such information as "about six little brown birds," "a few fish fry about 2" long," or "tracks--raccoon?" can be useful to biologists. The UW Nature Mapping project will accept observations identified to species level only, so if you do know the specific or Latin name for the creature you observe, be sure to list it.

Note: Only write what you know—if you're taking a guess, indicate that it's a guess and why you've guessed it.

FISH

Your best bet is to quietly walk up to a pool, preferably not casting a shadow on it. If you're lucky, you may see some fish-like shapes holding still or darting around. Other possible sightings include spawners in riffles or pool tailouts, carcasses, or redds (salmon and trout nests), which are elongated oval mounds in the streambed that are algae-free, often with a depression on the upstream side.

There is a juvenile salmonid ID book in your field kit, but these are almost impossible to identify without catching them; "salmonid spp." would cover any salmon or trout that you might find. If you investigate your watershed and consult your local fisheries biologist or Streamkeeper staff, you will be able to make a pretty good guess as to what species of fish you might find in the stream at a given time of the year.

WILDLIFE

The visual observation approach recommended below can yield valuable information on the presence and absence of wildlife and their relative abundances in different survey areas. For identification, there are many publications and keys available to help you. The animal-tracks key in your field kit will help since most wildlife do not appreciate human observers and hide from view. Or you may wish to bring a knowledgeable partner (such as an Audubon member) to help you.

BIRDS

Birds may be the easiest creatures to spot. Look and listen for them as you walk into your reach. Take into consideration that different species inhabit different layers of the vegetation, from the dense, shrubby undergrowth to the top of the canopy.

Note the locations where you see and hear birds both spatially and vertically. Record the species that you are able to identify by sight or sound. Also document any evidence you see that birds are present, such as nests, egg shells, feathers, or tracks.

HERPS

Herps (reptiles and amphibians) are more secretive than birds. The best places to look for them are under rocks and logs in damp spots, especially along the stream's wetted edges. Take care not to create too much disturbance on the fragile stream banks, and make sure you return all logs and rocks to their original positions.

In the spring, look for amphibian egg masses in slow-moving backwater areas, side channels, and other wetlands associated with the stream and in your reach area. If you can, take a trip to your stream reach on a spring evening to listen for breeding frogs.

MAMMALS

Mammals may be the most challenging to spot, but they often leave behind evidence of their presence. Note any signs of mammals that you see in addition to actual sightings. Signs may be in the form of nibbled plant matter, scat, bones, fur, tracks, trails, nests, burrows or dens. You can use the scat and tracks keys here and in your field kit to help identify these signs. We also have a more detailed animal tracks guidebook in the Streamkeepers office that you can consult.

DOGS

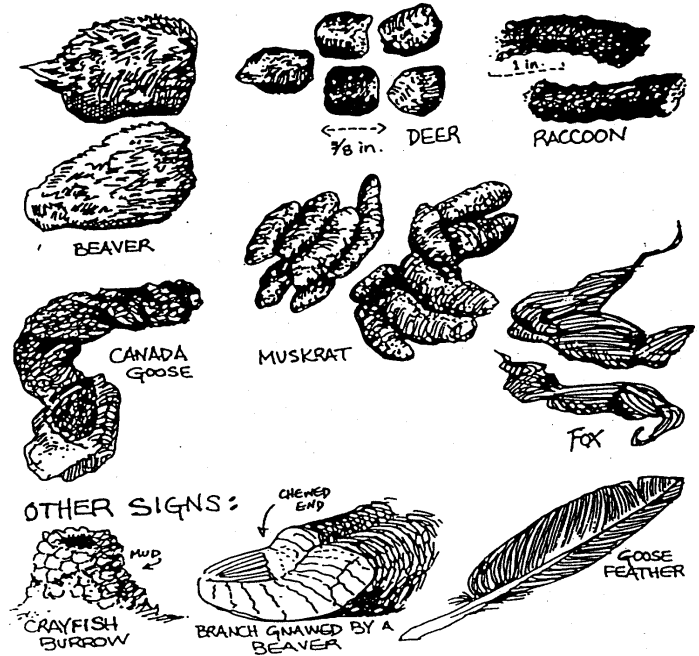
Note any sign of dogs in or near the creek, and take photos of them if you can. Dogs can eat spawning salmon and should not be left loose to do so. If notified, the Dept. of Fish & Wildlife can investigate and contact the appropriate landowner.

RECORDING WHAT YOU FIND

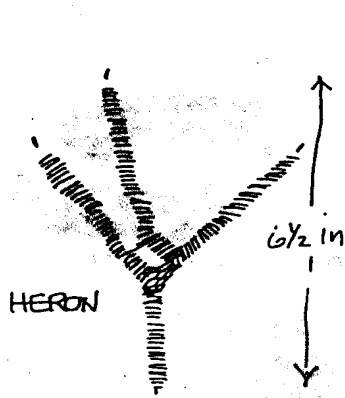
Record what you see in the space provided on your data sheet:

1. You can document the species you see, or use broad categories to record your wildlife sightings. For example, birds are categorized into types such as gulls, ducks, sandpipers, passerines (perching birds), raptors, etc. Herps can be easily distinguished as frogs, salamanders, snakes, turtles, etc.
2. Include information on number, size, and activity. Feel free to estimate, using the "~" symbol in front of a number to denote "approximately."
3. If no fish or wildlife are observed, write "None" in the data boxes.
4. In the "Sampler's Initials" box to the right of the data boxes, put all the initials of one sampler taking responsibility for the data. If more than one person worked on this data, put the initials of the person with the most experience or knowledge.

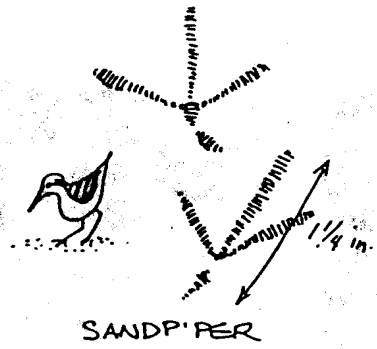
ANIMAL SCAT



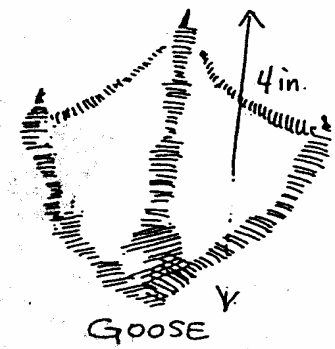
FOOTPRINTS (TRACKS)



HERON



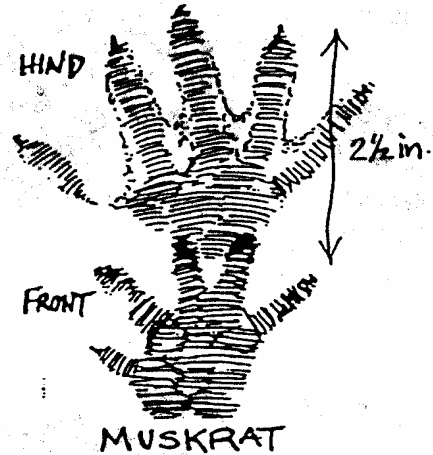
SANDPIPER



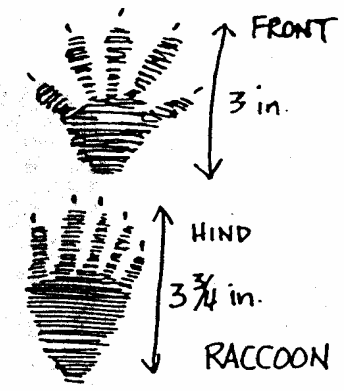
GOOSE



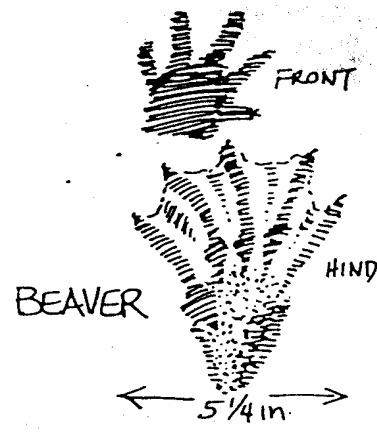
OTTER



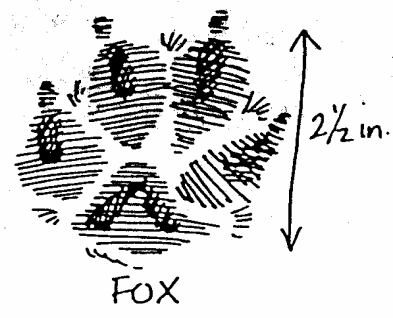
MUSKRAT



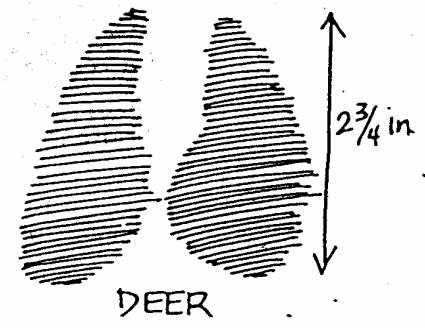
RACCOON



BEAVER



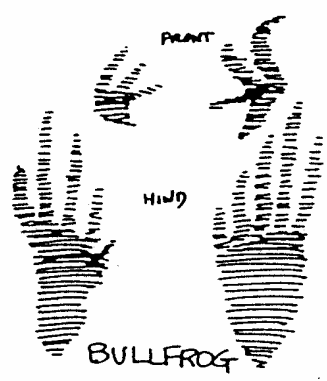
FOX



DEER



TURTLE



BULLFROG



DOG

From NEWS SPLASH, City of Bellevue
Salmon drawing Dog-Eared Publications

WHO'S THERE?

What kind of spawning salmon or trout is that?

① Length
Chinook: 24-60"
Sockeye: 10-18"
Coho: 17-38"
Steelhead: up to 45"
Cutthroat: up to 30"
Chum: 30-42"

② Dorsal Fin
Distinct dark spots: Chinook, Steelhead, Cutthroat
No spots: Sockeye, Coho, Chum

③ Back and sides
Green to brown, spots on back: Chinook
Bluish-green, lower sides red: Coho
Bright red to red-gray: Sockeye
Reddish stripe on sides: Steelhead
Silver or faint red: Cutthroat
Red-purple vertical markings: Chum

④ Caudal fin
Spots both upper & lower: Chinook, Steelhead, Cutthroat
Spots upper lobe only: Coho
No spots: Sockeye, Chum

⑤ Head
Bright to olive green: Sockeye
Dark bluish-green: Coho
Hooked jaw: Chinook, Sockeye, Coho males
Blunt head: Steelhead, Cutthroat

⑥ Gumline (colors typical, but may vary)
Black on lower jaw: Chinook
Light color: Coho

⑦ Gill Covers
Green to brown: Chinook
Bright to olive green: Sockeye
Reddish: Coho, Steelhead

- 1st draft - Olympic Peninsula Salmon Timetable

These timing bars are estimates only. Information comes from SASSI report.

