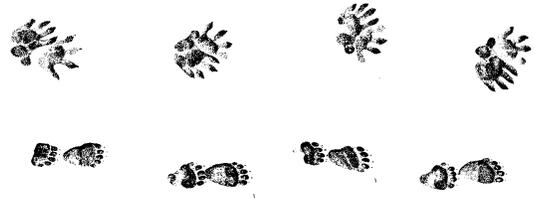

Sand Tracks Detective



Objective

This activity improves observational skills, perception, and problem-solving skills.

Materials

Provided in the kit:

- Various activity/movement flash cards
- Optional: various animal track replicas
- Optional: fold-out booklet, *Pocket Naturalist: Animal Tracks*

Not provided in the kit:

- rake
- sand bed

Appropriate Grade Level: 3-8

Time Required: 30-40 Minutes

Curriculum Benchmarks:

Scientific Inquiry: Ask questions about organisms and events that are based on observations and can be explored through simple investigations.

Activity Inventory:

See materials list.

Background Information

Every action or behavior has the potential of being recorded in some way if the conditions are right. In this way, paleontologists, and archaeologists and historians learn about the plants, animals, and people that lived here in the past. Wildlife biologists, wildlife photographers, game managers, hunters, and ranchers learn about the habits and behaviors, population densities, etc. of the animals they are interested in. Police detectives also solve crimes by looking for clues left behind by criminals.

In this activity, students sit in a circle around a smoothed damp, fine-grain sand bed (long-jump pit) with their backs to the circle and their eyes closed. Students take turns creating a trail of tracks in the sand by jumping, walking, hopping, crawling, rolling, sliding, dragging, etc. After each set of tracks is made, the other students open their eyes, turn around and guess what activity or motion was used to generate the tracks, and what direction the tracks are moving in. If a pair or team of students made the tracks, the other students can try to guess what scenario is being portrayed by the tracks.

Activity

1. Gather the students in a circle and explain the activity.
2. Select the initial student or group of students to create tracks in the sand, and have all other students turn their backs to the sandpit and close their eyes.

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3. To the student(s) making the tracks, show an activity/motion card and tell them the direction in which they should travel.
4. When the tracks have been made, the other students can open their eyes and turn to face the sandpit. Give them up to 1 minute to observe the tracks. Then ask the students what they think the tracks mean. What activities/motions were used to make the tracks? In which direction are the tracks moving?
5. Show the group the activity/motion card to verify their responses.
6. Repeat steps 2-5 until every student has had the opportunity to make tracks.
7. Wrap up the activity by discussing the following questions: Which tracks were the easiest to identify? Which tracks were the most difficult to identify? Why? What other types of activities might leave clues? What kind of clues?

OPTIONAL

8. Do the same activity, but let the students use various animal track replicas to make tracks in the sand. The other students can use the fold-out booklets, *Pocket Naturalist: Animal Tracks* to determine which animal track replica was used.

