

TRACK HUNTING

Wildlife viewing is a popular activity for visitors and residents of Lake County. Some of the more popular animals to spot include the Florida Black Bear, Bobcat, White-tailed Deer and Marsh Rabbit.

Sometimes it may be difficult to see animals, but that doesn't mean they are not present. By learning to read the signs animals leave behind, it will increase your chances of spotting them. The best time to look for animal tracks is early in the morning or later in the afternoon when the sun casts shadows in the tracks. Also after a heavy rain, damp soils create a clean slate for fresh tracks that can retain their shape for several days.

A few places to look for animal tracks are near water or on well-worn trails. Large animals will use more open areas, while a small area under some brush can lead to many different little tracks. Studying tracks can also give clues on how big the animal was or how it moved. Part of the fun of studying wildlife tracks is getting to know an animal's routine. Some wildlife, such as bobcats and rabbits, stay in one area leaving fresh tracks in the same places regularly.

The Lake County Parks & Trails Division offers more than two dozen parks and preserves for recreational activities. A team of park rangers also presents monthly guided hiking tours, educational discussions and paddling excursions. For a complete list of parks and events, log on to www.lakecountyfl.gov, keyword: parks, call (352) 253-4950 or email ParksandTrails@lakecountyfl.gov.

TIPS FOR WILDLIFE VIEWING

Code of Conduct

1. Learn about any protected plant and animal species in the area
2. On multiuse trails, horses always have the right of way
3. Observing without handling is the preferred method of exploration
4. Stay on designated trails
5. Keep noise to a minimum to avoid scaring off wildlife.
6. Know local hunting seasons and rules before exploring natural places.

Prepare for Observation

1. Prevent wildlife disruption by reducing pocket change, noisy jewelry and rustling clothes
2. When outdoors for a long time in Florida's hot sun, plan to bring water, sunscreen and a hat
3. Comfortable, waterproof shoes are recommended for exploring different habitats
4. Wildlife is best viewed and often most active during early morning and prior to sunset
5. Productive wildlife viewing areas include transitional zones between different habitats



LAKE COUNTY
FLORIDA

Parks & Trails Division

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HINTS OF THE WILD

Identifying wildlife tracks at
Lake County's parks and preserves



LAKE COUNTY
FLORIDA

A ARMADILLO
(length: fore 1.5-2 in.; hind 2-2.5 in.)

B BLACK BEAR
(length: fore 4-6 in.; hind 6-7 in.)

C BOBCAT
(length: 1.5-2.5 in., hind print is slightly smaller)

D EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL
(length: fore 1-1.5 in.; hind 2.5-3 in.)

E FERAL PIG
(length: 2.5-3 in.)

F GRAY FOX
(length: fore 1.5-2 in.; hind 1-1.5 in.)

G MARSH RABBIT
(length: fore 1-1.5 in.; hind 3-3.5 in.)

H OPOSSUM
(length: fore 2-2.5 in.; hind 2.5-3 in.)

I PANTHER
(length: 3-4.5 in., hind print is slightly smaller)

J RACCOON
(length: 2-3 in.; 2.5-4 in.)

K RIVER OTTER
(length: fore 2.5-3.5 in.; hind 3-4 in.)

L SNAKES
(length: not available)

M WHITE-TAILED DEER
(length: 2-3.5 in.)

N WILD TURKEY
(length: 3.5-4.5 in.)

