

Suzy's World

Tracks - How can you tell who has been at the beach today?

Fact

- Sand moves easily when a force like weight is introduced.
- When the weight is removed the sand stays in that position until the wind moves it, the tide washes it away or more another weight moves it.
- Anything that carries enough weight to compact the sand will leave behind a track as it moves.
- An animal may also leave behind other signs that it has been there like poos.
- People have hunted animals for hundreds of years by following the tracks the animals leave behind.



Do you know

- Tracks can also be seen easily in snow, and sticky mud.
- Fossil footprints have been found of animals that lived thousands of years ago.
- Animals like sheep and goats can often wear a pathway in a hillside as they continue to walk up and down the hill along the same track.
- By looking at a track scientists can usually tell what kind of animal made the track and how big it was.
- They can also tell if the animal was walking or running and even if the animal was hurt - just by looking at the tracks.
- Scientists will look for other signs to find out what the animal was doing in that area (like looking for food, building a home or just lazing in the sun).

Experiments you can do

Have a look at the tracks left at the beach next time you visit.

Who has been there that day, can you tell?

Take a note of the tracks that the members of your family leave.

(I could always follow my Grandad's tracks on the beach because he walked a bit like a penguin with his toes pointing outward).



Build a sandcastle near the water as the tide comes in and watch how the waves knock the castle down and distribute the sand as if it had never been there at all.

Other Investigations

You don't have to go to the beach to find tracks. Have a look at the grass on your way to school on a frosty morning. Or how about in mud on a farm, what tracks would you find?

Where else can you find tracks?

Try making your own tracks in a sandpit or make a track pattern on paper. Find a book in your library on animal tracks and see if you can recognise any of the tracks.

Jokes

What name do you give someone who lives at the beach? Sandy.