



Backyard Trackyard



Florida and Fauna

A naturalist studies plants and animals, fungi and other living things in their natural environment, and observes how the ecosystem works together. Learning the skill of identifying Animal Tracks allows naturalists to understand more about the types of creatures that live in a particular area. In this activity, we'll prepare a lure for the animals around you, and observe their tracks to identify them

Bonnet Springs Park's Nature Center displays immersive exhibits on native Florida wildlife and species. Discover what wildlife you already share an environment with in this activity!

You Will Need:

For Step 1 and 2:

- A Baking Sheet (*at least 13 x 18"*)
- A cardboard tissue roll.
- A Pencil (*Sharpened or not*)
- Aluminum Foil
- A nail or toothpick at least 2" long.
- A roll of Masking Tape

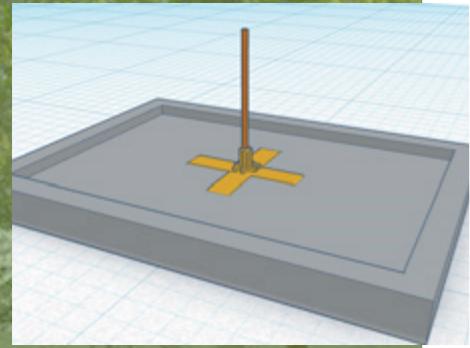
For Step 3 and Beyond:

- Large mixing bowl
- 1 cup of Flour or Cornstarch
- 2 cups of play sand
- Creamy Peanut Butter
- Oats & seeds (Sunflower, sesame, or bird seed)

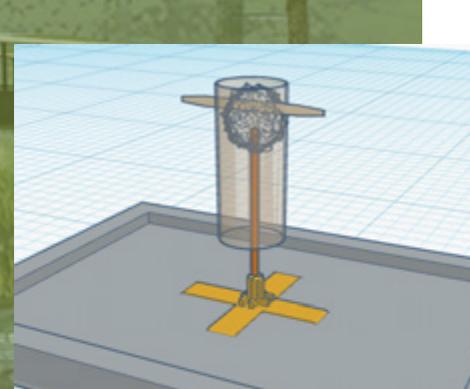
Build

We will build a simple animal feeder that can be easily replaced or replenished and may attract several herbivorous animals.

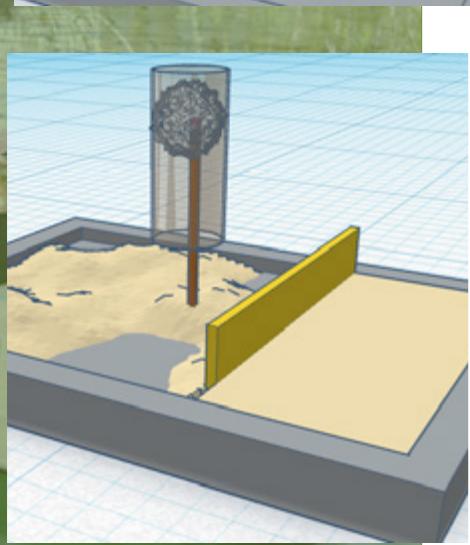
Peanut allergy warning: Substitute a 2:1 mixture of Water and Cornstarch in place of peanut butter. Heat the mixture gently until the cornstarch turns clear, and let cool. This creates a non-toxic, lightly tacky glue. Try adding honey before heating!



1. Stand the pencil upright in the center of the baking sheet. Use four pieces of Masking Tape in an X-pattern to hold it upright. Tightly packed foil around the base will add stability.



2. Build a Feeder We will make a feeder that can be easily removed from the pencil. A nail (or toothpick) is pushed through the sides of the tissue roll like a bridge. A ball of aluminum foil placed inside the tube will hold it upright on the pencil.



3. Make your Track Sand - In a large bowl, Mix 1 cup of flour or cornstarch with 2 cups of sand until well blended.

4. Set Your Trackway - Move the baking sheet outside to where animals can find it. Pour your track sand mixture into the tray, and smooth with a ruler or other straight edge. The surface should be as smooth as possible.

5. **Bait Your Feeder** - Spread your peanut butter thickly over the surface of your cardboard roll. Pour oats and seeds over the peanut butter and coat evenly. (You can also drizzle some honey over the peanut butter to help stick to the oats.)
6. Carefully place your feeder onto the pencil in the center of your trackway. Take a picture of your trackway with a smartphone or digital camera to compare later. Leave your trackway in place overnight.
7. In the morning, check your trackway for any changes. Take another photo as it appears.
8. Compare to the common animal tracks of Florida and see who visited your yard!

Observe

- **If you do not see tracks:**
 - No worries! Check the feeder and replace any food that may have fallen off. Smooth the trackway and check again the following morning.
- **If you do see tracks:**
 - Take a photo of the track from directly above. Put a common object like a quarter or a ruler next to it to record the size of the track.



Many animals are patient when discovering new food, and may not use your feeder on the first day.