

COPR: Furry Friends

Next Generation Science Standards

2-LS4-1. Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats. [Clarification Statement: Emphasis is on the diversity of living things in each of a variety of different habitats.] [Assessment Boundary: Assessment does not include specific animal and plant names in specific habitats.]

Lesson Plan: Furry Friends

Objective: Students will engage in scientific observation and explore the coastal dune community with a short introduction to studying animal tracks.

Materials: KIN Journals, Wood or metal stakes, Colored ribbon or plastic tape

Preparation: Prior to student's arrival, and as early as possible to avoid disturbance, locate and stake ribbon around a few small areas encircling some fresh animal tracks from the intertidal zone to the sand dunes. Look for bird, mammal, and invertebrate tracks.

Introduction: Ask the students what animals they think might visit Coal Oil Point Reserve and why. What evidence can we look for to see what animals have been here? *Feathers, fur, skin, bones, droppings etc. and footprints.* What do you think those animals were doing here? *Hunting, foraging, nesting etc.*

Procedure: Walk students around the roped-off areas letting them identify the footprints with the key on pg of their KIN Journals.

Points of interest: Skunk and raccoon tracks are common. Emphasize that the skunks and raccoons are predators that can hunt the already threatened Western Snowy Plovers and their eggs. Though the skunks and raccoons are natural predators, a readily available food supply from nearby, encroaching human communities has increased their population. Are there really Cougars that visit Coal Oil Point? Probably not in a while, though Cougars and their tracks have been spotted recently in the Guadalupe Dunes just north of here and there was a bear that came all the way down the Goleta Slough not too long ago. Animals like these are less common on the beach than in the past due to human encroachment causing a lack of corridors for them to access the habitat. What other animals might threaten the Plover's nesting grounds? Coyotes, foxes, and domesticated dogs and cats may also leave their tracks on the sand.

Conclusion: Let the students draw their favorite animal tracks in the sand.