

# Track Casting

4 & Up

Spring showers make great mud, and mud is a great place to look for tracks. Animal tracks of all sorts, and bird tracks too, are easy to find once you start looking. You can preserve those interesting tracks and bring them home as plaster casts. It is easy and fun.

### Supplies:

- ⇒ strips of boxboard (cereal box) 3-5 cm x 30-40 cm, 2 or more per person
- ⇒ paper clips or clothes pegs or a stapler
- ⇒ Plaster of Paris Dry Mix- hardware store, cost about \$7
- ⇒ bottle of water
- ⇒ measurement cup
- ⇒ container for mixing
- ⇒ spatula or wooden stick for mixing
- ⇒ container or newspaper to wrap tracks in for safe transport home and for messy tools and containers



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### Procedure:

- 1 - find interesting tracks, look along trails, near ponds and creeks, check every muddy spot
- 2 - mark each track you wish to cast with a cardboard ring, use the paperclip to form the ring, sizing it to just encircle the track, prepare all the tracks you wish to cast as the plaster will set quickly. You can mix small batches.

It is a good idea to cast extra tracks in case 1 accidentally breaks.



- 3 - measure plaster into mixing container, add water 2 parts plaster to 1 part water - mix well, should resemble pancake batter
- 4 - pour the plaster into the track, starting at the toes and filling the entire track, pour enough plaster to make it 1.5 - 2 cm thick
- 5 - take a walk, share a story, the plaster needs 45 minutes to harden, your finger should be clean after rubbing it across the cast's surface

- 6 - gently lift the cast by digging underneath, **avoid** prying from the edges as this can cause the cast to crack and break in the middle.
- 7 - wash dirt off gently, avoid rubbing or scratching the dirt off, the plaster will cure (harden) fully over the next few days.
- 8 - remember to clean-up and leave no trace

**Tip:** Can't find any animal tracks? You can make a cast of your own tracks! Find some mud or soft soil, make a track using your foot, or hand, or just draw something and plaster it!

