

Ontario Envirothon 2023

CHALLENGE 2: I SAW THE (ANIMAL) SIGNS

Animals can be elusive and might not be the easiest to spot, especially in more urban areas. However, they may leave behind evidence of their presence. This can include tracks, scat, shed antlers, fallen feathers, damage caused to trees, or any other sign of an animal's presence.

In our second Ontario Envirothon Challenge, you are asked to find signs of wildlife that might live around you, or along a trail or in some other landscape that is easily accessible to you. This includes photographic evidence of tracks or other signs that point towards an animal's presence. These observations cannot include pets, such as dogs. Any member of the team can post these sightings. For your observations to count towards the challenge, you must make note of your reasoning for the ID in the "notes" field of your observation. Here are some resources that might assist in your interpretation of the signs of wildlife around you!

- [Discovering Ontario's Wildlife \(Video; part 2\)](#)
- [Mammal Identification and Tracking Guide](#)
- [Wildlife Study Guide](#)
- [Feather Atlas ID Tool](#)
- [iTrack – an app to help identify tracks. Can be used offline!](#)



Fig 1: Examples of animal signs that can identify a beaver (*Castor canadensis*) habitat. Both a beaver's den and chewed logs can indicate the presence of a beaver somewhere in this ecosystem.

Valid observations for this challenge DO NOT need to go down to a species level. For example, if you find an owl pellet at the base of the tree, the sighting can be classified as just an “Owl (Order Strigiformes)” or, if you are outside of southern Ontario, “Typical Owl (Family Strigidae)”. Animal signs do not always point to a specific species.

Observations can include

- Tracks
- Scat
- Damage to plants and trees (e.g. beavers, deer grazing, EAB damage)
- Remains (e.g. bones, shed antlers)
- Fallen feathers
- Tree cavities, stick nests, or other dens
- Any many more!

GOAL:

As a team, collectively find signs of 4 animals. The observations may include the animal in question but must include photographic evidence of tracks, scat, remains (such as bones or shed antlers), feathers, an identifiable den or nest, or other feature that could be used to identify the animal if it wasn't there. State your reasoning in the "notes" field of your observations.

Please fill out this form when your team has completed the challenge.

NOTES:

