



# Winter Wonder with Hands on Alberta

Using **NatureLynx™**, *Hands on Alberta* is a series of Alberta-wide citizen science missions, allowing nature-minded folks across the province to connect over a common goal. Together, the observations you collect will help monitor our province's amazing biodiversity.

## Calling all wildlife detectives!

Not just for hunters and hardcore naturalists, tracking can be a great way to understand the wildlife that may call your community home!

Before the age of motion sensing trail cameras and GPS radio collars, one of the best ways to monitor animals in winter was to look for prints and tracks in the snow. In fact, a fresh blanket of snow still presents one of the best opportunities to learn a little more about Alberta's mammals.

Like a series of clues, trail networks, bits of fur, bite and claw marks, and even poop can tell us a lot about the different animals that might make use of our backyards.



*A Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*)  
makes tracks in  
the snow.*



## Your Mission:

With the province recovering from the polar vortex, it's easy to feel like everything has slipped into hibernation. While this may be true for some species, there is still quite a bit of activity out there and winter can be a great time to learn a little more about what some animals get up to.

Join "Hands on Alberta" for our first mission of the new year. It's time to lace up those boots and put your tracking skills to the test!

## How to participate:

**It's easy!** Join the Hands on Alberta: Winter Tracking "mission" and, between now and the end of February, simply upload your tracking observations to **NatureLynx™** and tag them to the mission.

We've even drafted a few tips to help you, and our experts, out:



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# Tips for Successful Tracking

## Scale is important

**Bigfoot or toddler?** When snapping a photo of a print, always be sure to include some type of scale for reference. This can be a ruler, or anything of a known size (i.e., a pencil, pocket knife, compass, water bottle)—even your hands will do.

Without a reference for scale, it can be difficult to tell the exact size of the print.



*A tracker uses their hand to provide a scale of reference for a set of Gray Wolf tracks.*

## It's not just about the print in front of you

**I've found a print! Now what?** Individual prints can tell us a lot about an animal, but it's important to look for the pattern between these prints, too. This pattern, or gait, can be one of the best tools to ID tracks in the snow.

For example, weasels will hop, leaving pairs of prints, while coyotes and foxes typically put one paw in front of the other leaving a straight and narrow track in the snow.



*Hares leave a very recognizable track as they bound through the snow. The two hind feet leave prints at the top of the track, and the two front feet can be identified at the bottom.*

## When to track?

The best time to track is immediately following a light (5–10 cm) snowfall. Fresh snowfall presents a blank canvas, making it easier to spot new prints. But, deep snow can make things more difficult as snow can collapse on top of the track, distorting the prints.



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