Coyote Track Identification and Interpretation

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Coyote Feet Characteristics

Basics:

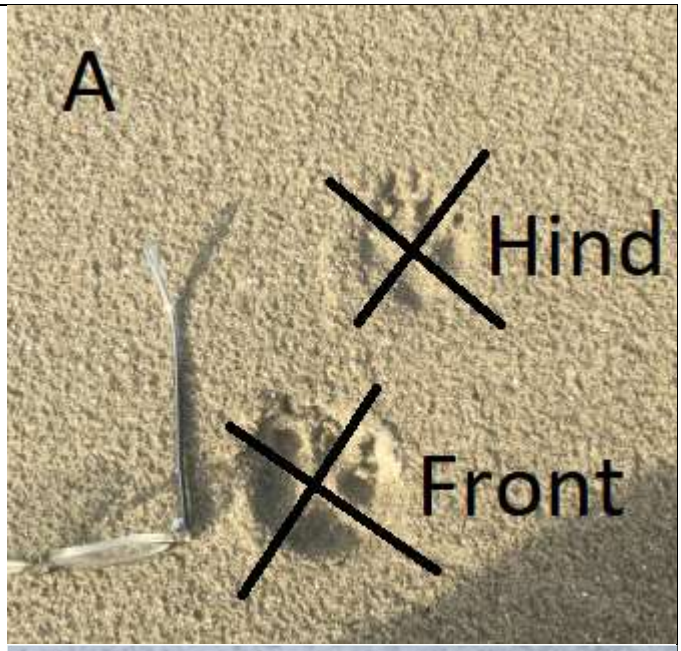
- Four toes with claws
- Overall oval-shaped
- You can draw an 'X' in the negative space without cutting off toes or pads, often with a raised mound in the centre (**A**)
- Claws are short and sharp; often 'pinpricks'
- Hinds are smaller than fronts (**A**)
- Metacarpal/ tarsal pad has ONE anterior lobe and TWO posterior lobes (**B**)

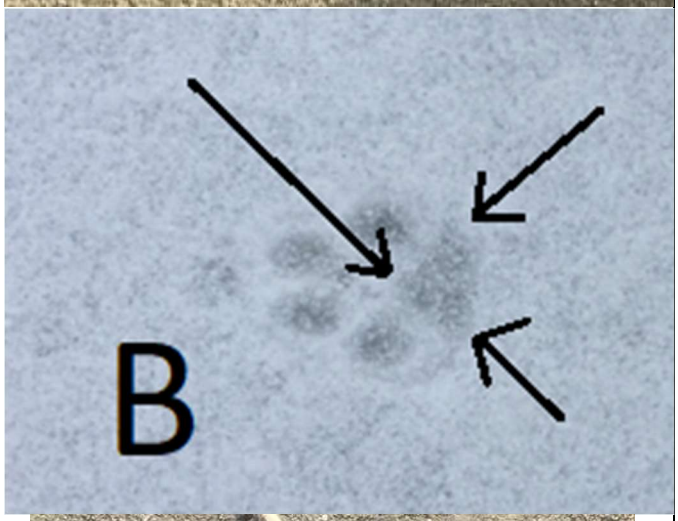
Complex Features:

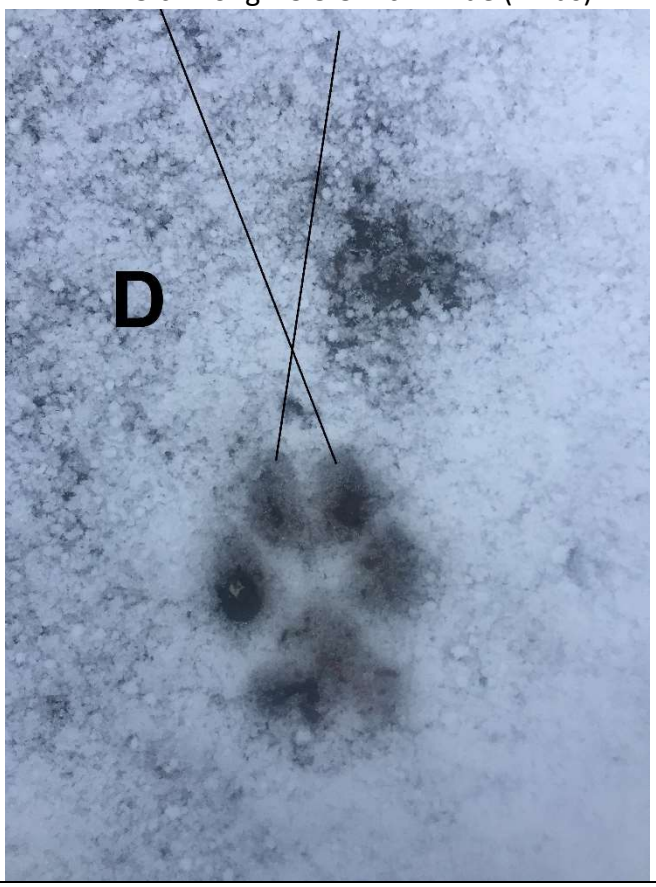
- Tracks are 'tight'; toes don't splay much
- Weight is in front end of body; toes of tracks are deeper than pads
- Palm pad is triangle-shaped
- Claws on Outer toes register close to inner toes (**C**)
- Front two toe nails, if extended, would cross (**D**)

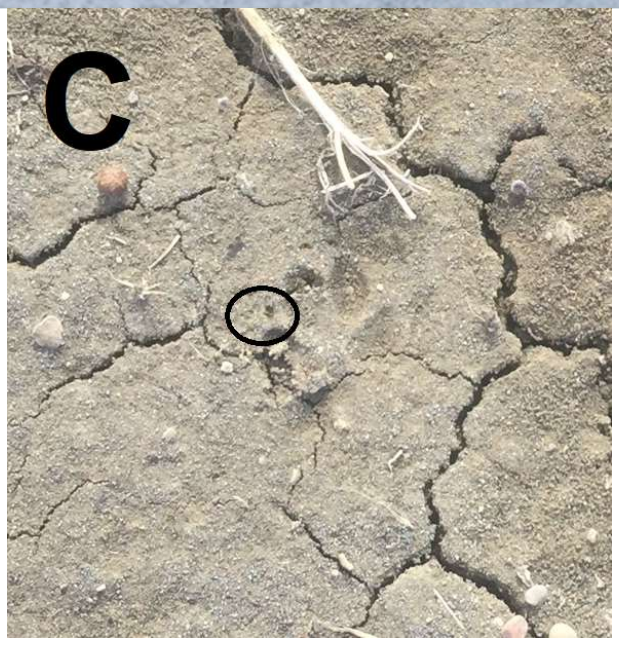
Literature dimensions (excluding claws; Moskowitz 2010):

- 5.4-7.68 cm long x 4.2-6.3 cm wide (fronts)
- 4.4-7.5 cm long x 3.5-5.4 cm wide (hinds)









Coyote Travel Characteristics

Efficiency:

- Efficient travel patterns that follow straight lines and paths of least resistance
- Frequently double register (i.e., hind tracks land on top of front tracks to conserve energy)

Gait Patterns:

- Employ a diversity of gaits compared to most species
- Baseline travel is trotting. Trots can be direct register (**E**) or side trot (**F**) but sometimes use a straddle trot (**G**)
- Walking is also common. Walking can be direct register (like E, but shorter stride) or overstep (**R**)
- In deep snow (or when pursuing prey), they bound
- Extended gallop (**H**) when freakin' out

Coyote Scat Characteristics

Morphology:

- Generally tubular (**I**)
- Sometimes twisted/ ropey
- Generally one (or more) pointed ends
- Often contains some hair (regardless of main content)
- Typically deposited (1) in the middle of roads/ trails/ linear features or (2) at junctions (**J**)

Content:

- Variable diet → variable content
- Coyotes are omnivores, and plant matter is often present in scats

Literature Values (Moskowitz 2010):

- 1.3-3.0 cm diameter
- 9.5-33.0 cm length

Scent-Marking:

- Animals often advertise presence with urine and/ or scat
- Double marking by mating pairs (usually one low pee from the female and one high pee from the male) is territorial behaviour
- Urine containing blood generally signifies estrus

Compared to Domestic Dogs (DD)

Feet:

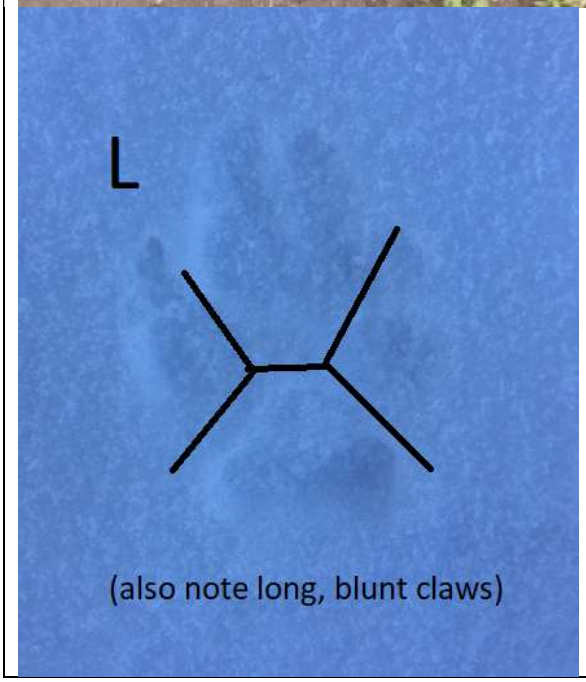
- DD have blunter, often longer claws (**K**)
- Pads and toes are less muscular, leading to a 'looser' track (**K**)
- Negative space tends to be H-Shaped (**L**)
- Toes splay a lot; extended claws would not meet/ cross; claws of outer toes splay away from inner toes (**M**)
- Size difference between fronts and hinds is less pronounced in DD
- DD carry more weight in their bums, so their tracks are often equally deep throughout

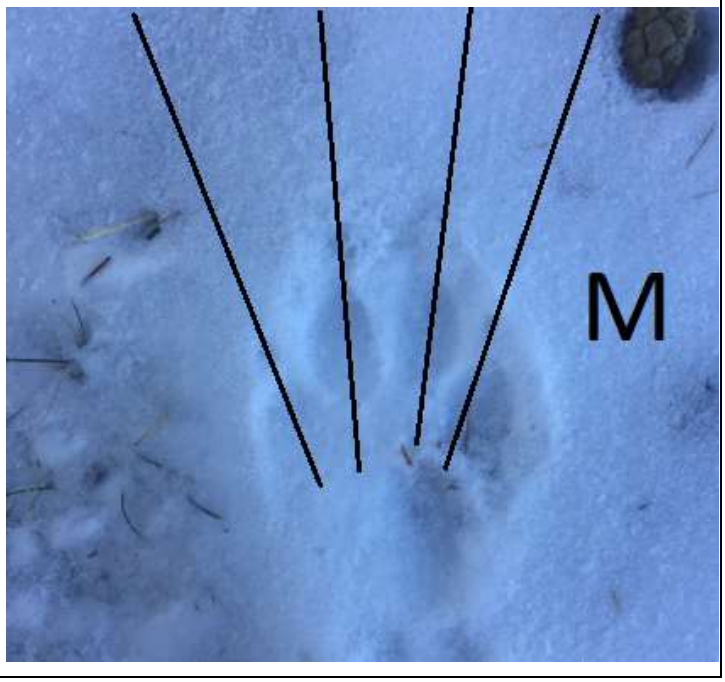
Gait Patterns:

- DD don't need to be efficient; tracks often go all over the place
- Direct Registers are uncommon
- Gait is more variable, switching between walks, trots and runs

Scat:

- 'Mealy' texture (think of ground-up kibbles)
- Blunt ends





Compared to Felines

Feet:

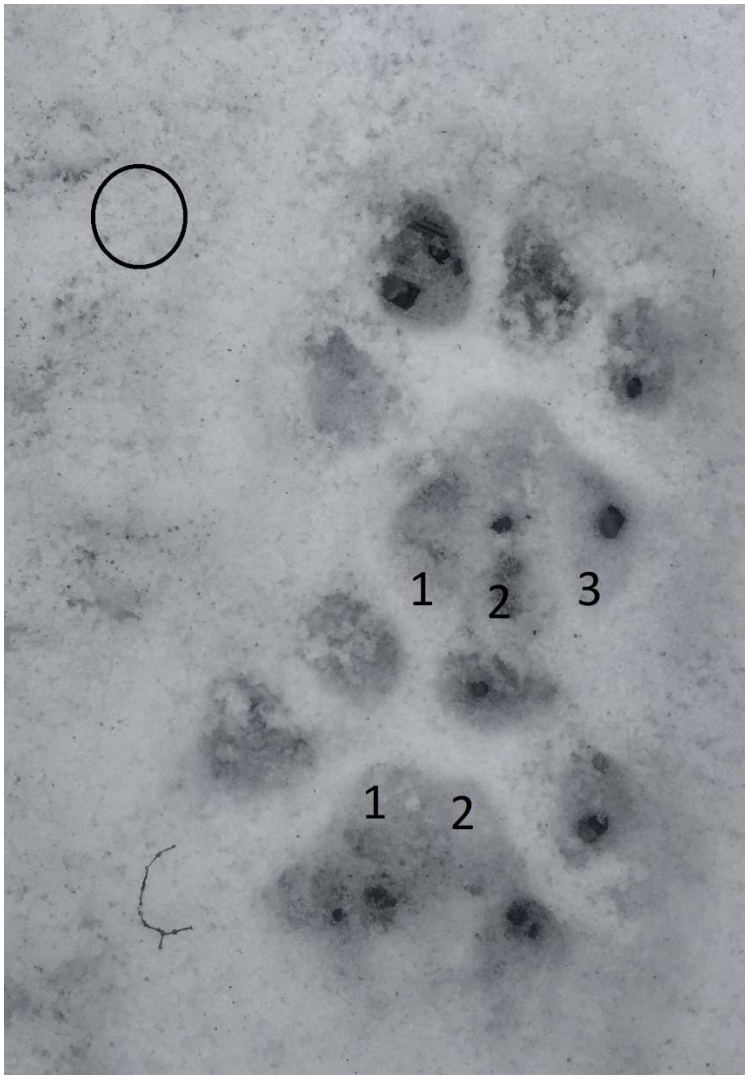
- Claws rarely register
- Tracks are often wider than they are long
- Pads have TWO anterior lobes and THREE posterior lobes (**O**)

Gait Patterns:

- Felines walk (direct register, overstep walk or under-step walk; **P**)
- Felines often avoid main trails/ roads etc.

Scat:

- Felines often leave scats near the base of trees with overhanging branches, or off to the side at junctions
- Scats are dense and segmented (not ropey or twisted) with blunt ends (**Q**)
- Felines are strictly carnivorous (no plant matter in scats)



Reference: Moskowitz D. 2010. Wildlife of the Pacific Northwest. 1st ed. Tracking and Identifying Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, Amphibians and Invertebrates. Timber Press, Inc. Portland (OR). 364 pp.

All photos taken by Sage