LESSON GOALS
This plan will be used as a small component to a broader unit that will include forestry and natural resources. The primary goal of the study is for students to be able to identify various wildlife tracks/wildlife that are present in the schoolyard. They are also to determine which species of wildlife might be present in which particular habitat and what role it plays in the ecosystem of that area. I feel this study will give students a greater appreciation of the ecosystems and wildlife that are around them. This will also help students to realize how closely we actually live with wildlife.

MATERIALS
Sampling Supplies:
- Tracking boxes
- Shovels
- Clipboards
- Tracking guides
- Sand
- Wheelbarrows
- Data sheets

Classroom Supplies:
- Furs
- Track molds
- Plastic biscuits from coke bottles
- Plaster of Paris
- Buckets
- Mortar trowel or serving spoons
- Gallon jugs filled with water

QUESTIONS
I would introduce my students to various wildlife here in Georgia by using the available furs. We would talk about the components of a habitat and define the specific areas of habitat we have in our schoolyard. We would try and predict what animals would actually live in the different habitats. This would hopefully lead them into the question of:

Do more animals live in the forest habitat, the pasture habitat, or the river habitat?

PROCEDURE
A. Sampling sites
   The first site will be in the forest habitat. This is an area that is bordered by a logging road to the east and pasture to the west. It is an old growth forest made up of mainly oaks and hickories.
The second site will be in the pasture habitat. This is a large grassy area bordered by a road to the south and the barn and baseball field to the north. There are only a few trees surrounding the perimeter of the area. In past years, a small vegetable garden has been planted on the west side of the pasture.

The third area is the river habitat. The Yellow River backs up to the entire schoolyard. There is a logging road that separates it from the forest habitat.

B. Methodology
Students will be divided into three different groups. Each group will form a hypothesis as to where they think the most species will be present and the largest diversity of tracks will be seen. Students will ready the units by digging the 4x4 tracking boxes into a location in the habitat. They will mix the sand with the existing soil and backfill the tracking boxes, making sure they are level with the ground surrounding it. Twice a week, students will examine the boxes looking for tracks that may have been left by wildlife. A chart will be provided so they may list the number of different tracks seen as well as identify the different tracks. This will be done for three continuous weeks. At the end of the three weeks, each group will compile their information and present their information to the class listing their results of the number of species tracks and what species left the tracks. With this information, you can falsify or support the original hypothesis as to which habitat more animals will be located in.

C. Extensions
If students find really good tracks, and can identify the animals, an extension would be to allow them to create molds of the tracks. This is done by encircling the track with a plastic biscuit and pouring in plaster of Paris. This is then a mold they may take with them for future reference.

You may not even see any mammal tracks, but only those of birds and insects. Be prepared to begin a separate investigation into which birds or insects live in the different habitats.

You can also use the Berlese funnels to identify various microinvertebrates that are present in the different habitats.

RESOURCES
Peterson’s Field Guide to Animal Tracks
A Field Guide to Mammal Tracking in North America
The Complete Tracker: Tracks, Signs, and Habitats of North American Wildlife
Field Guide to Tracks of North American Wildlife
Nasco Nature Study Aids
Tracking Scarves

BUDGET
4 pressure treated 2 x 4s, $24
Nails, $5
Sand, $9
Plaster of Paris, $6

Total $44
Wildlife Tracks

Site ____________________________________________________________

Team Members ____________________________________________________

Hypothesis
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Different Tracks</th>
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*Make sure that tracks traveling across the tracking box are only counted as one species and not different tracks. You may want to make note of which direction the tracks were headed.*