



Australian Government  
Australian Sports Commission

# Waayin

'waa-yin'



SCHOOL  
YEARS  
K-3

SCHOOL  
YEARS  
4-6

## Background

The study of different animal and bird tracks was an important part of the education of Aboriginal children.

These were drawn in the smoothed earth or sand by means of the fingers, fingernails, palms, small sticks and so on. A great deal of care was taken by adults in imitating the tracks of various animals for the benefit of the children. The children in some areas were often encouraged to compete in reproducing these.

## Language

In the Dativuy language of the northern part of the Northern Territory, *waayin* refers to 'land animals and reptiles'. These are classified as eaten or not eaten or by their movements (such as flying, crawling or slithering).

## Short description

In this activity players attempt to make the tracks of animals on the ground and other players guess what they might be.

## Game play and basic rules

- An experienced player draws the tracks of several animals in the sand and the other players attempt to guess what they are. The watching players may comment on how well the tracks have been made.
- It might also be possible to obtain plaster moulds of different animal tracks and use these. They would also serve as a good way to learn and understand the different tracks.
- Photos of animal tracks would allow the players the opportunity to learn some different and unusual tracks of animals. Players could find tracks and take photos or use some books.

## Examples

- An **emu track** is made by impressing lengthwise the thumb and first finger in the sand. Changing the thumb to the other side without lifting the first finger, a second impression is made with the thumb in this position at about the same angle as the first. The pad of the emu foot can be added by an impression of the thumb at the intersection of the three toes.



- A **kangaroo track** is made by pressing a finger or the big toe twice into the sand, a short distance apart so that the resulting marks are two parallel grooves to represent the impressions of the long central toes. A shorter mark at the centre of these, at an angle of 45 degrees, will indicate the lateral toes when the track is complete. A small scratch or hole can be made at the end of each of the 'toes' to represent the claw marks.



- A **dingo track** is made with the fingers alone, the thumb making the impression for the pad, and the tips of the fingers those of the toes, the imprints of the claws are added by a small stick.



- A **turtle track** is made by moving the hand backwards in a sudden jerky movement, with the result being a good imitation of the real flapper prints.



## Variations

- Draw an outline of various tracks on paper or cardboard and players (individually or as a group) attempt to name as many tracks as they can. As a relay game players run out 10 metres from their group and attempt to match six cards (or more) with pictures of the correct animal.
- When they are correct the cards are jumbled and the player returns to the group so the next player can have a turn. The cards could be changed after each player's turn or kept the same by the teacher.
- A picture of a track is shown and photos of animals are provided for players to guess the animal.
- A photo of an animal is shown and players attempt to make what they think its track might be.
- Players could research various animals and tracks they make, and compile a resource to be used.
- Players make or obtain plaster casts of various animal tracks. Stamp these on damp sand and have the players attempt to name and/or copy them.