

**Awareness Quiz**  
by Tamarack Song

**First Cougar**

I just tracked my first cougar -- right here in my back yard! "Impossible," say the regional wildlife experts, who claim there are no cougars for hundreds of miles. Wait until they see the pictures and lab confirmation of the scat!

Sometimes a tracker can identify a disturbance as a track not because it fits a general pattern, but because of some unique peculiarity. For example, I would not have been able to connect a turned-up pebble with a sand scrape an inch from it had I not known that a badger's long front claws reach out that far from the toes. A similar distinct feature drew my attention to the cougar track, which was disguised in a mishmash of disturbances on a well-traveled trail.

More on this and the whole adventure in a future story. And yet the experience has me pumped, so you can guess what the new Quiz questions are going to be about. A lot of people liked the one-word-answer format, so I'm sticking with it. The topic, of course, is tracking, with the questions focused on what sets a particular track apart from all others. But first the answers to the last Quiz.

1. How many eggs does a Robin normally lay? Four. (Surprisingly, Karl Wessel was the only person to get this one.)
2. What female insect eats her mate? Praying Mantis (and some spiders). (Joseph Anderson, Rides Alone and H. Beeler knew this. Contrary to popular belief, Black Widow spider females seldom eat their mates.)
3. Is wet or dry wood hardest to carve? Dry. (Nearly everyone got this one. H. Beeler says "fibers swell and are softer when wet.")
4. What is the cactus with the widest North American distribution? Prickly Pear. (About half of you knew this one.)
5. Which Deer bone makes a natural arrowhead? Toe. (Rides Alone was the only one here. Ronald Summer suggests trying the sternum.)
6. What is the smartest popular North American freshwater fish? Largemouth Bass. (Rides Alone was alone again.)
7. Which hide tans easiest, Beaver or Raccoon? Raccoon. (This one goes to Joseph Anderson and Karl Wessel.)
8. How many primary wing feathers do most birds have? Ten. (Yep, Rides Alone, who also got the next two.)
9. Which nut tree kills surrounding vegetation? Black Walnut. (Almost half of you got this.)
10. What is the only conifer tree to annually shed its needles? Tamarack, also called Larch. (Several knew this one, and H. Beeler said Bald Cypress is another.)

Thanks to everyone who sent in answers. I especially enjoyed the additional information some of you provided -- I learned a couple of things!

**New Questions:**

1. Which large bird's track leaves no thumbprint?
2. What at a glance distinguishes a Raccoon track from an Opossum's?

3. Which hoofed animal typically leaves point-tipped tracks when living on soft ground and round-tipped tracks when dwelling in a rocky area?
4. The foot of which member of the Rabbit-Hare family can leave a track wider than a man's hand?
5. Which animal's track shows a V-shaped depression across the heel pad?
6. What at a glance distinguishes canine from feline scat?
7. The tail of which member of the Weasel family leaves a drag mark?
8. Which letter of the alphabet can often be seen inside a canine track?
9. The partially-retractable claws of which canine leave a stubby-looking claw print?
10. Which woodland bird walks with so little straddle that her track looks like a line running through a string of widely-spread Vs?

Send your answers to [tamarack@teachingdrum.org](mailto:tamarack@teachingdrum.org) or Quiz, c/o Teaching Drum Outdoor School, 7124 Military Rd, Three Lakes, WI 54562) and I'll print them in the next Quiz column.