

# Tracks and scat

## Your guide to identifying animals by what they leave behind

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Jim Halfpenny was cross-country skiing when he found a strange set of wolf tracks. Three heavy steps and a paw just barely dragging in the snow. By the spacing of the prints, and the way they meandered from side to side, he could tell the wolf was walking and looking around.

He had been following the three-legged wolf for years. Halfpenny has been tracking since childhood and is now a wildlife biologist and author of several tracking guides.

When he first met him, the wolf was two years old and had recently been hurt in a fight.

He never fully recovered, and for the rest of his life he left a distinct trail: three heavy steps and a lightly dragged paw. The wolf was radio collared and named 253M, and Halfpenny watched that wolf grow, despite its injury, into a large alpha male.

As he skied along beside them, the tracks started to pick up pace. Then they broke out into a full gallop. He watched — the tracks leading his imagination — as 253M took down an elk. The carcass was a few hundred yards farther down the trail.

253M was one of the first wolves killed during a brief period of wolf hunting in Wyoming in 2008.

"It's those stories that make tracking exciting," Halfpenny said. "Wolves leave great stories, especially in the winter. But I get just as excited to get on a weasel track and find where he ran a mouse down."

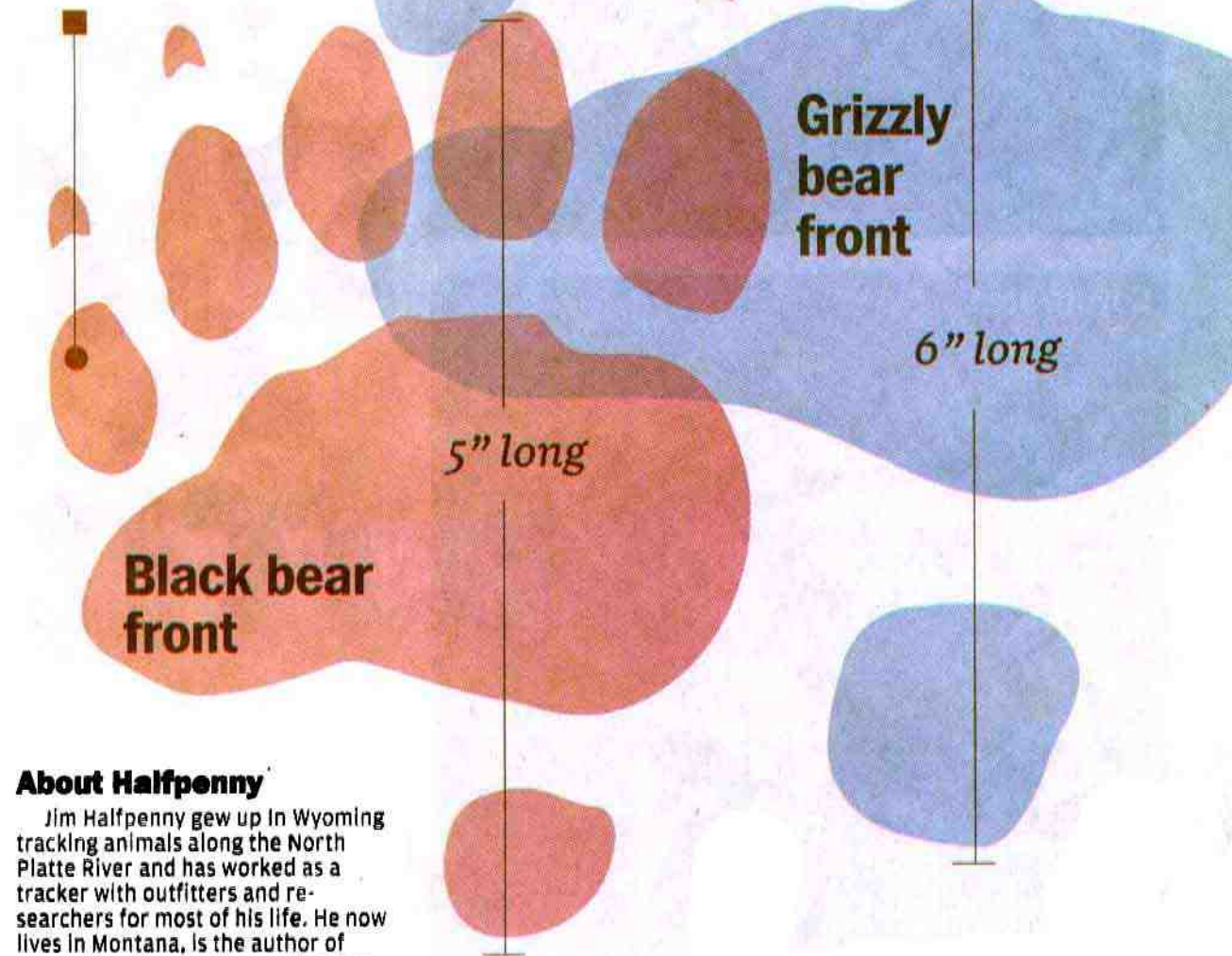
Even without finding a wolf's — or weasel's — hunting grounds, knowing what animals are on the trail can be a safety issue, or just add a new level of interest to a walk in the woods.

This guide highlights Halfpenny's top tracking tips and information for animals around the state.

A note of caution: Included in this guide are photos of scat for many of the animals. Scat isn't a great diagnostic tool, as it varies widely in size, shape and color depending on time of year and the animal's diet, Halfpenny said. When tracking an animal, the most important thing is to take in the whole scene, and not be swayed by an one clue.

*Outside small toe track may appear faint on both grizzly and black bears*

Grizzly claw marks are long and broad



### About Halfpenny

Jim Halfpenny grew up in Wyoming tracking animals along the North Platte River and has worked as a tracker with outfitters and researchers for most of his life. He now lives in Montana, is the author of several tracking guides and teaches classes on animal identification, natural history and ecology.

For more information on Halfpenny, or on tracking in general, go online to [www.tracknature.com](http://www.tracknature.com)