

Keuka Lake is a natural interface of many different habitats (lakes, creeks, associated riparian areas, swamps, woodlands), and it supports a rich variety of wildlife. We see many of them during the day - the songbirds, kingfishers, occasional eagle or osprey, hawks, chipmunks, squirrels, woodchucks, snakes, turtles, and, of course, fish. Sometimes we don't actually see the animals, but we do see their nests, or tracks, or scats (poop, to the uninitiated) or other evidences. We also have a large number of nocturnal visitors we don't normally see, but we do see their "calling cards" if we know what to look for. Many come up on our decks and docks, looking for food at night, and leave traces behind. How to identify *who dat* is? Fortunately, naturalists have compiled identification guides, which take the guesswork out of nailing down the critter. Arm yourself with these and you can become a super wildlife sleuth. Local bookstores can order them if they don't stock them.

Critter Feature

Bird nests commonly seen, left to right: oriole swinging basket; robin circular mud & twig; barn swallow mud ball under docks; hummingbird made of spider web & moss.

Animal tracks, pressed into the ground or decorating our docks. Most common, besides deer tracks which everyone knows, are those at right, compared with cat.

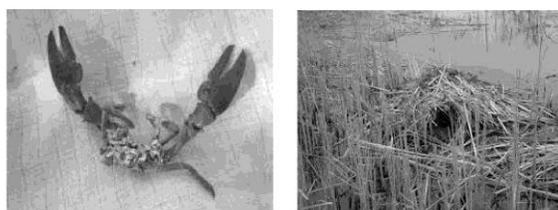
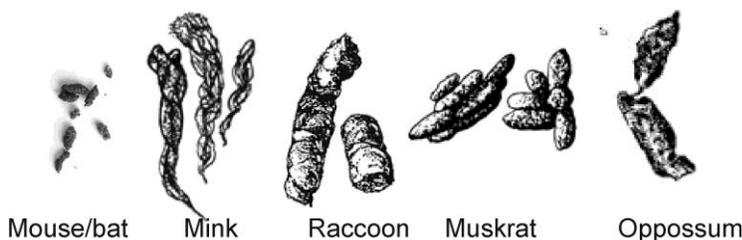
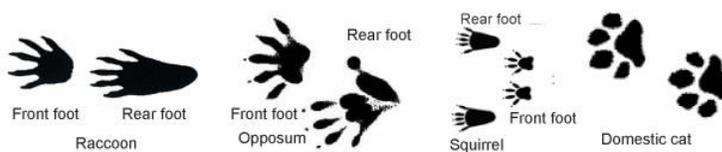
Animal scats, deposited here and there. Mice & bat size of rice grains, bats have shiny bits (insect parts); mink usually have fish scales in them, raccoon are squared-end cylinders, muskrat are round-end, possum usually soft & mushy.

Crayfish remains, muskrats and raccoons eat crayfish: raccoons usually leave the remains on docks; muskrats usually leave them on floating feeding platforms they build out of reeds and other aquatic vegetation

Chewed ornamentals, vegetables. Deer rip off vegetation, leaving ragged edge, rabbits leave sharp 45° cut. Possums and raccoons leave bite marks or chew chunks out of tomatoes

Roadkill - illustrated guide to animals flattened on the road

Examples



Crawfish remains on dock Muskrat feeding platform



Deer Rabbit Raccoon/Opossum



References: Peterson Field Guide - Eastern Birds' Nests; Peterson Field Guide to Animal Tracks, Third Edition; Field Guide to Animal Tracks and Scat of California (nothing for the East or New York, strangely); Flattened Fauna: A Field Guide to Common Animals of Roads, Streets, and Highways (a bit tongue-in-cheek, but actually accurate, if interested).