Winter Wildlife Study Data Sheet

Date: _____ **Weather Conditions:** _____

Group Members: _____

Time since Last Snowfall (hours): _____

Assigned Transect line (number): _____

Introduction

The roots of Alberta's parks and protected areas date back to 1930 when the Provincial Parks Act was legislated. In the early days, these small recreation areas were scenic spots for Albertans to swim, picnic and fish. Over the years, Alberta Park's network grew to incorporate further parks from recreation sites to pure wilderness areas. These areas were set aside to protect the plants and animals that live there representing Alberta's biodiversity, as well as, Alberta's cultural heritage while providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. Balancing the needs of conservation with recreation can be a challenging endeavor that requires data on wildlife and human use of landscapes. In this study, you will be collecting animal track data, mimicking an approach, Alberta Park Ecologists use, to gain information on the "probability of occurrence" that a specific animal has for your study area. Information such as this supports Alberta Park management decisions to protect areas for both conservation and recreation values.

Instructions

1. In your assigned group, you will be walking a transect line, a pre-determined straight line that intersects your study area. Note, your transect line will be 50 - 100 meters in length, and will be sub-divided into 5 m sections. Each section will be flagged with a pin flag or flagging with each section identified (1-1, 1-2, 1-3….1-10; 2-1, 2-2, 2-3….2-10 etc.). The first number represents the individual transect line; the second number represents the section. Each group will walk a unique transect line in the study area and will share their data with other groups afterwards.

2. For each section, you will be required to fill in the following information:

   Segment – identify which segment you are collecting data for

   Habitat Type

   Treed – plants with one main woody stem (trunk)

   Shrubs – plants with multiple woody stems coming from the ground

   Grassland- non-woody plants; mainly grasses and herbaceous (flowering) plants

   Mixed – any combination of the above

   Terrain

   Flat – there is no or minimal slope

   Gentle Slope – Can easily walk up

Steep Slope – challenging to walk up

Snow Depth – using your meter ruler, push it through the snow to the ground and record depth of snow in centimeters

Species – Using track guides provided by your teacher, document every track you see that crosses your transect line. Identify species name including humans and dogs.

– document the number of tracks that crosses your transect line for each individual species within each segment

Comments – anything unusual to note

3. Once you are done, your teacher may have you share your group's data. Follow their instructions on how to share this with the rest of the class. If you use Google Docs, create a spreadsheet where each group can enter their data and to compare notes.

4. Working in your assigned group, summarize your transect (or class data set) by answering the following questions:

    1. What species were present in your study area?
    2. How abundant were each species? Rank them from most abundant to least.
    3. Did the Habitat Type affect where you saw specific animals? Explain your reasoning.
    4. Did Terrain type impact the animal tracks observed? Explain your reasoning.
    5. Did snow depth influence where you found tracks? Explain your reasoning.
    6. What activities did humans engage in based on any observed tracks (e.g. walking, dog walking, running, biking, other?)
    7. If you observed human tracks, were they associated with any specific animal track? Were there any animal tracks not observed where human tracks were present?
    8. Do you think it is easy or challenging to manage Alberta Parks to have both high conservation values along with diverse recreational opportunities for Albertans to enjoy?
    9. When visiting a Provincial Park, what is one action you can do to support the protection of wildlife while recreating and exploring it?

Data Recording: Transect Line #_____

Segment	Habitat Type - Treed - Grassland - Shrub - Mixed	Terrain - Flat - Gentle slope - Steep slope	Snow Depth (cm)	Species	#	Comments
Example 1-1	Grassland	flat	10 cm	Deer Vole	3 1	Hard to know number as tracks were crossing each other.