

Challenge: Go wild!



Content

If you were lost, would you be able to look after yourself? If someone else was lost do you think you could follow their trail? These are all useful skills in outdoor survival.

Activities

Scouts and Guides

- Show how to find north, day and night, without a compass.
- Practice signalling that you are in distress using signals, a whistle, a torch, a mirror and markers.
- Discuss types of shelters; build one and sleep in it overnight.
- Know what 'tracking' means and explain what a 'sign' is.
- Describe five visual clues that might attract the attention of a tracker and follow a simple trail over a short route.

Senior Section, Explorers and Network

- Show how to find north, day and night, without a compass.
- Practice signalling that you are in distress using signals, a whistle, a torch, a mirror and markers.
- Discuss different types of shelters, build at least two and spend the night in one of them.
- Know what 'tracking' means and explain what a 'sign' is.
- Describe eight visual clues that might attract the attention of a tracker and follow a simple trail over a medium length route.

Equipment

Compasses, whistles, torches, small mirrors, tarps, pioneering poles.

Setup

This could be done as an overnight "experience" so give some thought to the time of year and along with your sleeping bag you'll need mirrors, torches, whistles, tarps, groundsheets, and a suitable campsite.

Background

Directions but no compass

You haven't got your compass with you and someone asks where North is, as they would, expecting you or another leader to come up with the answer.

There are many internet websites that explain how to find directions by using the sun, moon, stars, wind and trees. The following webpage from the 1st Ebbw Vale (Penuel) Scout Group and the navigation page on the website for "Wilderness Survival Skills" are excellent examples.

- <http://www.penuelscouts.org.uk/2011/07/navigating-without-a-compass/>
- <http://www.wilderness-survival-skills.com/>

International rescue signals

- Three signals of any kind means S.O.S. (distress)
- Keep your whistle around your neck at all times. The sound carries far and saves voices.

<u>SOS</u>	Flare	Red - Repeat every 10 minutes.
	Light	Signal 3 short, 3 long, 3 short flashes.
	Sound	Signal 3 short, 3 long, 3 short blasts.

Repeat at 1 minute intervals

- If you see or hear any of the above you must respond or alert the emergency services.

<u>HELP NEEDED</u>	Flare	Red - Repeat every 10 minutes.
	Light	Signal 6 flashes in quick succession.
	Sound	Signal 6 blasts in quick succession.

These sound, light and pyrotechnic codes are recognised internationally by rescue services and are universal to the whole of Great Britain. Any flare will be investigated during a search, regardless of colour, but choose one best fitted to the location.

http://www.scoutingresources.org.uk/codes/codes_rescue.html

Shelters

These can range from simply stringing a poncho or tarp over some string/rope strung between two trees right through to a tee-pee style construction. In all cases you need to ensure that wind direction, insulation from cold ground, and enough coverage to prevent getting wet from rain are fully considered.

The following link to the Scouts South Africa website gives examples of the different types of shelters that you can try out along with other useful tips and info:

<http://www.scouting.org.za/resources/backwoods/>

Tracking: definitions and explanations

<u>Tracking</u>	The art of being able to locate, identify and pursue signs, and from intelligent interpretations and deductions, gain reasonably accurate information about the quarry.
<u>Sign</u>	Any evidence of change from the natural state that is inflicted on an environment by a persons or animals passage, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sap from a bruised root or trunk of a tree○ Disturbance to animal, bird or insect life○ Change in colour and unnatural formation of vegetation due to disturbance○ Lack of water and dew on vegetation○ Footprints in bare or muddy ground○ Mud, soil or sand on vegetation○ Animal droppings, fur, feathers and bones○ Bruises, breaks and cuts in vegetation
<u>Track or print</u>	Is an impression left from the passage of a person that can be positively identified as being human.
<u>Ground Sign</u>	These are ground level marks or disturbances.
<u>Top Sign</u>	This is defined as any sign above the ankle.
<u>Sign Pattern</u>	This is sign that serves to indicate the habits or the peculiarities of a quarry.
<u>Sign Cutting</u>	Is looking for sign in order to establish a starting point from which to track. Tracking involves following a chronology of sign, or consecutive tracks, step by step. Sign cutting is searching for the <u>first</u> sign or track.
<u>Straight edge</u>	This is the line found on leaves or blades of grass caused by the application of pressure. Most leaves, dry or green, are curled and if trodden on will break or bend in a straight line. Usually dry leaves will break and green or wet leaves will bend.
<u>The Track</u>	This is the line of sign.

Visual Tracking This is the art of being able to track a human being, animal or vehicle; by the marks it has left. A visual tracker relies primarily on sight.

Scent Tracking Dogs normally perform scent tracking. Although it is possible for a tracker to follow by detecting smells such as Cooking, Smoke, Latrines, and Newly dug earth.

Signs – the specifics

What might attract the attention of the tracker (visual clues)?

1. Compression / flatness (shape, outline, contrast). Conclusively human

In tracking it has generally been accepted that only people and hoofed animals can make flat spots on the ground. However, hoofed animals tend to produce smaller disturbances, which have a sharp ridge that is deeper around the edge of the print.

2. Compressed pebbles and / or twigs (outline, shape). Conclusively human

It usually requires a hard surface when applying pressure, such as with a shoe or hoof, in order to compress a pebble or a twig into the ground. Animal paws are soft and do not cause such a disturbance.

3. Rear edge of heel (shape, outline). Conclusively human

This is one of the most common pieces of conclusively human evidence. When a person walks on level ground, full body weight is transferred from one foot to the other by first contacting the ground with the rear edge of the heel and subsequently, as the body is propelled forward, the remainder of the foot. If a disturbance will be made on the ground this initial heel strike is when it will occur. This initial impact is when the greatest weight per square inch is applied to the ground with the sharpest part of the shoe: the rear edge of the heel.

4. Toe digs (outline, shape, contrast, texture). Conclusively human

This is commonly regarded as insignificant by the untrained tracker despite its accurate indication of human passage. To propel a body forward the rear most foot pushes off in a way that either compresses the ground, moves loose material slightly backwards, or digs in.

5. Bent low vegetation grass, ferns, etc (shape, colour, contrast). Conclusively human

Anything that walks can push down grass or similar vegetation causing the vegetation to reflect light differently. Hooves tend to cut vegetation because unlike a flat sole they have sharp edges underneath. Creasing without hoof damage is a good indicator that something with a flat foot passed.

6. Bruised vegetation (contrast, colour). Conclusively human.

Vegetation damaged by being stepped on heals at a predictable rate. If they are knocked over, plants may become upright within a day of being trampled although they may bear the scars or bruises of the incident for far longer. Small animals do not usually cause discoloured or flattened

areas on vegetation and larger hoofed animals that would damage plants should most certainly cut.

7. Picking up mud (contrast, colour, texture). Conclusively human

Means that mud, usually the sticky moist type, has adhered to the footwear. As this situation continues mud accumulates on the soles to such an extent that it completely masks any specific sole pattern that may otherwise be left on the ground. Walking with mud on the shoes like this leaves only numerous, non-distinct marks on the ground at regular intervals and occasionally blocks of mud that have fallen off. When the mud is of the right consistency the chunk that fell off may hold valuable information regarding the sole pattern from the foot gear that produced it.

8. Shine (contrast, colour, texture). Conclusively human

Unlike most types of sign, shine can be often be easier to see when the observer is further from it. A tracker viewing from close up can over look shine, but stepping back and viewing from a low angle or viewing far ahead can sometimes bring to notice what otherwise might be missed.

9. Transfer (shape, outline, contrast). Conclusively human

Is when a subject walks from one type of terrain to another, material from the first is often transferred to the second. Examples are: from mud to asphalt leaving mud often in the shape of a print, dust to pavement, from wet to dry, from fresh cut grass to pavement, from snow to pavement or from any terrain where some material can be picked up by the foot gear and deposited later.

10. Displaced twigs on the ground (outline, shape, contrast). Corroborant

Fallen twigs and small sticks can cause an imprint or leave an outline on the ground over time. A moving person or animal could easily travel by and move the twig from its resting place, leaving the imprint or outline behind. Remember it could have been an animal that caused this type of sign so other evidence must be discovered in the area to corroborate the initial sign.

11. Fallen leaves / petals (contrast, colour). Corroborant

Living plants do not usually discard their leaves or petals. They must be either pulled off intentionally or jarred from their attachment by a substantial stress. The presence of fresh leaves or petals on the ground and next to a plant are a good indication that someone or something of fair size has passed by hitting it.

12. Dislodged rocks / pebbles (outline, shape, colour). Corroborant

Pebbles and rocks behave the same as twigs in that they make a home for themselves by settling into a depression in the ground over time. Similarly a person or animal can disturb the objects but it tends to need more pressure than is required for twigs. Larger rocks or stones dislodged from their resting place are rarely caused by animals so the larger the rock displaced the better the chance it was caused by a human. In addition pebbles and rocks almost always tend to become dislodged in the direction of travel.

13. Broken branches and twigs (shape, contrast, colour). Corroborant

A person walking on a twig, particularly a small one, will often break it. In addition to breaking the twig hoofs usually cause splintering and impressions of the twig in the ground. Generally the larger the diameter of the broken branch the more likely something the size of a human was responsible for the damage. Branches broken while still attached to their parent plant can indicate direction of travel. Above three feet from the ground typically damage to a larger branch is generally caused by a human, but look immediately below for evidence of a hoofed animal. When broken twigs and branches are discovered look for other corroborating evidence that is caused by human.

14. Plant leaves close to the ground (shape, contrast, colour). Corroborant

Broad leaf plants that grow low or close to the ground appear in almost all terrains. Very often a person walking over or very near this type of vegetation will cause some type of disturbance. Flagging is caused by the lighter coloured underside of one or more leaves being turned up. Bruising and picking up small pebbles. Bruising is caused by a person or animal stepping on the leaf and injuring it, and is best seen on the lighter underside of the leaf. It looks like a dark green wound when fresh eventually turning even darker and then finally scars turning a light brown or grey. When soft moist leaves are compressed by something walking on them small pebbles and particles of dirt from the ground often stick to the undersides.

15. Intertwined vegetation (shape, contrast). Corroborant

Some small bushes and grasses grow close together and their leaves or branches overlap. When a traveller passes through an area with such plants the limbs or leaves are often pulled in the direction of travel. Because of the close proximity of the limbs they can catch on each other, interlace and do not return to their natural state until they are disturbed again. Depending on the thickness and height from the ground can suggest how big the animal or human was that caused the disturbance. It can also show direction of travel.

16. Lichen and moss (shape, outline, contrast, colour, texture). Corroborant

Soft materials that tend to yield readily when pressure is applied to them then return to their normal states upon release. However, when either is compressed between two hard objects such as a shoe and a rock or tree, which they are growing on some damage usually, occurs. This could be bruising or discolour or easily be damaged or displaced.

17. Dew and frost trails (shape, contrast, colour). Corroborant

These trails are disturbances found when dew and frost cover an area. Normally results in dark on light contrast.