

# A Tracker's reading list

By Rohan O'Connor

Unless otherwise stated, in [square brackets], these books are in English. Books in other languages, typically French, are worth reading to see how another culture looks at the subject.

## ***Tracking theory***

1. Brown Jr, Tom; *The Science and Art of Tracking*, 1999, Berkley Publishing Group. The most focused of the Tom Brown books, this book gives a practical, albeit still overcooked, guide to his notions of 'pressure releases'.

2. Brown Jr, Tom; *Tom Brown's Guide to Nature Observation and Tracking*, 1983, Berkley Publishing Group.

A bit too 'mystic Meg' for many people, this book introduces pressure releases and explains his thoughts on stalking and movement.

3. Cheney, Cleve; *The Comprehensive Guide to Tracking (Skills)*, 2013, Safari Press Inc.

The coffee table book on tracking. Lots of colour glossy photos, big format; guns, blood and big game. The author really does try to be comprehensive too. The blood spoor photos are first rate and the book is right on the money for nature guides and others working in African grasslands. The only let-down is too much Tom Brown, slightly relieved by a very real impression of how pressure releases are not quite so marvellous actually that comes across as a volte-face. This material would benefit from stiff editing to eliminate the non-essential TB claptrap but, as a whole, the excellent colour photography makes it a positive contribution to the literature.

4. Fuller, G, Johnson, E and Koester, RJ; *Man Trackers and Dog Handlers in Search & Rescue*, 2000, dbS Productions.

Now reprinted, this is a short book intended to help trackers and dog handlers work together on SAR operations. It addresses management issues in terms of search theory 'methodology', how trackers and handlers work (a useful section) and what both can and cannot do in the field. It ends with a section on suggested joint training exercises to help both parties get on together. Interesting overall, there are some real nuggets embedded in the text for trackers. It's a 'must have' for SAR folks and any trackers working with dogs (or rather, their handlers; dogs are fine ☺).

5. 'Gilcraft'; *Training in Tracking*, 1927-1944, C Arthur Pearson Ltd.

One of the pre-War Boy Scout training publications in the Gilcraft series, this is now a free download from [www.thedump.scoutscan.com](http://www.thedump.scoutscan.com). It expands on the information given in the earlier editions of *Scouting for Boys* and draws heavily from the now unavailable 'Foot Prints' by GW Gayer of the Indian Police. It is a comprehensive guide to trailing, stalking and memory exercises with some insights into techniques. Well worth a read.

6. Grant, Terry and Robinson, Nadine; *Mantracking, the ultimate guide to tracking man or beast*, 2012, SPOT llc.

Solid theoretical stuff based on the Canadian reality-TV shows. Quite a lot of bio-stuff about the author but the tracking theory is solid and very much reflects a cattle-ranching background. Lots of B&W photos to illustrate points but nothing groundbreaking (pun?).

7. Johnson, Glen R; *Tracking Dog theory and methods*, 1975/2003, Barkleigh Productions Inc.

A classic dog training book for 'tracking dogs', i.e., those following vegetation scent and thus the actual footsteps of the target. Bizarrely, the author and Syrotuck, both Canadians and writing at about the same time do not seem to have been aware of one another's work. This is a shame as Syrotuck could have explained to Johnson where much of the latter's problems lay, especially that of the 'hump' of tracks about 45 minutes old when vegetation scent and human scent are both at their weakest. An excellent book for understanding the difficulties of training tracker dogs but somewhat outdated with the current emphasis on air-scenting and trailing dogs.

8. Liebenberg, Louis; *The Art of Tracking*, 1990, David Philip Publishers.

The seminal work on tracking theory, this is Dr Liebenberg's original thesis. As such it is very heavy going but essential reading for would-be trackers. Currently available at a good price direct from the publishers. The meat of the text is repeated, in a more digestible form, in his excellent *Field Guide to the Animal Tracks of Southern Africa* (qv).

9. Liebenberg, Louw and Elbroch; *Practical Tracking*, 2010, Stackpole Books.

Given its authors and title, this is a significant addition to the literature on tracking. It takes the form of chapters on technique interspersed with personal 'dits' from the authors and invited tracker guests. It is aimed at experienced trackers and concentrates on large animal work in southern Africa and North America. After a predictable start with feet and footprints, it moves on to gait and track patterns. The latter is based on Muybridge, so there are no quibbles there, and it makes the point that gaits and track patterns do not have a 1:1 relationship, which is good.

The next chapter covers ageing and spoor recognition but rather wanders into the subjunctive, 'It might be this, it may be that', which is OK at this level but may leave beginners a bit frustrated. And they will remain so, as it then flips straight into speculative tracking, with virtually no guidance on systematic tracking / spoor cutting. At this point the SAR trackers will be unhappy too. The key issues of speculative tracking, i.e., the critical need for the maximum possible knowledge of the subject and the environment from the subject's point of view, are raised but without making the point that, without these, it can quickly degenerate into 'jump tracking'.

This is followed by advice on animal stalking, kit and awareness, etc, especially within the S. African and N. American environments. Useful knowledge but not too detailed. The last section is a walk through of large animal behaviour, particularly the dangers, followed by some trackers' bios and an explanation of the Cybertracker evaluation system.

10. Loiseau, J [FRENCH]; *Chercheur de Pistes* [Track Detective], 1939-42, Vigot Freres.

A naturalists' training guide covering techniques, mantracking and common European animals based on the Scout movement. Very much orientated towards laying trails, as is the Gilcraft book, this is another interesting insight into a bygone age. The lost spoor procedure drawings are thought-provoking but the French tracker's glossary has now largely been superseded by terms from the hunting field.

11. Loiseau, J [FRENCH]; *Le Livre de la Piste* (Tracking), pre-1940, La Grande Maison.

A focused Boy Scout manual, à la Gilcraft, unlike *Chercheur de Pistes*, with more emphasis on real tracking than training exercises.

12. McGee, Eddie; *No Need to Die*, 1977-1996, Paul H Crompton Ltd.

A survival book with good stuff on tracking. Lots of quaint sketches but nothing new. One oddity is his idea of tracking with the light behind; this is valid in the tropics,, especially when the sun is low (i.e., in the context cited), but strikes as bizarre in a book more generally aimed at northern Europe.

13. Nellemann, C; *Sign and the Art of Tracking*, 2011-13, Interpol and the unit/great Great.

This is a trackers guide for use in law enforcement and counter-poaching tracking operations. It is very comprehensive, richly illustrated and heavily oriented towards counter-poaching operations in Africa. English and other language versions are available. Jack Kearney was involved in its production but it is not tracking stick biased. The material is covered in a practical and professional manner and I have adopted his word 'nesting' for compression shapes in grass and leaves. A paperback book version is available via Interpol and the publishers or the 2013 version is available as a download here:

[http://dev.grida.no/tracking/revised2013/trackingmanual\\_2013.pdf](http://dev.grida.no/tracking/revised2013/trackingmanual_2013.pdf)

14. O'Connor, RM; 2013-2014, *Tracking - Tyre Directionality* (available on request).

This is my own essay on assessing vehicle direction from track & sign. Apart from a few notes in Baden Powell's 'Scouting', which are now very dated, there is very little information available on this subject. This is not a specialist work and it is essential for any tracker to have some idea of vehicle tracking, especially directionality. As a subject it is far from straightforward and any guidelines are better than none.

15. O'Connor, RM; 2014, *Individual Trailing Procedures* (available on request in two formats).

My own essay on trailing as opposed to tracking. It approaches the subject from a 'head-up' point of view, based on 'line of spoor', rather than the 'head-down' tracking off one's feet method. It is directly compatible with Liebenberg's 'speculative tracking'. It includes a simplified form of lost spoor procedure called 'spoor discovery procedures' that may be also used to start the trailing process.

16. Shadowhawk; *Wildlife Tracking*.

Cover sheet for the definitions and terminology (glossary) handout.

17. Syrotuck, William G; *Scent and the Scenting Dog*, 1972/2000, Barkleigh Productions Inc.

One for the doggies. This is one of the seminal works on scent tracking with dogs, mostly concentrating on what scent is (vapour from bacterial action on skin cells and from crushed vegetation) and how it is propagated. It explains how dogs smell humans and the difference between 'tracking' (following crushed vegetation in footsteps), 'trailing' (following discarded skin cells on the ground) and 'air scenting' (detecting skin cells floating in the air). It discusses the pros and cons of each method (only trailing is specific to the individual), i.e., differentiation versus detection. Essential knowledge for all trackers.

## **Mantracking**

1. Bodziak, William J; Footwear Impression Evidence, 2000, CRC Press.  
A large and expensive book on footwear, footprints and blood spoor by an expert FBI forensic scientist. Worth reading but not buying, especially as it is available in its (near) entirety on Google books.
2. Carss, Bob; The SAS Guide to Tracking, 2000, Lyons Press.  
A general guide to tracking, fieldcraft and stalking but one centred on tracking humans. It reflects the British Jungle Warfare School approach to tracking (less dogs), which may not be wholly appropriate in other environments.
3. Carss, Bob; The Complete Guide to Tracking, 2009, Right Way.  
A reprint of the 1999 original and, effectively, identical to the SAS Guide. There are a few more sketches but, basically, it's the same book: 7-Step method and probe type lost spoor procedures. The format is easier to read, however, than the SAS Guide.
4. Cooper, D (Ed); NASAR Fundamentals of Search and Rescue, 2005, Jones and Bartlett publishes LLC.  
This is the American search and rescue Bible with two sections on tracking for search and rescue operations the information concerns search and rescue type tracking assuming a non-hostile subject anyone conducting search and rescue tracking in America should absolutely read this book. Failure to do so, would attract criticism from the search and rescue community.
5. Diaz, David; Tracking – signs of man, signs of hope, 2005, Lyons Press.  
An excellent guide to combat tracking but, again, very much oriented towards jungle work as practised by the US military (less dogs).
6. Hardin, Joel; Tracker, 2005, J Hardin Inc Publishing.  
A fascinating collection of case histories interspersed with essays on theory. It concentrates on 3-person SAR tracking as taught in the north-western US using the step-by-step method dear to the old US Border Patrol teams from California. He explains the origins of this and its association with his old colleagues, Jack Kearney and Ab Taylor.
7. Hull, David M; Man tracking in Law Enforcement, 2015, VITALE LLC  
This is an introduction to tracking by someone who has done it as a US game warden. The first part of the book concentrates on selling tracking for law enforcement. As such, there are several sound, experience-based observations, some of which, such as the 'inherited costs' of a tracking dog, may not initially be evident to law enforcement management. Likewise, the author understands the attraction of technology to

managers and indicates areas where this may help (e.g., cameras, GPS, etc) rather than hinder. The technique sections are concerned with tracking rather than trailing. There is a small amount of practical information and a useful glossary, but the book is really a guide to the advantages of tracking in law enforcement rather than a guide to procedures.

8. Hurth, John D; Combat tracking guide, 2012, Stackpole books.

A quite comprehensive guide to combat and law enforcement tracking. John Hurth was associated with TTOS, and this book reflects the TTOS teaching in some detail. In fact, one might say that it reproduces the TTOS manual. That said, the illustrations are very good and the subject coverage comprehensive. Although fundamentally American, it also covers the British five-step drill and has a number of American military message format templates. Interestingly, it also shows a selected range of tyre and armoured vehicle track patterns, which is unusual.

9. Idriess, Ion L; Man Tracks, 1937, Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Ion 'Australian Guerrilla' Idriess recounts a collection of stories about the Mounted Police service and their trackers in Northern Australia during the 1920's and 30's. Ripping yarns, probably true, of hunting down Aboriginal killer gangs (and some whites too), all told in the 'straight right to the dusky jaw' style of public school colonialism. Lots of tracking, lots of bushcraft and a real page-turner. Many copies still exist at fair prices and it's well worth having.

10. Kamongo, Sisingi; Shadows in the Sand, 2011, 30° South Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

A biography of a tracker with the Koevoet gendarmerie in Southwest Africa during the war there. A very personal history, it provides interesting insights into Koevoet's operating procedures as well as a history of Koevoet from the viewpoint of both coloured and white operators. Written in conjunction with certain white colleagues, it also deals with the unfortunate manner in which coloured members of South Africa's Armed Forces were treated by the post-apartheid regime.

11. Kearney, Jack; Tracking – a blueprint for learning how, 1978, Pathways Press.

This is 'teach yourself mantracking', the manual by the man who designed the step-by-step method. A 'must read' for all trackers. When the Border Patrol were first tasked with teaching 'civilians', Kearney, with his education degree, prepared this syllabus for volunteers on weekend courses, leaving them with a means of self-improvement to go home with.

12. Koester, Robert J; Lost Person Behaviour, 2008, dbS Productions LLC.

This is the Bible for Search & Rescue operations in terms of what missing persons may actually do and where the search should be concentrated. The core of the book is behavioural analyses drawn from statistics from many countries. It provides and probabilities and values for directions and distances from the Point Last Seen. The first and last parts of the book blends search procedures with mathematics, specifically statistics and operational research. A copy of this book is essential in the crash-out bag of any search and rescue tracker.

13. Merritt, Susan; Seek On!, 2011, Strategic Book Group.

This is a very personal record of American trackers in Vietnam. These were both sight and dog trackers, trained at the British jungle warfare school by New Zealand SAS

instructors. Mrs Merritt has collected the memoirs of members of the US trackers' Association to produce a very personal history of their deployment during the Vietnam war from the point of view, fundamentally, of the dog handlers.

14. NDS, *Le Pistage* [French], 2012, NDS (Switzerland).

This is a short, but interesting little textbook on combat tracking, in French, prepared by what appears to be private military training company in Switzerland. The author is probably one Phillip Perrotti as part of a series of his books in the same style. The content is the usual mixture of British jungle warfare and American tracker training and presents little new, but it is in harmony with the NDS immediate action techniques.

15. Reid-Daly, Ron; *Staying Alive*, 1990, Ashanti Publishing Ltd.

Not actually a tracking book, it does however contain a long chapter on tracking and deception techniques. Reid-Daly was the CO of the Selous Scouts and is an entertaining author but he seems to have forgotten that this chapter was supposed to be about tracking animals for food. The chapter has some new takes on spoor-cutting, however whilst, basically, following the FM7-42 /JWS line. Otherwise, it's a comprehensive update of Grainger (*qv*) but marginally less difficult to find.

16. Ritch, Van; *Rural Surveillance*, 2003, Paladin Press.

Not really a tracking book, although there is a chapter on tracking within it, this is very much a 'tracking awareness' book for law-enforcement officers. Because surveillance and tracking go hand-in-hand, it provides a useful insight into a law-enforcement tracker's working environment.

17. Salzger, Rainer [GERMAN]; *The Art of Mantracking*, 2006, Asaro-Verlag.

Very military, very American. Lots of stuff on camouflage, stalking and fundamentals of tracking – all in German! Thankfully, it is richly illustrated in sketches and B&W photos. It's probably a major contribution to the literature but I wouldn't know as I don't read German that well.

18. Scott-Donelan, David; *Tactical Tracking Operations*, 1998, Paladin Press.

The words of the master! David has taught combat tracking since ... well, a long time ago and he's still doing it today. This is a lively and inspirational guide to tracking bad guys across two continents by the man who's done it. Laced with politically incorrect stories, asides and the lessons of a lifetime, this is the window on the southern African mantracking practices as taught by Shadowhawk and which form the basis of the Combat Tracker courses currently being taught to the US Forces by TTOS.

19. Shadowhawk; *Tactical Tracking Operations Level 1*.

The original handbook from the tactical tracking course.

20. Shadowhawk; *Fast Adaptive Sure Tracking Level 1*.

The handout from the Mantracking course, derived from the PowerPoint slides.

21. Speiden, Robert; *Foundations for Awareness, Signcutting and Tracking*, 2009, Nature Awareness Tracking School, LLC.

A superb man-tracking textbook written for SAR folks, based on the teachings of Charles Worsham and Greg Fuller (the 'Virginia' school). It provides useful information on visual tracking methods and techniques, how we see, etc, and backs this up with multiple sense tracking, e.g., smelling tracks (it really works!). It is heavily into 'indexing', especially as a means of aging (and makes the tremendous point that aging is event-based, not time based). The trailing techniques are biased towards wedging in pairs and there are separate sections on tracking across leaves, grass, rocks, slopes, etc. Pressure releases as action indicators receive intelligent treatment (albeit on sand). The choice of vocabulary is somewhat unusual but perhaps clearer to understand for all that. The section on animal tracking may not follow all the tenets of conventional wisdom but it does make the key point that one has to be familiar with animal tracks to be a good people tracker. A 'must-have' for man-tracking and SAR purposes. Oh, and you can chuck away those tracking sticks too!

22. Stiff, Peter; Covert War, 2004, Galago Publishing Ltd.

A sort of 'regimental history' of Koevoet operations. Very little on techniques or tactics but sufficient to show how Koevoet actually did operate, basically by deliberately driving into ambushes! It reads like Ops logs edited into a narrative format (dates, callsigns, body counts) and there's a lot of it!

23. Taylor, Albert and Cooper, Donald C; Fundamentals of Mantracking, 1990, Emergency Response Institute, Inc.

Hard to get (try E-bay), this is the original Step-by-Step SAR tracking guide. Not as good a training aid as Kearney and not such a good read as Hardin, it is still extremely informative and told by the chap who taught both Kearney and Hardin. Well worth having if you can find a copy at a good price.

24. TTOS; Combat Tracker, 2000, TTOS.

The handbook from the standard Combat Tracking course. Comprehensive in its own right, it's the many marginal notes derived from David Scott-Donelan's personal stories that make one's copy so valuable. There is another handbook on deception techniques but the majority of the content will have been covered on one's standard course.

25. US Army; Field manual 7-42, Combat Tracker and Tracker Dog Training and Employment, 1973, HQ Department of the Army.

Available as a scan to download from <http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/5218/>, this hard to find US Field manual was put together by five senior NCOs from the US Army based on their training at the British Jungle Warfare School. As such, it reflects what the School was teaching in the late 60's and early 70's. It is the basis of the military material in Carss' books and gives an insight into the original British practices. US practises have changed since the arrival of TTOS as the training contractors and are now less jungle orientated.

26. Williams, Ted; Operation Firestorm, 2009, PublishAmerica LLLP.

The only novel I know of about tracking and one written by an experienced tactical tracker. The hero tracks a group of terrorists through the forests west of the Rockies, training a FBI HRT team as he does so, and we are given an insight into tactical

tracking techniques in rural areas. A ripping yarn and my only criticism is that the book could easily be twice as long for twice the pleasure.

## **European wildlife**

1. Albouy, Vincent; [FRENCH] *Guide de Pisteur Debutant* [A tracker's primer], 2009, Delachaux et Niestlé

A cracking little book intended as a practical guide for those starting to track in Europe. It starts with domestic dogs (excellent!) and covers a handful of the most common European mammals (rabbit, hare, fox, boar, Roe, etc) and farm animals with excellent colour photos of track and sign and a brief supporting text for each photo. It aims to show the common stuff so that the user can ultimately recognise the more exotic species. No trailing techniques are shown but there is sufficient T&S information to give beginners (and others) a flying start.

2. Bang, P and Dahlstrom, P; *Animal Tracks and Signs*, 2001, Oxford University Press.

Recently reprinted with a foreword by Ray Mears, this is the best known of the European tracking guides. It is, however, heavily oriented towards tracking in snow and frequently disappoints when one is looking for detail. Although beautifully illustrated with coloured photographs, and quite comprehensive, its main advantage, regrettably, is its availability.

3. Bouchner, Miroslav; *Animal Tracks*, 1990, Blitz Editions (in English).

The best of the European wildlife tracking books in this list, it has everything one needs in terms of drawings, photographs, behaviour and gait patterns in a compact package. Unusually, it is very much oriented towards hunting and game-keeping and was thus destined for the remaindered bookshops from day one, but there are still quite a few copies around at good prices.

4. Brown, R, Ferguson, J, Lawrence, M and Lees D; *Tracks and Signs of the Birds of Britain and Europe*, 1987 & 2003, pub. Christopher Helm.

A gorgeously published guide to British and European bird sign, this is particularly good on feathers, for which there is no shortage of colour photographs. It comes second best to Elbroch's masterpiece (*qv*), however, as a general guide to interpreting bird sign. Note that the other books in this section also cover birds as well as mammals.

5. Brown, RW, Lawrence, MJ and Pope, J; *Animals – Tracks, trails and signs*, 1992, Octopus Publishing Group.

An excellent, colourful and comprehensive guide to British wildlife tracks. Sadly, it is now out of print again but it's well-worth looking for. With its plethora of coloured drawings of tracks and trail patterns, it's a far more useful field guide than Bang and Dahlstrom but it has an academic air when compared to Bouchner.

6. Chaigneau, André [FRENCH]; *Indices et Traces des Animaux Sauvages* [Wild Animal Sign and Spoor], 1965-2001, Editions Crepin-Leblond.

Written by a gamekeeping instructor for hunters, this book has a somewhat bucolic style that, although very useful in the field, may test the foreign reader's translation

skills. It is rich in personal observations with occasional factoids where the author exceeds his academic envelope. It is, however, very good on bird language and sign generally. The comments and drawings on where an animal has been shot, with its resulting trail and blood spoor, do not appear anywhere else to my knowledge (eat your heart out, Tom Brown).

NB. Now in print again as *Traces et Indices de Gibier*.

7. Chard, JSR; *British Animal Tracks*, 1936, Mayflower Press.

Recently reprinted by Lightning Source UK, this is a fascinating monograph written from a gamekeepers' and hunters' perspective. The original terms for male and female animals are included provided they are game or vermin! There's some outdated info at the back on casting and photography that appears bizarre in a book of this type. The drawings of tracks are superb, however, but watch out for factoids, especially with Red Deer, as herd characteristics may vary with location.

8. Chazel, Luc and da Ros, Muriel (now Muriel Chazel – well done) [FRENCH]; *L'Encyclopédie des Traces des Animaux d'Europe* [Encyclopaedia of European animal tracks], 2001, Delachaux et Niestle.

The source book for European track and sign. Luc has been tracking throughout Europe for at least twenty years and knows his subject. Importantly, he knows that nothing is certain except that nothing is certain as far as nature is concerned. Most species (other than small rodents) are covered in considerable detail with sections on feet, tracks, gaits and track patterns, habitats, scats, runs, diggings, sleeping places, factoids and anything else of interest. The French is academic but the lexicon is limited so, by 'breaking the code', a foreign reader could access the text. It is cheaply published, however, and all the photos are lumped together in two places, which is an added problem for a foreign reader

9. Chazel, Luc and Muriel [FRENCH]; *Traces et Indices des Animaux des régions du Sud* [Animal track & sign of Southern Europe], 2008, Edisud.

Utterly brilliant! Here is a small track and sign guide with some of the best illustrative colour photography ever, now right in with the text where it should be. The animals of southern Europe include such northern species as the European Beaver, the Wild Cat and the Red Deer, as well as the Genet and Mongoose of the Mediterranean littoral. The language is a bit more colloquial than the encyclopaedia, however, so the foreign reader may have to hang on to the Latin names and the photos.

10. Corbet, Gordon and Oviden, Denys; *The Mammals of Britain and Europe*, 1980, William Collins & Sons.

Really a field guide to mammals but there is a small section on tracks and plenty of sketches of skulls, etc by Denys Oviden. Denys was my supervisor with BBONT in 1982/83, so I've included this book out of loyalty to an old friend.

11. Durantel, Pascal [FRENCH]; *Traces et Indices des Animaux* [Animal Tracks and Sign], 1990/1991, Les Carnets d'Arthaud.

A slim pocket guide by species. Richly illustrated but eclectic in format, this would be a useful book for the occasional tracker to take into the field. It may also exist in a larger format (1990 edition), which may be more coherent than this one, without the

page jumps. It tends to prioritise behavioural information at the expense of systematic track/track pattern descriptions, which gives it a rather generalist air.  
NB. A 2008 edition now exists.

12. Falkus, Hugh; *Nature Detective*, 1978, Victor Gollancz Ltd.

A fascinating natural history of north west England based on black and white photos of track and sign. Very English Middle Classes in its style, this book is a tribute to the naturalists of the 1960s. Well worth having.

13. Leutscher, Alfred; *Tracks and Signs of British Mammals*, 1960, Cleaver-Hume Press.

Long out of print (except for a children's' version), this is another species by species guide to track and sign. Leutscher was President of the British mammal society (I think) and the book is authoritative. Excellent B&W sketches and good comments on behaviour, sign, etc. Short on techniques but with a good glossary of hunting terms, collective nouns and suchlike. Very similar to Chard but much more detailed.

14. Maxwell, Ian; *Animal Tracks ID & Techniques*, 2007, Flame Lily Press.

An extremely useful pocket guide to the more visible tracks of Britain and ... wherever it is those big cats come from ☺. A 'must have'.

15. Morel, Jacques [FRENCH]; *Les Traces d'Animaux* [Animal tracks], 1991/96, Delachaux & Niestlé.

A small pocket book containing sketches of prints. Very little text and, indeed, very simple all round. Latin names are a help but the sketches are nothing special. The main interest lies in the sketches of small rodent prints, where very little helps. Arty, but not particularly useful.

16. Rys, Jan [FRENCH]; *Sur les Traces des Animaux* [Tracking animals], 1971, Grund.

A coffee-table book of B&W photos with short accompanying texts. Very typical of its time and now extremely dated. The photos are of the animals and birds and there is little reference to track or sign.

17. Strachan, Rob; *Mammal Detective*, 1995 & 2002, Whittet Books.

An absolute gem! A superb primer on track and sign with a gentle sense of humour to boot. All one needs to know to start watching animals, whether for pleasure or for science. A 'must have'.

18. Thomassin, Sylvain [FRENCH]; *Les Traces d'Animaux, indices, empreintes ...* [Animal spoor, sign, tracks, etc], 1993-?, Bordas Ecoguides.

A superb textbook aimed at undergraduate level biologists. After sections and keys on spoor, runs, burrows, food remains, etc, it goes on to a species guide and then some quite astonishing exercises, e.g. baiting fox dens with strands of coloured wool in minced meat in order to discover their territorial boundaries. The drawings appear simplistic at first but are rich in 'jizz'. A short book at just over 200 pages but one of the best available.

## **American wildlife**

1. Brunner, Josef; Tracks and Tracking, 1941, Macmillan.

A hunter/forester's guide to US animal tracking that contributes little to the current literature other than track patterns for wounded deer and a fairly useful paragraph and drawing of how to stalk animals in coverts (approach upwind, pass round and stand upwind; smoke a pipe (optional) and flush the animal downwind. As it hits your ground scent, it will turn and flee to the other side. As it breaks cover, shoot it).

2. Butler, Barbara; Wilderness Tracks, 1997, Hancock House Publishers Ltd.

Not the world's greatest tracking book, but a good collection of stories by a nice lady tracker. She knows her stuff and has enough savvy about the wild to avoid dangerous situations, which she passes on in a gentle way. The result, however, is rather bland, which is a shame really

3. Eiseman C and Charney N; Tracks And Signs of Insects and Other Invertebrates, 2010, Stackpole books.

This is a superb guide to the track and sign of insects and other unusual small animals. Although based on North America, generalisations can be drawn by genus and species that are of use everywhere in the world. Because insects and amphibians are not usually covered elsewhere, this is a very valuable book reference book that is copiously illustrated with colour photographs supporting an approachable text by knowledgeable authors. This track & sign guide is uniform with the other Stackpole books on bird and animal sign and will quickly become an essential part of any tracker's library.

4. Elbroch, M, with Marks, E; Bird Tracks and Sign, 2001, Stackpole Books.

An absolutely inspirational book on bird sign that makes one want to leap out of the armchair and get into the woods. Such woods, moreover, would not have to be on the far side of the Atlantic. Between them, Elbroch and Marks tell us pretty well all we need to know about birds where this can be interpreted from sign. I've used details in this book to fill in the blanks left by Brown, Ferguson, Lawrence & Lees.

5. Elbroch, Mark; Mammal Tracks and Sign, 2003, Stackpole Books.

The *tour de force* by the master; species accounts, tracks and scats, how to do it, masses of colour photos. Everything a good reference book should be. Yes, it's for North America but much of the content could apply to similar species in Europe or Africa. After all, Mark comes from Britain! If nothing else, the section on 'not getting up until you find a hair' has changed my approach to sit-spots.

6. Forrest, Louise; Field Guide to Tracking Animals in Snow, 1988, Stackpole Books.

This book forms a good complement to Halfpenny (*qv*) since it is largely oriented towards trail patterns rather than individual tracks. There are some useful illustrated keys, but buy Halfpenny first.

7. Halfpenny, James; A Field Guide to Mammal Tracking in North America, 1986, Johnson Books.

This book really concentrates on trail patterns in a way that no other does. There are some interesting quiz questions inside to check one's comprehension, and a large section on scats, but it's the trail patterns theory that make this one a 'must have'.

8. Halfpenny, James; Scats and Tracks of the Desert Southwest, 2000, Morris Book Publishing Inc.

One of the regional series produced by Dr Halfpenny subsequent to his original Field Guide. His useful analysis system for gait patterns has now been rationalised and improved and there are now some useful sketches of tracks and trail patterns with each species account. Any book from this series would be a useful complement to his original Field Guide.

9. Halfpenny, James; Scats and Tracks of the Rocky Mountains, 2001, Morris Book Publishing LLC.

Another of the regional series. Like the others, this covers track and sign for about 70 species of mammals, birds, amphibians and snakes. The first part is a rationalised account of Dr Halfpenny's thoughts on track patterns, etc. This series is an ideal pocket size tracker's field guide. Usefully, small grey rectangles at the bottom margins of the pages show the average sizes of prints (right hand page, width and length) and scat diameters (left hand pages). Nice idea.

10. Hanson, Roseann and Jonathan; Animal Tracks, 2001, Globe Pequot Press.

Published in the "basic essentials" series, that's half right. It's certainly basic but it sure ain't essential. Distro map, scruffy track sketch and basic text for each species. Forget it.

11. Jaeger, Ellsworth; Tracks and Trailcraft, 1948 and 2001, The Lyons Press.

Very dated in its style, this book appears aimed at children, albeit very precocious ones. It is reminiscent of Baden-Powell in many ways and Johnny (Animal Magic) Morris in others. Very anthropomorphic in its approach, the detail is still all there and there's nothing wrong with the drawings either. It's just not a field guide in the modern style.

12. Lowery, James C; The Tracker's Field Guide, 2006, Falcon Guides.

A field guide's field guide. Lowery was one of Tom Brown's lieutenants and brings a serious academic approach to a deep and practical knowledge of wildlife and tracking whilst de-mystifying 'pressure releases' at the same time. A real 'must-read' and, quite possibly, the standard against which other tracking field guides should now be judged.

13. Merlin, Pineau; A Field Guide to Desert Holes, 1999/2003, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

This is a book that stands out (hmm) from the mass of track and sign books by being about holes. I found it fascinating as I have always regarded holes as having a history predating their current occupants. They're an essential part of the countryside and a deeper knowledge (oh dear) of them is always useful. Some of the ideas in this book can be adapted to Europe or Africa but it's not really essential reading, e.g., Arizona scorpions apparently live under stones not down characteristically shaped slots as they do in Africa so this latter hole shape doesn't appear in this book.

14. Murie, Olaus J; Animal Tracks, 1954 and 1982, Peterson Field Guides.

The book that originally laid down the standard for tracking guides, its pen and ink drawings and closely written text covering tracks, trails and sign were a first for its time. Comprehensive, academic and handy, it still has its place on the bookshelf

today. Heavily plagiarised, it contains several mistakes (the 'Murie errors') that may be used to recognise the plagiaries.

15. O'Connor, RM; tracking bears in Yellowstone Park, January 2010, Bush Craft and survival magazine.

This was my magazine article on my time in Yellowstone Park with Dr Jim Halfpenny. It is normal to write some academic paper if one has been hosted by Jim and this was my contribution. It is now available on his website in full, with the approval of the magazine. It concerns the larger animals in the park such as bear, bison, wolf and coyote.

16. Ormond, Clive; How to Track and Find Game, 1975, Outdoor Life.

A hunter's guide to stalking and tracking American game and vermin by species. Sketches of tracks and scat and text on stalking techniques. Worth a read to see the variety of methods that may work with different animals.

17. Rezendes, Paul; Tracking and the Art of Seeing, 1999, Harper Perennial (pub).

Something of a coffee-table book written by a wildlife photographer about animals and their tracks. This is unfortunate as Mr Rezendes was very well-respected in American tracking circles. Great photos though.

18. Seton, Ernest Thompson; Animal Tracks and Hunter Signs, 1956, Doubleday & Co Inc.

A selection of his monographs compiled by his wife after the great naturalist's death, this book forms a tribute to the acute observation of the former 'Chief Scout of the Americas'. Wonderful sketches, wonderful stories.

19. Smith, Richard P; Animal Tracks and Signs of North America, 1982, Stackpole Books.

Written by a journalist and well illustrated in black and white photographs, this is not, however, a great field guide to either animals or their tracks. A book for borrowing from a library for a wet afternoon by the fireside, perhaps.

20. Stall, Chris; Animal tracks of the Rocky Mountains, 1989, The Mountaineers.

A small, pocket field guide in the 'page of text, page of drawings' category. The drawings are basic B&W but (mostly) full-size. The text is also basic but there is usually a hint that the author has actually tracked much that is here. Not worth going out of one's way to find, but well worth the two bucks or so it costs if you do find one.

### ***African wildlife***

1. Grainger, Col DH; Don't Die in the Bundu, 1967?, Howard Timmins (pub).

Not actually a tracking book although it does have a chapter on tracking in it. This is a bit of a mixture between wildlife and people tracking. It provides a brief introduction to the subject within a useful little book on survival in the veldt. Something of a collector's item though.

2. Liebenberg, Louis; A Field Guide to the Animal Tracks of Southern Africa, 1990, David Philips (pub).

The master's guide to tracking and tracks in South Africa, this book starts with an introduction to techniques and then goes on to species by species behavioural accounts, with full size or scale drawings of the tracks in black and white. As such, it's a 'must read' for anyone going tracking in southern Africa. It does cover pretty well everything, including insects and leaves. It is the reference book for THETA/FGASA tracking courses but, if not actually out of print, it may be hard to find a good copy.

3. Liebenberg, Louis; A Photographic Guide to Tracks and Tracking in Southern Africa, 2000, Struik Publishers.

This little book should be in the pocket of everyone tracking in S. Africa. Each page gives a colour photo of the beast itself, a distribution map, a block of text on its habits and spoor and a drawing of the track taken from the Field Guide. The only disadvantage is that the publishers have scaled the track drawings to fit the pages and so one has little idea of their actual size. Essential kit all the same.

Two other versions exist, also by Struik, one in English, one in Afrikaans, same content but different format. These are available in many RSA bookshops.

4. Stuart, Chris and Tilde; A Field Guide to the Tracks and Signs of southern and East African wildlife, 1994, 1998, 2000, Struik Publishers.

This is the book to keep in the lodge or tent for reference in the evening. With its comprehensive picture keys of tracks and multitudes of photographs in colour and black & white, this is the *magnum opus* on African wildlife tracking by a pair of well-known academic naturalists. A 'must have'.

5. Walker, Clive; Signs of the Wild, 1996, Struik Publishers.

A book on tracking by a wildlife photographer, this one has some impressive colour photographs, distro maps, a very short text on each animal, with perhaps a line or two on its spoor, and something like a Rorschardt's ink-blot alleged to represent its track. Its greatest value, perhaps, is the somewhat random list of native language names shown for each animal. A bit of a coffee-table book.

## **Asian wildlife**

1. Gurung, KK and Singh, Raj; Field Guide to the Mammals of the Indian Subcontinent, 1996, Academic Press Ltd.

This book features a section of short descriptions for the various animals, some coloured sketches, some B&W sketches of the more significant tracks and a guide to the national parks of India. Actually, it's not that bad - and that's good, because it's all there is!

## **Internet essays / websites**

Search Probability Theory – one of several essays to be found on an American SAR site, along with Lost Person Behaviour Characteristics and others. A sobering introduction to the accounting and statistics side of SAR operations.

Search Techniques – a probably British police essay on SAR techniques. Concise and very sensible, I wonder how many search managers have ever read it.

US Field Manual 23.10 (the Sniper Manual) Chapter 8, Tracking and Countertracking – a track awareness guide for snipers, this is most useful for its section on deception techniques. Readers will not wish to become dog handlers after reading this! (from [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)).

US Field Manual 7-93, Appendix F, Tracking and countertracking, evasion and escape, and survival – the Oxford comma in the title strikes me with shock and awe but the text is OK as an introduction to combat tracking. Again, it's more of a track awareness essay than a how-to guide. (from [www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)).

An essay on Nature Observation – a potted account of Tom Brown's stuff, probably by someone who did a course there.

OA Guide to Animal Tracking by Rick Curtis, Princeton University, Outdoor Action, 1995 – a short but useful guide summarising the theoretical bits of Halfpenny, Forrest and others.

Tracking (from the Selous Scouts home page) – a useful aide-memoire that was probably aimed at Territorial units rather than tracking-orientated units. This essay provides a succinct guide to combat tracking operations. Paragraph 3, 'actions when tracking', in particular, warrants careful study. The references to tracking in pairs and leapfrogging trackers when the trail is faint may not be applicable to 4-man 'sticks' but they are techniques that are currently being 're-discovered' within the context of 6-man combat tracking teams. The second half of the essay, on the use of war dogs, is also interesting.

Follow-up operations (from the Selous Scouts home page) – this essay provides the framework within which combat tracking was used by the Rhodesians. Again, it is orientated to full-size military units, with references to Sections and Platoons that did not figure in the orders of battle for the SAS, RLI or Selous Scouts.

A useful French site for tracks and hunting is at:  
<http://www.jyrousseau.com/goelan.htm>

The RSPB site with its useful guide to bird calls is at:  
<http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/a/index.asp>

Gaulke, DW, 1998, The Revival of Traditional Animal Tracking (an MA dissertation).

Downloaded it; never read it as it describes itself as a 'spiritual homecoming'. He acknowledges Charles Worsham, however, who was the guru for tracking in the 'Virginia school', so I should read it really.

Cunningham, T; Forensic Spoorology, 2011, Fort Leavenworth.

This was Ty Cunningham's Master's Degree dissertation and it is available as a download or as an expensive book. It is academic and heavy going, tending to the micro-tracking needed by forensic examiners. Too heavy for me so far, anyway.

### ***Further reading***

A long list of tracking books appears at

[http://www.wildlifetrackers.com/resources/tracking\\_books.html](http://www.wildlifetrackers.com/resources/tracking_books.html)