

# POINT REYES TRACKING SCHOOL

## Core Tracking Course Outline

This is what we are covering every time we go out over the course of the year, to one degree or another. It is hard to separate all these aspects. Tracking is holistic, employing all of these views at once, and nature always has the last word about what will be available to work with.

### 1. The Tracker Mind

Shifting into a state of gratitude, respect and curiosity. Joining our minds. Shifting into an awareness of our own profile and lowering it. Walking without fear.

### 2. The Tracker Shift

Entering the land in a state of heightened awareness; listening and observing from the Three Perspectives Sensory Intensification and slowing down. Occasional blindfold work is employed.

### 3. Species Lists

Knowing which animals—birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects—are likely to be in any particular area we are tracking, and what their territorial ranges and preferred habitats are.

### 4. Track Identification and Analysis

This is what I call *hard tracking*: scale, shape, toe and pad details, how tracks vary on different substrates, pressure releases and other aspects of movement, We occasionally work with my extensive collection of plaster casts and dried feet.

### 5. Gaits

Animal movement patterns and the trails they create. Baseline movement for different species—while traveling or while feeding. Context and purpose of movement patterns—why were they here and what were they doing? Mechanical analysis of four-legged movement from slow to fast.

Practicing and embodying the gaits of different animals.

### 6. Aging Tracks and Sign

When was the track, trail or sign made? What are the effects of wind, rain, sun? How does location affect weathering? This is truly a life-long learning.

### 7. Sign Tracking

Scat analysis and ID of mammals, birds, and reptiles including size, shape, age, contents, location, context, and placement.

Feeding Sign: chews, browse, nibbles, snips, and kill sites.

Scent marking signs

Digging styles and purposes.

Trail analysis.

Feather ID: wings, tails, body feathers. Using my extensive collection and identification resources—Feather wear patterns

Skull, Jaw, Tooth and Whisker Identification—working with my collection.

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## **8. Trailing**

Following trails to enter the animals' minds, observing shifts in gaits and other changes in response to the land. Forward tracking toward the animal with fresh trails. Where is it now? Learning to feel the animal and its choices—becoming the animal! Backtracking to see where an animal came from.

## **9. Sit Spots**

To let nature resume baseline with attendant bird language, journalling.

## **10. Personal Mastery**

Bringing the practice into your daily life: Self-reliance, quiet mind, patience, mental health (see *The Four Agreements* and *Fifth Agreements*), physical health, common humanity, and the Apache scout.