

Keeping Track® Monitoring Program Course Summary (from their website 10/2010)

(As of October 31, 2003)

Course Specifics

Keeping Track provides each participant with training materials and an extensive list of supplemental readings. Volunteers learn about:

- detection and interpretation of tracks and sign of agreed upon focal species for your region
- tracks and sign of additional species that may be confused with those of the focal species
- conservation biology as it relates to data collection and resulting land protection
- forest ecology and plant identification as they relate to mammal uses of habitat.
- 'Search imaging'—Sue Morse's technique for looking in the right places and finding sign in predictable locations according to the specific habits of each species.
- an introduction to science-based field studies, including the *Keeping Track Project and Data Management Protocol* and data collection forms and procedures.

Field Workshops

At 'Wolfrun', where Keeping Track has its field training facility (in Jericho, VT):

Cougar Knob / Moose Wallows

- Introduction: setting the intellectual and ecological context for the knowledge and experience to be gained in the course
- Tracks and sign of black bear, bobcat, moose (also otter, fisher, mink as encountered)
- Tree and shrub identification as it relates to habitat quality and specific resources wildlife need and use
- Topographical features of the landscape as they relate to habitat quality
- Natural disturbance regimes and forest management – agents of change in the forest environment
- Introduction to wildlife foraging and cover requirements
- Search imaging – introduction and practice

Witness Draw (including the 'Babysitter Swamp') – always done in winter

- Bear sign, fisher tracks and sign; also possible tracks and sign of otter, bobcat and mink
- Protocol terminology – 'core habitat', 'corridor', 'linkage zone,' 'transect', 'focal species'
- Search imaging – continued practice

Bobby Knob (always offered in February or March)

- Focus on bobcat: the importance of cliffy refugia, including dens, lays, thermal and security habitat
- Continued practice with track and sign identification and search imaging (bear, fisher, moose, as well as other non-focal species, including coyote and red fox)

NOTE: In the event of snow or rain, the Bobby Knob class will be postponed. Class members should consult their coordinators in order to determine the status of this class.

Local Field Trips

In addition to the three workshops at Wolfrun, there will be three field trips scheduled to take place in your own community:

- Focus on one or more of the focal species, with emphasis on otter, mink and other species of local interest

- Later workshops allow for practice with data forms, photo-documentation, and identification of tracks and sign of focal species

Indoor Classes

These classes occur locally, usually offered in the evening when Keeping Track staff are in your region conducting a field workshop.

Class 1 (Occurs close to the second or third field workshop)

- Foot morphology as it relates to accurate track identification: inspection of and discussion about Sue's collection of freeze-dried mammal feet

Class 2 (Occurs during latter half of the course)

- Intro to next steps after training: Super Map Session and field reconnaissance
- Slide show with comprehensive coverage of all species, including four Threatened and Endangered species

Readings and 'Dirt Time'

As part of the course, Keeping Track expects participants to read the following materials:

- Keeping Track Tracker's Packet (containing articles on each species and conservation biology topics)
- Keeping Track Project and Data Management Protocol
- Keeping Track Guide to Photographing Animal Tracks and Sign

Keeping Track recommends these resources on tracking:

Paul Rezendes. 1999. Tracking and the Art of Seeing. 2nd Edition. Harper Perennial.

James Halfpenny. 1998. Scats and Tracks of the Northeast. Falcon Press.

Lynn Levine and Martha Mitchell. 2001. Mammal Tracks: Life-Size Tracking Guide. Heartwood Press.

Diane Gibbons. 2003. Mammal Tracks and Sign of the Northeast. University of New England Press.

Mark Elbroch. 2003. Mammal Tracks and Sign: A Guide to North American Species. Stackpole Press.

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