

Tracking and Scouting Field Checklist

Use this before interpreting wildlife sign, setting a camera, or entering sensitive habitat.

1. Observe First

- Stop before stepping into the sign area.
- Note wind, weather, light, substrate, slope, cover, water, and distance.
- Photograph tracks with scale before touching or walking through them.

2. Identify Carefully

- Separate track, scat, browse, rub, bed, trail, feather, hair, or kill sign.
- Record size, stride, direction, freshness, and uncertainty.
- Avoid forcing a species ID when the clue is weak.

3. Stay Safe

- Keep distance from wildlife, young animals, dens, carcasses, and feeding areas.
- Carry navigation, light, layers, water, and bear-aware safety gear where relevant.
- Tell someone your route before scouting remote country.

Interpret, Map, Confirm

A good tracker builds a pattern from multiple clues, not one dramatic footprint.

4. Interpretation Log

- Likely species: _____
- Evidence confidence: low / medium / high
- Freshness: minutes / hours / days / older
- What would confirm it: another track, camera image, scat, bed, rub, browse, or repeated trail.

5. Mapping Notes

- Mark location without sharing sensitive coordinates publicly.
- Record travel direction, habitat edge, water source, bedding cover, feeding area, and wind.
- Use map, compass, GPS, or phone as backup systems, not a single point of failure.

6. Trail Camera Check

- Follow local rules and property permissions.
- Do not bait, crowd, or disturb wildlife.
- Place cameras to learn movement, not to pressure animals.

Respect the Animal and the Place

Tracking and scouting should leave the animal safer, the habitat quieter, and the observer more informed.

7. Ethical Guardrails

- Do not chase, feed, crowd, call, or block wildlife movement.
- Do not approach young animals or dens.
- Do not share sensitive locations for nesting, denning, rare species, or heavily pressured wildlife.

8. Rule Check

- Check hunting seasons, licence rules, land access, parks rules, and camera restrictions.
- Use official sources before relying on social media or old forum advice.
- Species at risk and protected areas require extra caution.

Trip Review

- What sign was confirmed?
- What was uncertain?
- What safety issue needs improvement?
- What route should be avoided next time?