

Summer 2011 Newsletter

Training Season IS OPEN!

It's been a great start to the training season! Thanks to the course coordinators, Roger Meunier from Salmon Arm, Peter Wilson from Duncan, Randy Rorvik from Princeton and Jane Whitticase from Port Alberni, over 100 Novices and trackers have attended three In House Novice classes, one Universal Tracking Services Train The Trainer course and one Tracker 1 course. Many advanced trackers attended the novice courses in order to brush up on their skills and practice advanced techniques, on their way to Tracker 1 and Tracker 2 evaluation and certification. The course critiques were very positive and the reimbursements helped many who would have had second thoughts about attending courses.

Yes, as with any new program, there were a few hiccups. The actual funding from the National SAR Secretariat did not arrive until just a few days before the first course was to begin and others had already been planned and advertised for some time. PEP did not increase the allowable mileage rate upon which the Contribution Agreement reimbursements are based, and a few old forms got printed off before the correction was made.

On the Duncan Train the Trainer course, there were 13 BCTA members, including three of the five Regional Directors, the President and the Vice President. They were all brought up to speed on the planning and administration of courses, as well as instructing in the classroom and in the field. The next Train the Trainer will be at Vernon in July.

Check out the pictures members have posted on the Yahoo members-only link on www.bctracking.org.

NEED HOST GROUPS

What the Association really needs now is to get the word out to BC SAR Groups that they can offer to host Tracking courses this summer and fall. Letters were sent through EMBC/PEP and BC SARA, but personal contact and word of mouth (you know – the old school social network) is still our best means of getting the word out. Talk to your training officer or SAR Group executive and point them to the BCTA website link How to Host a Course. Talk to your local RCMP or Police Detachment, Parks and Conservation about our courses. Regional Directors will take it from there and help organize a course.

British Columbia Tracking Association

Executive 2011:

President: Win Koch

Vice President:

Tania Walter Gardiner

A/Secretary: Peggy Shelley

A/Treasurer: Win Koch

Regional Directors:

SE: Jerome Liboiron

SW: Gerald Wolfe

Central: Dwaine Brooke

NE: Vacant

NW: Roger Meunier

VI: Peter Wilson

Contact information:

<http://www.bctracking.org>

Committees:

Training

Communications

Policy

Tracker Call-Out

SAR at Gardom Lake, by Princeton SAR at Camp Tulahead and by Port Alberni Rescue Squad. Duncan SAR hosted a UTS Train The Trainer as well as a UTS Tracker 1 Course.

Course Announcements:

8-10 July Vernon

UTS Train the Trainer & Tracker 1

22-24 Sep Salmon Arm

UTS Tracker 1 & 2

Courses are being planned for the North West, possibly in Terrace or Smithers.

Links and details are available on the BCTA Website: www.bctracking.org

Membership: Renewals were due by **1 May 2011**. As of June, we were at 99 members and continue to grow. The number of members is important for our status as a Society and for grant applications. It shows the commitment of the membership to the objectives of the Society. Please get out there and encourage the trackers and SAR volunteers you know to join our Association!

Membership application forms are available for download and printing from the Association web site.

Policy Committee: Based on the committee's recommendation, the Board passed a motion for instructors to be reimbursed beyond the 500 km limit, if they are conducting courses in distant parts of the province, such as the North West.

Tracker Call Out Committee: Peter Wilson and Mike Neeland are continuing to work on the Tracker Call Out system. The new BCTA membership form asks members if they

June 2011 Board Meeting Highlights

Financial Statement: Thanks to the National Search And Rescue Secretariat (NSS) New Initiatives Fund (NIF) Contribution Agreement (CA), the Association is in great shape to conduct training and reimburse some of the associated costs for the members. Everyone is encouraged to speak to their training officers about hosting a tracking course in your area.

Training: Track Aware In House Novice courses were hosted by Shuswap

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wish to have their name and contact information provided for the Tracker Call Out list. This can include Trackers who are currently not members of SAR groups. Certified Track Aware and higher levels, willing and available to respond province-wide, if necessary, are asked to check off the response and they will be considered for the Tracker Call Out list.

Tracker Advisors Another best practices review item was a recommendation to provide senior Tracker Advisors to support SAR Management where significant trackers are tasked. Again, Peter and Mike are working on the details, but selected Sign Cutters or TK2s with SAR Manager certification could be called upon as specialist advisors to the Operations Chief or SAR Managers on a task.

Community Gaming Grant: The Association will apply for a 2012 grant to help defray training costs. A volunteer is urgently required to update last year's application and prepare the grant application for the August deadline.

BCTA Annual General Meeting will be held at the Salmon Arm course on Saturday 23 September at Gardom Lake. Members unable to attend in person may be able to participate via teleconference or Skype. The August 2011 newsletter will provide details of the agenda, the budget for 2012 and election of Executive and Regional Director positions. Anyone interested in running for these positions should contact Win Koch at: president@bctracking.org

Tracker Clues & Tips

What if you are searching for sign of a subject, and are faced with a number of different tracks? The Point Last Seen may be trashed with tracks from first responders, police and passers-by. Here are several clues and tips that may help the Tracker Team sort out which ones could belong to the subject or subjects being looked for.

Of course, the first step is to "Know your prey" as Mantracker would say. You should know the subject profile briefed by the SAR Manager or Team Leader and is on the ICS form 301. Everything and anything you know about the subject could be important when it comes to identifying clues that may belong to the subject.

A person described as heavy or not-so-fit generally tends to walk with their toes turned outwards, while a light or fit person tends to walk with their toes in a straight line.

Someone carrying a heavy pack will tend to walk with a shorter stride and with their feet slightly wider apart to balance their load.

A running subject will of course, have a longer stride and travel with the toes pointed straighter than a subject walking. If the subject is running in a "heel to toe" fashion, as is the case with long distance runners, the heel mark and the toe mark will be more pronounced. If the subject is running as a sprinter would, only the ball of the foot will be visible and the toe will be accentuated. Flat-footed runners would present a complete track with a deeper toe depression. Running also causes more scattering of debris and soil.

If tracks that indicate the subject is running are also covered with bear, cougar or wolf tracks, then you know why they are running!

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The depth of the sign in soft ground may give a clue that the track belongs to the missing subject. If the missing subject is described as heavy or carrying a pack, the track could be identified by comparing the relative track depth, as compared to others at the PLS.

A Tracker can compare the relative compression they leave in the same soil, to gauge the relative depths of the found tracks. This is where shoe size (area of the print) relative to the subject's weight, is an important factor. Remember – a child's footprint could leave the same depth of sign as an adult because of weight relative to shoe size – but of course, the relative size of the print is the identifying clue!

Many prints in a given section traveling in different directions may confuse even an experienced tracking team. If the tracks become too confusing it may be best to cut a circle around the area in an attempt to locate the exit path rather than to waste time with step by step tracking through the maze of prints.

If the subject is bleeding, any blood drops will normally splash in the direction of travel. This could be useful at an accident scene for example, if a subject panics, leaves the scene in an attempt to locate help, and becomes lost.

Variations in depth between left and right sign may indicate that the subject is favouring one leg, has changed their load, or is changing their speed. Changes in ground pack will also create depth variances.

Limping will cause one leg to create a deeper depression than the other. There will likely be more scraping and scuffs. In addition, the stride will be different stepping right to left foot than the stride stepping left to right.

Serious leg injuries, someone suffering from a stroke, or becoming extremely tired may

cause one or both legs to drag and would be presented as unclear tracks with a disturbance connecting tracks.

If the subject is a hunter, birder or mushroom picker, frequent stops along the trail with prints facing different directions may indicate that the subject was looking for something. It could also mean a subject was uncertain of their direction and the trackers should be extra alert for the subject changing direction of travel - possibly leaving the present trail.

Wandering may indicate that the subject does not have a destination in mind and could be looking about in hopes of recognizing something familiar, or in the case of a hunter, birder or mushroom picker – looking for that trophy buck, that rare bird or those tasty sorrels.

If the heels are abnormally deep without much toe depression accentuation, the subject may be walking backwards.

Trackers should always keep these tips and clues in mind whenever they are on a task – or even if they are just practising!

Can you identify this common hazard found in BC forests?

Answer is on p. 5



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Preserving Sign as Evidence

Any track or sign should be considered potential evidence until proven otherwise. Trackers should treat all tracks and sign as if it belongs to the person being looked for.

Once a track or sign has been trashed or destroyed by searchers or passers-by, it cannot be reconstituted. It is lost FOREVER!

The trashing or destruction of track, clue or any sign, not only chips away at the finite body of information about the subject's whereabouts, it reduces the chances of finding the lost person. Destroying tracks, clues, or any sign can literally mean the difference between life and death for the subject.

Beyond simply finding and interpreting sign, a GSAR tracker is obligated to protect it, report it and flag it with your Team #, date and time. On debrief, be sure to complete the ICS 204C Clue report and/or 204T Track report. Remember, any clue is important, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. Do not move from one place to another without being track aware!

An untrained person stepping on a good sign or track, or missing a clue is unfortunate. A Searcher – and especially a trained Tracker doing the same is inexcusable.

Answer from P 4: Devil's Club. Found in moist forests, along streams and avalanche tracks, low to middle elevations. The plant is covered with sharp spiny thorns. Even the leaves have tiny thorns that will go right through jeans and gloves into the skin. It's like getting many splinters – and they all need to be pulled out. The spines will break off easily and fester causing severe skin irritation or - in some individuals – severe allergic reaction.

Recognize, avoid and warn others!

Nominations Open BCTA Regional Directors

The BC Tracking Association Society is looking for volunteers to fill the position of NE Regional Director and nominations for the other Regions. The duties include: liaising with GSAR training officers and trackers within the region, providing tracking training materials and advice, facilitating tracking training, assisting other Regional Directors and providing reports, as required. Elections for Director positions will be held at the Annual General Meeting in September in Salmon Arm.

Nominations Open BCTA Treasurer

The BC Tracking Association Society is looking for a volunteer/nominee to fill the position of Treasurer within the Association Executive. The duties include keeping the financial records necessary to comply with the Societies Act and NSS SAR NIF Agreement, to render financial statements when required.

For further information, or to volunteer or nominate, contact Win Koch at: president@bctracking.org

If you have questions, comments, suggestions or ideas, please drop us a line and we'll make sure they get addressed or passed on to the appropriate Board member or Committee, or published in the newsletter!

Send to: President@bctracking.org