

The Clear Print

The San Diego Tracking Team Newsletter

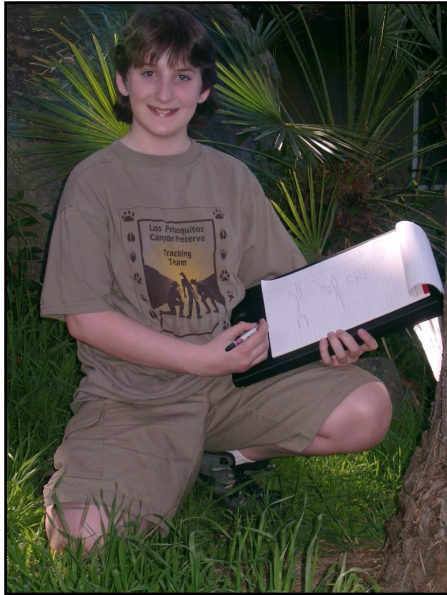


Wildlife Tracking

By Renee Harter

Hi. I'm Renee, and I'm 11. I am currently in training to be a wildlife tracker with the San Diego Tracking Team (www.sdtt.org). I get to go to preserves and track animals to tell if their population is doing well. To the common eye, all tracks just look like dog tracks, but to a tracker all tracks are like faces, and we never forget a face. When in the field, you are looking on the ground all the time, and every once in a while you need to look up and appreciate your surroundings, so you can breathe, relax, and focus. Otherwise you will have a very sore neck!

Tracking isn't just a hobby you can pick up in a few days; you have to pass classes, tests, and complete a certain amount of hours doing certain things. In the classes, they show you casts of prints and tell you what animal they belong to. Then you go out with an experienced tracker and practice identifying tracks. Pretty soon you can go on transect surveys, where you search a certain area for animal signs and write down what you find for the database. Of course, I'm still in training, so I can't write things down for the database yet. The SDTT website says that you have to be in high school, but because I expressed such a strong interest in tracking, they let me in anyway!



While in training, it is very important to put in "dirt time." Dirt time is time in the field, and you're required to have a minimum amount of it to become certified. Even when you are still in the first stage of training, your dirt time counts for this requirement! When you go in the field for some good 'ol dirt time, you need an experienced tracker with you. They can find prints in the dirt, sand, on a rocky surface, through grass, even on a sidewalk! Sometimes when you're in the field all huddled around a track, people will come up to you and ask what you lost!

Another important part of tracking is scatology. Although it may seem gross, animal feces can tell us a lot about an animal; where it's been, how recently it's been here, and where its territory is. You can also tell from it what they are eating. If there is fur, you know it is a predator. If it's mostly vegetation, chances are it's an herbivore.

That I like most about tracking is that it weaves in nicely with wildlife habitat conservation. Sure, it's great to protect the animal, but you also have to conserve its habitat. An animal without its proper habitat will eat the wrong foods like trash, and drink water that may have poisonous substances that can kill the animal! I've been studying the natural habitats of my area and learning about native and non-native plants and why non-native plants endanger the health of native animals as well as native plants. There is a lot to learn, and I'm just getting started!

Introducing the New Girl

By Brie Henry



Santa Cruz Island Fox *Urocyon littoralis*

Hello all, I just wanted to take a second and introduce myself. I am Brie Henry, and I have been contracted by SDTT to help with their administrative work. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to keep this organization going!

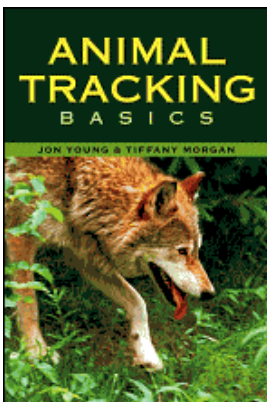
A little about me; I graduated from Arizona State University with a B.S. in Conservation Biology in 2005 and a year later I decided to do an internship. The internship I had was working for a U.C. Davis graduate student on Santa Cruz Island, which is off the coast of L.A., more accurately

Ventura, CA. The Nature Conservancy owns 76 % and the Park Service owns 24%. This means that everyone that lives on the island is doing research or working there, approximately 20 people total. I was on Santa Cruz Island for 3 ½ weeks at a time for a total of 4 months. I was helping gather telemetry data on the endangered Island Fox. I did strictly telemetry and it was very grueling work! Our job was to get locations for the 28 foxes in our study at every hour of the day.

Unfortunately, I was doing this in the middle of winter and it just so happens that the field vehicles we had were Jeeps (no tops or heaters)! I stuck with it and gained the experience I was looking for, but 2 months would have been more than enough time. If you think you have it bad now, just think about being on an island with no heat and no one around to talk to, not so bad! Anyway, now I am living in San Diego and helping the San Diego Tracking Team on my down time so that I can still be associated with a conservation organization. There don't seem to be that many wildlife based organizations around here, but hopefully that will change since there are so many of you helping out! Hope to see you all real soon.

A Book Review

By Gary Seiser



ANIMAL TRACKING BASICS

By Jon Young and Tiffany Morgan

Ho-lis-tic: emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts.

Track-ing: the pursuit of an animal by following tracks or marks it left behind.

Holistic tracking: what Animal Tracking Basics strives to teach.

I've never had the good fortune to take a class at Wilderness Awareness up in Washington State when Jon Young was teaching there. And I haven't had the opportunity to take a class with him through the Shikari Tracking Guild up in Santa Cruz. I have listened to his Bird Language series, though, and really liked it, and I know that he's the first and only person to have been mentored by Tom Brown, Jr., in the way Tom was taught by Stalking Wolf. So when Jon Young's new book, ANIMAL TRACKING BASICS, co-authored with Tiffany Morgan, came out, I was quick to buy it. Should you? That depends.

This book isn't a field guide, so it doesn't serve as a reference for tracks and sign. But neither is it just about the basics of animal tracking. It includes chapters on awareness, intuition, and storytelling, as well as ecology and mapping, and journaling. It also includes some great samples from Tiffany's journals. The biggest difference between this book and others already on the market, though, is that it is told largely by talking to the reader. Thus, reading it is like sitting down to listen to stories about tracking and nature awareness, and that is its strongest selling point, the ease with which it deals with its various topics.

So what did I like most about this book? Two things; the first was that in chapter 14 on Tracking Tools our own Barry Martin has over six pages included on the San Diego Tracking Team (check out pages 270 to 276). Indeed, our Wildlife Survey Form is included at the end of the book in the section on Tracking Forms. The second was the story by Tiffany Morgan about the first Track and Sign Evaluation in North America with Mark Elbroch and Louis Liebenberg in December 2004 in Cuyama, CA (she got a Track and Sign III). It definitely brought back memories of the two evaluations I've been through.

So, should you buy it? Sure, but not as your primary source for tracking skills. For that I think you're still better off with Jim Halfpenny's book on Mammal Tracking in North America, Mark Elbroch's Mammal Tracks & Sign, or even Tom Brown's Nature Observation and Tracking. But at \$13.57 on Amazon.com, it's worth adding to your tracking library for the stories alone, and in the midst of it, you'll find some good tips and knowledge too.

Member Profile: Anna Gateley-Stanton

My name is: Anna Gateley-Stanton

I was born or grew up in: Born in New Jersey, and as a Navy brat, moved to Maine, Mississippi, and finally Hanford, California at age 7, where I remained until moving to San Diego when I was 24.

My current occupation is: I've been a legal secretary for 29 years...the only job I've ever had.

I got into tracking and nature awareness: In the early 90's, I started volunteering with Project Wildlife, then I became a Volunteer Naturalist at Blue Sky Ecological Reserve in 1993. I had a little exposure to



tracking through Blue Sky and became aware of the Los Penasquitos Tracking Team by attending a few of their events. A couple of years ago I decided to learn more about tracking to round out my knowledge of the natural world ... I thought it would be one more thing I could talk about on my Blue Sky nature hikes. I then decided to try to set up a tracking team and a transect in Blue Sky, so I completed the apprentice program, got the tracking team and transect set up, and we held our first Blue Sky transect survey in July 2006.

My current tracking and nature awareness activities are: I'm on the SDTT board, a new member to the SDTT Executive Committee, and the new SDTT Secretary, in addition to occasionally helping with wildlife survey training and public outreach efforts... I continue to lead nature walks and help with special events at Blue Sky. Other than tracking and nature awareness, my favorite hobby or activity is: I don't have just one favorite...I love to read, scrapbook, and travel.

My favorite book(s) and/or movie(s) is/are: My favorite book is whatever I'm reading at the time, but my favorite author is and always will be Stephen King! My favorite movie is ... I have two. Blue Hawaii (with Elvis Presley) and The Sound of Music! I love musicals and have season tickets to the Civic Theatre.

My favorite food(s) is/are: Anything Italian, but Chinese and Mexican run a close second.

If I could take a vacation anywhere in the world, I would go to: I would love to go back to Italy, and someday I'm sure I will.

If I could share one more thing about myself it would be: In the past I've also been involved with the San Diego Bird Festival (in its early days) and helped collect data for the San Diego Natural History Museum's Bird Atlas.

A Note from Karen

SDTT is fortunate to have so many of our supporters using our Yahoo! E-list. However, a gentle reminder to all is that discussions or requests should be limited to tracking, wildlife monitoring or habitat preservation topics. If you are unsure if something is appropriate to post, please send it to Lani Noreke (info@sdt.org), and ask her to post it. In addition, when you send a response, please reply only to the person that sent out the inquiry. We have strived to minimize the number of email sent to the SDTT E-list and to ensure high quality messages.

Upcoming Events

The **Spring Wildlife Survey** period has begun. If you are interested in helping with wildlife survey transects or any other activities, email Lani at info@sdt.org.

Saturday, June 2: Tracking Intensive Class, **Postponed** due to location, new date to be announced.

Saturday, June 9: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Saturday, July 14: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Saturday, July 21: Wildlife Survey Volunteer Training, 9:45 am to 4:00 pm at the Ranch House in Peñasquitos Canyon.

Saturday, August 11: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Saturday, September 8: Monthly tracking walks, 8:00 am to 10:00 at the Peñasquitos Preserve Ranch House. Beginning and Intermediate/Advanced levels offered.

Wednesday September 19 and Saturday September 22: Intermediate Tracker Naturalist Class, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm Friday and 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Saturday at the Ranch House. \$50 fee, \$10 discount for SDTT donor members. Contact Rick Botta at (858)472-2220 or registration@sdtt.org to sign up as a student or to help out.

The SDTT schedule for this year is now available on our website, sdtt.org.

Did you get a newsletter and membership application in the mail? If not, we might not have your current address—please contact Lani to update your info.

The 2007 Donor Membership drive is underway. Are you a donor member of the SDTT? Don't forget, you can help support SDTT in two important ways—volunteer your time and/or contribute financially by becoming a donor member. Call 760-715-4102 to volunteer and go to www.sdtt.org for a membership form if you don't already have one.

Please send submissions to the Clear Print to Lani Noreke at info@sdtt.org.