Tracker Certification
CyberTracker North America

Content of the CyberTracker Track and Sign Evaluation

Through this experience, you will develop and/or refine a skillset for exploring the vast world of wildlife tracking. While we always cover key fundamental themes, every tracking experience is unique—we go where the tracks take us! Topics that will likely be explored:

- Clear and Obscure Print Identification
- Sign Interpretation, Wildlife Behavior & Natural History
- Wildlife Physiology and Design
- Animal Movement & Track Pattern Interpretation
- Aging Tracks and Sign
- The Ecology & Natural History of the Local Landscape
- Wildlife Ecology, Interactions, & Roles within an Ecosystem

In short, this process is renowned for facilitating an entirely different way of relating with local wildlife and landscapes through track & sign, and for offering new tools to continue our development as naturalists.

The Format

The CyberTracker evaluation system is an internationally applied, professional-level certification process used to promote wildlife tracking and ecological knowledge. Though this field training is in test form—meaning that before we go over each question as a group, individuals are given time to look it over and come up with an answer on their own—the goal is to strengthen participants' ability to find and accurately interpret a wide array of track and sign.

The call to investigate a question and come up with an interpretation completely transforms our level of attention, focus, and how we absorb and retain information. Combined with a supportive and entertaining group-learning experience and a mind- bending diversity of wildlife sign, this becomes a uniquely powerful, skill-changing experience.

In other words, *this is both an assessment **and** a rich learning experience, and is far different than the tests most of us might be used to.* There is immediate feedback and group discussion throughout the process. Evaluators always emphasize learning and development, and every participant will walk away with a *lot* more knowledge and "search images" for the subtle patterns left behind by life on the landscape, ultimately feeling a stronger connection to the natural world.

No prior tracking experience is required to participate, but preparation can be helpful for those for whom attaining a certificate on their first evaluation is important (I've put some resources in this document to support your preparations). To attain a certificate, participants will have to hit a

minimum score threshold. However, the underlying impetus is not just about receiving a certificate, but rather the rich educational benefit the evaluation process provides. Tracking skill accrues with experience, and evaluations are an effective tool for rapidly increasing one's ability and measuring progress over time.

What is the CyberTracker Certification?

This system began in the early 1990s as a process designed to celebrate and employ the ecological knowledge of indigenous trackers in southern Africa (namely the San of the Kalahari) in wildlife research and conservation. Many of these trackers were unable to read and write but were, and are, exceptionally ecologically literate, able to interpret complex wildlife activity across vast landscapes with remarkable accuracy. To implement this skillset in modern research, Liebenberg spear-headed the development of icon-based handheld-computer software called "CyberTracker" so that trackers on the ground could electronically log their field observations.

The "Tracking Evaluation" was first applied to identify the dwindling few with excellent tracking ability and help rebuild a body of tracking knowledge impacted by western colonization. The process aimed to inspire younger generations, and provide an avenue for cultural preservation and economic opportunity by reviving tracking as a modern profession. Today, CyberTracker Conservation's unique system is the international gold-standard for tracker training and certification across Africa, Europe, and North America, with thousands of people having been certified in the United States alone.

Check out the [TCNA website here](#) with an interview with Louis Liebenberg on the history of CyberTracker.

Learn More

www.trackercertification.com

Facebook: Tracker Certification North America

Instagram: @trackercertification

Generic flow of Program Logistics for a typical Evaluation

- We will meet at a location still to be determined in the greater Columbus area at 8:30 am on April 2nd and wrap by 5:00 pm. We will have a similar schedule on the 3rd, though we may end a bit earlier. *The exact specifics of our Saturday location likely will not come out until Friday afternoon/evening before the eval.* **Look for an email then from your evaluator or host.**
- We will likely visit several sites throughout the weekend, and transport between them will be necessary.
- We will go where the tracks take us. Be prepared to potentially be off trail, in the mud, and in and amongst creeks and waterways.
- As always, be prepared for any weather conditions that may arise. *We will be outside the whole time.*
- Bring a notebook and something to write with if you'd like to take notes. Write-in- the-rain notebooks are great for wet conditions.
- Feel free to bring a camera as well if you'd like to take pictures Here are a few resources to support your learning beforehand

A few resources to help you start to explore Wildlife Tracking

1. Nature Tracking by Jonah Evans - www.naturetracking.com, he Also has an app called iTrack.
2. *Mammal Tracks and Sign* by M. Elbroch and C.McFarland
3. *Wildlife of the Pacific Northwest* by D.Moskowitz (even though this is a regional guide, it's still very relevant to trackers anywhere in N. America)
4. Mammal Skulls by M. Elbroch
5. Bird Feathers by D. Scott and Casey McFarland

Thanks all. Please let us know if you have any questions. I'm really looking forward to our time together!

TCNA Evaluator Team