



2017-10

Tracking—Part 1 Determine Habitat

Homesteaders and individuals living on the frontier in colonial America were largely dependent upon hunting to provide meat for the table. A man had to learn how to track animals or read sign. Failure to understand those signs might result in going hungry.

There are three aspects of tracking. The first is to identify signs or indications that animals are present, for the chances of a successful hunt increase if you hunt in the animal's habitat. The second aspect is to identify the animal that made the tracks so time isn't wasted tracking an inedible animal. The third is to understand what the tracks tell you about the animal. This part will cover only this first aspect, identifying the animal's habitat.

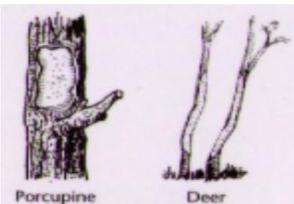
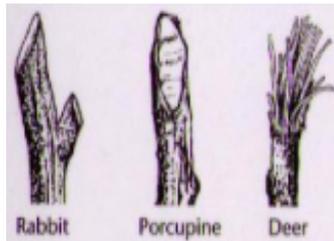
Small signs provide clues about the proximity of animals. Most animals stay within a limited area. The size of the animal and availability of food and water determine the size of that habitat. Smaller animals rarely travel long distances, while larger animals especially predators such as wild cats, wolves, and bears may cover miles.

Key signs to watch for include the animal's tracks or droppings, scratch marks on trees, barked or gnawed trees, disposed of nut shells or cones, marks of browsing such as chewed twigs, and animal homes.



The easiest sign of the presences of animals is spotting their tracks or droppings. Seeing where an animal slept or fed is another indication. For smaller rodent-like animals (e.g., squirrels, chipmunks) and some birds, the presence of stripped evergreen cones and chewed nuts is another

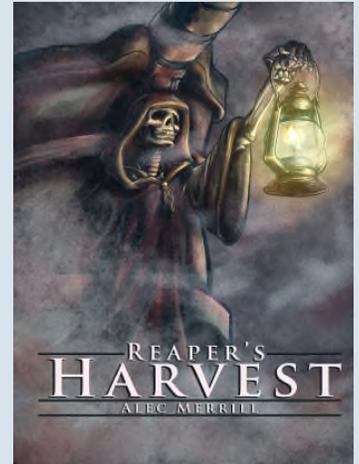
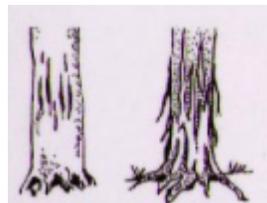
The way an animal browses indicated the type of animal. The browsed ends of twigs can indicate the type of animal that nibbled on them. A clean cut indicates an animal with sharp teeth like a rabbit. When the ends are broken-off, it is most likely an animal that pulls the item such as a deer or moose. Other animals leave their signature like the porcupine who leaves a rows of small teeth marks.



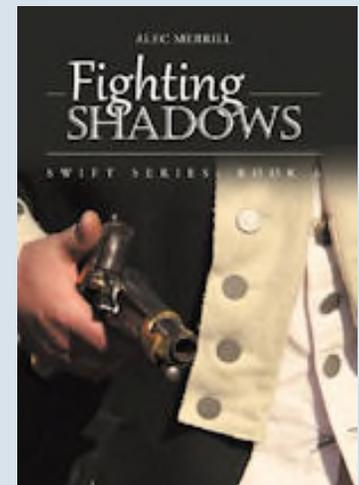
Missing bark from a tree is also an indicator. Porcupines chew off large patches on the upper parts of tree. Rabbits chew on scrubs near ground level. Male deer often rub the bark off the lower extremities of smaller tree with their antlers.

Nests in trees indicate the presence of birds or squirrels. Hollow logs or tree trunks may provide a home for other animals.

Scratch marks on trees identify a bear's territory. The higher the marks, the larger the bear. Bobcats sometimes use trees as scratching posts. Other tree-climbing animals (e.g., raccoons, and rodents) may leave scratch marks while climbing. Gnawed trees may indicate the presence of beaver. Generally these are near the edge of water and a distinguishable beaver lodge is close by.



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