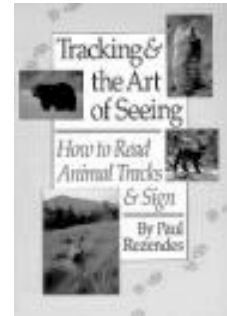


Tracking and The Art Of Seeing



BOOK REVIEW

by Mike LaPlante

Tracking and the Art of Seeing - How To Read Animal Tracks and Signs by Paul Rezendes covers the signs, trail patterns, tracks, claw marks and other evidence left behind by those creatures with whom we share our habitat - from small rodents to Bison. Rezendes includes illustrations and beautiful wildlife photography (he's also a professional wildlife photographer) and neophyte as well as expert tracker should find useful information here.

For each animal Rezendes provides information about feeding habits, gait measurement, tracks, trail patterns, scat, digs, burrows, dens, and other signs, as well as a brief description of the animal and its habitat. He goes into significantly greater detail than the other books I've seen on the subject and has catalogued such details as the diverse characteristics assumed by twigs chewed on by rabbits versus deer, and hickory nuts eaten by flying squirrels versus field mice. The level of detail related to animal signs alone makes this a worthwhile read.

The book's introduction was especially poignant to me. Rezendes alludes more than once to Thoreau's observation that we are asleep to our surroundings. "Unlike the deer who is completely in its body and in touch with its surroundings, we have retreated into our heads as reasoning beings and so have distanced ourselves from our surroundings". Rezendes approaches tracking as an opening up to and awareness of our environment and therefore of the animals contained there.

Thoreau called us sleepwalkers... " Have you ever found yourself walking along a path in the woods and then suddenly realizing that the whole forest around you has changed? You started out among conifers, but now you are surrounded by deciduous trees. Or you realize that the birds are active and noisy, and you don't know when the change took place. You have awakened. You let the smell of fern leaf wash through you. You realize why you were asleep. You were talking to yourself, caught up in a familiar, endless dialogue. What were you taking about? You can't remember!"

"I never met a man who was truly awake" Thoreau said 150 years ago, surrounded then by the second growth forest of Northern Massachusetts. Rezendes adds, "How much more applicable is this comment to people today. How much farther have we strayed from the wild within".

This book will be enjoyed by tracker and environmentalist alike.

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