

Tracking Column

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THE WAY OF TRACKING © KYT WALKEN



Interview with **Mattias Stromberg**

Former Swedish Army Ranger

Mattias is a ret. 2nd Lt from the Swedish Army Rangers with 2 deployments to the Balkan-conflicts (Bosnia and Kosovo). He is a trained sniper with a Masters degree in Explosives and Weapons systems. After leaving the army, he have mainly worked with IT, both as a manager and on the floor as specialist. To clear his mind he play airsoft, go to the gun range or out and about in the Wicklow mountains with his service dog Nosferatu, a Staffy/Pointer mix just turned 3.

1) *What kind of experience you had with Tracking?*

My experience of tracking comes down to tracking wild animals that have been injured, lost people and individual/group/platoons during my time in the Swedish armed forces. During my 2 deployments in the 90's in the Balkan conflicts, I had to use my skills and experience during various operations.

2) *Which is your fave terrain to track on and why?*

Snow and forest. Snow because of the different way to track. The challenge to "read" the environment in a totally different way than for example forest, sand/gravel/rocky terrain. It is the smallest shifts in the pattern, often effected by wind, lightning and temperature. Forest is a "traditional" tracking ground. Here you can take help of the sound of the forest, are there any sounds from animals and birds, how do they sound and act? Disturbances of branches and leafs, smells, prints on the ground... Endless possibilities.

3) *As a former Ranger, which kind of training you have received?*

The army Ranger training is more aimed to track larger groups of people/vehicles and how to read the tells of the different types. Heavy or lightly load-outs.

What type of boots used, band or wheel vehicles? Gather information and relay back to command.

I also received training on how to move around in the nature, to leave as little impact as possible, to make it harder for others to track me and my spotter.

How to live off what the nature can provide, and always to respect the wildlife and nature itself. The moment you stop respect her, you are screwed. How do I take out the directions? What is North, South, East and West? How do I track during night? How to pick up a cold track versus a warm? Time estimation. Survival on my own. How to make a camp without any "modern" tools, how to make fire, clean water, protect myself from the elements.



4) *Which is the tracking manual/s you highly recommend?*

I haven't used any tracking manuals except the ones given to me during survival- and tracking training during my time in the army. The knowledge from them, I have adapted to civilian life after leaving the army. So I can't really recommend any, but I'd say start out slow and basic. In a forest known to you, try to guess what kind of animal have been around. Google and YouTube can help you a lot in the beginning. Also, if you have friends that are outdoor people, or even into hunting/scouts, bombard them with questions, pick their brains and when you feel ready, reach out to your local tracking/outdoor/wildlife community and gather experience.

