

# Tracking Column

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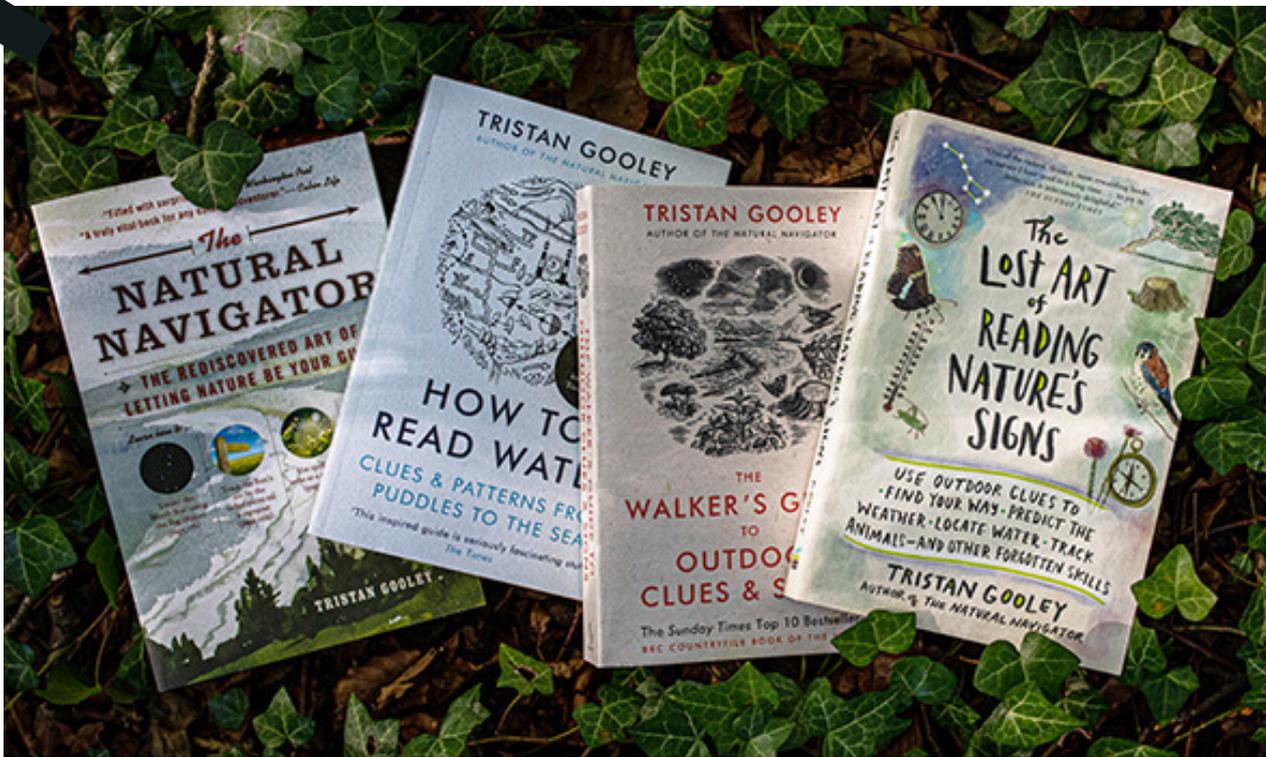
THE WAY OF TRACKING © KYT WALKEN

**T R I S T A N**

**G O O L E Y**



[www.naturalnavigator.com](http://www.naturalnavigator.com)



Tristan Gooley is an author and natural navigator.

Tristan set up his natural navigation school in 2008 and is the author of award-winning and internationally bestselling books, including *The Natural Navigator* (2010), *The Walker's Guide to Outdoor Clues & Signs* (2014), *How to Read Water* (2016) and *Wild Signs and Star Paths* (2018), some of the world's only books covering natural navigation.

Every outdoor-lover should have at least one Tristan Gooley book in their library." Jim Perrin

After decades spent hunting for clues and signs in nature, he regularly gets called the "Sherlock Holmes of nature".

He has written for the *Sunday Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *BBC* and many magazines.

Tristan has led expeditions in five continents, climbed mountains in Europe, Africa and Asia, sailed small boats across oceans and piloted small aircraft to Africa and the Arctic.

He has walked with and studied the methods of the Tuareg, Bedouin and Dayak in some of the remotest regions on Earth.

He is the only living person to have both flown solo and sailed singlehanded across the Atlantic and is a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Navigation and the Royal Geographical Society.

In 2020 he was awarded the Harold Spencer-Jones Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of Navigation. It is the Institute's highest award, given in recognition of an outstanding contribution to navigation.

He has recorded the podcast, 'The Pursuit of Outdoor Clues,' and named a path - the 'smile path'. Tristan has appeared on TV and radio programmes in the UK and internationally, including *The Today Programme*, *Night Waves*, *Countryfile*, *BBC Stargazing Live*, *Country Tracks*, *Ramblings*, *Open Country*, *Shipwrecks*, *The One Show* and *All Roads Lead Home*.

He has given talks across the world. He is Vice Chairman of the independent travel company, *Trailfinders*.

Taken from <https://www.naturalnavigator.com/tristan-gooley/>

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1. Tracking is an ancient Art with valuable applications in everyday life in the Outdoors. Vintage mentality or still actual? How is your perspective about that?

Tracking reveals the story of what has happened in our environment. It is up to us whether we consider that valuable or not. I certainly do. There is a difference between something that is valuable and something that is essential. Oxygen is essential, but tracking is valuable. One keeps us alive, the other enriches that life. A bacteria is alive, but humans are capable of the sort of awareness that leads to a much richer life. If we choose it. Those who have no interest in the stories we can read in nature have a poorer life.

2. According to you, how can Tracking be combined with natural navigation?

My work is all about the clues and signs in nature. Some of this overlaps directly with tracking. The sign in the ground can be used to identify a human or animal species, but it can also be used to understand their story. Their story can then be used to help us find our way. The decisions people and animals make can be seen in their signs, this reveals a lot about our surroundings and can help us with navigation decisions.

3. Can a missing person rely only on Tracking Skills?

I'd never encourage people to rely on only one set of skills, because nature will choose its way of revealing things and different perspectives can help us to see that. But if you are lost, then noticing the route taken by animals can reveal the location of water, woodland, hills, towns and much more. Humans leave erosion patterns at junctions that point towards civilisation. As a general rule, individual animals and people can do strange things, but group behaviour will always reveal a truth about the area.

4. According to your opinion, can Animal Tracks identification be supported by technology?

Many people assume that I'm anti-technology, but that is not true. I am a big fan of technology, but my philosophy is normally: try to answer the question before asking the computer. Then use the computer to see how you did and to hone your understanding. Technology can be a great tool for enhancing education and safety, but it never reminds us to look to nature for the answer first. We rely on ourselves to do that.