

Appendix Q

Clue Recognition

A clue is a fact, an object, information or some type of evidence that helps to solve a mystery or problem. The purpose of seeking clues (gathering all the facts and information) is to assist in the reasoning of a problem and its ultimate solution.

General Principles

The following principles apply:

- Clue seeking is an ongoing process that starts with planning, continues throughout a mission and doesn't end until the debrief concludes.
- Clue seeking is a skill and must be practiced to develop a sense of what is the minimum information to work with.
- Avoid forming opinions and then gathering information to support that opinion.
- Don't immediately form an opinion about the value of a clue.
- Gather information from everyone, as no one person can adequately gather all the facts.
- Assemble a complete profile of the missing subject and the situation, and let it offer direction.

Tracking Skills.

The ability for searchers to recognise signs that are not obvious clues within their search area can dramatically reduce the duration of the search. These signs may be quite obvious to some searchers but may go unseen by others. Developing skills in reading signs of activity within the landscape can greatly benefit the searcher and enhance their observation skills.

Trail signs.

Once the size and shape of footprints is determined, another factor that can aid your search is terrain. Look at the ground. If no footprints are apparent, look for freshly overturned stones (darker on top than the others, maybe even moist looking).

Look for broken twigs and tree branches. They will usually break forward as a person pushes through unless deliberately snapped back to lay a false trail. Fresh breaks will show up as unweathered timber, differently coloured to the rest of the tree. The underside of the leaves will be duller or more brightly coloured as well, depending on the species.

Through thick bush, a lightness can be apparent when scrub is pushed aside, much like long grass that is flattened in the direction of travel.

When footprints are found, gauge the weather that has occurred since the person went missing. The amount of dryness of the print can determine an approximate time the person passed that way. Other factors that should be considered are described below:

- If the weather was previously damp and windy, a predominantly dry print will indicate it has been in the open to the wind longer and has had time to dry out.

- If wetter weather had occurred but no real rain has fallen recently, the same print may have been there less long. The heel will be the last area to dry. If the heel is all dry, the person travelled that area a considerable longer time ago than if the print is partially damp.
- If heavy rain has fallen, most prints will appear to wash back into the soil and be little more than a depression. Newer laid prints will be more defined.
- If it is at present drizzling/raining, fresh footprints may disturb the ground surface layer and produce dry sand.

Scuff marks on the ground, which also kicks up rocks, scuff marks on rocks where someone has climbed, broken pieces of rotted wood are all indicators of someone, or something, having travelled that way. A lost person may sit down and rest regularly, so look for heel and seat marks where they may have sat down. Think what you would do in their position and identify likely locations for rest.

Flattened ground beneath trees or amongst the undergrowth can indicate a sleeping place, either of the missing person or fauna. Animal droppings will normally indicate which, through a thorough search of the area might show footprints where a person has used an animal lair. Personal items or human faeces may also be detected in these areas.

Keep an eye out for signals that have been made by the missing person. These include rock piles (sometimes a message may have been left within the layers of rocks), arrows or other marks left on the ground to indicate their direction of travel, flashes from mirrors, or items of clothing.

When tracking, work as a pair if possible. Work to either side of the track rather than directly on top of the person's track. With this method if you lose the trail you can backtrack and pick it up again and resume. If you have trampled all over it, you will have destroyed the clues.

When finding signs treat them the same as when finding search items. Preserve them for analysis and report them.

Like all other search aspects, tracking takes much practice to develop the skill. The eye needs to be thoroughly trained, and then is used in conjunction with a knowledge of the bush.

Sight

- Smoke from campfires (day)
- Light from campfires (night)
- Light from torches (night)
- Footprints
- Clothing
- Pieces of foam sleeping mat
- Trail register
- Disturbed foliage
- Witnesses
- Discardables such as lolly wrappers, drink or food cans, cigarette butts etc.