

## The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs: Using Nature to Find Your Way, Predict the Weather, Locate Water, Track Animals—and Other Forgotten Skills

**Tristan Gooley**

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*Gooley's playful and relaxed tone imparts as steady a pace as one might expect on a stroll through the woods.*

How rare to find a book that is truly brilliant. *The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs*, by Tristan Gooley, is brilliant in the English slang sense (as in being terrific); it is brilliant in its comprehensive conveyance of all the ways to interpret natural and man-made landscapes; and brilliance glitters from Gooley's sparkling wit.

The author leads natural-navigation workshops and has a fun, engaging way of relaying his vast knowledge about the outdoors. The book is intended for walkers "who like to feel their minds flex with their legs," and is stuffed with information about ways to "read" stars, sounds, plants, animals, and the elements. There are serious discussions about orienteering at night using astronomical principles, both ancient and modern, but an equal emphasis on knowledge gleaned from farmers, folklore, and Gooley's years of observation, including such nuggets as noticing that increased presence of dog turds means that human habitation is ahead.

This compendium of outdoor skills and knowledge is greatly enhanced by the careful line drawings. These illustrations punctuate the text at frequent intervals and promote deeper understanding of Gooley's concepts. It is one thing to read his paragraph-long description of how to find the North Star in the Big Dipper constellation, but the illustration gets the point across instantly. Several chapters narrating walks in his usual English haunts, Edinburgh, and with Dayak tribesmen in remote areas of Borneo show how Gooley knits all of this information together, and they are a nice contrast to the weightier subject chapters. The book concludes with a checklist that collects the preceding information into an "invisible toolbag" for outdoor adventures.

While the inveterate hiker and wilderness camper might get the most mileage out of this volume, it is useful to anyone who travels frequently, wants to be more nature literate, or seeks a deeper enjoyment of their outdoor walks. Or maybe you fancy flipping through all these informational tidbits "for no other reason than it's sometimes fun to know things that almost no other walker knows."

RACHEL JAGARESKI (Fall 2015)

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