



Lead Tracker Skills Programme

Objective

To ensure that trackers are equipped with the skills necessary to consistently track and find animals in difficult conditions and demonstrate an accurate measure of observer reliability for scientific data collection and ecotourism.

Eight-week program accredited by CATHSSETA and endorsed by FGASA.

The **Lead Tracker** qualification represents Tracker Academy's most advanced level of tracking proficiency – a certificate of excellence. Candidates are those certified as Advanced (Level 4) trackers who have tracked in the conservation industry for a minimum period of 10 years. Applicants must be able to demonstrate consistent and meaningful contribution to the field of wildlife tracking. Applicants must display a deep understanding of animal behaviour and bird language. The selection process examines the candidate's historical achievements and evidence; such as past tracker assessment results, testimonials, reference letters, proof of ethical behaviour, CV and written publications.

The programme curriculum is designed to provide candidates with the opportunity to engage in tracking mentorship and meticulous practical assessment. The course examines modules on track and sign identification, trailing, animal behaviour, basic ecology, hunter-gatherer knowledge, bird language and approaching potentially dangerous animals on foot. The programme culminates in 10 days of rigorous practical assessments, theory reviews and a presentation.

CATHSSETA unit standards covered in the Lead Tracker Programme (NQF4 / 65 credits):

Unit standard: 8518 – Track animals and identify spoor using moderately difficult spoor (50 credits)

Unit standard: 335797 – Conduct a guided experience to view potentially dangerous animals (15 credits)

To certify as a **Lead Tracker** each candidate must be found competent in the following:

- Successfully follow the trail of a lion and a leopard.
- Correctly identify, explain and interpret 50 x 'track and sign' questions of animals ranging from insects, amphibians to larger species.
- Correctly identify, explain and interpret 30 x bird sign questions.
- Correctly identify and interpret alarm calls of local mammal and bird species.
- Demonstrate sound understanding of basic ecological processes.
- Safely approach potentially dangerous animals on foot.

The Outcome

The Lead Tracker qualification certifies the highest level of tracking expertise possible. The accreditation by CATHSSETA represents a significant academic endorsement for African indigenous knowledge, and in particular traditional tracking skills. It is the only nationally recognised wildlife tracking certificate in South Africa to be presented on the national qualifications' framework level 4.

