

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

Larimer tracker works to locate the lost

By Howard Pankratz
The Denver Post
Posted: 04/09/2009 02:36:56 PM MDT



Dave Hake is one of only 10 "master trackers" in the United States. (Photo by Doug Grimm)

Dave Hake was among the first search team to look for 3-year-old Jaryd Atadero when he disappeared in October 1999 in the Big South

Trail area of Poudre Canyon.

Four years later, the little boy's remains were found 500 yards from his last known location on the trail, the victim of a mountain-lion attack.

It still haunts Hake.

But it was that tragedy that motivated Hake to become one of only 10 "master trackers" in the United States.

"It is like I want to follow those tracks and find out what took place. It tears people up. That's what motivated me to learn more," said Hake reflecting back on Jaryd's disappearance and the impact of not finding out what happened for so long.

Michael Fink, a search leader for Larimer County Search & Rescue, said that Hake is dedicated, almost obsessed, with tracking, and practices it every day.

"He is patient and meticulous," Fink said of Hake, who was awarded the master-tracker designation last month. "Dogs use their nose. Dave uses his eyes."

Hake has trained his eyes and senses to the point that he can pick up on microscopic signs, said Fink.

On the ground, Hake picks up on broken and discolored or bruised vegetation.

Hake is so good that he can determine from the

Advertisement



OFFICE LIQUIDATORS HAS MILES OF FILES

OVER 700 USED FILES IN GREAT CONDITION ALL PRICED AT A FRACTION OF THE NEW COST.

GO TO www.OfficeLiquidators.com OR VISIT OUR HUGE SHOWROOM AT 6TH & SIMMS.

SAVE 25%

ON USED FILES OR GET A STEELCASE 30" 5 DRAWER LATERAL FOR \$139.



Hot Item!

\$139 Steelcase



SHOWROOM HOURS M-F 8:30-6:00 SAT 10-5 SUN 12-5

CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS 303.759.3375 EXPIRES 5/17/09

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

denverpost.com

THE DENVER POST

state of the vegetation and movement of dirt or sand which direction a person is going and how long it has been since the individual was there, said Fink.

He can tell when a lost person has stopped and whether the individual looked at a particular rock formation or mountain. Hake can then tell whether the person decided to head toward the particular formation that caught his attention. Hake also can tell whether the person is injured by the way he or she is walking.

"Not only can we see that a person passed through an area but when," said Hake. "Everything ages."

Hake knows the stages of discoloration in the undergrowth that pinpoint just how long it's been since the person was in an area.

Hake said that most people think tracking is a matter of following shoe prints in the mud. But that almost never happens, he said.

"For us to find a track (shoe print) in the mud is heaven," he said. "It happens once every blue moon."

Hake is a longtime member of the Larimer County Search & Rescue Team and goes out on 60 to 80 calls a year. He uses his tracking skills in about 40, he said.

At some point, search dogs usually take over.

"We seldom track all the way to the subject,"

said Hake. "It is slow and tedious at first."

When he shows up at a search scene and announces he is a tracker, the common response is, "Where is your dog?" Hake said with a chuckle. "It happens all the time."

Throughout history, American Indians have been considered some of the best trackers in North America. Hake says they were because it was a matter of survival — tracking game that could provide food.

But today, said Hake, tracking is used to find lost souls and in criminal investigations.

Hake is one of the founders of Rocky Mountain Trackers. The goal of the organization is to "make a change in the way searches for lost people are conducted."

"Approximately every 3 feet or less, there is a clue as to which direction the lost subject is traveling. That equals nearly 2,000 clues, or small pieces of sign, for every mile traveled," says the organization's website. "Yet only a very small number of searchers understand how to find or even look for those clues."

Hake is one of them.

Howard Pankratz: 303-954-1939 or hpankratz@denverpost.com

Advertisement



OFFICE LIQUIDATORS HAS MILES OF FILES

OVER 700 USED FILES IN GREAT CONDITION ALL PRICED AT A FRACTION OF THE NEW COST.

GO TO www.OfficeLiquidators.com OR VISIT OUR HUGE SHOWROOM AT 6TH & SIMMS.

SAVE 25%

ON USED FILES OR GET A STEELCASE 30" 5 DRAWER LATERAL FOR \$139.

Hot Item!
\$139 Steelcase

SHOWROOM HOURS M-F 8:30-6:00 SAT 10-5 SUN 12-5

CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS 303.759.3375 EXPIRES 5/17/09

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™