

Sign Cutting Methods



Lesson objective:

Apply approved techniques for sign cutting.

Why?

Provides a sign picture at the start point.

Provides a technique for relocating sign.

Phase 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of sign cutting

Definition of sign cutting

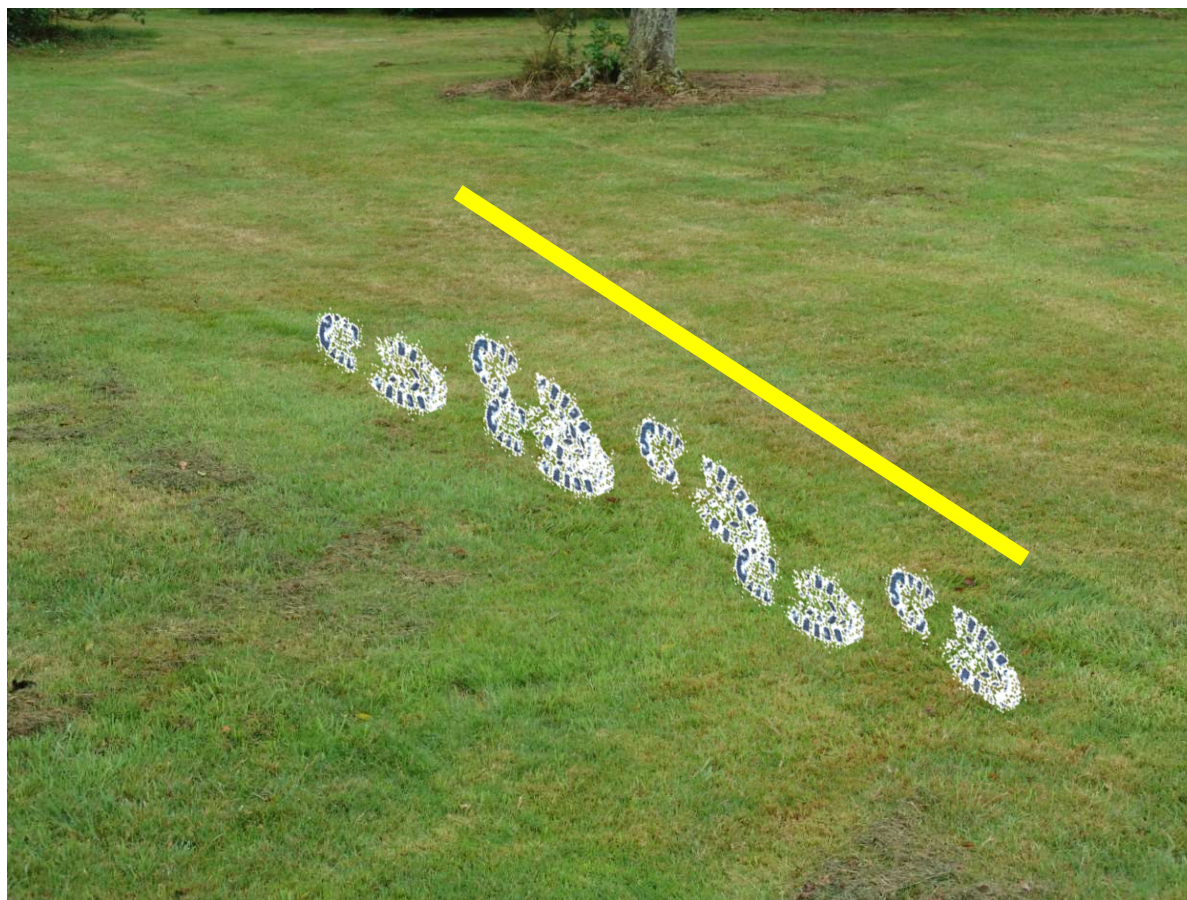
Determining the number of people in a party, the direction of travel and special characteristics in a track.

Sign cutting is also the process of interpreting the information within the sign.

Estimating the number of people in the group

Take an extra large stride along side of the track. Then count the number of footprints within the range of the large stride. Divide the number by two (two feet per person).

The answer is the number of people in the track party.



2 heels
4 heels
6 heels
3 pers

Special characteristics in a track

What are other pieces of information we can gather from the sign?

- Equipment carried
- Speed of travel
- Equipment used
- Footwear type and tread
- Discarded items
- Height of the person
- Weight of person
- Fitness or energy levels
- Use of shelters
- Health and eating habits
- A person's bias.

Apply STOPPER to sign cutting

When the sign changes the tacking team must take stock.

The acronym for the process used is STOPPER.

- S** – Stop moving, take a pause.
- T** – Think about the sign pattern and the current picture.
- O** – Observe take in the sign picture.
- P** – Plan your next move.
- P** – Process the information to provide a methodical process.
- E** – Evaluate the information and put it all together.
- R** – Record and report the facts, then add own opinions.

Phase 3: Demonstrate sign cutting methods for a given situation

Methods to locate sign:

- Vehicle search pattern
- Collapsing and Expanding circles
- Zig zag pattern search
- Probe
- Casting
- Perimeter search
- Feature cutting

Vehicle Search Pattern

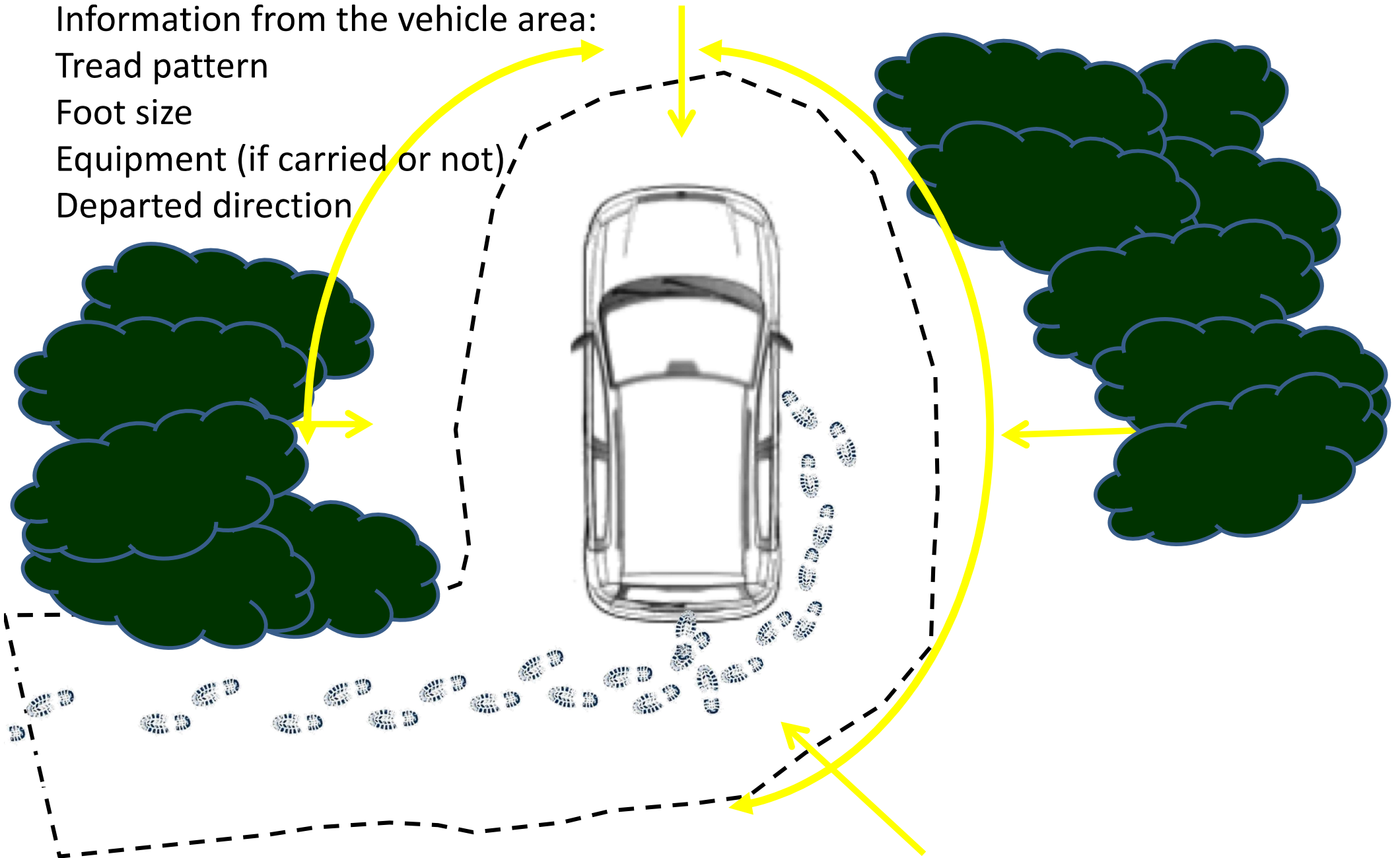
Information from the vehicle area:

Tread pattern

Foot size

Equipment (if carried or not)

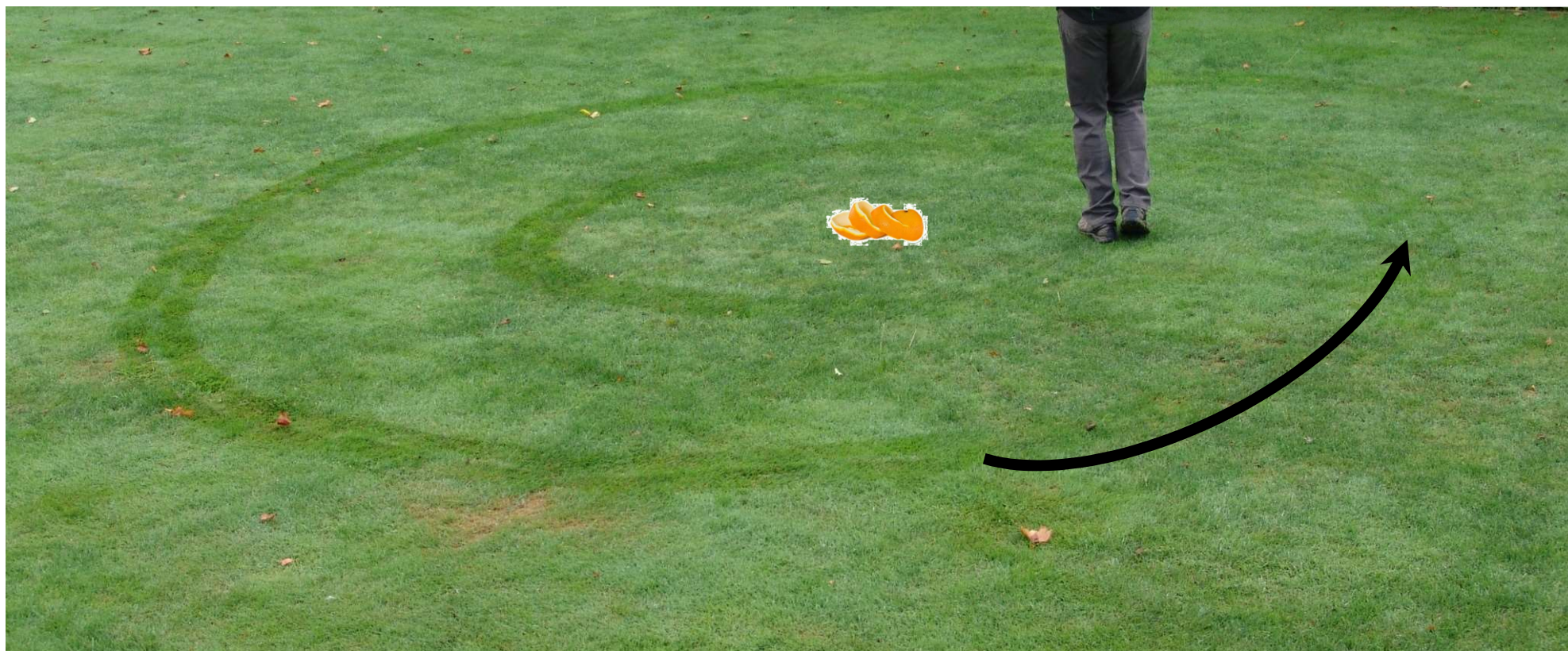
Departed direction



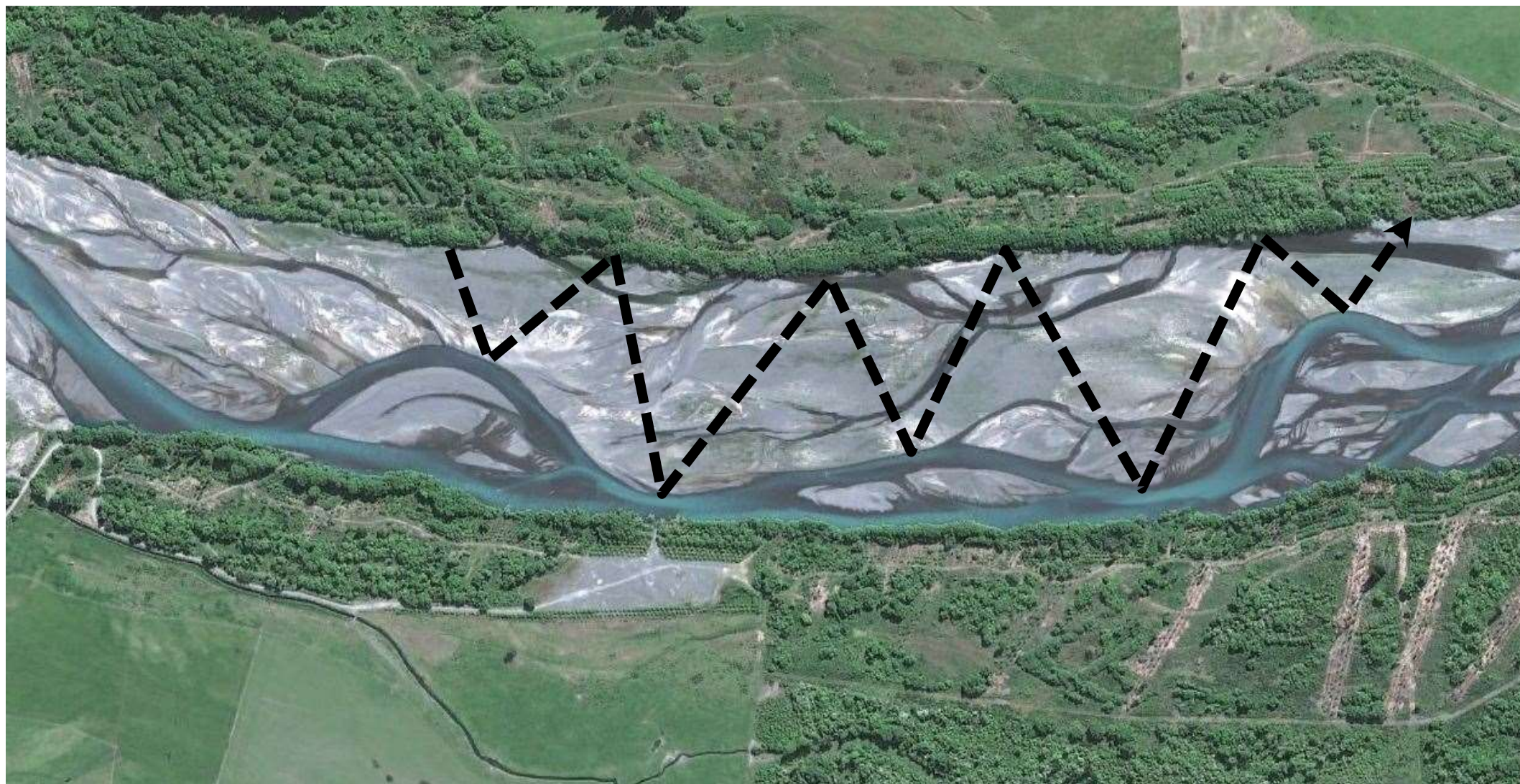
Expanding circles



Collapsing Circles



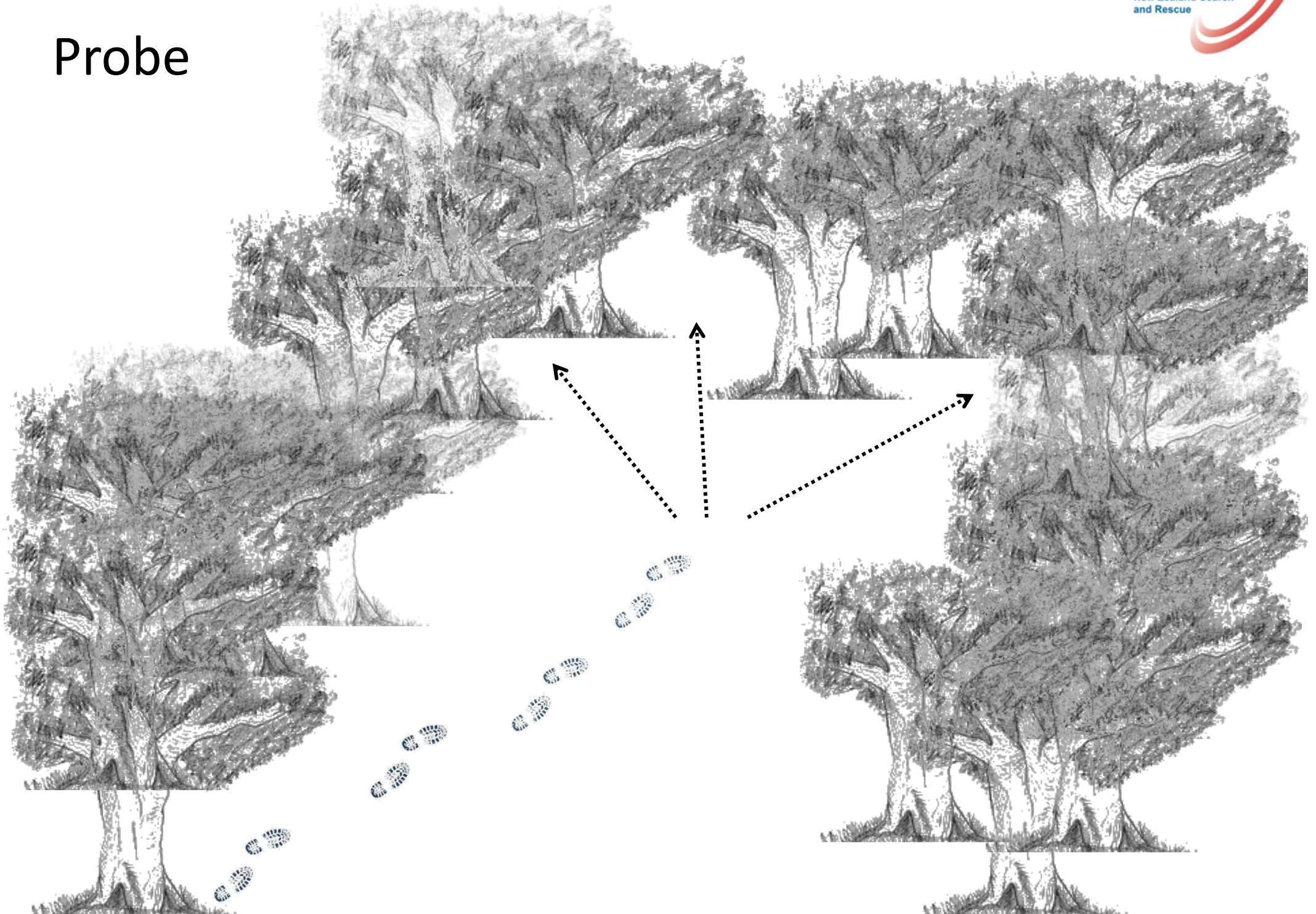
Zig zag pattern search



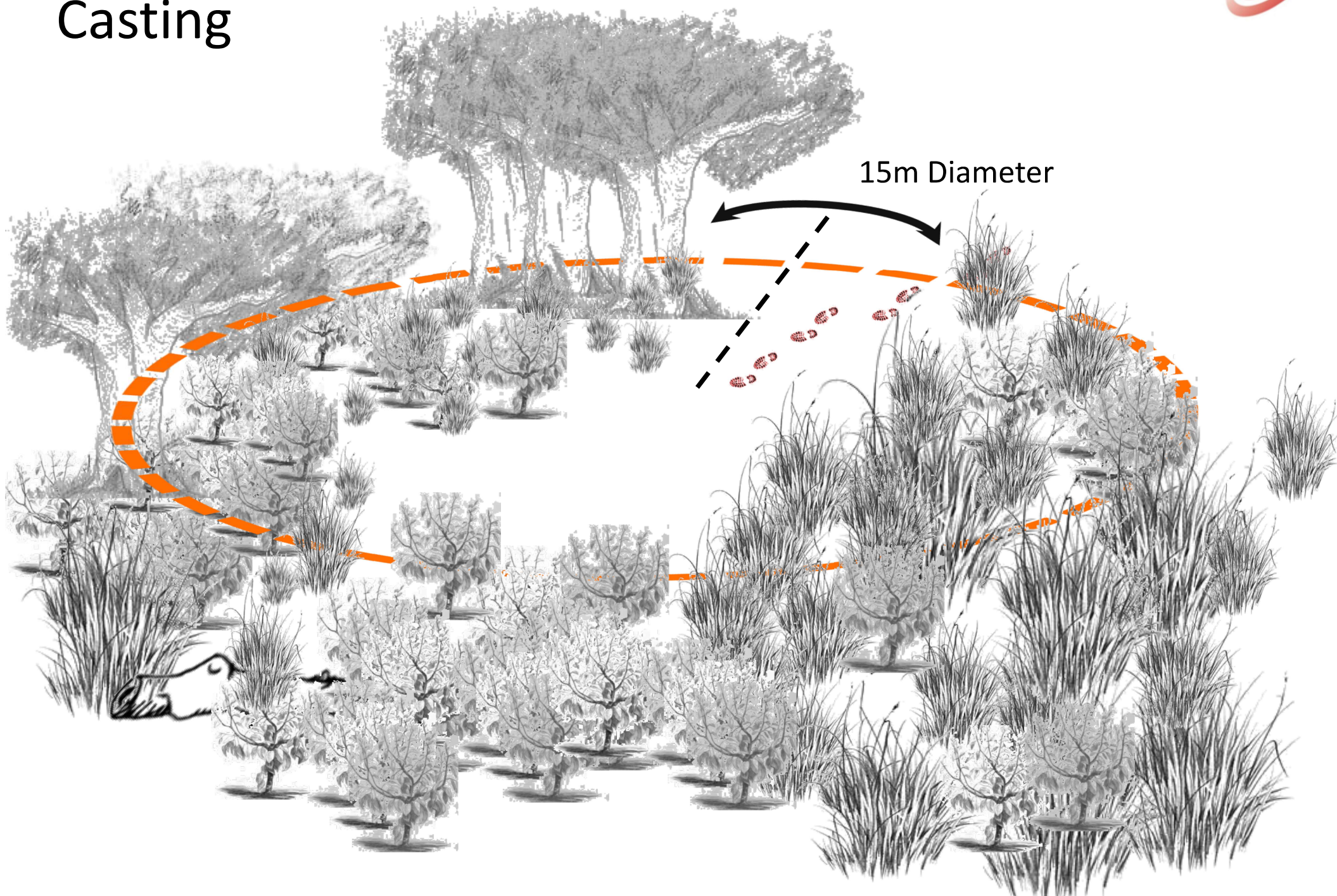
Zig zag pattern search



Probe



Casting



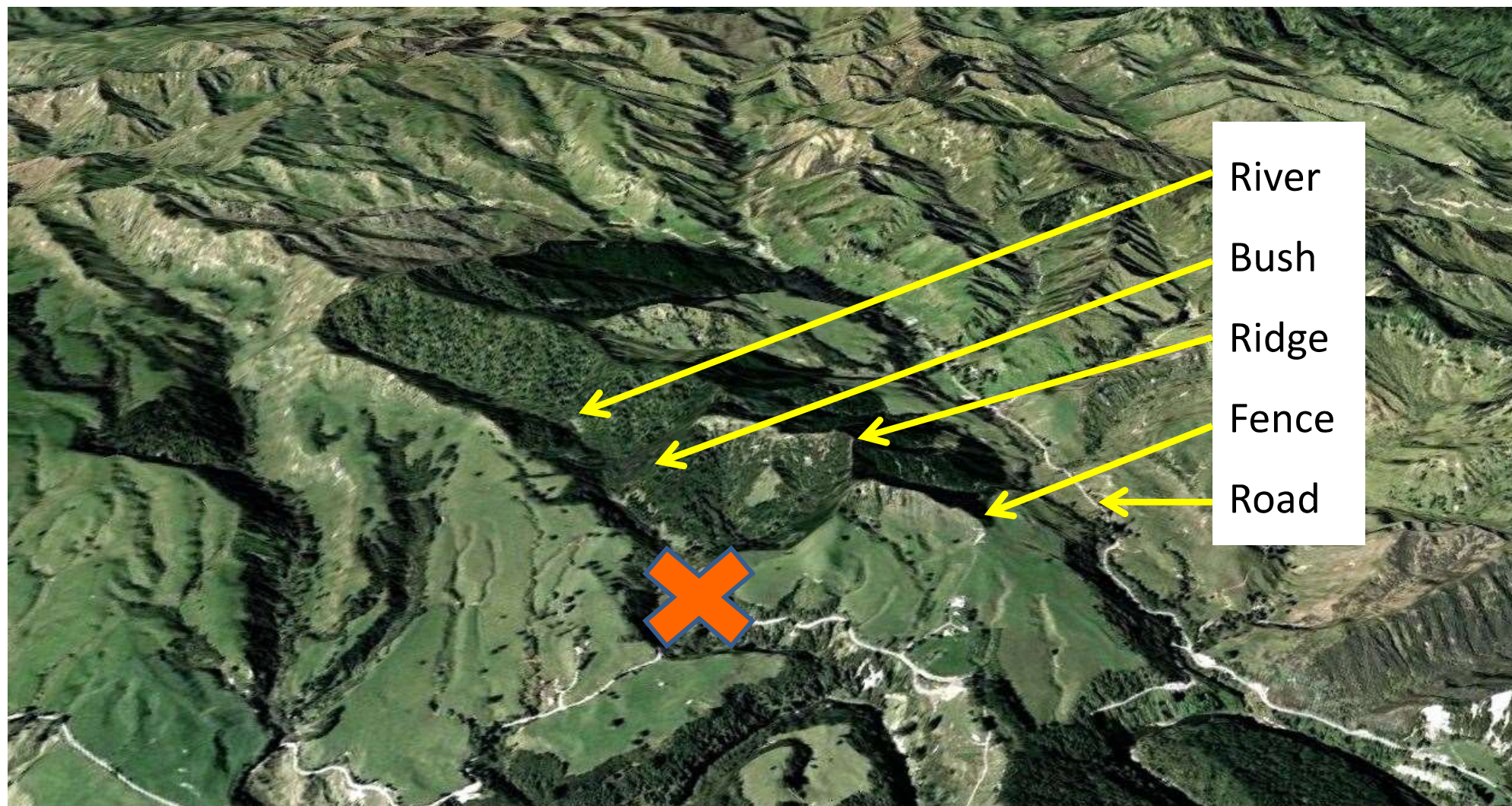
Perimeter search



Feature cutting



Feature cutting



Lost Hunter
Last known location

Summary

Sign cutting is a term that describes many skills within visual tracking. The art of locating sign/clues then determining their relevance to the search allows the time between lost and found to be lessened even after days lie between them.

Use the STOPPER acronym.

Finally apart from actual visual tracking, cutting sign is the most extensive of the skills of a tracker. This is combined with sign aging for providing the sign picture therefore adding vital information to the overall search procedures.

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