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Land Navigation Handbook, Kals: Be Expert with Map and Compass, Kjellstrom

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- Skills and guides - Library -



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Description :

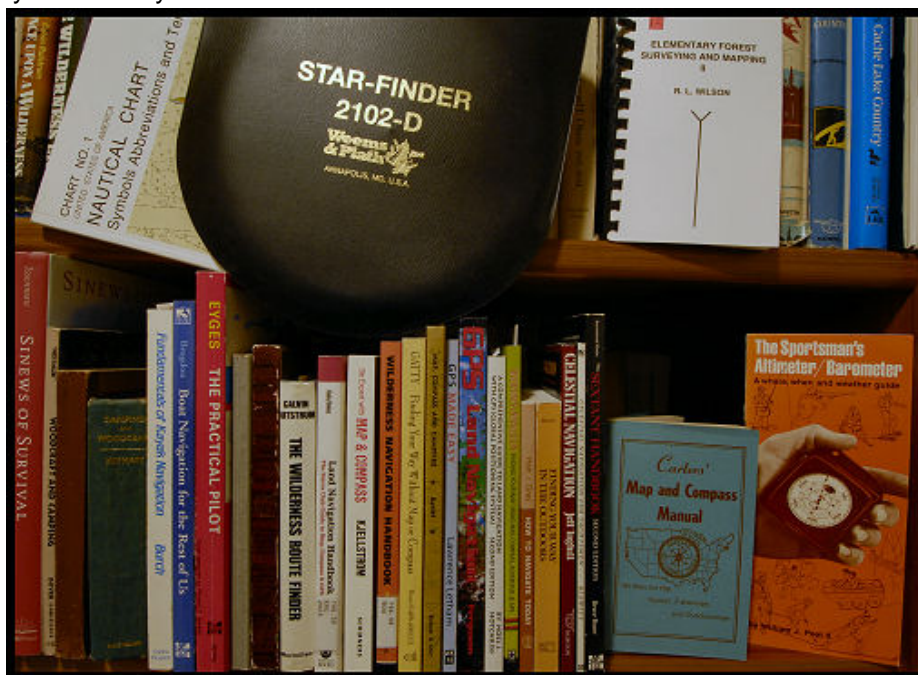
This article looks at two excellent land navigation books and a few of my favorite navigation instruments.

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Just last week I picked up the second edition of *Land Navigation Handbook* at my local library. I have had the original edition (published in 1983) for years and always considered it one of my favorite navigation books, but this new revised edition is much better. Clyde Soles took Kals original text and added several sections (primarily the compass chapter and of course GPS). The revisions to this already fine text prompted me to write this article.

Of all the navigation or map and compass books I have on my bookshelf I consider Kjellstrom's *Be Expert with Map and Compass* to be the quintessential text. This book should be read by any one who spends any time at all using a map and compass. The various other books I have are in some cases more specific texts (GPS, Sextant or Marine navigation) but none offer the general basics like Kjellstrom. Even though Kjellstrom's focus is on orienteering, the basics of map and compass work are just superbly covered. The tricks used by orienteering participants make for excellent skills in any backcountry walk.

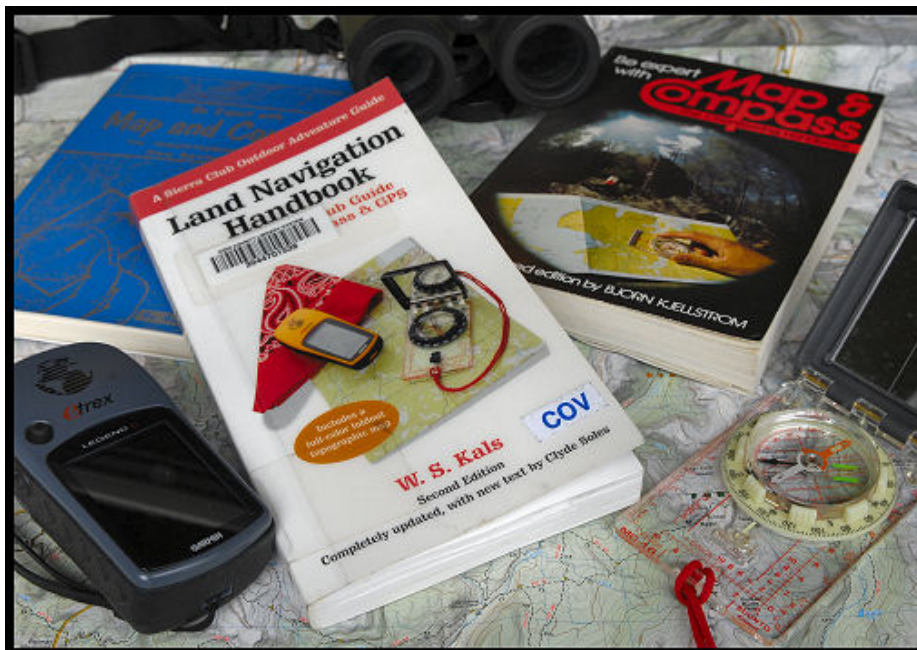


Navigation Bookshelf

My edition of *Be Expert with Map and Compass* was published in 1976 and it was the ninth printing of that revision. It was originally published in 1955 printed several times, and revised 2 times BEFORE my edition. I now see from Amazon.com that it is currently offered in a 1994 revised edition. I cannot think of any other map and compass book with such a strong history of publication. My original editions are about half as thick as my edition, and I guess I am going to have to purchase a new edition to see what changes have been added.

The basis strength of this manual is the straightforward lessons of understanding maps and using a baseplate compass. My edition included a map, practice compass and protractor to use while reading the book. These tools made learning map and compass work easy and fun. The practice "exams" in the text build skills in your living room that are easily translated to outdoor sessions with map and compass.

I would imagine most readers of this site either have a copy of this or at least have read it in the past. It truly is, in my view, one of the best of the map and compass books to be found.



The Classic and The Favorite Bjorn Kjellstrom; WS Kals and Clyde Soles

However, what sparked me to write this article was the recently released *Land Navigation Handbook* by Kals and Soles. This newly revised edition is a navigation book that I consider nearly perfect. Soles has added sections on GPS and "beefed" up some of the original work by Kals. The "Altimeter" use section is an excellent discussion not always found in many other map and compass or land navigation texts. The use of map, compass and altimeter is a little practiced skill that can add greatly to the ease of navigation. This manual covers the basics of maps, scales, coordinate systems and declination very well. It is, in my view, a more advanced study than Kjellstrom and the reader definitely will benefit from a good understanding of the basics of map and compass work (that can be gained by practice with Kjellstrom's techniques) prior to using this text.

This from the Preface:

*It has been a privilege to revise what is certainly a classic instructional text for the outdoors. **Land Navigation Handbook** had been in print for over twenty years and has educated countless readers on map and compass skills.*

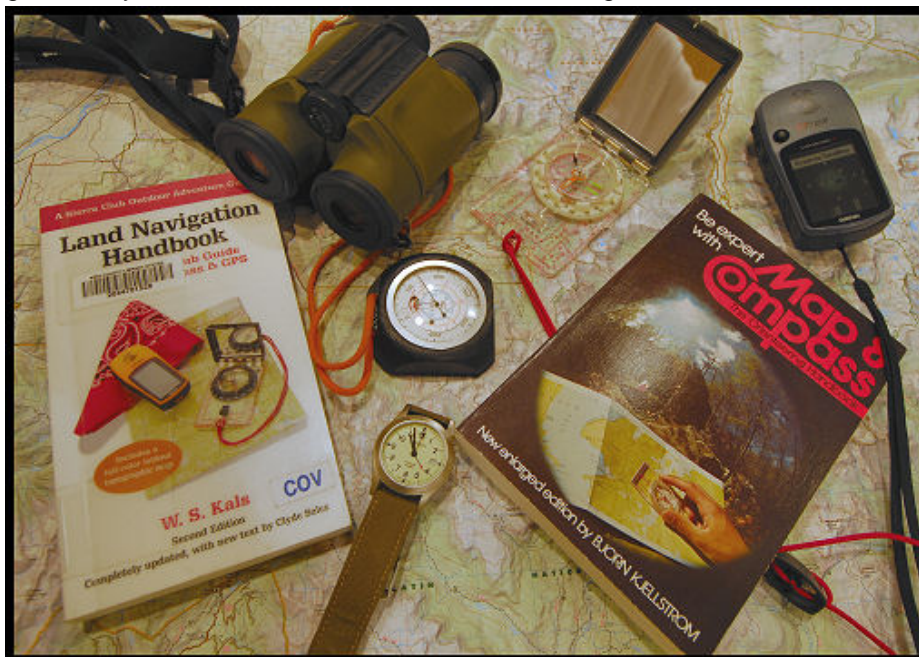
Although the basics of navigation haven't changed since WS Kals first penned this title, the technology sure has. I bought my first personal computer in 1983, the same year the first edition of this book was published. That computer came with 16 kilobytes of RAM, used a cassette tape player for data storage, and could print only crude black text—using that system for navigation was unfathomable.

In that same year, the Global Positioning System (a by-product of the Cold War) was first made available to the public. But using GPS technology required massive receivers that were not exactly portable.....

With these technological advances, navigation has become much easier. But often the manuals leave users more confused than ever, and they never explain the basic skills still required. Marketing departments may try to convince you that map and compass knowledge are no longer necessary—nothing could be further from the truth,

One of the great strengths of Kals's writing is his ability to explain complicated concepts in simple terms. I've tried to complement, rather than intrude upon, his material while bringing it up to date. This new edition should be useful for many years to come....Clyde Soles 2005

A good set of tools along with these two books and a good understanding of their lessons would set most people up for backcountry navigation. My favorite tools are shown in this last image.



Books and Instruments

First the Suunto MC-1G global compass. This Ranger type compass offers just about everything I could ever want in a compass. A excellent gimbaled needle for use all over the world, a mirrored cover for more-than-adequate accuracy of sites, and easy to set declination adjustment. All this in a reasonable priced package too, now apparently in a MC-2G version with magnifier and US scales.

Thommen altimeter. This Swiss-made mechanical altimeter is getting to be almost an antique but I would not trade it for any sort of wonder digital device. I have a Suunto Vector watch that includes an altimeter which works very well at less cost and less weight...but I still find myself taking along this old precision instrument. No batteries and no messing about with tiny buttons. This temperature compensated mechanical instrument is very easy to use....but quite costly now.

St. Moritz Pathfinder Field Watch. This is actually a very new addition to my instrument collection. I decided to return to an analog watch replacing my Vector. The Vector is a fun and accurate device, but I find myself a bit happier with a few less hard-to-remember functions. This Pathfinder has a light titanium body, mineral glass crystal, screw-down crown and daily alarm. Its simplicity is what caught my eye.

Garmin Etrex Legend C GPS. This GPS replaced an earlier Garmin 12XL model. This one has a nice color screen, uses downloadable maps, and takes half the batteries of the earlier model. It has an excellent user interface and about the only thing I wish is that I had waited and bought the version that uses SD memory cards. This is a nice device.

Swarovski Binoculars These light, rugged and waterproof binoculars are my favorite. The 8x30 roof prism with green soft rubber-like armor are perfect for spotting the trailhead, bridge crossing or campsite in the distance, plus the occasional moose at the waters edge or soaring hawk.

Map. This is the base of all the tools. Without a good map you are just....lost. I meant to include my notebook and pencil in the image too, as they are indispensable tools as I walk for notes, bearings, sketches whatever.

Land Navigation Handbook, Kals: Be Expert with Map and Compass, Kjellstrom

Resources, at Amazon...both of these are in my basket

[Land Navigation Handbook](#) WS Kals and Clyde Soles Second Edition Revised, 2005 Sierra Club Books

[Be Expert with Map and Compass](#) Bjorn Kjellstrom 1976 Charles Scribners and Sons but now published by Wiley, 1994.

Post-scriptum :Version 1.0 2/26/2007 Inception