

## The Pocket First Aid Kit



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

It has been said that if your outdoor sport does not leave you with injuries occasionally, that you are not passionate enough about it. Well, I must be pretty passionate about my outdoor sports. Between fast racing boats, dirt bikes, hunting, ATVs, and hockey, I have put emergency medicine to the test more than a few times. There

were occasions that my carcass looked like something that would give a road kill eating coyote the dry heaves.

Now that I am definitely older, and purportedly somewhat wiser, I carry a first aid kit with me. I am not talking about the size kit one would carry in a vehicle, RV or have at a base camp. These kits are far more extensive, as they should be, than what a person wants to lug around in a pack with them all day.

Over the years, I have purchased several of those "personal first aid kits" sold at the stores. These kits do contain some of the needed items but also have many things that never seem to be needed or get used.

In the interest of keeping my already swollen pack from getting any worse, I devised a kit around my own needs. I will offer up what I include in mine and why but encourage you to put some deep thought into the contents of your own pocket kit.

I geared my kit around those possible injuries that are more serious and possibly life threatening. I did not see the need for a kit that had all those little packets of sunscreen and burn ointment.

The little ailments, while annoying, do not necessarily need addressed immediately while on my outdoor excursion. Splinters, bug bites, blisters and scratches can all wait until I return to the truck or camp.

- Serious bleeding can lead to death in short order. I carry three things for this. A Swat-T tourniquet, which has a stretch, wrap, and tuck application. They are very small and lightweight. See [www.SWAT-T.com](http://www.SWAT-T.com)

- I also carry a small package of Quik Klot Sport, blood-clotting sponge. Used with the above tourniquet, you can dam up the blood flow quickly.

Available at [www.z-medica.com](http://www.z-medica.com).

- For serious gashes, or to cover a wound I carry a 4-inch Israeli bandage. This trauma wound bandage is battle tested and has its own elastic band attached to a super absorbent pad.

- I keep just a couple medium sized band-aids with me. A small cut that just bleeds all over your equipment can be an annoyance.

- I carry a small plastic bottle with a few ibuprofen and acetaminophen tablets in it. A headache can ruin a day for sure. Throw in a Benadryl tablet in case you run into something that causes an allergic reaction.

- Some folks carry a small Sam's Splint with them. This is very useful in the event you need to immobilize a limb because of a fracture.

If you are on any special prescription medicines, you will want to carry a few of them in your kit. The kit is customizable to fit your own needs.

These few items take up very little pack space. I have found that by keeping my kit small and lightweight, it goes with me everywhere, instead of being left out because I don't want to lug it around.

The pocket kit, like all first aid kits, should be inspected at least annually. Adhesives go bad with age. A little water damage can render many items useless in the kit. Pills expire in time and should be replaced.

Along with this kit, you must possess the knowledge of how to use it. For this, I recommend an extensive first aid class, one that is geared to wilderness first aid. There are many classes available on this and scores of books written on the subject. If you have not taken a class recently, consider getting into another one.

Carry something with you for those times when you may have become a little too passionate about the outdoors, and until next time, stay safe and see you on the trail.

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A dusky grouse hen, *Dendragapus obscurus*, perches in a Douglas fir tree along the Oak Flat Trail at Black Canyon. After breeding, females will scratch away leaves and needles to lay seven to 10 eggs in a nest that is primarily a bare patch of ground. (Submitted photo/National Park Service)

## Twitterpated grouse and the ritual of spring

**Thumper:** Why are they acting that way?

**Friend Owl:** Why, don't you know? They're twitterpated.

**Flower, Bambi, Thumper:** Twitterpated?

**Friend Owl:** Yes, Nearly everybody gets twitterpated in the springtime. For example: You're walking along, minding your own business. You're looking neither to the left, nor the right, when all of a sudden you run smack into a pretty face.

**Woo-Wooo!** You begin to get weak in the knees. Your head's in a whirl. And then you feel light as a feather, and before you know it, you're walking on air. And then you know what? You're knocked for a loop, and you completely lose your head!

**Thumper:** Gosh, that's awful.

Oxforddictionaries.com defines twitterpated as infatuated or obsessed. Some sources point out that origin of the word could go back centuries; confused-head (or pate).

Disney's writers of the 1942 movie Bambi are credited with officially inventing the term.

There is a racket of competing noises out there in the world of twitterpated species. Among them is the dusky grouse, full of springtime love as the bird carries out its mating ritual; a ritual as big as life itself.

These birds winter in spruce and Douglas fir trees, safely out of reach of many predators looking for a quick meal. They might roost in the same tree throughout the season. As the snowpack melts, they seek open breaks in forests and woodlands to answer the deep-seated call for breeding.

One of my first encounters was on a trail of mixed Gambel oak and Douglas fir trees. The female didn't want to get off the path, but was troubled by my approach. She popped up to fly a couple dozen yards down trail, and strut around a bit. Maybe she heard a male



### Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

drumming in the brush which I couldn't hear.

She seemed to tire of my presence, as we moved down the trail together. She finally leapt into the air, and attempted to fly downslope into the trees.

The flight appeared like a distressed B-52 bomber heading into the abyss. They seldom fly, and although they know how to do it, they appear to lack a certain grace in flight.

The males are following their annual ceremony to attract hens. Their mating territories vary; around 5 acres, but they have preferred display zones within that territory. The combs over their eyes turn bright red, tails fan out, wings stretch to the ground, and their ruby-colored air sacs inflate.

A low hoot, hoot, hoot emanates from the air sacs. It's faint. Bird enthusiasts (birders) have to be silent to hear. The hooting or drumming cadence varies. And during this rite of spring, a grouse might attempt courtship off and on during the day.

Flights to water sources, taking dust "baths," roosting, and eating are all on their agendas. But courting is at the top of the "To Do" list. It is spring, and they are twitterpated.

Spring is also the time birders flock to breeding areas to see them. Because their range is tightened for courtship, grouse are easier to find. In fact, Black Canyon is on national birders' radar screens see the cagey

bird. Tours drive back and forth on the South Rim Drive in search of grouse. The birds are oblivious to the quest.

When threatened, they freeze. Remaining stoic in the face of a predator makes them impossible to see. It's a poor strategy along a roadside, and there have been many times that rangers have shooed them off of the road to protect them.

Birders who search for dusky grouse are hopeful for the surprise of finding one. It's not the same to see it on You Tube, in a photograph, or watch it in a video game. Out there they will hear the cacophony from a host of other animals, but will be alert for the ritual of the dusky grouse.

The "twitterpation" season is here; experience life in a dynamic landscape. Don't miss it.

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#### IF YOU GO:

Birds are active early in the day. Go shortly after sunrise. Don't grouse about it.

- At Black Canyon National Park: Rim Rock Trail, Uplands Trail, and walk the South Rim Campground. Hike the trails but be patient.
- Grand Mesa: Watch for grouse in open meadows at the edge of brush or forest.
- Uncompahgre Plateau: Like Grand Mesa watch for birds at the edge of meadows.



These are the items I carry in my pocket first aid kit, just the essentials to save a life. The minor injuries can wait until I get back to my camp or truck where a more complete kit is available. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)



A male dusky grouse, *Dendragapus obscurus*, on the East Portal Road at Black Canyon is in full mating display. This rite of spring is intended to attract females which will ultimately carry forward a new generation of birds. (Submitted photo/National Park Service)