

Getting Yourself Ready For The Hunt

The Colorado hunting season is rapidly approaching. If you are anything like me, you have been preparing for months. I start packing the day after the end of last season's hunt.

I know that you will spend a great deal of time going over your equipment. Your bow is dialed in to perfection and you have practiced faithfully, every day, for months. The rifle is sighted in perfectly, boots are oiled, and the tent has been repaired. All is right with the world for opening day.

The Mountain Rescue Association estimates that 3000 rescue missions will be conducted annually in the Rocky Mountains. Of those, 2000 people will lose their lives. Our own team here in Montrose, the Sheriff's Posse, conducts an average of 6 per season.

Many of these rescues could have

been avoided if the person would have spent some time preparing for the trip, instead of just showing up. Did you remember to get your body ready for the big trip? After all, your body is going to put up with all the punishments and abuses of the hunt. It would be wise to do a little work and make sure your body is up to the task.

A good start would be a visit with the family sawbones. Make sure you don't have any medical condition that could cause you problems. Most conditions these days are treatable with medications and it's best to have a good supply of any needed prescriptions when you take the trip.

Spend as much time over the summer getting into the best physical shape as you can. Hunting in the high

country can be very physically demanding. All of your walking will be uphill, downhill or side-hill as there is really no level ground in the mountains. Throw in a bunch of deadfalls, rocks and chuckholes and you have the full monty of a workout.

Taking a power walk every day is a good start. Begin slowly, increasing your distance and speed every day. After a couple weeks, start wearing your pack with some weights in it. Again, slowly begin increasing the weight you carry. When you get here, think about how much equipment you will be carrying around with you and try to prepare for that weight load.

Wear the boots you will be using while on the hunt. This is what you will be wearing when you get here and it helps condition your leg muscles to those boots. It will also serve to help break in any new footwear before the trip.

Eating right and getting the proper amount of sleep is always important. Since we're preparing ourselves, we might try and shed any extra pounds that we may be lugging around. I hate that word diet so maybe we can call it eating smarter, or in my case, eating less.

Remember that you will be dealing with altitude on your hunt. If your camp is going to be at 9,000 feet, there will only be 33 percent of the oxygen available at sea level. That means your body will only be able to function at 86 percent of its physical capabilities.

For those of you coming from lower altitudes, you will want to give your body some time to acclimate to avoid altitude sickness. Altitude sickness can cause nausea, vomiting, headache, shortness of breath, weakness, mental confusion and a score



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

of other symptoms. If not treated, it could lead to death and the cancellation of all your life memberships.

The cure is usually quite simple, descend in altitude and quickly. Bring the sick person down several thousand feet in altitude. From there, it is a great idea to get them to a medical facility and have them checked out even though they might be feeling

better. Many times, the symptoms disappear just as quickly as they appear.

Montrose is at about 5,500 feet and that is a great place to start. Spend a few days here resting. Take a few walks each day, nothing vigorous, and drink plenty of water. The water will also help with the dry climate we have. Sports drinks with electrolytes are good as well, especially if you are perspiring. Try and avoid alcohol and drinks containing caffeine.

After a couple days here in town, it is a safer bet to move on up in altitude to your camp or lodge. Once there, it is once again a good idea to give the body a little time to acclimate. A good 24 hours of avoiding strenuous activity and the same rules of avoiding the caffeine and booze still apply. Continue drinking plenty of water throughout your hunt, even if you do not feel thirsty.

Getting your body in shape for the hunt will increase your chances of success. We not only want you to be successful on your hunt, we want to see you back next year. See you on the trail.

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Hunting involves a great deal of physical activity. Be sure your body is acclimated and ready for the trip. (Submitted photo/Mark Rackay)

Something will be gone

There are some people who turn their face to the sun. They are shaped by the wild land that encompasses the Uncompahgre Valley and all of the Western U.S. They are volunteers who give selflessly to a cause – the cause of caring for their public lands. As a group, they restore streams and habitat, aid scientific research in the field and assist the public in their enjoyment of the land.

They have donated countless hours, but most say that the sweat equity earned through their work is worth all of their time. Their secret? They have earned a relationship with the land that is uniquely their own.

This relationship is one that is handed down to all of us; bequeathed to our present age by generations who have gone before. A culture of honesty, integrity and community springs from our heritage because the people attained those traits in the wilderness of the continent when our country was new.

A surprising bit of horse



Outdoors

By Paul Zaenger

trading resulted in the Treaty of Paris that ended the American Revolution. Tough negotiators John Adams and Benjamin Franklin argued that Britain should cede the "western" lands of eastern North America (to the Mississippi River) to the new nation. Military victories in territory that would become Indiana and Illinois bolstered their claim.

The Louisiana Territory was added in 1803; treaties and war added additional lands to the Pacific. Western lands were harder to settle, and though settlement moved forward in a spotty fashion until irrigation brought water

to crops, people embraced the prospect of belonging to the land. Through all of this, we (ourselves) determined our own destiny, we made our own choices, we worked hard to build community and integrity through the honest application of our spirit.

We ventured into the unknown, but the mystery of the continent didn't conjure fear. Instead, we saw ourselves as part of the wilderness. Of course some sought to conquer wildlands, and we did. But 15 generations after Jamestown we turned from a mastering attitude to see that we Americans are enlarged and empowered by our relationship with the land. This has led us to care for the land.

"I hear America singing," wrote Walt Whitman in his "Leaves of Grass." Hard work helped our hearts to sing. Working in and on the land helped our hearts to sing. But today we are more in danger of losing our relationship with the land than at any other time in our past. Technology and urbanization have dragged us away from our roots.

Western author Wallace Stegner agonized over the trend some 60 years ago in a letter to a land commission on the importance of protecting wild places in our country.

In it he wrote, "Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be destroyed; if we permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic



Hiking the Horsethief Trail above Ouray offers an opportunity find human roots with the land. Near the Bridge of Heaven one can hear the song of America. (Submitted photo/courtesy National Park Service)

cigarette cases; If we drive the few remaining members of the wild species into zoos or to extinction; if we push our paved roads through the last of the silence, so that never again will Americans be free in their own country. . .

And so that never again can we have the chance to see ourselves single, separate, vertical and individual in the world, part of the environment of trees and rocks and soil . . . without any remaining wilderness we are committed wholly, without chance for even momentary reflection and rest, to a headlong drive into our technological termite-life, the Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment. We need [these wildlands] preserved — because it was the challenge against which our character as a people was formed."

There are people who turn their face to the sun; people who fight the idea that something will be gone from us. By

their work, these volunteers have a deeper relationship to their heritage of honesty, integrity and community. Public Lands Day, Sept. 30, is a time when you can volunteer on projects to conserve the land. But this is not a call to volunteer.

Rather, this is a call for you to bolster your mindset towards those eternal values which make us Americans. Regardless of race, creed, or religion, we humans have a need to be out in the wildlands of our heritage. Take your next weekend, get off the lawn mower, get out of the shopping center, turn off the phone and laptop. YOU have a destiny with the land.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

TO EXPERIENCE YOUR PUBLIC LANDS:

For conservation work on Sept. 16 and 30 with the Bureau of Land Management, contact Julie Jackson at 970-240-5310 or jmackson@blm.gov.

For Sept. 30 on Grand Mesa National Forest, contact Winslow Robertson at (970) 464-0675 or go to the Grand Mesa Nordic Council website.

For information for public land adventures, start at: National Park Service, www.nps.gov/, Bureau of Land Management, www.blm.gov/visit, U.S. Forest Service, www.fs.fed.us/visit.

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