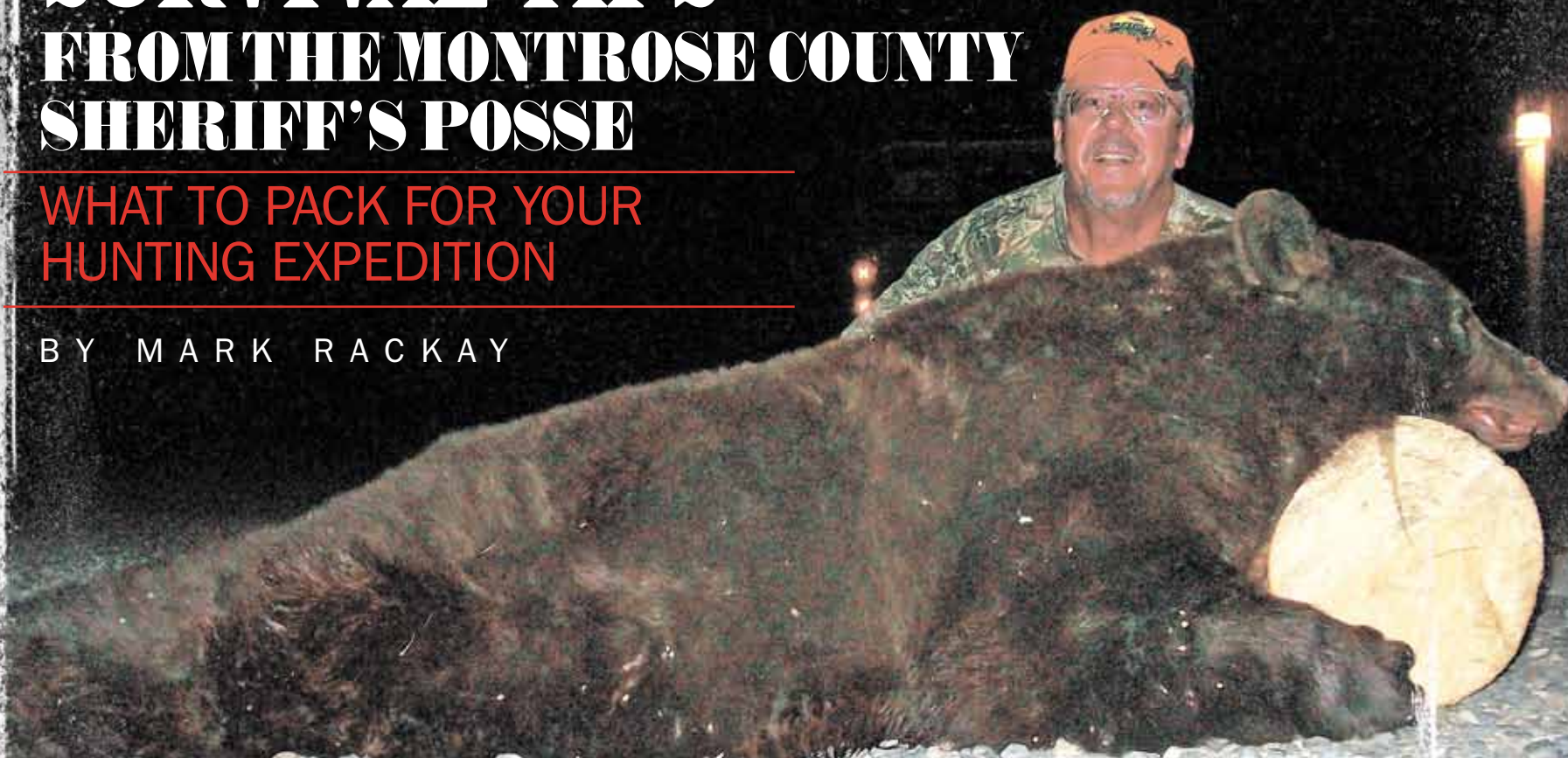


SURVIVAL TIPS

FROM THE MONTROSE COUNTY SHERIFF'S POSSE

WHAT TO PACK FOR YOUR HUNTING EXPEDITION

BY MARK RACKAY



PROPER PREPARATION MAKES NABBING A BEAR LIKE THIS EASIER AND SAFER.

(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK RACKAY)

WE SPEND a great deal of time preparing for our hunt. It starts out with applying for the tags, booking an outfitter, preparing our gear, sighting in the rifle and practicing with the bow.

Most of us spend some time getting into shape for hiking in the mountains. We would be wise to spend a little time thinking about what may happen if things don't go as planned.

One of the reasons we hunt in Western Colorado is because of the diverse landscape. Altitude can go from 5,400 feet to more than 14,000. With that increase comes weather changes. We can have summer-like temperatures in the morning followed by snow and subfreezing temperatures in a matter of hours. This is what the wise hunter will prepare for.

When these fast moving cold fronts come through, a blinding snow can follow, making it

impossible to find your way. What happens if you take a fall and sprain an ankle, or worse, and are no longer able to walk? Having the things necessary for such an emergency in a small pack would not only make things easier, but also potentially save your life.

It is important you select a pack that is comfortable. A small fanny type pack, a larger fanny pack with shoulder straps or a full backpack are your best choices. Try them on over heavy clothing and see which is the most comfortable to you. Spend some time before the trip getting used to wearing a pack for extended periods. You do not want to be in the middle of your hunt and discover that you should have one with a padded waist strap.

When placing items in your pack, try to keep to the essentials. If your pack is too heavy, you may talk yourself out of carrying it. The pack does little

good if it is sitting in the cab of the truck when you need it afield.

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE THINGS THAT I CARRY IN MY PERSONAL PACK:

- Compass and GPS — I use this at the start to orient myself and have a starting point
- Signal mirror and whistle — these are great for helping searchers locate me in the event of an emergency
- Knife and Leatherman tool
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Waterproof matches, lighter, fire starter—fire can be used for signaling and warmth
- Drinking water — some packs have a hydration bladder with them
- Food — power bars, trail mix, jerky, etc.
- Cell phone — keep power off to save battery.

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The battery power will run out quickly searching for service.

■ Small first-aid kit — carry only essential items, such as a tourniquet, Israeli bandage, couple Band-Aids, etc. while keeping weight in mind. Be sure that you have any essential prescription drugs you may require.

SOME OTHER ITEMS YOU MAY CONSIDER IF SPACE ALLOWS:

- Rain poncho
- Solar blanket
- Toilet paper
- Duct tape or electrical tape
- Insect repellent
- Pencil and paper

If you are hunting with a firearm it is always a good idea to carry extra ammunition. I have seen many cases where a hunter was able to signal for help firing the universal three well-spaced shots for help. Having enough ammunition for this can be a lifesaver.

One other item that you should carry is extra-warm clothing. In the mountains, the temperature can drop 30 or more degrees in a matter of minutes and having extra clothing can help.

All of these items can be carried in a pack. I prefer to have a waterproof pack as not all of them are. There are sprays on the market that you can apply to your pack before the trip that provide a temporary waterproofing. It does no good for you if the



contents of the pack are a soggy mess when you need them.

All of this just requires a little thought and preparation. A little advance planning will make your hunt more enjoyable and just might save your life. Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse, call 252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

ASIDE FROM THE WEATHER, YOU COULD FIND YOURSELF STUCK AFTER DARK AND FORCED TO SPEND THE NIGHT. HAVING A PROPERLY EQUIPPED PACK WILL MAKE YOUR HUNT THAT MUCH EASIER AND SAFER.

(PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK RACKAY)

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