

A flashlight to light the way

One of the things most often taken for granted in the woods is a flashlight.

Everyone probably has a half dozen around the house, vehicles and outdoor packs. Try getting along a night in the woods without one and you will understand just how important one can be.



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I was on a hunt with two other friends a number of years back. We were tracking an animal that one of the guys had wounded. Between us there were three flashlights. One

had dead batteries. We used the other two until the batteries in them were exhausted and decided to resume the hunt the next morning. It was then that we realized just how dark the Canadian woods really are, especially without a light. We were forced to spend the night right where we were.

Fortunately, all turned out well, but I never forgot the lessons I learned that trip.

Lights are now measured in lumens, which is nothing more than a measurement to determine how bright a light is. The higher the lumen rating, the brighter the light.

Flashlights used to be measured in candlepower, but I have not heard that term in quite some time.

The preferred type of flashlight is one that uses an LED (light emitting diode) type of bulb. These bulbs usually last for 100,000 hours of use and do not generate the heat that the old halogen type of bulbs did. The LED also uses much less battery power and you do not need to carry spare bulbs.

For most of our outdoor needs a hand held light with 200 lumens is generally enough. If you can find a light that has several modes to it such as low lumen, full power and strobe or flashing, you will be set.

The low power saves the batteries and is usually enough light for chores and repairs around camp and such. The higher power is more for looking into the distance, scaring away animals or signaling. And for signaling, it is great to have the strobe feature. More than one lost hiker has seen a strobe from a great distance and followed it to safety.

I firmly believe in redundancy in just about everything survival. The old Murphy's Law about failure can really come into play in the wilderness.



There are a lot of different flashlights from which to choose. Having at least one, with extra batteries, is a good idea when heading outdoors. (Photo by Mark Rackay)

I would try and have a pair of hand-held flashlights in my kit. Keeping both the same means you can interchange parts if you have to. It also means they would use the same batteries and I carry several extra sets in my pack.

An old prescription bottle makes a compact and waterproof container to hold extra batteries in.

I also carry a headlamp in my pack. I have one that uses the same size batteries as my handhelds.

A headlamp allows you to have light while your hands are free to do other tasks. These also come with multiple features. Some have various brightness settings and some have a red light, which is great for night vision.

The price of these lights varies from just about \$10 on up to hundreds of dollars. I usually opt for the higher-end lights and have never been disappointed. I have a pair of lights that I have used for seven or eight years now and I put them through some rough use.

This column would not be complete

if we did not discuss batteries.

You have many more choices now than we did just a few years ago. You can buy regular, alkaline, lithium and rechargeable. The regular batteries are just about useless for our application. They do not last, have a low shelf life and can leak.

Alkaline is a better choice but they have some drawbacks as well. Alkalines do not operate in extreme cold or heat. The extremes can cause them to leak and we have all opened up a flashlight to see it ruined by leakage at one time or another.

Rechargeable is an option that would be good for someone who uses the lights on a regular basis. Police, firefighters and first responders all come to mind here. You can carry extra, pre-charged batteries in your pack.

My personal choice is the lithium batteries. While they are more expensive, they make it up in run time. Lithium batteries can last as much as eight times longer than regular

alkaline. Lithium is not as sensitive to cold or heat and have a shelf life of more than 10 years.

For most of us, that is the most important feature. The flashlight that lives in the glove box, bottom of your pack or bug out bag, or in the ATV could see very little use. When you need it, having those lithium batteries should mean that it will still work and did not leak.

I give all my lights fresh batteries at the start of the hunting season. It is also the time that I inspect all the lights around the house and vehicles.

I will also check my supply of spare batteries in the packs. It is a good practice to get into knowing that they are there and ready when you need them. Until next time, see you on the trail.

Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse, call (970) 252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org

Camping fees increase in state parks

To assure the continued high quality of Colorado's State Parks, Colorado Parks and Wildlife announces increases to basic, electric, full hook-up and cabin/yurt camping fees at the 33 parks where camping is available, effective Nov. 1. This is the first increase in camping fees since 2010.

"Our wonderful state parks require a large amount of maintenance, and rising costs of utilities, equipment and personnel has made this fee increase imperative," said CPW Statewide Parks Pass and Reservations Coordinator Devon Adams.

The change was approved by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission at its September meeting. Depending upon the type of site, fee increases range from \$2 to \$10 per night.

Yurts and cabins incurred the greatest hike, but CPW notes the experience for campers provides a cost-effective getaway.

"Some of Colorado's most pristine sights and panoramic views are found at state parks that offer cabins and yurts, some still as low as \$70 per night," Adams said. "It is a great deal and no wonder our most popular camping sites fill up six months in advance."

CPW has more than 3,900 campsites available, many including electrical hookups and close-by restroom and shower facilities, plus 50 cabins and yurts located throughout the state at elevations ranging from approximately 3,800 to 9,400 feet. More information is available at <https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/Pages/ParkMap.aspx>. Almost 300 campsites are ADA accessible.

The current camping fees will not change for those who have already made future reservations.

Most camping fees range from \$10 - \$28, not including the reservation fee and park pass. Every vehicle entering the park, including RVs and towed vehicles, must have a park pass for each day. Annual park passes are \$70, and most daily parks passes are \$7.

Visit <http://cpw.state.co.us/buyapply/Pages/Reservations.aspx> or call (303) 470-1144 for more information.

Some discounts are available to permanently and totally disabled Colorado residents and residents 64 years of age or older, Sundays to Thursdays, with appropriate documentation. The CPW Communication Center is prepared to answer all your camping and reservation questions, call (303) 297-1192.

Boat ramp closing for season at Ridgway

The boat ramp and aquatic nuisance inspection station will close for the season at Ridgway State Park at 4 p.m. on Oct. 31.

Boats that are hand-launched such as canoes and kayaks, can go onto the reservoir year around.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife urges anyone using small boats to wear a life jacket at all times. Children under 13 must always wear a life jacket when out on a watercraft.

Anglers can also continue fishing from shore.

Depending on weather conditions, the boat ramp will open again sometime in the spring.

Campsites and yurts are available throughout the year at Ridgway.

For more information, call the park at (970) 626-5822.

Call ahead for Blue Mesa boat inspections

Beginning Nov. 1, boat inspections for aquatic invasive species at Curecanti National Recreation Area will be provided to boaters on a call-in basis.

Inspections can be requested by calling the Blue Mesa AIS Inspection phone at (970) 209-2335 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., seven days a week.

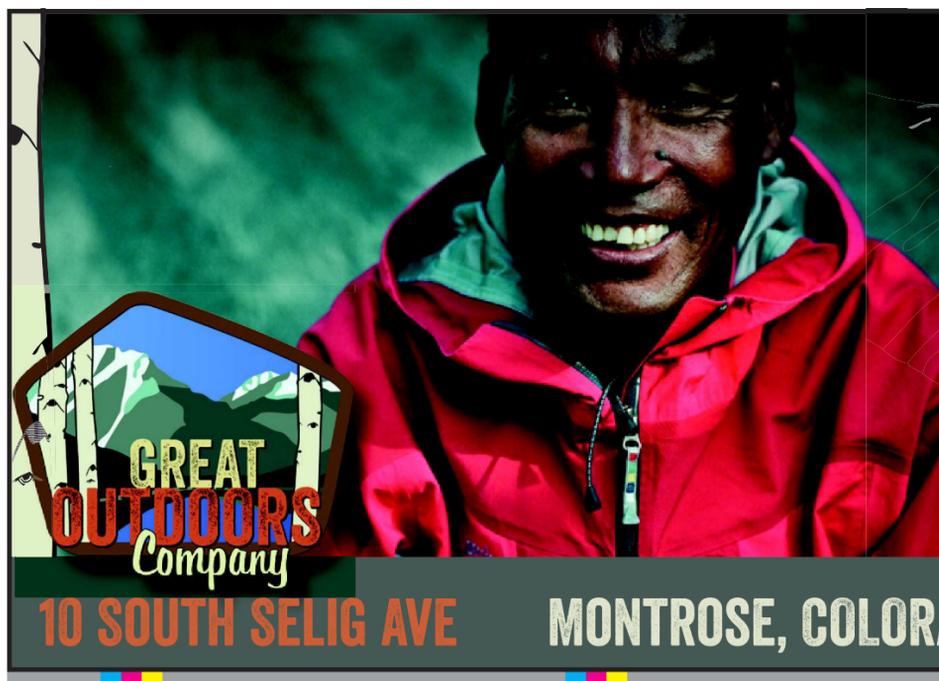
Boaters should expect a 20-minute response time to boat ramps, so call ahead to meet the inspector at the ramp. Boaters are reminded that inspections are required for launch and retrieval and ramps are locked, so calling for an inspection is required for each launch and retrieval.

Call-in inspections will be available at Elk Creek and Lake Fork boat ramps until ice precludes launching at each site.

Those two boat ramps may be plowed once all other plowing needs are covered, though the adjacent parking areas will be cleared of snow as quickly as possible. Ramps can become extremely icy in freezing conditions.

Please ensure that you have the proper equipment to retrieve your vessel considering these factors.

Due to freezing temperatures, decontamination will not be available; boats requiring decontamination may be denied launch.





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