

MISTAKES



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

I am a graduate of the school of hard knocks. All the lessons I have learned outdoors, I learned the hard way. Anyone can learn something from a book, but the lesson really stays with you if you learned it the hard way, sometimes in the form of a scar. I have amassed quite an impressive collection of scars over the years.

I have made more than a few mistakes in the outdoors. Fortunately, errors have just knocked some of the bark off me and none have been serious enough to send me to paradise ahead of schedule. I refer to these “mistakes” as “testing.” My wife of many years refers to them as “mind-boggling acts of idiocy,” but we shall ignore that comment in the interest of marital bliss.

At the end of each year, I review the rescues made by the Posse in the hopes of perhaps learning from the mistakes of others. Learning this way helps preserve what is left of my natural landscape and hopefully, you can take something away from it as well.

Calling For help

We had a hunter who was injured and needed some assistance. His injuries were to his leg after he slipped between some rocks. Knowing that he needed help, he phoned his wife in town, who was at the grocery store at the time.

The wife then phoned 911 for assistance. One of the services of 911 is an immediate location in GPS coordinates, of where the call originated. This saves countless hours for emergency personnel in finding an injured party in the mountains. In this case, the coordinates were for someplace near the cereal section of the grocery store since the call was placed from the wife’s phone.

It took over an hour before everything was sorted out, as the wife’s description of where her husband was located was sketchy as well. Fortunately, the husband’s injuries were not life-threatening. The take away from this is to place the call yourself. Keep the location setting on your phone turned on when you head into the outdoors. That setting gives the good folks at 911 the ability to obtain GPS coordinates for your location in the event of an emergency. Having a latitude and longitude location for you will save many hours of precious time for rescue personnel trying to find you.

Going It alone

A 31-year-old fellow decided to take his ATV out for a workout last spring. It was the time of year where the north facing slopes were snow covered, while south-facing slopes were mud.

The man missed a turn and rolled his ATV, seriously crushing his ankle. He was in the bottom of a draw and had to crawl on hands and knees, with a very painful crushed ankle, to a high spot for cell service. This crawl took many hours with him receiving service well after dark. He was eventually rescued and the story has a happy ending but it could have been worse if he never found service.

The moral of this story is the buddy system. Never go it alone in the great outdoors as old Mother Nature always sides with Murph of Murphy’s Law fame. A riding buddy, on another machine, could have gone for help after making his injured friend secure and warm.

The flight plan

If you are going out alone, it is most important that someone back in town knows your plan, and what to do if you are late. This responsible person will notify authorities if you are overdue and give them your planned travel route.

A couple was out on the Rimrocker Trail this summer, giving their new



A mistake outdoors can lead to a ride out in a stretcher or worse. Try to learn from the mistakes of others. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

ATV a workout and generally enjoying a nice summer mountain day. This all went south after the ATV broke down and would not restart. The couple was forced to take it on foot and search for cell service.

Needless to say, it was long after happy hour, when cell service was found. The folks were rescued in the pre-dawn hours, both suffering from dehydration.

Had they set a plan with someone back in town, the rescue could have been originated many hours earlier and they could have just stayed put, waiting on help. Always be sure someone knows your plan. Notify this person immediately of any change in your route or plan.

The knife edge

Many of the hunting knives have a dual-purpose blade. One side is the normal sharp working

edge of the knife. The backside of these knives has what’s called a “gut hook.” This gut hook looks similar to a seat belt cutter on some rescue knives. Its purpose is to make opening the body cavity of a harvested game animal a quick and easy job.

The gut hook works very well for it’s intended purpose. I have even found it to be useful in opening cardboard boxes taped shut. The problem is that while you are using the gut hook, the sharp, working edge of the knife is facing upwards toward you.

A young hunter in the Cimarron during archery season was working on his elk. His sharp edge was facing up as he worked the gut hook through the hide. His wet hands slipped off the handle of the knife and he laid open his forearm in a most impressive manner.

Fortunately, his hunting buddy was able to apply a tourniquet and dam the flow of the blood. Several hours later, the man was at the hospital getting a large number of stitches. He will be no worse for wear and he now has a neat scar to show how he learned a lesson the hard way.

Remember that you are never really alone in the outdoors, as Murphy is always along, waiting for the right time to wreak havoc on your day. Prepare for the worst and hopefully the trip goes well. Have a safe, healthy and Murphy free New Year.

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Notes:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is transitioning to a new purchasing system beginning Jan. 1, 2018, which will result in a short purchasing system blackout during the switch. The new system will allow all customers to use a one-stop shop for all products from CPW, to include hunting and fishing licenses, campsite reservations and OHV and snowmobile permits. While this transition to the new system takes place, there will be several days when all CPW purchases will be unavailable. For more information, please see the Colorado Parks and Wildlife release at:

<http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/News-Release-Details.aspx?NewsID=6356>